

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International

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Accountability and Quality Management Standards Planning Meeting Report

Thursday 10th November 2005

A number of crucial missing elements that led to the postponement of the planned November workshop needed to be addressed. Using the momentum gained by the build up to the workshop, HAP International decided to organise and run a planning meeting to assist in working through these outstanding issues. Participants invited were from the HAP-I members and associate members as well as a few guests and donors who were asked to share their insights.

Participants

26 participants were able to attend, along with 5 facilitators and 5 HAP-I staff, making a total of 36.

Format and Agenda

The meeting was divided into two objectives:

- Ensuring a clearer understanding for HAP International members on the mandate and rationale that underpins the process we are currently embarking on in developing accountability standards and indicators. This was undertaken through presentation of information in a plenary session, inviting questions and clarification from the participants.
- To design and agree a process for the development of the HAP-I Accountability and Quality Management Manual that will maximise members' ownership and support, ensure meaningful beneficiary, donor and humanitarian managers' participation, and achieve wider recognition and support for HAP-International and its mission. This was undertaken through 4 working groups, using the structure developed for covering the 4 main areas identified for assisting in developing standards and indicators of accountability.

The meeting closed with a report back from the working groups and an opportunity for the participants to feedback their overall questions, insights and opinions not only from the day but also for the standards development process launched by HAP-I

Executive Summary of Outcomes

No.	Outcome / Conclusion	Action Required
1	The standards development project is widely supported and is acknowledged to have great potential for improving the quality of humanitarian action.	Improved communications with HAP-I's partners to clarify project strategy, ensure ownership and secure participation.
2	It is recognised that the many factors contribute to the complexity of the project and that managing the linkages with other initiatives will be critical to the success of this project.	Complementarity and cooperation with other quality and accountability initiatives needs to be strengthened. We should aim to deliver a product that is "good enough", rather than fail in seeking perfection
3	Development of a stakeholder strategy was seen as essential, ensuring meaningful participation is guaranteed at all stages of the project	Further development of a detailed and achievable stakeholder engagement strategy
4	The general structure / framework of the 4 main working groups was endorsed: 1. Scope 2. Good Practices 3. Business Case 4. Implementation	The proposed approach of the "Good Practices" working group needs re-thinking. Leaders for each group need to be identified
5	There was a strong confirmation that beneficiary engagement at all stages is essential.	A practical plan for the participation of beneficiaries both in the management of the project/ process and in the

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		substantive work itself.
6	The general consensus was to define a realistic process that concentrates foremost on committed members and other supportive parties	Further consultation with the heads of partner agencies is required to confirm strategic support, assign leadership roles and commit to participation in the field trials.
7	Humanitarian quality management is more than a technical fix for the accountability "problem", it is a movement to address the imbalance of power between aid providers and aid recipients.	An "accountability campaign" is needed to help prepare for the launch of the Manual and the certification system.

Full Report of Planning Meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

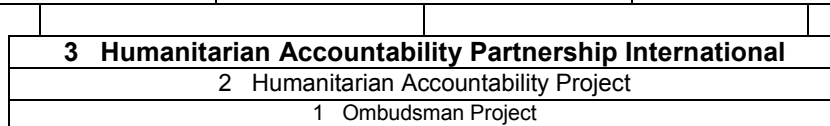
Participants were welcomed by Sheryl Haw, the HAP-I Standards Development Manager. Introductions were made and Patricia Lustig, the lead facilitator, took the group through a process of identifying needs and expectations for the day.

2. Review and Confirm Process Purpose

Nicholas Stockton, the Director of HAP-I presented an in-depth explanation of the standards development process that HAP-I has embarked on:

