

## After Action Review of the HAP Roving Team deployment to Sri Lanka



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HAP International

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# After Action Review of the HAP Roving Team Deployment to Sri Lanka

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HAP International is a partnership of humanitarian agencies dedicated to building a system of self-regulation based upon quality management and accountability principles, with a specific commitment to making humanitarian action accountable to its intended beneficiaries. In addition to providing capacity building support to members and other agencies enrolled in the certification scheme, contributing to research on the cost effectiveness of quality management of humanitarian action, and establishing a system of quality management certification, HAP International seeks to demonstrate to the “humanitarian system” more widely the potential for improving humanitarian outcomes through quality management and quality assurance.

\*Cover map of Sri Lanka courtesy of AlertNet

## Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
ASB	Arbeiter Samariter Bund, Germany
CRC	Canadian Red Cross
CRM	Complaints and Response Mechanism
CIDA	Canadian Department of International Affairs
CD	Country Director
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
GSA	Guided Self-Assessment
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HAP team	HAP Roving Team
HAF	Humanitarian Accountability Framework
IDP	Internally Displace Persons
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
LL	Lessons Learnt
LWR	Lutheran World Relief
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluations
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OfERR	Organisation for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation
PSG	Quality and Accountability Working Group (Peer Support Group)
SCUK	Save the Children, UK
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WVI	World Vision International

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## Summary of Achievements

- Hosted an Inter-agency workshop, “*Introduction to the HAP 2007 Standard and the Guided self-assessment process*”, with 11 agencies, which resulting in 7 agencies as undertaking the guided self-assessment exercise (GSA). The exercise allows agencies to identify aspects of their compliance with the *HAP 2007 Standard* and identify any accountability gaps needing further improvement. The agencies are currently addressing the results.
- As a result of the GSA exercises, agency staff commented on the HAP team’s role in building capacity and increasing the understanding of accountability mechanisms.
- Hosted a learning working, “Introduction to the HAP 2007 Standard,” with non-member agencies, including national and international organisations. Participants noted that they gained a greater understanding of their own accountability mechanisms and would continue to seek our peer support as they address difficult or new issues.
- The HAP team met with 140 agency staff members, 4 donor organisations, and representatives for other international and national coordination and training bodies.
- A number of agencies have committed to developing and sharing case studies of good practice.
- The HAP team provided much welcomed guidance for agencies in strengthening accountability and quality of programming, particularly in areas of information sharing and gathering complaints.
- 4 HAP 2007 Standard review consultations where held with HAP members, non-member agencies and donor representatives.
- 11 agencies participated in a Lessons Learnt workshop during the final week of the deployment; the workshop highlighted the positive outcomes from their engagement with the HAP team and provided examples of accountability improvements already visible in their organisations as well as those planned for the coming months.
- The development of partnerships and inter-agency learning amongst agencies responding to the IDP crisis was highlighted as an extremely positive outcome of HAP’s deployment. Agency staff stated this as a key capacity builder.
- Lutheran World Relief in Sri Lanka took the lead in translating the HAP 2007 Standard into Sinhala (completed in October) and Tamil (completed in November).
- A total of 1800 copies of the HAP 2007 Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard were disseminated (800 in English, 500 in Sinhala, and 500 Tamil versions).

## Background

The New Emergencies Policy (NEP) established a commitment by HAP member organisations to make a special collective effort to apply the *HAP Principles of Accountability* at the outset of all new humanitarian emergencies.<sup>1</sup> The terms of reference (ToR) for the Sri Lanka NEP were developed based on feedback gathered from agencies following a teleconference held 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009 and subsequent bilateral discussions with agencies, integrating both headquarter and country level feedback. The ToR proposed the HAP Roving Team be deployed for a three month period starting in July 2009 to work with HAP member agencies, their partners, and other interested agencies responding to the current IDP crisis in Sri Lanka. The goal was to enhance understanding and improving the practice of humanitarian accountability and quality management during the early phases of the response.

At the time of the deployment, seventeen HAP members were responding to the IDP crisis, directly and through implementing partners. They were: ACFID, ACT, ACTED, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid, Danish Refugee Council, MERCY Malaysia, Muslim Aid, PMU Interlife, Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian Church Aid, Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK, Tearfund and World Vision.

*The HAP Roving Team was deployed to Sri Lanka from 22 July- 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2009 under the New Emergencies Policy under which HAP Members commit to make special collective efforts to actualise beneficiary accountability during an new or escalated emergency. A teleconference with the HAP Members led Sri Lanka being chosen as the site for deployment. In June 2009, approximately 220,000<sup>1</sup> disaster-survivors who had escaped the conflict in Northern Sri Lanka were interned in Menik Farm making it one of the of the largest camp for internally displaced person (IDPs) in the world. Freedom of movement, acutely limited humanitarian access, increased vulnerabilities, and the inability to address protection issues remained critical and concerning issues for all agencies involved in the response. The highly complex and restrictive operational context in Sri Lanka hindered safeguarding protection rights, consulting beneficiaries, ensuring participation in the designing and implementing the projects or providing safe avenues for registering complaints. The aim of the HAP deployment and the work of the team was to provide support to agencies in increasing the understanding of the accountability to beneficiaries in light of the prevailing context of and highlighting internal and external efforts and actions, that would make decrease the accountability deficit within the constraints of the given context.*

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of Accountability are available at <http://www.hapinternational.org/projects/standard/development/principles-of-accountability.aspx>

### What did we set out to do?

The overall aim of the deployment was to improve understanding about, and strengthen performance of, the humanitarian accountability and quality management practices of HAP members and their partners responding to the IDP crisis in Sri Lanka.

