

HAP International Newsletter

HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Issue no. 1

This *HAP International* Newsletter is the first of its kind and we hope that many more will follow. The main objective of the newsletters will be to update you on the activities undertaken or planned by *HAP International*.

In this first issue we would like to give you a brief overview of the work that has been done leading to the establishment of the *HAP International*, and the steps envisioned over the next six months or so.

THE HUMANITARIAN ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

The humanitarian accountability project was set up in February 2001 in Geneva to respond to concerns among humanitarian organisations about the lack of accountability towards crisis-affected populations. Its mandate: to identify, test and recommend accountability mechanisms.

From 2001 to 2003, some 70 staff and consultants have worked to fulfil this mandate and to establish a permanent accountability mechanism.

Donors and Field Support Agencies: AusAID, DANIDA, DFID, Ford Foundation, Norwegian MFA, British Red Cross, CARE International, World Vision, DRC / DACAAR, IFRC, Oxfam GB.

Field trial activities: three models tested

The humanitarian accountability project carried out three field operations of 3 to 6 months each to test various approaches to field-level accountability. (Field reports and evaluations are available on our website.)

In **Sierra Leone**, we tested the feasibility of a 'trouble-shooter' or 'constable' mechanism. We investigated a number of accountability issues, and provided rapid redress by directly approaching beneficiaries and agencies.

We did succeed in identifying and bringing up solutions or redress to problems or concerns. But our impact did not extend beyond the beneficiaries concerned nor did it allow for sustainable institutional change within the participating agencies.

In **Afghanistan**, the humanitarian accountability project opted for an accountability catalyst approach with a monitoring and facilitation function. Through monitoring, we independently identified issues of concerns to beneficiaries. We also built the credibility and legitimacy of our work and the project. The facilitation function was successful but needs and demands were greater. Agencies wanted technical and strategic support for accountability in order to implement institutional change.

The approach used for the last field trial was the outcome of the lessons learned from the two previous trials: in **Cambodia** the humanitarian accountability project acted as a monitoring and technical support agency. We worked *together* with volunteer agencies to monitor and respond to beneficiaries' concerns, assess organisational practices, provide accountability training, and identify a Cambodia-based permanent accountability mechanism.

The Cambodia Field Trial demonstrated the added value of the monitoring and technical support model, and its potentials for sustainability. Agencies welcomed our monitoring work, coupled with active learning, and have taken steps to implement accountability recommendations. The Cambodia trial also confirmed the rights based approach adopted throughout.

Sample of other activities

- Field Studies in Gujarat and Northern Kenya
- Research on the accountable organisation through case studies of 5 organisations and initiatives
- Research on the legal obligations of humanitarian actors
- Research on medical ethics and humanitarian work
- Research on how other professional sectors have addressed accountability
- Dissemination of user-friendly messages and documents
- Organisation and participation to seminars and conferences
- Setting up of a Drafting Committee to review findings and develop the constitution of the permanent accountability mechanism.

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CONFERENCE IN COPENHAGEN

The humanitarian accountability project, in partnership with Danida, organised a conference on 19-20 February. Our findings and recommendations were reviewed and debated, along with other accountability initiatives such as: protection of girls and women in Sierra Leone, accreditation system in the US, UNHCR investigation of sexual exploitation, etc. This Conference was very successful thanks to the richness and the diversity of the presentations. Many speakers and participants gave words of support for the proposal to set up *HAP International*. (Proceedings are available on our website)

SETTING UP HAP INTERNATIONAL

A fundamental conclusion to emerge from our work is that accountability will best be strengthened and implemented through the creation of a strong international self-regulatory body that will insist on monitoring and compliance, while providing strategic and technical support to member agencies.

This proposal was endorsed by the CEOs of fourteen humanitarian agencies who met in January 2003 to review our findings and recommendations. The Constitution for HAP International was also adopted (available on our website).

On March 67, we held our first transitional board meeting. The successor to the project was officially named *HAP International*, with HAP standing for: Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.

THE INITIATORS OF HAP INTERNATIONAL INCLUDE:

British Red Cross, CARE International, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (Cafod), Caritas Internationalis, Danida, the Danish Refugee Council, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Rescue Committee, Medair, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Office Africain pour le Développement et la Coopération (OFADEC), Oxfam GB, Sierra Leone Assembly of NGO's (Slango), Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and World Vision International.

Since then, a number of legal and administrative steps have been taken to move from a project status to an independent Swiss-based NGO.

HAP INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

HAP International develops, implements and monitors accountability principles and policies through:

- **Capacity-building:** training, active learning, workshops, organisational assessment on accountability, etc.
- **Research on accountability tools and mechanisms:** Guidelines on the development and implementation of accountability work plans, development of an accountability tool box, etc.
- **Promotion and advocacy on accountability.**
- **Monitoring practices and policies in the field and at headquarters,** reviewing member agencies accountability work plans and their annual reports on progress made.
- **Reviewing complaints and identifying remedies with member agencies.**
- **Peer accrediting:** Developing and implementing a peer accreditation system.

The first Board and General Assembly meeting will take place on **11-12 December 2003**.

IN CONCLUSION...

The launch of the *HAP International* is the culmination of several years of work within the humanitarian relief community to strengthen the quality and performance of its activities.

The international environment has certainly made us more committed than ever to ensure that the mission articulated by the HAP Board and *HAP International* is fully implemented: *to achieve and promote the highest standards of accountability, through self-regulation by members linked by common respect for the rights and dignity of crisis-affected individuals and community.*

All documents are available on HAP International website:
www.hapgeneva.org

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