GUIDE TO A BASELINE ANALYSIS AGAINST THE HAP 2007 STANDARD

FOR AGENCIES UNDERTAKING A HAP INTERNATIONAL BASELINE ANALYSIS

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CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

These guidelines are for agencies that are preparing for a Baseline Analysis against the HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management (HAP 2007 Standard). The guide answers the questions:

- What is a baseline analysis?
- How can the baseline assist your agency?
- What is involved in the head office and programme site baselines?

It also clarifies the roles of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International (HAP) and outlines the responsibilities of your agency in the process.

The guidelines draw on two years of experience of using the HAP 2007 Standard in baseline analysis and certification audits. There are separate guidelines to assist agencies preparing for a certification audit, although the baseline analysis is partly designed to be a trial run for the certification process.

If you have comments or feedback on this guide please send them to: secretariat@hapinternational.org and mark as feedback on the Guidelines on the HAP Baseline Analysis.

ABOUT HAP INTERNATIONAL

Established in 2003, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership - International (HAP) is an international self-regulatory body for the humanitarian sector. HAP is a membership organisation. Its purpose is to achieve and promote the highest principles of accountability through self-regulation by members linked by common respect to the rights and dignity of beneficiaries. HAP's vision is a humanitarian sector with a trusted and widely accepted accountability framework which is transparent and accessible to all relevant parties.

HAP provides a range of training, advisory and capacity development services to members and other international agencies that seek to improve accountability to beneficiaries, including the Baseline Analysis. These are listed at www.hapinternational.org .

In addition, HAP certifies those members that comply with the HAP Standard, providing assurance to aid beneficiaries, affected communities, staff, volunteers, host authorities and donors that the agency is delivering on its accountability and quality commitments.

The HAP 2007 Standard was developed after extensive consultation with representatives of the humanitarian sector in many different countries including staff, donors, partners and beneficiaries. The Principles of Accountability (now p5 of the Standard) were developed first. However principles are hard to measure and are not a sufficient basis on which to assure quality. The benchmarks and requirements were developed as the means to verify compliance with the Principles of Accountability. They reflect what beneficiaries and other stakeholders agreed were the most important elements underpinning accountability and quality management.

In preparing for a Baseline Analysis it is important to understand that the HAP Standard forms the criteria against which agencies are being assessed. It is structured as follows:

- HAP Principles of Accountability (what HAP Members sign up to)
- Four Qualifying Norms – (agencies seeking to be certified must meet these)
- Humanitarian Accountability Covenant
    - Principles for humanitarian action
    - Declaration of additional interests
    - Working with humanitarian partners
- The HAP Benchmarks
    - Humanitarian accountability framework and quality management
    - Information dissemination
    - Participation in programme decisions
    - Staff competencies
    - Complaints handling
    - Continuous improvement.

For each Benchmark there are a small number of requirements. To be certified, agencies must demonstrate they meet, or are on the way to meeting, these requirements (19 in total).

The Standard sets out the evidence that auditors look for to verify compliance. The requirements also establish good practice expectations for each benchmark.

The Guide to the HAP Standard provides more detailed explanation of the standard, examples of good practice, and tools that agencies can use. Additional copies of the Standard and The Guide are available from HAP International – www.hapinternational.org .

WHAT IS A BASELINE ANALYSIS?

A baseline analysis establishes where an agency currently stands in relation to the HAP Standard. It is a stock take that helps the agency note and affirm existing good practices, learn about gaps and decide areas for improvement.

While it draws heavily on information provided by staff and other stakeholders, the involvement of an independent baseline facilitator provides an element of independence that would not be present in a self- assessment.

The findings and recommendations are contained in a report of the baseline analysis prepared by the facilitator. This gives the agency a basis for planning and decision making to improve accountability and quality management. For example, through developing a policy, improving monitoring systems, building capacity of staff or working to establish clear expectations of partners.

A baseline analysis is a recommended step in the HAP certification process. The methods used are similar to those that will be used by auditors undertaking a certification audit. In this way the baseline gives a step-by-step guide as to the changes necessary in preparation for certification, along with helping to prepare agencies in what to expect and what is required through the certification audit.