In order to achieve this aim the Roving Team divided their activities to meet three key objectives<sup>2</sup>:

<p><b>Objective 1:</b> To identify and deliver appropriate immediate and direct support activities with participating agencies</p>	<p><b>Objective 2:</b> To facilitate collective learning on issues of humanitarian accountability and quality between HAP members, their partners and other interested agencies within Sri Lanka</p>	<p><b>Objective 3:</b> To analyse and share outputs and lessons learnt during the deployment</p>
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**Objective 1:** Achievement against this first objective included the HAP Roving Team (HAP team) working alongside senior managers and designated staff from participating agencies to conduct Guided Self-Assessments (GSA) of planned and actual practice related to the ongoing IDP crisis against the *HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management*. For the agencies, undertaking a GSA exercise identifies areas of good practice as well as recognises gaps. The HAP team, where agreed, also provided relevant practical support in addressing the identified gaps, with a focus on immediate activities.

**Objective 2:** The measures of success for this objective were to include:

- Establishing an ‘Accountability and Quality Working Group’ as part of an existing network or new forum through which staff from interested agencies could discuss challenges and opportunities for strengthening accountability, share learning and examples of good practice, develop tools and approaches and build greater understanding of how to strengthen humanitarian accountability and quality management in Sri Lanka.
- Disseminate user-friendly practical core lessons and examples from agencies, guidelines, tools, and practitioners notes on good practice
- Translate the *HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management* into Sinhala and Tamil.
- Raise awareness among donors on their role in strengthening accountability and quality management.
- Identify means of sustaining the Accountability and Quality Working Group beyond the HAP deployment.
- Explore options for joint learning activities between HAP members and their partners at Colombo, sub-office and programme site level, and for piloting joint information sharing and complaints handling systems.

**Objective 3:** The activities meant to achieve this included:

<sup>2</sup> See the Terms of Reference for HAP Team Deployment in Response to the IDP Crisis in Sri Lanka, <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/draft-2-tor-and-log-frame-for-hap-deployment-to-sri-lanka-july-2009-v2-nb.doc>

- An AAR to assess the impact of the accountability activities undertaken by the HAP team as a result of the 3 month deployment
- Identify means by which participating agencies will report progress against developed action plans within their agencies and to HAP International after the HAP team has left Sri Lanka.
- Agencies will identify and implement means as to how learning from Sri Lanka will feed into wider agency learning and impact current and future humanitarian responses.

## What did we actually do?

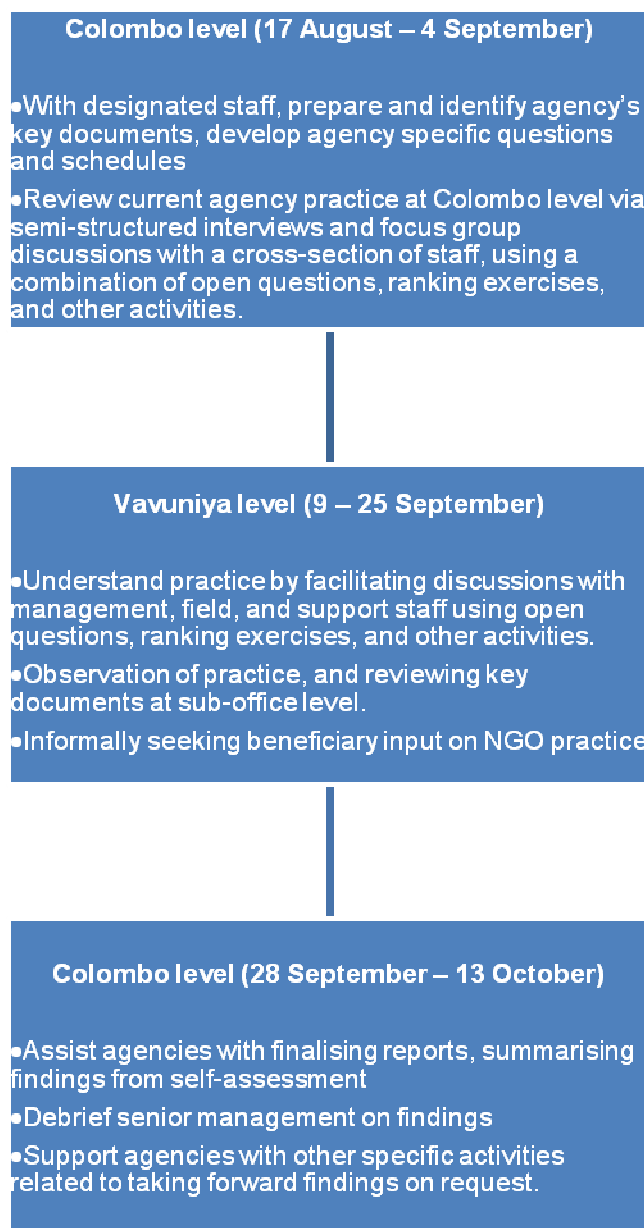
### ***Defining the ToR and seeking buy-in***

Prior to the deployment, the HAP team engaged with the focal persons from each of the HAP member agencies active in Sri Lanka. This engagement included: a group teleconference, bilateral discussions, and seeking feedback from country-level staff and the focal persons on the proposed activities for Sri Lanka deployment

Between 22 July and 6 August, 2009 bilateral meetings were held with member agencies and other stakeholders in Colombo, to discuss and explain the aim of the deployment, to allow for the HAP staff to better understand the context of the current IDP crisis and the activities of those agencies working with the affected populations, and to secure the support of senior managers in Sri Lanka. This was followed by an inter-agency meeting on 6 August for the team to share feedback gathered, and collectively discuss the ToR in particular seeking commitment on the specific activities proposed. As a result of this meeting dates for the GSA were finalised, and the activities proposed under objective two were modified (see below).

**Objective 1:** With respect to the first objective, the HAP team held an inter-agency workshop entitled “*Introduction to the HAP 2007 Standard and the Guided Self-assessment process*” on 12 – 13 August 2009, undertook agency specific self-assessment with 7 agencies (ACTED, Habitat for Humanity, MERCY Malaysia, Muslim Aid, OfERR, Save the Children UK, and World Vision Lanka), and provided further guidance and directed support to both CARE International and Christian Aid.

