

# **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International**

*"making humanitarian action accountable to beneficiaries"*

**Newsletter**

**Issue No. 7**

**Feb 2007**

## **Welcome.**

**The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership** welcomes you to our first newsletter of 2007. The past 12 months have been extremely busy and exciting for us. So busy, that we forgot to write the newsletter during that time! As an accountable organisation, we wish to confess that we have let this means of communication slip, and we will endeavour to improve our performance and try to get at least one newsletter published every two months. If we forget, please let us know immediately....

Aside from the newsletter, the HAP scribes have been busy. The HAP commissioned *Humanitarian Accountability Annual Report* for 2005, was published and can be found [here](#). The report provides a critical analysis of key accountability issues, as well as providing an update of the HAP Secretariat's work, and some case studies from HAP members.

Our website has plenty of new content, including: new discussion papers and presentations from Nicholas Stockton; updates on our programme in Pakistan; a revised and very honest FAQ page; new links to other parts of the accountability world; new accountability training modules which are free to download, and a little more.

HAP's greatest success of 2006 has been the development of the HAP Accountability and Quality Management Standard. Our Standard Development Manager, Sheryl Haw, has been exceptionally busy and tenacious, contacting and encouraging hundreds of people to contribute to the drafting of the HAP Standard. Sheryl has personally consulted over 200 people, from all sections of the humanitarian world, from 96 agencies, in 45 countries, through every possible media, under very difficult circumstances.... and always with a smile, more encouragement and a laugh. Sheryl's legendary power point presentations

have also helped us to keep smiling, as we have seen Sheryl present herself at workshops as an astronaut, super woman, an alien..... and more. For more details of the process, and to see a sample of who was consulted, please go to our Standards Development web-page, [here](#).

The HAP Board adopted the Standard on January 2007, and it is available electronically [here](#), but the final print version will take another couple of months to produce. The adoption of the Standard marks a significant stage for the Partnership. First, it represents an auditable, practical and simple way to demonstrate compliance with the HAP Principles. Second, it represents the opinions and views of hundreds of humanitarian workers and beneficiaries, thus providing a degree of relevance and legitimacy which makes us confident to publish. Third, the Standard provides us with one of the main tools to help fulfil a key part our mandate: "to monitor member agencies and to accredit them accordingly". In the coming months we shall keep you all posted about our certification work.

The HAP team have also been up to much more, which we will report in more detail in forthcoming issues. For now, let us update you on the exciting news that HAP now has 15 full members. We must be doing something right! For those new to the Partnership, keep in mind that HAP membership is not simply a "club" for like-minded organisations. Joining HAP requires a commitment from the CEO of every Member to uphold the Principles of Accountability, commit resources to achieve more accountability, be transparent and open to independent monitoring and finally, support a system of voluntary but robust self-regulation. Our newest and 15<sup>th</sup> Member is CONCERN Worldwide.

A huge welcome to our challenging mission!

**Zia Choudhury, Membership Services Coordinator**

**In brief**, other key HAP activities and achievements, since we last wrote a newsletter:

- HAP's research programme has been focussing on ensuring that beneficiaries and other stakeholders were consulted properly during Standards Development.
- HAP has been vocal and active in workshops, seminars, debates, orientations and various gatherings all over the world. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, Somaliland, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Ireland, USA, UK, and many more places.
- The Mid Term Strategic Review was produced in August 2006, and is available [here](#).
- Our existing donors have continued to show much solidarity with our mission, whilst new ones have shown interest and support.
- The Secretariat has welcomed new staff and said good-bye to others. Good bye and many thanks to Sabine Arrobbio, Darren Hart, Blandine Sankara, Anna Neubauer, Basil Lucima, Shah Wali, Abdel Moniem, and Ting Gorgonio. Welcome to Jennifer Birdsall (Research Officer), Sarah Farooqi (Research and Compliance Officer, HAP Pakistan), Maria Kiani (National NGO Officer, HAP Pakistan), Naveed Ul Huq (Programme Coordinator, Pakistan), and Andrew Lawday (Communications Manager).
- Special welcome to Jennifer's new baby, Nathaniel, born on 27 January 2007.
- We are pleased to announce a new alliance between the Building Safer Organisations (BSO) Project and HAP. The BSO team is Katherina Samara, Coleen Heemskerk and Radha Ivory. See below for further information on BSO.