Components of the baseline – head office and programme site

The baseline analysis includes two components - a head office baseline and programme site baseline. Where it is a national agency with a head office and programme sites in the same country, the two processes are undertaken simultaneously.

The head office baseline is used to gather information on the agency as a whole – its governance and management systems, agency-wide policies, systems, decision-making processes and experience of practice in different programmes and countries. It provides an overview of the existing quality management systems and the agency intent and plans with respect to accountability and quality management.

The programme site baseline allows us to verify how policies, systems and practice work on the ground: what is known and adhered to; how projects are managed and delivered and how the agency's work is experienced by people receiving humanitarian assistance, affected communities and other stakeholders. It involves on-site work in the country office and one or more project visits where we speak with local partners, direct beneficiaries and other people of concern.

At head office and at the programme site we review documents, interview people and observe practice. Detailed guidance on processes used in the head office and programme site baselines is included below. (from page 12)

In the case of international NGOs, the process almost always commences with the head office baseline, with the programme site baseline undertaken as soon as is practicable afterwards. A separate report is written for each.

Tailoring the process for different agencies

Each agency is different. In formulating the baseline terms of reference, HAP will discuss what is the optimal process given the size, complexity, geographic presence and activities of the agency. In some cases HAP does a more detailed scoping exercise to clarify what process fits best the size, structure, roles and programme mix of the agency.

The majority of agencies are involved in development and humanitarian aid programmes and a decision needs to be made as to whether the baseline will include the whole agency or only its humanitarian arm. Increasingly, HAP's members are choosing to see the HAP Standard as having applicability across their humanitarian, development and advocacy work.

With each agency HAP discusses the most suitable approach to the baseline given the type of agency, its scope and structure. For example:

- In the case of national NGOs, the head office and programme site baselines are sometimes undertaken as a combined process leading to a single report.
- For a large international federation where the international body plays a coordinating role and members retain a high level of autonomy, HAP and the agency together decide whether to treat the federation as one agency or whether to undertake a baseline analysis of each member.

The Humanitarian Accountability Framework

We know that agencies already have values, principles and core commitments that guide their work in development and humanitarian aid. We also know they will have existing policies, systems and procedures that provide a way to manage and assure quality. These are the things that together make up an agency's quality management system.

Benchmark one requires that the agency develop a public Humanitarian Accountability Framework (HAF) which brings together in one place the core commitments for quality and accountability to beneficiaries and other stakeholders. This provides a way for the agency to include internal and relevant external codes and standards and to decide and communicate what is most important. Multi-mandate agencies, involved in development and humanitarian work sometimes refer to the HAF as their Accountability Framework (dropping "humanitarian"). The Guide to the HAP Standard includes a detailed section on the HAF- see page 19-29.

In summary, the HAF should convey:

- What accountability means
- Who are the key stakeholders
- The importance of accountability to beneficiaries
- What the agency promises in terms of quality and accountability (what can be expected by stakeholders)
- How the agency will assess whether it is meeting its commitments
- A commitment to continuous improvement.

Benchmark one also requires that the agency's quality management system enables implementation of its accountability framework. For this reason the baseline analysis not only reviews policy and practice against the HAP requirements. We also seek to understand and assess how the agency's quality management system supports the agency's HAF, which will be more comprehensive than the HAP benchmarks.

Developing a HAF is a qualifying norm under the HAP Standard. Requirements relating to developing, communicating and improving the HAF appear across the benchmarks. Given the centrality of the HAF, it is preferable that an agency has begun this work prior to a baseline analysis. HAP can assist this process in two ways:

- *Facilitating a workshop to get the agency started on its HAF*
- *Providing advice or briefings to key staff.*

Who will do the baseline?

All HAP baselines are undertaken by trained people. HAP allocates either one or two facilitators for each baseline analysis.

One facilitator will be nominated as the primary contact for the agency and take the lead role in negotiating terms of reference, advising on the process and writing the report. Both facilitators will be engaged in discussions, review of documents, observation and determining findings.

