



Consultancy for HAP Commissioned Study: The Impact of Complaints and Response Mechanisms on Humanitarian programmes.

This is an excellent opportunity to undertake primary research in an emerging area of NGO quality and accountability. As an experienced researcher with a proven interest in humanitarian accountability, you already have in-depth knowledge of the issues surrounding aid effectiveness as well as some broad awareness of complaints and response mechanisms. In addition to at least five years experience as a researcher in the humanitarian sector (or related fields), you have worked with aid agencies, donors, academic institutions or civil society, and have demonstrated your ability to translate research into accessible knowledge. You are a first-rate communicator, with proven experience in managing your time wisely.

Terms of Reference

1. Background:

HAP International (HAP) is a partnership of humanitarian agencies dedicated to making humanitarian action accountable to its intended beneficiaries through self-regulation, compliance verification and quality assurance certification. In line with its strategic plans and to complement its capacity building, complaints handling and quality assurance services, HAP also contributes to research into the impact of the HAP Standard and certification scheme and the cost effectiveness of quality management in humanitarian action. Through this, HAP seeks to demonstrate to the “*humanitarian system*” more widely the potential for improving humanitarian outcomes through increased accountability, quality management and quality assurance.

2. The study and its contents:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of complaints and response mechanisms (CRM) on humanitarian programmes, including on the lives of disaster survivors. The study will contribute to the research agenda as outlined in the HAP 2007 – 2009 Strategic Plan. The core value driving our strategic plan is a simple one; *it is through the participation of intended beneficiaries of emergency relief programmes, that these programmes are delivered more effectively, more lives are saved, and the health, quality and dignity of peoples’ lives are improved.*¹ Although arguments are at times voiced and used to question the validity, feasibility or legitimacy of beneficiaries participating in programme development, implementation and monitoring processes, it is our firm belief that a robust programme includes full engagement with *all* stakeholders and must never exclude the most

¹ Stockton, N. (2007), ‘HAP 2007-2009 Strategic Plan’ [http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/hap-medium-term-strategic-plan-2007-v7\(1\).pdf](http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/hap-medium-term-strategic-plan-2007-v7(1).pdf) accessed on 2008-10-21

important – the survivors of disaster – even when that contribution takes the form of lodging a complaint against the agency and/or its staff.²

Accountability involves a two-way flow, a dialogue: it is about the right to have a say and the duty to respond. Being accountable to beneficiary populations requires that humanitarian agencies take account of their opinions, concerns, suggestions, and complaints. Most communication from disaster-affected people consists of advice and information, which agencies can adopt, challenge, or disregard as appropriate. By contrast, a complaint contains a specific grievance of a stakeholder who believes that a humanitarian agency has failed to meet a stated commitment. It is important to recognise that whilst responding to feedback may be optional, a complaint requires a response. Mishandled or unanswered complaints can often undermine community confidence and even compromise security.³

The right to complain and receive a response is an important part of being accountable, more so in a humanitarian context, where power imbalances abound. Complaints and response mechanisms present humanitarian agencies with significant opportunities to improve services and strengthen relationships with disaster survivors as well as to test their own assumptions of beneficiary community needs. With the inclusion of complaints and response mechanisms in the HAP Principles of Accountability, an explicit commitment has been made by HAP members in the effort to enable disaster survivors and other relevant stakeholders to report complaints and seek redress safely.

The study will provide a clear picture, via the collection and analysis of primary data, of the impact of complaints and response mechanisms (CRMs) on humanitarian programmes by addressing the following research questions:⁴

- *What impact have complaints and response mechanisms had on potential users, in particular on the lives of disaster-affected populations?*
- *What impact have complaint and response mechanisms had on the agency's staff and other relevant stakeholders?*
- *What impact has the introduction of CRMs had on the management (from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluation) and outcomes of humanitarian programmes?*

The study will take into account three of the Benchmarks in the HAP 2007 Standard (Benchmark 2: information dissemination; Benchmark 3: participation and informed consent; Benchmark 5: complaint-handling), with a particular focus on the impact of implementing Benchmark 5.⁵

3. Tasks & methods

² Here we are including arguments such as claims of tokenism and charges of unduly political correctness or language barriers and misjudgements of cultural sensitivities.