Three steps were taken with those agencies that participated in the GSA process:



Working along side the fourteen designated staff, the HAP team sought the input of approximately 140 agency staff members, ranging from Country Directors to tractor drivers. Five GSAs also included informal input from beneficiaries in Menik Farm camps.

**Objective 2:** The response among staff at country-level to the idea of an Accountability and Quality Working Group was mixed. It was recommended that if it were established it should start with a smaller group of HAP members and their partners, rather than as part of an existing network, and then decide at which stage to make it open to other agencies and participants. It was stressed that any group would need to be mindful of demands on staff time (in particular given the number of other working-groups/cluster and other forum meetings), and should take place at both Colombo and Vavuniya levels. Given the other demands on the Roving team's time, limited interest, and the absence of an agency volunteering to take the lead, this activity was not undertaken. However, during the AAR workshop the HAP team secured a verbal commitment from the agency representatives (including Country Directors) to establish an electronic peer support group, which will explore organisation of regular meetings for HAP members and their partners, with the first PSG organised by the HAP team in February.

A workshop was held on 2 October with non-HAP members on the Standard. Attendees came from the Canadian Red Cross, SAH Sri Lanka (part of the agency Solidar), World Concern, ASB Sri Lanka, Fridsro (partner of PMU Interlife), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) and ZOA Refugee Care. Agencies involved appreciated the opportunity to be exposed to the HAP 2007 Standard and stressed the need to highlight issues of humanitarian accountability particularly within Sri Lanka. Distant support through sharing of various tools and case-studies was also provided to agencies.

On 14 October a Lessons Learnt meeting was held in conjunction with the AAR – findings from this meeting will be reported in the next section.

Other activities included:

- Establishment of an on-going working relationship with RedR UK in Sri Lanka
- The translation of the HAP 2007 Standard into Sinhala and Tamil was undertaken by LWR. The Sinhala version was finalised and printed before the end of the deployment with the Tamil version was completed in November 2009. Both are available on the HAP website and hard copies will be disseminated by HAP partners.
- Four HAP 2007 Standard review consultation
- Meetings held with four donor representatives, including ECHO, JICA, DFID, and CIDA.

**Objective 3:** Responding to the final objective defined in the ToR, the AAR focused on the activities of the HAP deployment and associated activities of participating agencies. Further activities in response to the Lessons Learnt and AAR will include:

- This report, summarising the activities and learning from the deployment
- A review of the methodology used during deployments as a result from the suggestions and recommendations from AAR participants.
- Debriefing of all HAP member agency Head Office focal persons.
- Development and sharing of case studies
- A planned post-deployment follow-up scheduled in 3 months (February 2010) from the AAR to understand activities undertaken by agencies as a result of their engagement with the HAP team (in particular related to the actions identified as part of the GSA). This will help us understand the longer impact from a HAP deployment.

In order to summarise the strengths of the HAP engagement and activities, agency representatives were asked during the AAR in Colombo to address a number of questions. Of particular interest for this section of the report were two questions that provide insight into the guidance provided by the HAP team.

For each of the following questions, agency staff members were given the opportunity to examine and share their experiences and provide consolidated feedback. A summary of their answers are recorded below.

**Question 1: What did you find most useful from your experience with the HAP team?**

The professional skills (and diplomacy) of the HAP team during the GSA process was seen as a considerable positive for a number of agencies. The GSA was highlighted as a tool that provided staff not only the opportunity to assess their current performance but to also build capacity on areas of quality management and accountability that otherwise were lost in paperwork. Some agencies noted that the assessment process allowed engaged staff to team build.

Methods employed during the workshops and the availability of case studies and tools from other agencies and countries (on the HAP website) along with first time training on the HAP Standard and its benchmarks provided agency staff with the necessary guidance on how to deepen their

understanding and the organisations' accountability practices.

The opportunity to share experiences with agencies working in Sri Lanka during multi-agency workshops was highlighted as a key learning tool and provided reassurance as to individual agencies' practices.

The HAP team and the GSA process allowed for gaps in current practices and new methods of information sharing to be identified, revising current tools, and opening new avenues for accountability.

Working with the HAP team allowed for senior country management "buy-in" to the importance of accountability mechanisms during the humanitarian response phase in Sri Lanka. Staff highlighted that the HAP Team's involvement was essential in order to influence senior management.

The opportunity to generate and review the self-assessment results with the HAP team was seen as a key motivational tool for the designated staff to continue to improve and work with colleagues on identifying gap areas.

### **Question 2: Were you adequately prepared or oriented by your agency prior to your work with the HAP team?**

Staff members from the Danish Refugee Council had recently completed a self-assessment for all programmes in Sri Lanka as part of their HAP Mid-term progress audit whereas the majority of agencies stated that they were only "somewhat prepared" as a result of poor internal communication between HO, country office, and programme sites.

Agencies working through partners expressed a mixed response to their preparation with implementing partners. On reflection, these agencies felt that ownership of the lack of preparation came down to their lack of preparation for engaging partners with the HAP team.

Some commented that they had been informed very well about the process (and that this was well documented and had been shared with different levels within the agency), and that the advance communication to all about the purpose of the self-assessment had helped. The experience of staff in this respect depended on internal agency communication, and the stage in which the designated staff had been identified by the agency.

## **What have we learned?**

### **From the participating agencies perspective**

On 14 October a Lessons Learnt workshop was held with 19 designated staff members from 11 agencies (See appendix for participants list). Each agency provided a short description of its engagement with the HAP team: some underwent a *Guided Self-Assessment*<sup>3</sup> of their programmes, some spoke to their experiences with the introductory presentations on HAP and humanitarian accountability, and the World Vision staff member seconded to the HAP team focused on the knowledge gained from working on the translation of the HAP 2007 Standard into Tamil. Some of the points raised by agencies on their experience with the HAP team also included:

- Support on developing tools to review practice as part of GSA

<sup>3</sup> A Guided self-assessment offers agencies an insight into how the HAP Standard is applied at a programme site and enables them to identify strengths and gaps in current practice. By guiding designated staff through the process GSA build internal capacity of agencies and raise staff awareness of the HAP Standard. Based on the findings objectives for improvement, with specific indicators are developed and documented.