History

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAP-International's founders adopted a definition of accountability that is rooted in an analysis of asymmetrical power relations between aid beneficiaries and aid agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The founders determined to address this through a process of collective self-regulation – developing standards and indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A key tool envisaged by the founders was to be a system of accreditation that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Voluntary – Affordable
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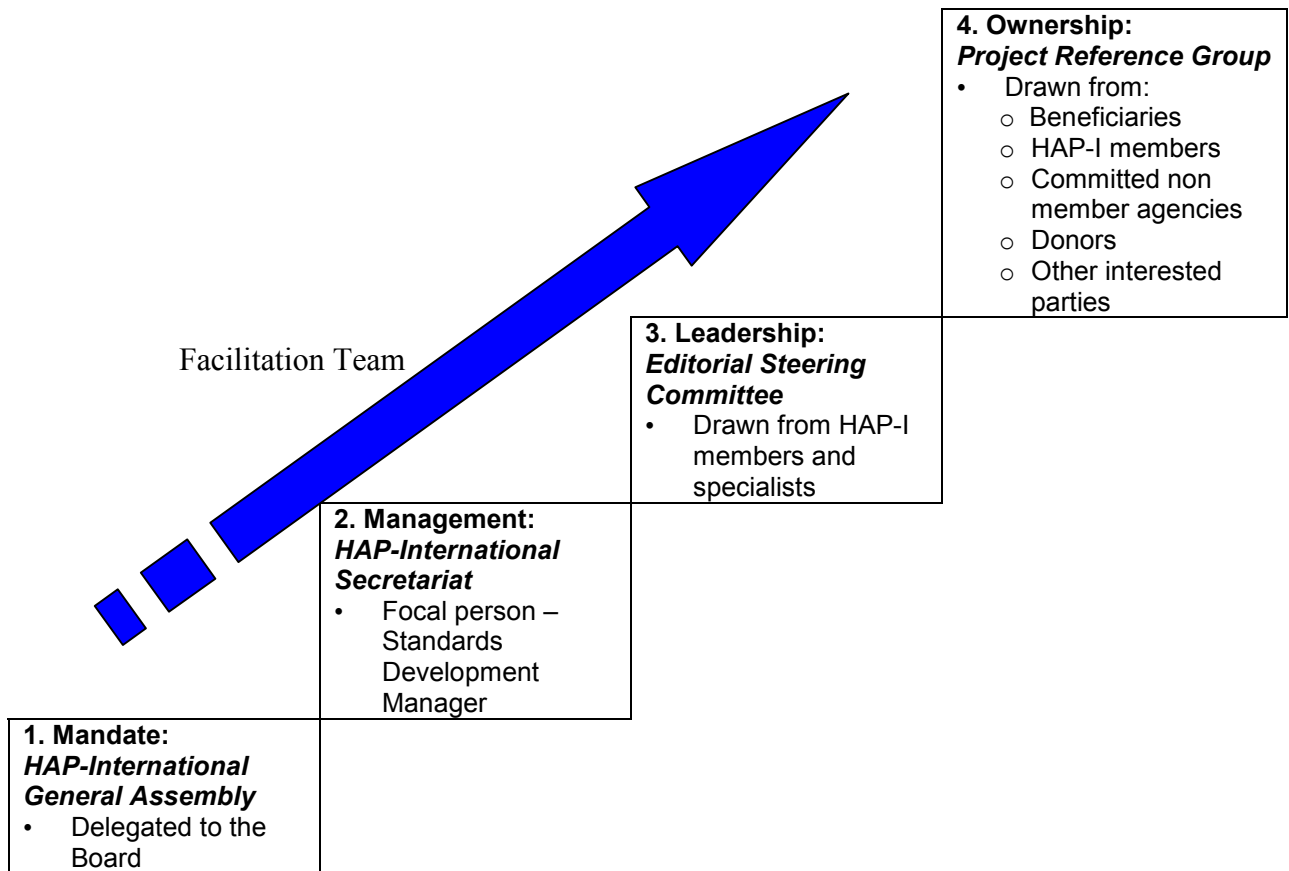
Objectives for the Accountability & Quality Management Standards Project

1. Identify good practices of accountability and quality management for humanitarian action
2. Identify cost-effective (proxy) indicators of accountability and quality management
3. Design and test methods of accountability and quality management validation. (Certification)
4. Propose a method for HAP-International Quality Management Accreditation/Certification
5. Publish the HAP-International Accountability and Quality Management Manual.

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Legitimacy and Authority Structure for the Standards Project



3. Standards Development Process Update

a. Structure

At a planning meeting held on the 17th August this year along with consultations held within the secretariat, an initial framework was drafted to help establish clarity on how we were going to tackle the different aspects needing to be addressed. This structure has been sent out on the 5th September to the Board of HAP-I, to all HAP-I members and those who have put their names forward to be on the Reference Group.

