

## 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

### Approved Minutes

25-26 April 2007  
MIE2, Chemin de Balexert, Geneva

#### Present:

**Full Members:** Denis Caillaux – Chair and Jock Baker (Care International), Andreas Kamm -Treasurer (Danish Refugee Council), Ton van Zutphen and Madara Hettiarchchi (World Vision Int.), Jane Cocking (Oxfam GB), Mamadou Ndiaye (OFADEC), John Kennedy (Tearfund), John Farmer and Rob Schofield (Medair), Tim Aldred and Anthony Mahony (CAFOD), Paul Valentin and Juliet Parker (Christian Aid), Carly Sheehan (ACFID), Dominic Crowley (Concern Worldwide), Shareen Shariza Dato Abd Ghani (MERCY Malaysia), Paul Nesse (Norwegian Refugee Council), Jane Cocking (Oxfam GB), Amelia Bookstein (Save the Children UK).

**Independent Board Members:** Antonio Donini – Deputy Chair, Mary B. Anderson

**HAP Staff:** Nicholas Stockton, Zia Choudhury, Sheryl Haw, Jennifer Birdsall, Susanna Soderstrom, Barb Wigley, Radha Ivory, Katharina Samara-Wickrama, Emily Rogers, Monica Blagescu

**Guests:** Leonie Oates-Mercier and Sue Edgecombe (AusAID), Aldiouma Cissoko, Olivier Tayar, Smruti Patel and Andrew Lawday

**Apologies:** DFID, SIDA, MFA Ireland, MFA Netherlands, Danida

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#### 25 April (Day 1) – Chair: Denis Caillaux

##### 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone. Informal and candid discussion was encouraged.

##### 2. Introductions – expectations

All participants introduced themselves and outlined their expectations. Welcome to Mary B. Anderson, new independent Board member.

##### 3. Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

#### Approval

Page 2, 4<sup>th</sup> para:- Replace “HAP competes for attention...” with “Humanitarian accountability competes for attention....”

Page 3 4<sup>th</sup> para:- Replace “SCF” with “Save the Children UK.”

**Decision: Subject to these changes the minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly were approved.**

#### **Matters Arising**

1. The Secretariat reported that the 2005 Humanitarian Accountability Report had been modified to take account of changes and additions proposed by members. The final version had been signed-off by the Chair before going to the printers.
2. The Medium Term Strategic Plan had been revised to take account of comments by the General Assembly and Board. The final version (version 7, dated 8-06-2006) had been circulated with the draft agenda for the 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, and was also now posted on the HAP website.
3. It was noted that the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly had discussed the 2005 audit and that the Treasurer had recommended approval of the annual accounts, but that a formal vote to approval had been overlooked.

**Decision: The General Assembly therefore voted unanimously to accept the 2005 audit and to approve the 2005 accounts.**

#### **4. 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Agenda:**

1. World Vision expressed concern about the current tenure rules for board members as these would have the effect of nine<sup>1</sup> board members being obliged to stand down at the end of 2007. World Vision wondered whether this would be in the best interests of the organisation, given the unique institutional knowledge of those board members who had been involved in the Humanitarian Accountability Project and in the founding of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership in 2003.

Board members agreed to hold a discussion over lunch regarding options regarding board member tenure to put to the General Assembly for further consideration.

2. The draft agenda was rearranged to enable the chair to be present for item 5. With these changes, the draft agenda was adopted.

#### **6. (a) 2006 Member Reports**

##### **1. CARE**

CARE's work has focussed upon the accountability principles. The development of the new AWP was delayed until both the standard and the implementation guides are ready. The range of accountability networks CARE is engaging with was emphasised. The distinction between relief and development aspects of their work is still an issue that limits the applicability of the HAP principles in CARE's operations. CARE is conducting a study regarding the benchmarks and so far they have found that at field level, they are used and relevant, although the agency needs to improve communication regarding the standards. CARE plans to conduct training on the ECB Good Enough Guide as a means to promote knowledge of the HAP principles. It was noted that Strategic Direction 1 in the CARE plan is about accountability, and that CARE is planning to develop a common accountability framework and does not yet have a Humanitarian Accountability Framework.

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<sup>1</sup> It was later clarified by the Secretariat that only 4 sitting members would have been obliged to stand-down at the end of their second term in November 2007.