- Able to discuss with HAP team and gain support on more sensitive internal issues.
- Gain understanding of what certain benchmarks mean, in particular what it means to meet benchmarks on information sharing, participation and complaints handling.
- Support with developing an action plan (seen as key to the success of the GSA process), and with participation of other stakeholders. As a result each agency has identified three key areas that will be focused on moving forward.
- Due to the access restrictions in Menik Farm, staff suggested it would have been a benefit if the HAP team had altered the original plans and accompanied agency staff to other project sites.

Staff commented that the GSA was a simple process – focusing on theory at HQ (i.e. policy and expected approach), and practical aspects at field level. The process was participatory and involved staff across the organisation including field staff. It enabled agencies to “look at where they are in terms of their quality management, where they wanted to be and think how to get there”.

The workshop examined learning in three main sessions: an agency-specific examination of what was learnt, a sectoral assessment of the impact (both immediate and anticipated) of working with the HAP team, and moving forward with accountability and quality structures in the post-HAP deployment period. It is fair to say that over all three sessions participants provided a examples of where accountability was practiced whilst also recognised areas in need of improvement.

After working with the HAP team agency staff recognised some *agency-specific* key lessons and accountability areas needing improvement:

- A need for stronger cultural awareness, especially in the provision of goods (food & non-food items) across the sector.
- Allow for continual review of community-members’ needs assessment to better address the changing “must haves” of beneficiaries throughout the project cycle. Staff gave examples of mosquito nets being distributed although they were not suitable for the beneficiaries to use, and cited the delay it took for changes to food packets which were a response to identifying that the ‘original’ food was not palatable or sufficient.
- More emphasis to be placed on assessing and building the capacity of partners to implement projects.
- Needs assessment are important and agencies can use activities that put them in contact with affected-people to seek feedback on agency activities (for example at communal kitchens, or as part of tent maintenance work).
- When working through partners, the means of assessing the implementing partner could be strengthened, as well as the performance being appraised during the length of the agreement.
- The need to provide capacity building for implementing partners to enable them to better respond to the peculiarities of the relief / emergency context especially when related to issues of protection and complaints handling.
- Agencies must not forget that there are often un-highlighted opportunities to work with IDP population, in particular many of the IDPs are highly skilled and can be used as volunteers.

- Opportunities sometimes present themselves, allowing agencies to use other means of seeking input, for example giving greater emphasis on observation (an example of plastic buckets that were provided for rubbish disposal were being used for washing).
- During this IDP crisis NGO partnerships were encouraged insofar as joint funding matrices and plans can be developed therefore providing support between agencies. In addition donors have been more receptive to change to allow and have worked closely with NGOs.
- Some commonly used terms, such as ‘participation’, have not been clearly defined by agencies. As a result staff have different understandings of what is expected by senior managements (for example is talking to beneficiaries sufficient or ideally does the agency want staff to aim for more meaningful engagement).
- Identified gaps in staff awareness of internal policies and systems. While these may be known by senior managers they have not always been passed ‘down the line’.
- A need to re-learn good practice that existed as part of previous programmes – for example as part of the Tsunami Response – that with staff turnover has been lost. This was seen as an opportunity to bring good accountability practice back into programmes.

There was overall agreement that the HAP team provided important guidance for agencies in strengthening accountability and quality of programming, particularly in areas of information sharing (with all stakeholders) and helping agencies develop more realistic analyses of their expectations and responses in meeting the changing contextual arrangements with the host government.

Two further suggestions were brought to the table from agencies’ representatives for the HAP team to include in future deployments:

- Develop and share more case studies and tools (including other inter-active methodologies) that can build staff capacity to assess their commitments, resources and human resources in the delivery of quality programmes.
- Expand the scope of the guided self-assessment to include a review of other responsibilities and work commitments beyond the immediate relief phase (advocacy, budget requirements, and administrative duties).

The workshop participants emphasised areas of knowledge transfer from the HAP team to the agencies, including specific aspects of the engagement in which the team was able to assist in building upon current management systems and strengthening capacity for accountability and quality structures.

In the course of the workshop, participants offered a number of useful suggestions on areas in which the HAP team were able to aid the agencies in highlighting and responding to challenges particular to the current Sri Lankan context, as well as opportunities for improving their agency’s role in promoting and improving accountability. These areas were denoted as opportunities and included:

- The development of partnerships (formal and informal) between agencies responding to the IDP crisis was highlighted as an extremely positive outcome of HAP’s deployment. Agency staff stated this as a key opportunity as they were better able to interact, understand and learn from peers.

- The unique role of the Gram Sewaka (a local administrative official- in this case was a member of the IDP community) was seen as offering agencies access to communities and the ability to share information as well as seek limited participation.
- Having staff in the Menik Farm IDP camps was seen as an opportunity for achieving beneficiary feedback that was otherwise unattainable, though concerns for personal security persisted

Along with the opportunities came a number of surprises, these were captured during the workshop and highlighted areas of strength and weakness within the overall response to the IDP crisis. Some of those most often mentioned or discussed included:

- A need for agencies to strengthen their internal communications, within a number of agencies there exist varied understandings as to the opportunities and challenges of the context between the Colombo and Vavuniya offices.
- The neglect of men and adolescent boys in the planning and implementation of programmes, including deliverables and programme infrastructure.
- The ongoing challenge of maintaining a balance between agencies' requirements to share information (who we are? what we do?) and the restriction by government of access to the camps and limiting interactions with beneficiaries.
- On occasions staff found there was greater feeling of beneficiary ownership over projects than they had anticipated, this was particularly noted for child friendly spaces

During the workshop participants were asked three further questions to help the facilitators and the HAP team gain a better understanding of where the HAP deployment could have been better. Answers to each of these questions are provided in the table below.

**Question 3: What might have the HAP team done differently to benefit your agency or the humanitarian community in Sri Lanka?**

A focus on overall programming (emergency, development, advocacy relations), as opposed to the IDP crisis response alone, would have provided the HAP team a broader picture of agencies accountability mechanisms as well as provided better opportunities to engage beneficiaries outside of Menik Farm.

It was suggested (by a few agencies) that the HAP team should consider issues of gender balance, as an all female team could be culturally problematic.

HAP should develop a tool to provide to agencies to assist them in capturing and recording staff knowledge particularly in areas with cyclical disasters or conflict zones.

**Question 4: Thinking back over your involvement with the HAP team what other types of support or alternative activities would have been useful?**

HAP could consider increasing the length of deployments; agencies felt the HAP team was restricted in time. There was a clear demand for even more in-depth capacity building and workshops directly on developing humanitarian accountability frameworks.

Collecting data from affected populations and agency staff, as part of the GSA, utilise more games and role playing exercises.

Engagement with senior country management to gain their "buy-in" and commitment should be increased.

**Question 5: How have you found working with the HAP Standard?**

Extremely useful in aiding the management of current emergency work.

All agencies remarked that with a better institutional knowledge of the HAP 2007 Standard they can prioritise accountability to beneficiaries and justify their actions through the means of verification provided in the Standard benchmark system.

Agencies expressed the usefulness of the HAP Standard for management and programme site activities in planning for emergencies, particular reference was made to benchmarks 2, 3 and 5.

The HAP Standard was seen as not only a programme improvement and monitoring tool, but also a way to improve transparency, which is an asset for donor compliance and reporting.

One agency recorded that staff attitudes towards complaints handling and programme quality had been tightened as a result of working with the HAP Standard and the GSA. This agency's staff are now working with a clearer vision of goals and a means of achieving them.

"The working culture of the organisation has changed and the organisation works towards the same direction. Attitudes towards strengthening accountability and quality have been strengthened."

**From the HAP team perspective**

In response to the points raised during the workshops, the HAP team were offered the opportunity to reflect and provide feedback to the rest of the group their thoughts on progress made over the 3 months.

**HAP team lessons learnt as a result of Sri Lankan deployment**

It takes time to meet individually with all HAP members - due to the number of HAP members responding in Sri Lanka the first two weeks needed to be dedicated to bilateral meetings agency Country Directors to brief them on the proposed ToR and seek buy-in, and for them to brief the team further on the context.

As a result of the volume of interest, time was needed to finalise bilateral MoUs with each agency. These took longer than expected during the first month of the deployment.

As a result of the need to alter the deployment ToR due to contextual and agency-specific requirements, it is highly recommended that the ToR be finalised in-country for all future deployments.

When developing future deployments, the HAP team should consider that communicating a clear picture of the context is difficult via email and framing the deployment can best be accomplished after meeting with the senior management of the country offices and garnering their input and support.

Staff in Sri Lanka, more so than in other locations, were particularly interested in the concept of the Humanitarian Accountability Framework, especially staff who focused on monitoring and evaluation.

The Roving Team had to balance differing requests and needs from the head office and Country Director level, and designated staff. In this context head office and Country Directors were in support of the Roving Team focusing activities on Menik Farm, where as some designated staff expressed a preference for the Roving Team to focus in other areas where the emergency response was not as new and there was better access to beneficiaries. It was in these areas of the Sri Lankan response that designated staff felt they could show greater accountability practice. In future an initial dialogue between all groups may help overcome these different preferences. It also indicates the need for senior management to highlight why accountability and quality need to be highlighted and prioritised during an emergency

Country Directors and senior managers (in country) identified designated staff, after bi-lateral meetings. This highlights the importance of initial face-to-face meetings, and the need to gauge levels of interest in-country rather than pre-deployment. For future deployments the Roving Team should not rule out the option of an 'exploratory visit' to determine if a full deployment should follow.

### Immediate and anticipated impacts

Focusing on the impacts of the HAP deployment, agencies were asked to divide their responses into two key areas, immediate impacts at the organisational and programme levels, and impacts they anticipate to implement or see as a result of working with the HAP team. Participants provided both positive and negative impacts.

Immediate Impacts
GSA is an effective internal evaluation – allowing a review of practice before the end of the project and enabled us to effectively evaluate ourselves
Being able to identify key documents during the GSA and sharing these with staff
The GSA findings allowed for a change to take place in the way we work with and share information with intended beneficiaries
Staff gained a sense of satisfaction with being able to gauge their accountability practices – field staff were motivated as they felt their good practice was acknowledged.
Identification of gaps and prioritisation of areas for improvement with participation of staff
A shared understanding of HAP across the country offices on par with head office – gained understanding at both management and field level, and staff are now aware of their own agency's commitment to HAP.
Improved information sharing between country and programme site staff
Training of staff on the Principles of Accountability and HAP benchmarks – now feel motivated to work on strengthening practice against the benchmarks.
Increase in workload for designated staff members
Senior country management disputed the GSA findings resulting in contradictory explanations
Opened up a space for accountability to beneficiaries.
Positive change in perception on complaints and complaints handling among staff.
Staff now able to run workshop for others in their agency on accountability.
Identified disparities in how senior management and field staff felt about current activities (strengthens and gaps) – identification of gaps now means action can be taken to address these.
Focus group discussions with communities are effective and useful and this provides an opportunity to interact and gather feedback from them. Information sharing with beneficiaries has improved.

Anticipated Impacts
Resources, time, and staff training on humanitarian accountability issues to be in all future Terms of Reference, budgets, and donor funding proposals. This will need senior management commitment.

Improvement in the quality of programming
Inter-agency shared learning and a pooling of accountability and quality management resources
Improvement in staff capacity on accountability and the HAP Standard
Shift in M&E approach (including techniques and tools) taking into account the HAP Standard. More participatory and qualitative aspect will be strengthened.
Formalisation of complaints and response mechanisms, achieving the requirements of benchmark 5 of the HAP Standard
For the first time 'experts' in the HAP Standard will be identified and seen as important to the agency
Programme site staff will have a stronger understanding of expectations in terms of complaint handling.
Self-assessments will be repeated at different locations within Sri Lanka, and findings shared across country offices and utilised as tools for learning across the INGO.
Improvement to beneficiary participation, and integration of information sharing and complaints handling into management system.
Increased work load for staff. In addition staff have an expectation that their concerns will be addressed. This is seen as a positive for field staff while senior management will see this as added pressure.
Will seek greater engagement with accountability focal person at HQ, and will initiate a process of annual review across the agency.
The benchmarks will be integrated into the new strategic plan for 2010, and now looking at how they can be applied in other projects (including micro-finance and development projects)
Constraints of time, budgets for capacity building and limited senior management support
Increased peer to peer learning particularly on humanitarian accountability frameworks, information sharing and complaints.

### What are we going to do?

The final session of the workshop focused on the activities that agencies had scheduled as a result of their engagement with the HAP team. The HAP team are committed as part of their post-deployment activities to follow-up with all participating agencies in January 2010 to capture areas of improvement and share them with all participating partners.

Agencies made a commitment to the continuous improvement of their emergency response programming. A number of suggested actions were highlighted as means and methods of building upon their learning. Furthermore, a clear commitment was made by the designated staff members to share with each other results from the activities of the AAR workshop.

### Salient Future activities for participating agencies

Where we are/Present Activities	Where we want to be/ Future activities
<p><b>ACTED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Including HAP Standard in project design, implementation and monitoring</li> <li>Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve qualitative aspects and beneficiary aspects in ME tools and processes</li> <li>Capacity building of staff and partners</li> </ul>
<p><b>MASL:</b></p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include beneficiary accountability in proposals and project design</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve information sharing to and from beneficiaries</li> <li>• Develop tools to capture feedback from beneficiaries</li> </ul>
<p><b>OfERR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase communication with whole community</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for sustainability of the growth</li> </ul>
<p><b>NCA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement training (emergency training) across staff levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitoring of sharing information through management systems</li> </ul>
<p><b>DRC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder complaint mechanism for DRC-Sri Lanka (developed based on CM handbook) is in draft form</li> <li>• Staff training in other districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise the mechanism ( and also include suppliers and other stakeholders)</li> <li>• Move implementation of HAP 2007 Standard in all projects</li> </ul>
<p><b>SciSL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include HAP benchmarks in evaluation processes</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop monitoring indicators to measure benchmark 2: information &amp; 5 complaints handling</li> <li>• Capacity building of staff and partners</li> </ul>
<p><b>CARE in Sri Lanka:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactivating emergency team to learn, improve quality of response and time of response, staff security improvements</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the HAP report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation of staff on HAP and HAF</li> </ul>
<p><b>DCA &amp; CA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sharing offered to peers</li> <li>• Provide support to partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality programming appraisals</li> <li>• Strengthen partners in accountability and quality related aspects</li> </ul>
<p><b>WViSL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use existing HAT materials from database</li> <li>• Managers share knowledge and practice on information sharing</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve qualitative aspects and beneficiary aspects in ME tools and processes</li> <li>• Capacity building of staff and partners</li> </ul>
<p><b>HFHSL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that Quality and accountability policy and procedures are in place</li> <li>• Undertake action on the goals identified in the GSA report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve information sharing to and from beneficiaries</li> <li>• Develop tools to capture feedback from beneficiaries</li> </ul>

Common developments that agencies will address included:

- Develop tools to capture ideas from beneficiaries, including a child friendly CRM policy, programme-based fact sheets, and quality programming appraisal forms
- Find agency-based methods of internally sustaining the current growth in accountability mechanisms

- Contribute to and monitor the sharing of information through the internal management structure
- Design indicators for measuring participation and consultation of beneficiaries given the context of difficult access
- Review of the supply chain and seek to improve use of locally sourced services and deliverables
- Develop a framework for improving indicators that can measure compliance to Benchmarks 2 & 5
- Build agency-specific training modules, including induction and orientation training, for programme site staff on the 6 HAP benchmarks
- Develop a questionnaire for programme beneficiaries which will respond to their changing needs as they move from Menik Farm

### Impact of the HAP deployment on the agency

In order to understand future plans and provide a clear view of the impact of the HAP team, participants were asked to provide group answers to one final question. This final question sought to gain specific examples of the impact of the HAP team on agencies as they develop their future programmes.

#### **Question 6: What specific issues emerged during your engagement with the HAP team at programme and country-office levels?**

For a few of agencies the GSA findings were divergently viewed (between country and programme site offices) due to the lack of communication between the Head Office, country office and programme sites when it came to the agency's involvement with the HAP deployment. This impacted on the planning, activities, and possible results of the deployment. Although there was no clear solution to the communication gap, agencies did express a desire to improve internal mechanisms.

Agencies have decided to implement within their time and budget allocations opportunities for staff training on accountability and the HAP Standard.

Due to the lack of access to beneficiaries in Menik Farm, complaints and response mechanisms are not working properly, if at all. Therefore, the majority of agencies expressed a clear decision to work at improving this.

Some agencies felt their Head Office and country office managers did not prioritise the HAP deployment and as a result they under-estimated the level of work and organisational impact that a GSA would have on the country and programme site. At times, designated staff felt their competencies did not adequately meet the needs of the role they were asked to fulfil.

As the HAP deployment was focused on the emergency aspect of the IDP crisis, it was difficult for designated staff members to have their colleagues devote the appropriate time to the tasks involved in completing the GSA. Many participants stated the only solution to this issue would be assuring senior country management buy-in from the very beginning. This was seen as a task that ought to be led by the Head Office of the INGOs and the HAP team.