The structure and rationale suggested was presented as follows:

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Working Group	Title	Objective	Target Participants	Rationale
One	Scope	Review / revise Accountability Principles – esp. articles 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members • CEOs • Senior management • Beneficiaries • Donors 	Clarify and possibly rewrite Principles 1 & 2 to capture the values fostered in humanitarian aid
Two	Good Practices	To define both generic and sector specific standards and indicators which outline an accountable and quality management framework which will support a process of validation / certification for quality assurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAP-I members • Commitment non member agencies • Beneficiaries • Donors • Host governments • Managers from both head office and field sites • Technical specialists 	<p>Specify what good quality management and accountability practices look like.</p> <p>Identify appropriate indicators for use in monitoring compliance.</p> <p>Note: tentative sub groups were suggested to aid this process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Governance Resource management Project cycle management Information & complaints mechanisms
Three	Business case	To examine the empirical case for accountability and quality codes. This may extend to the use of cost-benefit analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E Specialists • Researchers • Standards specialists • Beneficiary representatives • Donors 	<p>Seeking to confirm the “value added” in suing indicators and in developing a validation process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse and report on the “business cases” for quality management and quality assurance (certification and accreditation) and other implementation strategies Inform the deliberations of Working Groups 1, 2 and 4
Four	Implementation	To outline an implementation strategy for the promotion of the accountability and quality management standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and Accountability organisations • Standards specialists • Beneficiary representatives • Donors 	<p>To plan and implement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of manual and certification process Plan a strategy to address roll out needs.

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b. Process

Reference Group

A brief update was given on how the Reference Group was developing since invitations were sent out from the 3rd August 2005.

Total participants as of 10th November 2005: 166
Number of Agencies / organisations involved: 67

Task of the Reference Group Outlined:

1. To bring and share their expertise, skill and knowledge in a consultative way that supports accountability and quality management to the beneficiary and other stakeholders.
2. To commit to giving feedback, input and support of the entire process.
3. To be willing to host field trials of the standards and indicators being developed.
4. Where needed and possible to host discussion groups and consultation with a wider group of actors in their sphere of contact with regards the process and the progress.
5. To promote accountability and quality management as a vital part of humanitarian aid.

Concerns Raised by Standards Development Manager (SDM) Sheryl Haw:

1. **No beneficiary participation as of yet.** Participants were given a brief article that suggested ways of ensuring engagement and encouraged HAP-I members to work out a plan with the HAP-I secretariat to ensure beneficiaries within their project reach were not only reached but fully engaged in all aspect of the standards development process.
2. **Level of member involvement:** Of the 166 participants on the current Reference Group list only 47 were from HAP-I members. This is only 28% of participants. As the standards development process is primarily, for HAP-I members it is felt that there should be a significantly higher number of members engaging in the process. Members were encouraged to work on a strategy that best suited their agency style and that ensured decentralization and information flow throughout their agency to all those who should be involved.
3. **Leadership:** In order to management and steer the standards development process a number of key leaders need to be identified to act as both focal points for the specified working groups and as initiators / drafters of the standards and indicators. Each working group was asked to consider appropriate people to be considered and a list of competencies were handed out to help in this process.
4. **Southern Agency Involvement:** At present only one Southern agency was involved. Members were requested to use their networks to inform and invite southern agencies to be involved.
5. **Ratio of head office to field managers:** At present there are a good number of managers based in head offices involved in the standards development process. However, it was pointed out that both field and head office managers are needed, with a greater level of engagement required at field level as it is the field line managers who are the main implementers of good practice that directly impacts beneficiaries.
6. **Increased donor participation:** Only one donor was able to attend the planning meeting (many thanks to SDC – Christophe Jakob). Ensuring further engagement is important to ensure all stakeholders have had the opportunity to be involved in the all aspects of standards development process.

Steps to be taken in developing standards and indicators

1. Identify and agree on relevant and critical standards and indicators for good accountability and quality management practices
2. Clarify the means of verification of these indicators
3. Test them thoroughly in field situations
4. Gain member agreement, acceptance and ownership of the process and outcome.
5. Develop international recognition.

4. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Patricia Lustig led a brief explanation of:

- Clarification of current position of the standards development process – *"Connect and build relationships"*. A change management model was used to help underline that the process we were embarking on involved significant change in the aid sector. Such a process required appropriate time to be used to ensure as many as possible were informed and on board at each stage of the cycle.

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- Strategy for identifying and engaging various key stakeholders.

5. Working Groups

Participants broke into the 4 working groups for a two and half hour brainstorm period. Below is a summary of the main outcomes and actions suggested by each group:

Working Group One – Scope

Agreement: The participants unanimously agreed that an attempt to draft a “Humanitarian Accountability Covenant” in which “humanitarian values” are drawn out and then used to inform accountability principles which in turn inform good practices.

Rationale: Below are the first two principles taken from the HAP International Accountability Principles:

1. Respect and promote the rights of legitimate humanitarian claimants
Commitment to humanitarian standards and rights

Members state their commitment to respect and foster humanitarian standards and the rights of beneficiaries

2. State the standards that apply in their humanitarian assistance work
Setting standards and building capacity

Members set a framework of **accountability**¹ to their stakeholders

Members set and periodically review their standards and performance indicators, and revise them if necessary.

Members provide appropriate training in the use and implementation of standards.

¹ *Framework of accountability includes standards, quality standards, principles, policies, guidelines, training and other capacity-building work, etc. The framework must include measurable performance indicators. Standards may be internal to the organisation or they may be collective, e.g. Sphere or People in Aid.*

The Accountability Principles do not go on to specify exactly what these “humanitarian standards” are, nor what “rights” beneficiaries are believed by HAP-International members to have. The only guidance offered about what this framework might contain is in a footnote to the authorised version shown above.

As we attempt to draft accountability standards and indicators we need to establish clearly what this involves and what members will be held accountable for. The implication taken from the footnote implies that this would mean HAP-I developing indicators and a compliance system for quality initiatives such as Sphere and People In Aid, is considered unrealistic. However, a more realistic and appropriate way forward would be to answer the question of *which standards* and *rights* we mean by digging one step deeper and establishing what are the humanitarian accountability values that would underpin standards, principles, codes and in turn good practices.

Actions to Achieve Tasks

No.	Activity	Time Frame
1	Meet with CEOs of members and present rationale	November / December 2005
2	Pre draft document / covenant – share with members • Full stakeholder involvement through creation of a working team to help draft document	January 2006
3	Reference group consultation – share draft with Reference Group	February / march 2006

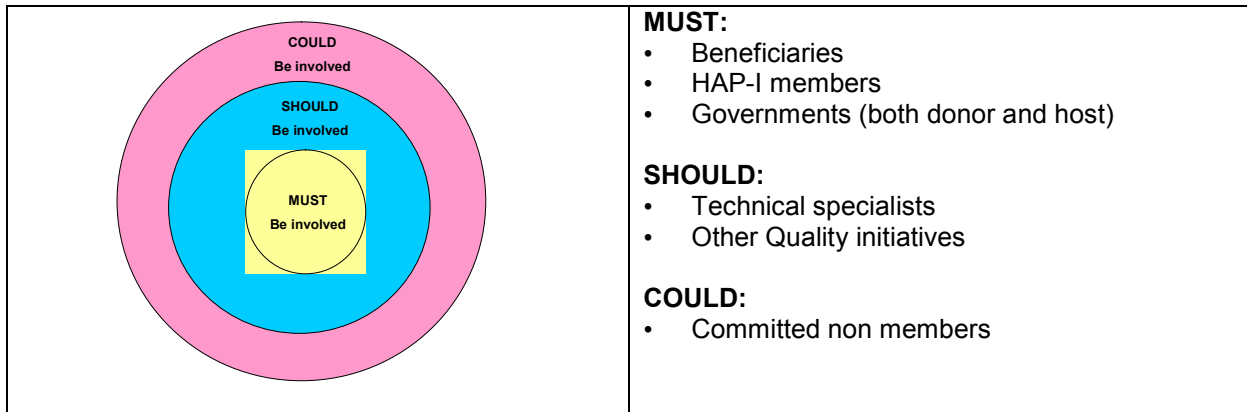
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Working Group 2 – Good Practices