³ For more detail see The Guide to the HAP Standard, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2008) pp. 79 – 87; ‘Humanitarian Accountability: Key Elements and Operational Framework’, available at:

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/335-final-operational-framework.pdf>; Exploring Accountability in 2006’ available at: <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/hapexploringaccountability-oct20.ppt>; and ‘What is a Complaint mechanism?’ available at: <http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/259-What%20is%20a%20Complaints%20Mechanism.%20OWT%20presentation.pdf> accessed on 2008-11-12

⁴ Although these questions represent the research themes that the Secretariat is interested in addressing, it is likely that others will be negotiated with the Consultant at the being of the consultancy.

⁵ Full text of all benchmarks are available in the HAP 2007 Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard available at: <http://www.hapinternational.org/projects/publications.aspx>

The Consultant will be responsible for researching and writing the study as indicated above.

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods will need to be employed as will a variety of participatory methodologies and techniques. It is expected that the study will include a combination of desk research, primary stakeholder surveys (including on perceptions of disaster-affected populations), and in-depth interviews, involving both focus groups and individual appointments.

The consultant will also undertake field visits to two locations to collect relevant data; the specific countries will be identified by the consultant as part of the research process.

4. Timeframe and budget

It is expected that the consultant will submit to the HAP Secretariat a consolidated research plan within 10 days of signing the contract. A draft report will be submitted to the HAP Secretariat for feedback on 30 March. The Consultant will submit the final report along with all evidence collected to the HAP Secretariat on **15 April 2009**.

HAP International will pay the consultant a daily fee of 500 CHF for no more than 30 working days and reimburse other direct expenses within the available budget. An indication of this is provided below:

- Accommodation and subsistence in relation to maximum 20 days spent at project sites (4400 CHF).
- Airfare for 2 research trips to project sites (total of 3000 CHF)
- Insurance, local travel, supplies, and miscellaneous charges have been budgeted; details will be provided to the Consultant.

The consultant may also be requested to present the findings to the HAP General Assembly in Geneva on either the 5th or 6th of May 2009. This will be confirmed at a later date and expenses would be covered by the HAP Secretariat, separately.

Once the study has been accepted and approved, the HAP Secretariat will apply for an ISBN code and publish the report as a HAP-commissioned study, giving the author(s) full credit where appropriate.

5. Terms and Conditions:

- The Consultant will be contracted on a standard HAP consultancy contract.
- The HAP Secretariat will provide timely response to communication from the consultant. Any relevant available documentation will be shared accordingly.
- The Consultant will invoice HAP for no more than **30 working days**.
- Other relevant expenses will be reimbursed as **pre-approved** by the HAP Secretariat and within the available budget to be agreed at the start of the consultancy
- All HAP Consultants are requested to sign the HAP Code of Conduct:
<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/hap-code-of-conduct.pdf>

6. Application process

Applications are invited from experienced, qualified researchers with:

- Demonstrated familiarity with the international humanitarian system, knowledge of accountability and quality management issues, and experience of working with disaster-affected populations.
- Knowledge about the important concepts and methodologies that are involved in undertaking an impact research
- The ability to compile and report information in a clear, accurate and concise manner

Interested individuals or teams should submit (1) a draft proposal, including research methods, of max 700 words; (2) a current CV that highlights experience and publications relevant to the study; and (3) two relevant samples of writing to:

Lieske Pott Hofstede, HAP Human Resource and Office Manager by email on:
eph@hapinternational.org

Closing date: **06 January 2009**

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted no later than **20 January 2009**.