## **2. World Vision**

WVI's second progress report had been recently submitted. The institutional commitment to promoting accountability to beneficiaries throughout the organisation is seen as difficult in a large and diverse organisation such as WVI. Accountability to donors has improved. The organisation has committed itself to developing a set of global minimum standards that will be linked to emergency, development, advocacy and policy work and will be tested in a year's time.

Challenges include the diversity and decentralisation of the organisation. WVI is happy to share their internal document on the process of certification. They plan to participate in certification through certifying specific units and programmes, but are not yet clear as to what level and to what standard, and if it is possible to certify WVI against the HAP standard.

The Assembly discussed the complexity of the certification process in a large organisation and the point was made that the process aims to help organisations to improve from wherever they are. The cost and difficulty will depend upon where the organisation is in the first place and the changes required may not be that great in organisations that are already some way along the road.

## **3. Tearfund**

Tearfund has used its strategic review as an opportunity to weave accountability into the wider work of the organisation, with a focus upon making it practical at the field level. A number of field examples and case studies were presented. Tearfund has found that partners and local staff tend to accept the processes of accountability as given and not as extra work, whereas expatriate staff often believe it to be a major additional burden. It was stressed that complying with the standard is more of a paradigm shift than a lot of extra work, with an aim to get communities engaged rather than just "to get the project done". There is a need to look more widely and creatively to engage with local communities and promote the concept of accountability to beneficiaries so that they know how to hold humanitarian organisations to account. Tearfund's AWP has not been revised since 2005. The assembly noted the enthusiasm and effectiveness of many Tearfund staff and that the quality of the AWP can be seen throughout their programmes.

## **4. Oxfam GB**

Oxfam GB is mainstreaming accountability throughout all of their activities, increasing organisational acceptance and influencing programme work on the ground. A range of activities and programmes were presented. Oxfam developed their own definition of accountability to people affected by crisis: *"Accountability to people affected by crisis means putting them at the heart of what we do and prioritising their needs above those of other stakeholders."*

Increased organisational buy in on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse has meant that it is accepted as applicable to all the roles at Oxfam and not just in emergencies. Other internal initiatives include rewriting policy and the work plan, and further developing humanitarian accountability "work leads" or accountability officers. Challenges have included ability to link accountability reporting with other internal initiatives to improve evaluations.

## **5. OFADEC**

Institutional commitment to accountability includes regular meetings to share information and hold discussions with staff and beneficiary representatives. OFADEC has integrated commitments into their work, including improving the mission statement and making suggestions for changes to the statute. Beneficiary representatives are elected and have a focal point in accountability and complaints.

The field test was useful and highlighted that the Humanitarian Accountability Framework and Complaints-handling system were weak. OFADEC used the One World Trust framework and HAP support to develop their complaints-handling system. The complaints handling committee includes staff and refugees, and mobile boxes, mobile phones and email are used.

OFADEC staff were given the option to go for certification and after the field test and discussions they decided to do so. The challenge is how to maintain accountability now that certification has been achieved, which requires resources to meet the increasing demands and awareness of beneficiaries. Different initiatives need to be linked to avoid multiple certification processes.

## **6. MERCY Malaysia.**

MERCY Malaysia has worked with a range of corporate partners to assist in their organisational development. Challenges include understanding the requirements of HAP Benchmarks, time constraints, and a lack of guidance in structuring information for the HAP baseline analysis. Lessons learned include that developing an accountability framework requires time and commitment, and that the work plan should be in phases with achievable targets and timeframe. MERCY Malaysia manages the challenge of working with volunteers by treating them the same as paid staff. MERCY Malaysia has now decided to apply for HAP certification and hopes to complete this by mid 2007.

## **7. Medair**

Accountability has been woven into corporate planning, and the accountability work plan is now referred to in the corporate objective on beneficiary accountability. Highlights presented include training and briefing conducted at HQ level, engagement with the ECB Project, Medair case studies used in the Good Enough Guide, and Medair providing support to the HAP Secretariat in the standard development process. Challenges include identifying beneficiary champions to act as catalysts to mainstream accountability into line management, managing knowledge loss through staff turnover, building confidence in talking about accountability, achieving consistency across programmes, and managing competing demands upon time. Lessons were learned regarding the importance both of case studies in disseminating learning and of donor interest in driving the field. Accountability is more easily incorporated at the beginning of operations.

Medair has no plans to seek HAP certification, as they are already ISO 9000 certified and are not sure it is advantageous to do both. The Secretariat expressed the view that the HAP certification scheme is more rigorous as it extends to partners, that audits also examine field practices and that beneficiaries are consulted, while conceding that the brand value of HAP certification needs to be strengthened before the agency will enjoy additional market benefits.