Stakeholder Strategy

The group identified levels of engagement and listed which stakeholders were necessary per each group to ensure fruitful and meaningful outcome:



Structure

The 4 suggested sub groups were discussed:

- a. Governance / management responsibilities
For example:
 - Management system in accordance with the requirements of the mandate / charter / principles / statutes of the organisation (international standard?)
 - Need to be able to demonstrate our ability to consistently provide aid that meets the needs of the beneficiary in line with applicable regulatory requirements
 - Commitment of Boards and senior management
 - Senior management to provide evidence of its commitment to the development quality management and accountability system
- b. Resource management
 - Provision: What is needed to implement and maintain the management system and continually improve its effectiveness so as to enhance beneficiary satisfaction by meeting their requirements. This would be viewed in:
 - Finance management
 - Human Resource management
 - Supply / logistics management
- c. Project cycle / operational management
 - Using the *Plan - Do – Evaluate – Improve* cycle to establish a process to draw out the standards and indicators
- d. Information and complaints mechanism

The consensus from the participants of the working group was to use the project cycle as the framework to tackle the standards development process. Inclusion of the topic of “empowerment” was highlighted. Oneworldtrust offered to share their recent drafted outline with HAP-I.

Point of Note – Quality Management / Accountability Discussion

There was general concern raised as to why “Quality Management” was added to the title of the project alongside “Accountability Standards”. Due to time constraints a full explanation and background evolution was not expanded. However, in each participant’s info pack handed out at the start of the planning meeting a document entitled “*Accreditation – The Way Forward*” was included which outlines why quality management is alongside Accountability. Accountability (or the lack of it) has been viewed as the problem and hence when addressed tends to elicit and defensive reaction. To re focus our attention of the solution, which we believe to be quality management, we feel we will be able to apply practical approaches and tested solutions that support managers in their striving for greater accountability.

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Process: Drafting the Accountability Standards Manual

The following steps were highlighted during the works group discussions:

No.	Activity	Time Frame
1	Re draft and agree structure	URGENT
2	Prepare a plan and define chunks of work to be done	Based on structure
3	List and contact all those to be involved	Reference Group + ensuring stakeholders as per MUST; SHOULD and COULD outline.
4	Draft a communication plan	Informed by stakeholder list
5	Select people to lead and write standards & indicators	Based on structure / chunks of work
6	Cross reference other accountability and quality initiatives	In progress
7	Prepare focus groups	Through members
8	Write standards and indicators	With leaders
9	Prepare and sort out field testing sites	March to September 2006
10	Prepare draft for field tests	March 2006
11	Finalise draft manual	December 2006

Working Group 3 – Business case

The working group came to an agreement on the need for:

- Making a “case” (Business case) for developing standards and a certification process
- Developing a process that informed deliverables of group 1,2 and 4 in a clear and transparent way. The process should:
 - Show the effectiveness of the process
 - Highlights the benefits of accreditation
 - Evaluates the standards and indicators alongside specific criteria and allows for an approval / revision process accordingly

Process

No.	Activity	Time Frame
1	Draft a set of criteria to evaluate standards drafted and to even see whether to test them or not. If they don't meet the criteria, they should not even be field tested.	February 2006
2	Test and review standards	Over 6 months from when field trails start
3	Select appropriate group of people to take part in the criteria drafting and the analysis of field trials. Example – made of Finance directors, specialists, M&E specialists, beneficiaries and donors.	ASAP – Research Officer to be consulted

Working Group 4 - Implementation

There are two sections in this working group:

- a. Marketing and production of the manual
- b. Roll out and up take of the manual (includes utilisation strategy of the standards and management of the certification / validation process)

Comments noted during discussion:

- Development of a communication strategy is most important for this group. Pre launch and post launch. Those involved with the development of the handbook need to be closely involved with developing communication strategy.
- A flyer for the handbook should be drafted to ensure absolute clarity of the marketing message.
- Communication with beneficiaries with regards to the manual and the standards which they should hold us accountable to is important. Simple methods and materials for explaining the process to beneficiaries should be developed - different strategies for different stages of the process.
- The members need to be leading and focusing on marketing the idea to beneficiaries and staff. They need a marketing strategy for beneficiaries.