### Outcomes & unexpected results

In terms of outcomes of the after action review and lessons learnt sessions, the summary findings are simply, the HAP roving team provided a strong support service to those agencies participating in the guided self-assessment process and various workshops held in

Colombo and Vavuniya. There were a number of areas, particularly outside the Vavuniya context, in which designated agency staff saw as possible opportunities for the HAP roving team to engage with beneficiaries and a broader agency base although these were beyond the remit of the terms of reference for the deployment.

Also as HAP, along with member agencies, ought to explore building on the success of seconding from a member agency, World Vision, in Sri Lanka. During this deployment, the benefit for the HAP team (administration sharing, gaining local knowledge, having an experienced aid worker on hand to provide advice and context information, etc) and the staff member from World Vision was clear. Most importantly, the secondment adds to the capacity of the particular agency involved but also at the end of the deployment, HAP leaves in-country a well trained local staff member to share her/his experiences in workshop facilitation, guided self assessment training and, more broadly, a strong understanding of the HAP Standard to share with peers.

This leads to the final point of this section, one area in which HAP needs to think more strategically, is how best to encourage agencies to establish a peer support group (or similar body). Although agencies may not recognise it at the beginning of a HAP deployment, experience shows they will call for it at the end. A PSG could be built-up during the deployment so that prior to leaving the country, the team are assured that the joint lessons learnt and the growing commitment to accountability and quality management is not lost as designated staff return to their daily work.

### Summary suggestions to consider

#### For ongoing humanitarian activities in Sri Lanka:

1. Emphasis should be placed on the delivery of culturally appropriate deliverables. Every effort should be made to ensure beneficiary input is sought to identify what is and isn't culturally appropriate and suited to current needs in the humanitarian response.
2. Given difficulties with access in the context, communication with government officials and the development of work to gain beneficiary participation in relation to NGO activities are critical (e.g. speaking with beneficiaries at communal kitchens, working through the Gram Sewaka). This may involve re-defining what is meant by participant for this context, and having regular dialogue internally to identify match changes in the context with changes in approach.
3. Needs assessment should be continuous or repeated frequently given the dynamic circumstances of intended beneficiaries. As much as possible means of seeking feedback on aid already delivered should also be actively identified, to continuously monitor how efforts are matching needs so that projects can be adapted accordingly.
4. Means of improving communication between Vavuniya and Colombo level should be sought in order to ensure common up-to-date understanding of the challenges of the current security situation in the camps, so that the agency can effectively respond to these changes.
5. Focus should be placed on responding to the needs of men and adolescent boys in the camps given that they are a potentially vulnerable group due to the current security situation.

6. Attention should be given to the induction and training of volunteers (and other front-line staff including drivers and field staff) who are often the 'face of the agency' from the perspective of project beneficiaries, so that they have basic awareness about the agency and the project, and what is expected of them as a volunteer.

#### For future deployments of the HAP Roving Team

1. Varied means of inter-agency learning and the sharing of practice on accountability and quality management should be identified to meet agency staff needs at country-level.
2. Local language versions of the HAP Standard are valuable, but take significant time to produce. Their production should be initiated as soon as possible during the preparation for a HAP deployment.
3. During preparation for a deployment, the HAP Team and focal points should emphasis increased between them and the and country offices to ensure adequate support for the agency staff who will participate in guided self-assessments and other activities.
4. Agencies who work through implementing partners should give special attention to preparation for interaction between their partner organisation and the HAP team.
5. HAP deployments should continue to foster the formation of partnerships between agencies responding to the humanitarian situation at hand.
6. For future deployments, ToR for the HAP deployment should be finalised 2 week after the beginning of the deployment, to allow for adjustments based on understanding gained regarding the current context after arrival.
7. Participating agencies should recognise that collaboration with the HAP roving team may require allocation of additional staff time and resources, but they can expect significant benefits to their organisation and mission on several levels.
8. The AAR was a high value activity for participating agencies and should continue to be conducted at the end of HAP roving team deployments.
9. The AAR should continue to be facilitated by someone familiar with the deployment activities, but separate from the HAP roving team staff.
10. Wide invitation to participate in the AAR or the whole deployment should be continued
11. The AAR methodology should be extended beyond a workshop, to ensure the views of other stakeholders (who may not be able to participate in a two-day workshop, but who have a stake in the deployment) are also represented.

## Appendix 1: What is an After Action Review (AAR)?

After Action Review is a meeting of involved stakeholders to reflect on an event or task they have recently accomplished. The purpose of the AAR is to learn from the group's experience in order to take the lessons learned into the next phase of activities, or to accomplish the group's task more effectively the next time it is done.

### How is an AAR different from a Post-activity review?

Many projects have some type of Post-activity audit or sign off report. However, the purpose of such a review is very different than an AAR. Post-activity audits are often evaluative or held for purposes of accountability. The purpose of an AAR is to turn knowledge into action, not to make judgements.

The goal is to bring together the collective thinking of all the people involved in the event or task so that the group can improve. A team could, of course, leave the task of improving its action to the team leader – but doing so might sacrifice the opportunity to garner the in-depth observations of those who actually carried out the task. AAR meetings build the shared understanding that is often critical to effective team action.

### Guidelines of the AAR

There are some important guidelines that need to be in place when the goal is knowledge and learning rather than evaluation, and these guidelines were implemented as a framework for this AAR.

#### *Facilitated*

AARs need to be facilitated, often by someone familiar with the activities of the team but outside of the responsibilities related to the deployment. The facilitator(s) is responsible to keep the discussion focused on the few critical questions.

The facilitators for this AAR:

- Reinforced the fact that it is permissible to disagree
- Emphasized that the focus is on learning
- Encouraged people to give honest opinions
- Used open-ended questions to guide the discussion
- Paraphrased, re-stated, and summarised the key discussion points
- Invited input from the HAP Roving Team members to establish the context, set the discussion parameters and to introduce scope of the deployment at the beginning of the AAR.