## **8. Concern Worldwide**

Concern is one a recent member. The accountability principles are felt to fit well with Concern's existing core principles and they have accountability incorporated into existing policies, plans and strategic plans. Concern would aim to integrate additional strategies into existing structures. Attention will be paid both to increasing accountability in rapid onset emergencies, and in development contexts. HAP certification will be considered.

## **7. Proposals for retaining institutional memory at the Board**

The chair reported back on the discussions held by some board members at lunch time regarding Board tenure and the concern regarding loss of institutional memory. Three options were proposed, with those consulted on the board recommending option 1.

1. Remove tenure limits and use regular elections to create turnover.
  2. Renew only half of the board at a time.
  3. Extend the electoral mandate beyond the current maximum of two by two year terms.
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## **26 April (Day 2) – Chair: Antonio Donini**

### **6. (b) Member Reports Continued**

#### **9. Christian Aid**

Christian Aid made the decision to join HAP due to their commitment to accountability. They had reservations about what it would mean for agencies working via partners, for example, how to fit in with the framework if not operational and how to promote accountability in partners. They have not yet decided to pursue certification and emphasise that they do not want certification to become the primary focus of their work. Concerns include that “the bar” should not be set too high or create a system of elites who have the capacity to become certified over less well resourced partners. Christian Aid wish to make links between accountability initiatives and not look at each as separate. Want to demonstrate commitment to HAP to partners through practice and principles. The main focus of the humanitarian team is partner liaison and capacity building. Challenges include increasing interaction with partners to ensure a chain of accountability from the agency through to beneficiaries, putting the principles in practice, and managing diverse politics, risks and limited capacity in many countries of operation.

Ethical and practical issues of promoting accountability in other organisations were discussed. It was suggested that care must be taken to allow for partner autonomy and for disagreement, however for Christian Aid, financial accountability is a non-negotiable requirement.

#### **10. Save the Children UK**

A number of Save UK evaluation initiatives were presented and discussed. Their aim is to extend sharing of lessons learnt and evaluations. Save piloted a child-led review in Yogyakarta, asking children how they would hold Save to account and what indicators they would like to use. HAP principles are being incorporated into the Standard Operating Procedures and are well integrated in induction of new staff. Save is challenged by the range of accountability initiatives at the moment and effective communication of their commitments to various initiatives to country offices. Development of Humanitarian Accountability framework will help reduce the confusion between different initiatives. Save is considering certification but is concerned about the demands that this might place upon the organisation. Save has not as yet produced an AWP.

#### **11. CAFOD**

Progress in accountability has included; participation in standards development, strengthened financial controls including new whistle-blowing and fraud policy and improved audit function and financial induction, an internal audit that is also looking at how CAFOD is meeting Sphere, HAP and other standards, improved awareness and integration of accountability and participation across systems, and work with NSPPC and BSO to improve existing child protection policy. However, CAFOD has not yet completed an AWP. Challenges presented include the issue of applying HAP standards when working through partners, and particularly when the partnership may be minimal and therefore influence is low. CAFOD questions to what degree the standards are tools of empowerment and to what degree they are perceived as an imposition, or exclude national organisations and staff from being part of the humanitarian sector. Issues for CAFOD to work though: accountability and partnership issue, reflection on statement of principles within CAFOD, resource implications, and proliferation of accountability initiatives and where to situate

organisation in relation to these. A new working group on accountability will focus on the different initiatives and will specifically look at HAP and CAFOD's position with regard to certification.

The general discussion pointed out that HAP membership is entirely voluntary and that certification is not a requirement of membership, although the preparation of an AWP and reporting and monitoring of its implementation is obligatory.

## **12. ACFID**

ACFID's application for full membership was approved in the week before the GA. ACFID engages with HAP on behalf of their 70 member Australian NGOs. They have applied for funding from AusAID for the promotion of the standard and benefits of HAP membership, and further work on establishing their own accreditation system and capacity to conduct certifications. Promote HAP on their website and on email bulletins to raise awareness, keep expert humanitarian working group informed. The HAP Director's recent visit to ACFID members raised the profile and commitment to HAP among NGOs in Australia.