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- HAP-I should communicate and market to all the people who influence Agency Managers. (Academia, universities, NGO senior governance, donors).
- The accountability concept (importance, value etc) as well as the manual should be marketed.

Example of Push / Pull Model

Push: training courses, manual

Pull: incentives, rewards, performance appraisal systems, job descriptions, strategy commitments.

Analyses should be done for both inside and outside the organisation.

To change a system requires a big launch. Thus a launch strategy will need to be developed, as well as tactics.

The conclusion of this working group was that a campaign strategy was needed in order to ensure "buy-in" and knowledge of the manual.

Points to be Considered

- Decide who the key audience will be
 - Different material for different audiences may need to be considered
- Decide on scale:
 - Launch
 - Agencies to be targeted
 - Beneficiaries to state why they see benefits in this process
- Clarify what will be included in the manual
 - Keep standards and indicators to the minimum
 - Provide practical tools to assist in application
 - Provide case studies
- Try and see how integration with other quality initiatives can be undertaken
 - Establish links and integration with working groups 1,2 and 3
 - Suggest that a campaign manager may well be needed.

Process

No.	Activity	Time Frame
1	Draft plan and leadership structure	
2	Ensure stakeholder engagement through links with other working groups	
3	Start campaign	

Plenary Group Feedback

Participants were asked to consider positives and negatives about the planning meeting. Comments given:

Positives:

- Working in small groups of shared concerns and being able to share different opinions yet pull it all together.
- The mixture of people ensured interesting discussions, creativity and fun groups.
- Working Group facilitation was very good and much appreciated.

Negatives:

- More clarity was needed in the morning sessions to ensure fuller understanding of the expectation of the outputs from the working groups. It would have been preferred even to have this information prior to the planning meeting.
- There was confusion as to what the meeting was about. There was an initial expectation that we would be discussing beneficiary engagement yet we did not do this and instead discussed a number of different issues.
- Facilitators were not always neutral in the process
- It felt like there were two different meetings occurring. There was no time to address some of the big issues broached and too little time to address the practical strategy requested to be developed

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- A two day meeting would have been better to try and achieve what was asked as one day felt far too short.
- The information shared could have been adapted better to the deferent audiences and thus ensuring a more constructive outcome
- Quality definition may have helped at the beginning as some of the discussions got bogged down in definitions
- Working Groups: It may have been better to have Sheryl and Nicholas circulating the working groups ensuring all questions were being answered.
- Too much was expected of the working groups in too little time.

Conclusion

Reflecting back on the two main objectives for this planning meeting to ascertain whether these were met and what remains to be tackled in the coming weeks we note the following:

Objective	Result	Still to be answered
Ensuring a clearer understanding for HAP International members on the mandate and rationale that underpins the process.	Information shared that led to the decision to develop standards and indicators and present them in a manual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of working groups and how they will work needs further clarity
To design and agree a process for the development of the HAP-I Accountability and Quality Management Manual that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise members' ownership and support, • Ensure meaningful beneficiary, donor and humanitarian managers' participation, • Achieve wider recognition and support for HAP-International and its mission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG 1: Process / Time frame drafted • WG 2: Rough draft of stakeholders made and list of activities to be tackled drafted • WG 3: frame work of process drafted with initial suggested time frame. • WG 4: suggestion of process (campaign) put forward. • Beneficiary engagement at field level supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership suggestions not established • Strategy for increasing ownership in members requires follow up • Beneficiary engagement strategy / practical support needs to be developed. • Agreement on structuring the WG 2 process is required. • Dates / Time line for process to be developed, including suggested dates for workshop

Though the day was packed and too many deliverables expected, the general outcome and issues raised will greatly inform the development of the process.

To all those who took the time to participate and will continue to play a vital role in the development of standards and indicators, a process that will impact the humanitarian aid sector significantly, our thanks and appreciation. It is through consultations such as these that plans are improved and enriched.

Sheryl Haw
Standards Development Manager

20th November 2005