#### *Standardised format*

In order to be efficient the facilitators used a recognised format for the AAR – providing clarity about what is on the table and what should be left to other kinds of reporting on the deployment (post-deployment report, one-to-one agency feedback, etc). There was a focus on four questions:

- **What did we set out to do?** What the intended purpose was as expressed in the Terms of Reference (ToR)? What should have happened? Did the team and agencies have the same intent for the deployment?

- **What did we actually do?** There is no blame for changes or differences to the intended purpose. What went well and why? What can be improved and how? Look at the key events, chronological order or functions/roles?
- **What have we learned?** Focus on what we have learned, not what we will do next. What do we know now that we didn't know before? What strengths and weaknesses have we discovered? What advice would we give to someone starting out now?
- **What are we going to do?** Exactly who will do what and when? The objective being to sustain strengths and improve weaknesses.

#### *Everyone involved in the action participates in the AAR*

The information and ideas of everyone involved in the Sri Lankan deployment activities are necessary to get a full picture. Depending on the engagement level, someone may well have seen or been aware of some action or detail that others did not see. Invitations went out to all HAP member agencies in Sri Lanka, agencies with which the HAP Roving Team engaged, and a number of other stakeholders involved in the deployment. The intention of a wide invitation was to capture the essence and range of activities undertaken. When everyone is in attendance, it sends an important visual message about accountability – no one is so unimportant that he or she can avoid responsibility for what happened or didn't happen and everyone is responsible for helping the HAP Roving Team improve and work more effectively the next time.

Because AAR participants actively discover what happened and why, they often learn and remember more than they would from a critique or more formal evaluation.

#### *No Recriminations*

Facilitators made clear that the AAR was not a “find the blame” meeting. Rather, mistakes or failings would be treated as data to be taken into account in figuring out how to make the action more effective the next time the HAP Roving Team deploys.

#### *Flexibility*

One of the strengths of the AAR format is its flexibility. The facilitators were able to use key events and themes to structure the discussion, weaving context, management buy-in and HAP support into the discussion.

## Appendix 2: After- Action Review and Learning Workshop Agenda

**Location:** Renuka Hotel, Galle Road, Colombo 3

**Time:** 0900-1700

### Aims:

- To identify and share learning between participating agencies and other stakeholders
- To identify potential areas for inter-agency collaboration and resource sharing
- To clarify further action to which agencies are committed
- To identify learning for HAP International, including what worked well and areas for improvement
- To gain input from agency staff into the HAP Standard Review
- To formulate recommendations for future NEP deployments

### Facilitators:

Dr Jamie Munn- Research and Communications Manager, HAP International

Dr Mark Foran - Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (providing voluntary service to HAP for this event)

Wednesday, 14 October, 2009 (Lessons Learnt)	
9:00 am	<b>Introductions</b>
9:30 am	<b>Presentation from HAP Roving Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overview of the deployment</li> </ul>
10:00 am	Participants share a short summary on their interaction (guided self-assessment, translations, introduction sessions) with the HAP team in plenary session
10:45 am	Morning tea
11:00 am	<p><b>Agency specific Focus – What did we learn?</b></p> <p>Participants share key points that came out of their activities with HAP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the 3-4 key lessons learnt during your engagement in the HAP deployment? (Highlight key learning in relation to accountability, opportunities within the context, performance against the HAP benchmarks etc)</li> <li>2. What surprised you on these issues during the engagement?</li> <li>3. What are the challenges and opportunities in strengthening humanitarian accountability and quality in your work (focus more on internal ones).</li> <li>4. What advice would you give to others who are planning to do a self-assessment?</li> </ol> <p><b>Agency representatives should prepare their responses to the above questions prior to the AAR Workshop, and share a one page summary which will be circulated to all participants.</b></p>
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	<b>Summarise the highlights from the first session</b>
2:00 pm	<p><b>Assessing the impact –group discussions</b></p> <p>Participants highlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What immediate impact can you notice as a result of working with the HAP team?</li> <li>▪ What impact do you anticipate as a result of working with the HAP team?</li> </ul>
3:30 pm	Afternoon tea
3:45 pm	<b>Moving forward – agency specific and inter-agency actions</b>
4:45 pm	<b>Summary of Lessons Learnt Sessions</b>

Thursday, 15 October, 2009 (Deployment Review)	
9:00 am	<b>Recap of Lessons Learnt, Summary of Day 1 &amp; Introduction to Day 2</b>
9:30 am	<p><b>Summarising strengths of the HAP engagement and activities</b>  <b>Participants will asked for their responses on the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What did you find most useful from your experience with the HAP team?</li> <li>▪ Thinking back over your involvement with the HAP team what other types of support or alternative activities would have been useful?</li> <li>▪ How have you found working with the HAP Standard?</li> <li>▪ What might have the HAP team done differently to benefit your agency or the humanitarian community in Sri Lanka?</li> <li>▪ Were you adequately prepared or orientated prior to your work with the HAP team?</li> <li>▪ What specific issues came out from your engagement with the HAP team at programme and country-office levels?</li> </ul>
11:00 am	Morning tea
11:15 am	<b>HAP team feedback</b>
12:00 am	<b>Capture and summarise the morning activities</b>
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	<p><b>Introduction to the HAP Standard Review consultation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How have you used the HAP Standard (and Guide) in your work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What aspects did you find most useful?</li> <li>▪ What aspects did you find least useful?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. What general feedback do you have about the content, format and language of the Standard?</li> <li>3. Has or do you see ways that working with the Standard affects your relationship with the community?</li> </ol>
3:00 pm	Afternoon tea
3:15 pm	<p><b>Suggestions for changes to the HAP Standard</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What specific changes do you suggest in the current six benchmarks?</li> <li>2. What specific changes do you suggest in the requirements?</li> <li>3. What new benchmarks would you recommend be added, if any?</li> <li>4. Thinking of the Guide, what are your suggestions for improving the format and structure?</li> </ol>
4:30 pm	<b>Closing comments</b>