### **Members reports: discussion**

The assembly reflected upon how best to benefit from what each member has learnt and how to manage presentations in the future as HAP membership grows. Suggestions included:

- 1) Organisations present on alternate years
- 2) Break into small working groups to present, analyse and discuss, and then pull out themes to report back to large group

***Decision: that the General Assembly would follow the second option in 2008.***

It was also suggested that the GA could emphasise particular themes for presentations each year.

## **7. HAP Secretariat Annual Report**

The draft Annual Report was distributed on the 13 April. A brief summary was provided as follows:

Financial and HAP Secretariat report: Nicholas Stockton (HAP Director)  
2006 Humanitarian Accountability Review: Andrew Lawday (independent consultant)  
Member Services: Zia Choudhury (Member Services Coordinator)  
HAP standard and Certification: Sheryl Haw (Standard Development Manager)  
Building Safer Organisations: Radha Ivory (BSO Programme Assistant)

Since sending the draft annual report to the GA, the financial report had been finalised, and the revised version of this was distributed.

***Decision: ACFID proposed that the 2006 audit be accepted and the 2006 accounts be approved. The General Assembly approved the motion unanimously***

Discussion regarding the "Clinton Initiative". Fears were expressed that this may lead to further confusion and proliferation of standards. One solution suggested was to draw them into existing networks through outreach. There is some evidence that the intention is to bring initiatives together rather than create something new.

Andrew Lawday presented Section 1 of the 2006 Annual Report: "Humanitarian Accountability in 2006." Due to time constraints, discussion was curtailed, however some members expressed concern about the content and tone of the report which was deemed to be unfairly negative.

***Decision: Formal feedback on the report should be submitted to the Secretariat by May 4. The Secretariat will then revise the report for a second reading by the Chair before going to the printers. If there is substantive disagreement on the revised text, it will go back to the board for further discussion.***

## **8. Review of Statutes<sup>2</sup>**

### **i). Duration of Board members electoral mandates**

Three options were considered:

1. No Time Limit: Remove all time frames of mandates and have an annual election for all board
2. Half Renewal Option: Allow for half of the Board to have an extension to help stagger turn over
3. Limit HAP Board membership to 3 consecutive mandates of 2 years each.

***Decision: Option 3 was adopted by the General Assembly. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a revision of the Statute for final approval by the 2008 General Assembly. The Board was asked to articulate a policy on succession management so that institutional memory is not lost.***

### **ii). Good Humanitarian Donors – a seat on the HAP Board**

The Secretariat tabled a proposal to create a seat on the board for a representative of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. Some members opposed the proposal as this might compromise the independence of HAP. The Chair supported HAP's strategic plan to develop a closer relationship with the Good Donorship Initiative, perhaps through encouraging donors to join HAP as Associate Members. (No vote was taken on the Secretariat proposal).

### **iii). Proposed changes to create Certified Member category**

The Secretariat tabled a proposal to create a new category of membership for agencies certified by HAP. Some members opposed the idea of creating a new category, but agreed that HAP certified non-member agencies should not be required to complete the full membership application procedure if they wish to join as a full member.

***Decision: The Chair requested the Secretariat to draft an amendment to the statutes to enable certified agencies to become full members on request. This should be submitted to the 2008 General Assembly for approval.***

### **iv). Proposed changes to create Certification and Accreditation Review Board (CARB)**

The Secretariat tabled a proposal to create a Certification and Accreditation Review Board to oversee the HAP certification scheme. While there was support for the proposal, some members expressed concern about the composition of the CARB. The Chair expressed the view that the Chair rather than the Vice-Chair should lead the CARB. The Chair also proposed that the majority of the members of CARB should be "eminent persons of impeccable credentials". (No vote was taken on the proposal)

### **v). Members position on Certification/Workplan**

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<sup>2</sup> The Chair wrote to the participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly on 30 April 2007 with a summary of his understanding of the conclusions reached, and asked participants to review these. The Secretariat is not aware of any feedback sent to the Chair and therefore the formal minutes of decisions taken are largely based upon the Chair's communication.

The Secretariat tabled a proposal to circulate a questionnaire to clarify the member position on certification to enable the Secretariat to better assess demand for certification or AWP support services. The results should be communicated to HAP members.

**9. Date of next meeting**

**Decision: It was agreed that the date of the next General Assembly would be 23-24 April 2008**

**10. Any other business**

There being no further business tabled, the Chair closed the meeting at 17.15

**These minutes are a fair and accurate record of the 5<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and have been approved by the 6<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.**

Signed:

Chair:

Date:

Vice-Chair:

Date:

Treasurer:

Date: