

# **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International**

*"making humanitarian action accountable to beneficiaries"*

**Newsletter**

**Issue No. 5**

**August 2005**

## **Welcome to Sheryl Haw and Treena Wu, and Thanks to Mr Sok Phoeuk**

**Sheryl Haw** joined the HAP-I team in June 2005, taking up the challenging role of Accountability Standards Development Manager. Over the course of the next 16 months she looks to join forces with all those interested in developing indicators to help measure good practice in the area of accountability and quality.

Sheryl started out in the humanitarian aid world back in 1991 as a team member of an aid organisation responding to the crisis in Iraq and has continued in the sector, developing a strong desire to see quality and professionalism strengthen our humanitarian aid work. In her role as Operations Director and Quality Manager in her former organisation, Sheryl helped develop a management system that has now been granted an ISO 9001/2000 certificate for quality management. She will draw on this experience and the skills of many others to draft a Quality Management and Accountability Manual for humanitarian response.

Starting June 2005, **Treena Wu** has joined HAP-I as the Research & Communications Officer, carrying out research that will test the hypothesis that accountability to beneficiaries improves humanitarian outcomes.

She started out in the field as a Portfolio Associate at UNOPS in South and South East Asia. Then at New York University she completed her Masters and went on to start her PhD specializing in Public Policy and Economics. Now she is focused on using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to test the hypothesis that accountability has a positive effect on humanitarian relief.

We would like to thank Mr **Sok Phoeuk** of Cambodia, who has been working for 6 months with Oxfam GB in Aceh, promoting accountability to beneficiaries. His work has benefited the Tsunami affected community through improving Oxfam's accountability practices. Some examples of Sok's innovative work will soon be published on our website. Oxfam GB and other HAP-I members in Aceh have agreed that Sok's replacement will work

as an Accountability Advisor to all HAP-I members. We welcome Ms Remedios "Ting" Gorgonio who comes from Davao City, Philippines and brings with her a wealth of experience in Humanitarian work, especially on community participation.

## **OP-ED**

**(This is your space: but because no one has submitted an opinion piece for this issue, we are taking the liberty of letting you know what we think.....)**

**Question:** If my mum 'invests' £100 each in Toyota Industries, the local UK Government hospital fund, and a UK NGO delivering relief in Sudan, and then asks each to explain why, how and to what effect they used her money, what do you think the results would be?

**Opinion:** Being accountable is not easy. It involves listening to others, being open to criticism and changing one's *modus operandi*. Achieving accountability generally results from one, or a combination of the following: a) humility and a respect for other views, b) legislation, c) a belief that accountability will lead to increased economic or other benefits.

For Toyota Industries, like most profit making companies, economic benefits are the most powerful incentives for being accountable. In 2004, Toyota processed over 540,000 suggestions from staff, of which a massive 90% were implemented. Toyota invested in what they know: that listening to staff, *and* valuing what they have to say leads to innovation, efficiency and better business outcomes: i.e. more profit and fewer customers choosing to switch to Honda.

Legislation which enforces Accountability recognises that individuals and organisations often conceal their actions for self benefit, and that they become inefficient through lack of meaningful feedback. Agencies that are publicly funded, face little or no competition and which survive regardless of performance are particularly in need of a legislative nudge.

The UK Freedom of Information Act (FOI), of January 2005, is a radical piece of legislation, which enforces a very simple principle: that people have a right to information about how Government authorities operate. That includes access to decision-making processes, research findings, performance reports and more. Aside from a few reasonable exclusions, authorities are now transparent to a greater degree than ever before. Look at the FOI section of any government website, and it is clear what a difference the Act has made to efforts to be transparent. Government departments have now set up on-line "Registries" where most documentation is proactively made available. A culture of accountability is being enforced.

I believe that humanitarian and development NGOs should voluntarily adopt key tenets of the FOI Act, as a step towards changing the culture of opaque "transparency" which contributes to their lack of accountability. Why? Because NGO staff often lack humility and respect for the views of others, are not forced to be accountable in any meaningful way and don't see any point in being accountable:

- Aid workers are not a homogenous group of caring and humble people. Expecting them to automatically respect the views of others (especially poor beneficiaries) is just not realistic.
- Current accountability legislation, which NGOs are subject to, focuses mainly on financial auditing not decision-making processes, management quality or impact. There are channels for enquiring about the latter, but they are tedious and most NGOs would not be able to respond efficiently or accurately.
- Agencies' income and survival are not based on performance and good investment, but historical image, good marketing, good will and the ability to process funds. The biggest agencies don't need to prove that they turned a profit (if profit is saving lives and reducing suffering) and nor do they need to worry about their client group (poor people) taking their business elsewhere.

NGOs can voluntarily improve their accountability by learning from the FOI experience. Make public and explain your decision making processes. Let us see your proposals, budgets, monitoring reports, evaluation reports and whatever else helps us to understand how and why you spent public funds.

NGO's might also learn from Toyota's practice of really valuing the opinions of staff and clients.

Being transparent and valuing others' opinions, will lead to less cause for complaint or invoking of legal rights to enquire into your practices. We don't need more legislation, but that could become a reality if agencies do not voluntarily and meaningfully demonstrate that they are in business because they make a positive difference in the lives of poor people.

We would like to hear your opinion about my original question above.

Zia Choudhury,  
HAP-I Accountability Adviser

## CASE STUDY

### Beneficiary feedback tools in West Darfur

Medair began a modest health project in West Darfur back in 2001 which has expanded over the last 2 years into a multi million dollar emergency relief programme for 230,000 IDP's.

Despite the pressures and constraints of managing a relief programme, the Medair North Sudan team saw their situation as an opportunity to develop beneficiary feedback tools that could in turn be applied to other projects and programmes in Sudan.

A pilot study was initially conducted in 2 IDP camps in February 2005. The data obtained has helped to identify problem areas and assess the impact of interventions. Two tools were used – household questionnaires and patient voting.

#### Household Surveys:

Medair visited 104 households in 14 locations over the course of 5 weeks where the following basic questions were asked:

- Where do you get your water from?
- Are you happy about the time you are waiting to queue for water?
- Do you use a latrine?
- Did you get a visit from a hygiene promoter last month?
- Did you change any of your behaviours based on this visit?
- Do you feel that you are treated respectfully by the health clinic staff?
- Were you given an explanation of how to use the drugs?
- Would you attend the ante-natal clinic if you were pregnant but not sick?
- Would your neighbour attend the clinic if she was raped?

- Which of the services Medair provides do you consider to be the most important?
- To whom would you complain if you were not satisfied with the quality of the services that Medair provides?

Key issues identified from the quantitative data were: unsatisfactory waiting times at hand-pumps, low attendance rates for post rape care (because beneficiaries did not expect their visit to lead to legal justice) and wide variations between locations concerning hygiene promotion visits and its effectiveness. Medair was also able to discover problems in specific locations through the qualitative data obtained from follow-up questions.

#### Satisfaction Surveys In The Clinics (Patient Voting) :

When leaving a clinic, patients were asked to register their satisfaction level in three areas (1: staff conduct; 2: drug explanation; and 3: waiting time) by depositing a counter in containers with happy, neutral or unhappy faces.

Feedback was gathered from a sample of 768 patients in 10 clinics, and the satisfaction levels were:

- Staff conduct (87% happy, 9% neutral, 5% unhappy)
- Drug explanation (82% happy, 12% neutral, 6% unhappy)
- Waiting time (54% happy, 25% neutral, 21% unhappy)

The overall satisfaction ratings (a combination of all three areas) for the clinics ranged between 65-95%.

#### **Lessons learnt**

- The development and implementation of beneficiary feedback tools needs ongoing input and time to further test, adapt and improve. Creative solutions need to be found in order not to burden the team with too much additional work.
- Beneficiaries really appreciated the fact they were being asked for their opinion. This is a positive side effect that should not be overlooked as respect is being expressed and dignity restored.
- It was possible to discover valuable information and performance indicators for the programme in a fairly short amount of time.

Rebekka Meissner, Zachariah Ahmed Adam & Robert Schofield, Medair

## **RESEARCH**

People have asked me “what has research got to do with accountability to beneficiaries?” Is this just about looking for benchmarks and best practices? No, because I’m not going to listen to someone tell me about a case study and believe everything he or she may be saying. I need proof. This is where research design comes in. By building sound research, there is scientific rigor in proving that an emergency or relief project is accountable not only in process but in outcome. With this evidence, research can help projects to be better designed and executed. Projects will be more effective getting things done right the first time because they have really listened to the beneficiaries. In turn beneficiaries will have their needs met more effectively and they can then get on with their lives. It’s a win-win situation that we should all aspire to in humanitarian assistance. [For further information...](#)

Treena Wu  
Research and Communications Officer

## **STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT**

The need for an internationally recognised and accepted set of accountability and quality management standards with verifiable indicators has been recognised in the humanitarian sector for quite some time. HAP-International is now in the process of developing a “[Manual of Humanitarian Accountability](#)”, a process that will include the identification of good practices of accountability in humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, as well as verifiable indicators for the application of the accountability and quality management principles.

In order to create such a tool HAP-International is launching a consultative process, drawing on interested humanitarian workers, quality management standards specialists and committed senior managers, drawn both from HAP-International member agencies and other interested parties, who will form an [Accountability Reference Group](#). The Reference Group members will contribute to the development process through interaction via e-mail and telephone discussion, coupled with attending workshops planned for the production of the Manual. The first such workshop is planned for **10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> November 2005 in Geneva.**

Please contact Sheryl Haw,  
HAP-I Standard Development Manager  
for further information:  
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## UPDATE ON HAP ACTIVITIES

- [Monitoring and Capacity Building Mission in Liberia, 5-15 May, 2005](#)
- Serbian Refugee Council Visit 30<sup>th</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2005
- [Nicholas Stockton and Treena Wu carried out a monitoring visit in Aceh Indonesia from 4 – 18 July](#)

## MORE ON ACCOUNTABILITY...

- [Remarks by Mr António Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees](#)
- [Humanitarian Accountability: putting principles into practice - by Jan Egeland, June 2005](#)
- [Guide « Synergie et Qualité » : Propositions pour des interventions humanitaires de qualité \(French only\)](#)

### Useful Links include:

Key initiatives to promote quality and accountability in the humanitarian community:

[ALNAP](#)  
[HAP-I](#)  
[People In Aid](#)  
[Projet Qualité](#)  
[Sphere](#)  
[URD](#)

## DATES AND EVENTS:

- [HAP-I](#) and [ICVA](#) are co-organising a Debate on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005 ([MIEH2](#)), on the motion:

***"The Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative: Rhetoric or Reality?"***

Please confirm your participation by sending an email to:  
[secretariat@icva.ch](mailto:secretariat@icva.ch)

- Accountability Reference Group Workshop, [10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 05](#), Geneva

- [ALNAP](#) bi-annual Meeting, 9 & 10 December 2005, Brussels.

## HAP-I WEBSITE UPDATES...

Please check out the newly updated and exciting "[Programmes](#)" and "[Policies](#)" sections, which were recently reorganised!

Feedbacks to HAP-I website are very welcome and should be sent to:

[webmaster@hapinternational.org](mailto:webmaster@hapinternational.org)

## BEING HELD TO ACCOUNT...

In the last issue (Issue no 4), Zia Choudhury, HAP-I Accountability Advisor asked Directors from three of our Members: World Vision, CARE International and Oxfam GB:

*"Staff from all your agencies have expressed to HAP-I that one of the main reasons for their limited accountability to beneficiaries is due to the lack of resources to meaningfully participate with intended beneficiaries. For the Tsunami response, resources were not a constraint. Can you demonstrate that your accountability to beneficiaries has now significantly improved?"*

We would like to thank Ton van Zutphen, World Vision International's Director of Humanitarian Accountability, for his contribution:

*'As member of HAP-I we have from the very beginning of the response encouraged staff that was part of the support teams in the field, as well as the new Tsunami Response Team Office in Singapore to ensure that whenever feasible, discussions with affected communities took place during assessments and during the process of project planning. While we now know this has not been perfect certainly the message of communicating with beneficiaries has been a prominent one. I believe that to some extent many agencies share the problem of not having the right staff in situ to develop the accountability and quality agendas; not because funds are not available but more because of not being able to deploy the most qualified staff to start this specific work.'*

We welcome any feedback, questions, or useful links, articles, events and more. Please send all correspondence to:

[newsletter@hapinternational.org](mailto:newsletter@hapinternational.org)

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***Thanks and good reading,  
HAP-I Secretariat***

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