### **Op-Ed**

#### **Accountability to Beneficiaries in Humanitarian Assistance**

A MSC student of the London School of Hygiene recently carried out a project to

investigate the degree to which different initiatives such as the Sphere Project, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership-International (HAP) and Quality Platform improve humanitarian aid delivery to intended beneficiaries in acute-phase emergencies, and how they are implemented by humanitarian agencies.

This report describes the differences between three initiatives in what they intend to achieve, and how they address accountability and quality assurance. Using the water and sanitation sector as an example, it assesses the feasibility of the initiatives at the field-level, and the NGOs' efforts in involving affected communities.

Data was gathered through a comprehensive literature review and qualitative interviews, which reflect the perspectives of informants from agencies utilising Sphere, HAP and Quality Platform approaches. Findings reveal the attitude/perceptions, appropriate resources, institutional structure, financial capacity, and donor dependency of agencies affects their ability to engage in accountability practices to beneficiaries.

There is consensus among Sphere users that the Sphere Project has not significantly improved beneficiary involvement in humanitarian interventions. HAP and QP are complementary approaches to accountability which address Sphere's weakness, however there is insufficient awareness of both initiatives at the field-level.

Beneficiary participation is clearly not systematically implemented in humanitarian assistance due to various limitations in acute phases of emergencies. It would be inappropriate in circumstances of unusually high morbidity and mortality rates, but informing them and increasing transparency is clearly feasible. Most humanitarian agencies do not respond or report back on their actions.

Active implementation of initiatives rather than provision of guidelines is crucial. Given the lack of awareness of accountability approaches at field-level, and inadequate means to address beneficiary accountability through the Sphere Handbook, agencies need to aggressively promote other approaches. Widespread promotion of HAP and QP as

complementary approaches should support incorporating accountability practices at institutional levels and in programme design.

All preconceptions and myths regarding the definition of affected populations should be discarded to avoid misunderstanding with beneficiaries. Involving beneficiaries is not a step in attempting to achieve programme outputs, but an overall objective in itself. Improving relations between providers and receivers of assistance can only positively impact accountability to affected populations.

If agencies do not see participation as required in critical stages, their involvement must be quickly considered when adapting the intervention to increase appropriateness. There is no excuse for not adequately informing beneficiaries of programme activities, allocation of resources and justifications for decisions. Agencies can work towards promoting awareness of accountability approaches, requesting increased donor-funding flexibility for participation in emergency contexts, and increasing transparency in decision-making processes in acute phases.

-Valerie Do

For more information regarding the project, please contact the author at [InDo.Valerie@gmail.com](mailto:InDo.Valerie@gmail.com)

### ***Building Safer Organisations Project***

Reports of exploitation and abuse in refugee camps in West Africa and Nepal in 2002, demonstrated that NGOs working with persons of concern must anticipate and be prepared to respond to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by members of staff. To improve NGOs' capacity to receive and respond to such allegations, the Building Safer Organisations (BSO) project was launched in September 2004. This inter-agency project (managed originally by ICVA, and now by HAP) brings together more than 240 large and small organisations that work with persons of concern.

#### ***Project goal***

The goal of the BSO project is to reduce the risk of SEA of persons of concern by aid

workers. The project therefore supports agencies in institutionalising common standards on preventing and responding to SEA, namely, the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse,<sup>1</sup> and the IASC draft Model Complaints and Investigation Procedures and Guidance Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

It follows that NGOs who implement complaints mechanisms and train staff to conduct and manage investigations will be more likely to appropriately receive and respond to complaints of abuse. This in turn acts as a deterrent for potential perpetrators and increases NGO accountability to persons of concern.

### **Progress so far: activities and achievements in Phase I**

#### ***Learning programmes***

During Phase I of the project, BSO conducted a series of two Learning Programmes, the 'Investigation' and the 'Managing an Investigation' Learning Programmes. Ten Learning Programme workshops were held in 5 regions around the world, benefiting 160 NGO staff. The project's independent evaluator described the Learning Programmes as "valuable tools for humanitarian agencies in strengthening their capacity to receive and investigate allegations of SEA of beneficiaries by staff<sup>3</sup>". (See [Breaking the Code](#), a report by the [Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children](#).)

#### ***Training Handbook and Guidelines***

BSO also developed a *Training Handbook and Guidelines* on complaints and investigation procedures. The project secretariat designed the Handbook through a process of

<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). October 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force (IASC) draft Model Complaints and Investigation Procedures and Guidance Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation. March 2004

<sup>3</sup> Lattu, Kirsti. 2006. *Breaking the Code. Building Capacity to Investigate Sexual Abuse and Exploitation by Humanitarian Workers - Evaluating ICVA's Building Safer Organisations Project*

information sharing, ongoing discussions, and piloting of materials. NGO staff and managers, professional investigators, and child protection experts all participated in this extensive process. Both documents will be available shortly on the ICVA website or by request.

### **The project going forward: activities planned for Phase II**

Phase II of the project began in summer 2006 with the goal of strengthening and entrenching the gains made in Phase I.

#### *Further workshops*

From November 2006 to January 2008, BSO will facilitate 13 Investigation and Management Learning Programme workshops:

- Investigation
  - 5 Investigation workshops
  - 3 Follow-up workshops
- Managing an Investigation
  - 5 Management workshops

Dates and locations are being finalised and will be posted on the ICVA calendar shortly.

#### *New initiatives*

During Phase II, the project will also:

- Design and pilot course materials for a training of trainers workshop. This will increase the global capacity of NGOs to address beneficiary SEA by ensuring training is available outside the BSO project
- Create and manage 6 regional networks focusing on responding to SEA. Participants in the regional network will include qualified NGO staff and managers as well as beneficiaries
- Launch an online information exchange to respond to NGO requests for assistance
- Distribute the BSO Training Handbook and Guidelines.

A further evaluation of the project will be in the fall of 2007.

#### *Getting involved*

The success of the BSO project in Phase I is largely due to the agencies and organisations

that took part. We are extremely grateful for their contribution and look forward to continued collaborations in Phase II. In addition, we welcome expressions of interest from new participants. Please contact us at [secretariat@icva.ch](mailto:secretariat@icva.ch) to receive further information.

### **Accountability Advocates- Profile**

**Emmanuel Congo Minari** has been HAP's Accountability and Quality Management Advisor for 18 months. Emmanuel holds a Bachelor Degree in Business Management (Daystar University) and Postgraduate Diploma and MSc in Economics from University of London (SOAS).



He joined HAP International after 12 years of designing and managing humanitarian and development programmes in conflict and non-conflict contexts in Africa (East, North and West) with many international agencies including CRS, UNICEF, Oxfam GB, Tearfund and Mercy Corps.

Emmanuel joined HAP because he wanted to use his long humanitarian experience to support agencies to improve the quality of services to disaster survivors, through advising on ways to design and improve internal quality management systems. Emmanuel's commitment to accountability stems from his own experiences of being displaced by conflict, and is strengthened by his first hand knowledge of the huge difference aid workers can make, by acting in a accountable and responsible manner.

Emmanuel spent his first year in HAP providing advisory and capacity building services to HAP members and other agencies in Pakistan. He is currently in Sudan,

consulting HAP members and others to explore ways improving accountability and quality of aid services in Darfur.

Emmanuel is part of the HAP Member Services Team, and can support you in a variety of ways including: assessing organisational accountability status, advising on accountability strategies and work plans, training, briefings and much more. Emmanuel can work in English, Arabic, Swahili and Lingala. [eminari@hapinternational.org](mailto:eminari@hapinternational.org)

*(Note from Editor- Emmanuel's many hidden talents include gospel singing and dancing)*

## **Accountability Case Study**

### **Medair. Beneficiary Accountability Programme, Indonesia**

#### **Introduction**

During Summer 2006, Medair set up a post-tsunami water & sanitation programme in Aceh province, Indonesia. One of the key early challenges was gaining the trust and confidence of the local community, who reported they had been poorly consulted and had little involvement in NGO project activities.

The Medair Beneficiary Accountability Programme was part of our response to this issue; a feedback mechanism that would enable beneficiaries to participate in the design and implementation of the project, as well as providing a means for people to complain and give constructive criticism to help us improve. To ensure the system was appropriate for the Indonesia setting we designed the system with our National staff and then consulted with beneficiaries before implementing.

We deliberately kept the system simple, inviting beneficiaries and community members to tell us their complaints and feedback in person, in writing or by phone. We committed to respond to all complaints within 7 days.

#### **Staffing**

A Project Manager, independent of the project outputs plus a Project Assistant working 3 days a week to proactively encourage and enable people to give Medair feedback. A female project assistant was recruited, in order

that local women would be more encouraged to offer their feedback.

#### **Implementation**

The initiative was introduced at the first meetings with the community during October 2006, in all the locations where Medair proposed to work.

A complaint we heard time and again in the early meetings was that NGO's were "all talk and no action". This feedback gave us a springboard to launch the initiative by explaining that the whole point of the process was:

- To listen, as opposed to talking to beneficiaries
- To take action

Early ideas included feedback forms and confidential 'drop boxes'. In addition, people requested access to the mechanism by phone, we therefore included the Project Assistants phone number on both the complaints form and on a poster on all notice-boards.

#### **Training**

In December 2006 all Medair staff received a briefing about the new feedback mechanism, including what to do if they received a complaint either in the field or in the office. From January 2007 this training was incorporated into the monthly staff induction course.

#### **Results to date**

The Project Assistant records all complaints received on a database showing date received, response given within 7 days and any further action necessary. As of March 2007, there have been 47 complaints received, with 32 now resolved.

#### **Challenges**

- Reluctance of the community to engage with yet another NGO
- Many pre-existing focus groups
- Lack of ownership of beneficiary accountability by our own Medair Managers

#### **Benefits**

- Increased participation by the community
- Improved security for the Medair team

- Transparency - the system enabled people to question us about all aspects of the programme.
- Recruitment – highly skilled staff who had worked for other NGO's were genuinely motivated to work for Medair because of our commitment to beneficiary accountability
- Increased motivation – especially when positive feedback received e.g. when the well rehabilitation project was approaching completion, 18 written compliments were received, which provided great encouragement to the Water Sanitation team.

#### Future plans

Over the next 6 months we plan to introduce the system to our new project on Nias Island and expand and develop the programme in Aceh in the following ways:

- To formally acknowledge receipt of all claims
- To post complaint and response statistics on our notice-boards
- To produce business cards for the Project Assistant, which will have the project aims on one side and contact details on the other.
- To introduce a form that the beneficiary signs when their complaint has been resolved
- Get feedback from children in local schools where we are implementing Water -Sanitation projects

#### Conclusion

The beneficiary accountability system works effectively because it was built into Medair's programme from the very beginning. It has already proved a key tool in maintaining our good relationship with the community and helps us all to keep our focus on those we are here to serve.

**Fiona Daborn, Aceh, March 2007**

#### **MORE ON ACCOUNTABILITY...**

[The Humanitarian Accountability Report 2005](#)

[HPN Network Paper- Concerning Accountability in Humanitarian Action](#)

[The 2006 Global Accountability Report](#)

[Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies- The Good Enough Guide](#)

NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations (Paperback) by [Lisa Jordan](#) (Author), [Peter van Tuijl](#) (Author), [Michael Edwards](#) (Foreword)

#### Useful Links include:

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

[ALNAP Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action](#)  
[Building Safer Organisations Project](#)  
[Emergency Capacity Building Project](#)  
[Global Accountability Project](#)  
[Humanitarian Accountability Partnership](#)  
[International Council of Voluntary Agencies](#)  
[People In Aid](#)  
[Projet Qualité](#)  
[One World Trust](#)  
[Sphere](#)  
[Transparency International](#)  
[Groupe URD](#)

#### DATES AND EVENTS:

- ECB Event- 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2007 London: Increasing Accountability and Impact Measurement to Beneficiaries in Emergencies
- HAP Board Meeting- 27 April 2007 Geneva
- HAP General Assembly- 25-26 April 2007 Geneva

#### HAP WEBSITE UPDATES:

[New FAQ page](#)  
[Standards Development Page](#)  
[Pakistan page](#)

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

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

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**Thanks and happy reading from the HAP Secretariat !**