In appointing the facilitator we consider any potential conflicts of interest and where possible consider prior knowledge of the agency, the context and language.

Preparation for the baseline

The success of the baseline and its value for the agency depends on good preparation. The quality and accountability focal person and/or their delegated representative will play an important role at this stage in disseminating information, coordinating the development of schedules and collating documents. This section lays out the responsibilities and tasks that fall to the agency and those that HAP commits to.

What the agency needs to do

Taking the decision - Most agencies commit to a baseline when they enrol for certification against the HAP Standard. Accountability and quality are intrinsically agency-wide goals. The decision to enrol in certification, and thereby engage with a baseline analysis, should ideally be made by the head of the agency or Board, and have the commitment of the senior management team. At a minimum the decision to proceed with a baseline analysis must be endorsed by the head of the agency (CEO).

Timing –Choosing when to do it and over what period is a decision which lies with the agency. Timing will be affected by the agency's existing work commitments and readiness.

Allowing for its other commitments, the normal period taken by an international agency to plan, prepare for and complete the head office and one programme site baseline is between three and six months. This allows for a break after the head office baseline to review findings before the start of the programme site baseline. In cases where the head office and programme site baseline are combined, the process is completed within a shorter time frame.

Identifying responsibilities and authority for the process - Before embarking on a baseline, the agency should consider which parts of the organization will be included and who is going to have responsibility for different aspects of the process.

Providing documents to HAP – Once the terms of reference are signed, HAP requests documents and information required as evidence and background for the baseline. It is important that this is provided in a timely way (at least 10 days before the start of the baseline). To assist the agency organise the documents, and HAP to review them, we provide a format for listing the documents against the qualifying norms and benchmarks in the standard.

Communication with board and staff – The agency should take steps to ensure board members, managers and staff are aware of the baseline analysis, and have an understanding of its purpose. Staff who are going to be involved will need more information about the process so they know what to expect and how they can contribute.

Engagement of other stakeholders – The agency should also seek permission, brief and prepare any partner representatives and beneficiaries who will be involved. This is discussed further under the sections on preparing for the head office and programme site baselines.

What HAP will do

Terms of reference – When the agency requests a baseline analysis and nominates a time frame, HAP provides draft terms of reference for consideration by the agency. Once signed, this forms the contract with the agency. It will include information on responsibilities, cost and timeframes, in line with these guidelines and tailored to the agency.

Negotiating the schedule of interviews – Based on the information provided by the agency HAP will propose and negotiate a schedule of interviews and meetings.

Background reading and preparation – The baseline facilitators will review all of the documents provided by the agency and the website, to familiarise themselves with the agency and to identify evidence relevant to the HAP 2007 Standard.

HOW CAN THE BASELINE ASSIST YOUR AGENCY?

Value for the agency

The value of the baseline for the agency is in the learning it generates and the information base it provides for planning and decision-making. Agencies that have completed the baseline have observed the following benefits.

- It promotes awareness and understanding across different parts of the agency – of its own accountability and quality commitments and the HAP Standard.
- It provides a forum in which staff and other stakeholders can share information about good practice.
- It raises the profile of accountability to crisis-affected communities as distinct from accountability to donors and other stakeholders
- It helps the agency to see how accountability sits within operations, human resources, finance, communications, logistics and security.
- It allows for consideration of good practices in other agencies, as the facilitators share examples of how others do things
- Because the process includes feedback from beneficiaries, partners and staff, it helps make the case for using feedback and participative processes in an ongoing way
- The report provides a systematic picture of what is currently happening in relation to the 19 requirements and makes recommendations for improvements.

The baseline report also establishes what needs to be done before the agency could be certified against the HAP Standard. Using the report, the agency can decide a realistic timeframe and plan for moving toward certification. This plan could include what external support and assistance is needed to build capacity or address specific gaps.

Using outcomes of the baseline analysis

The findings and recommendations of the baseline can be used in four related ways:

- Planning and implementing changes that improve accountability and quality (policy, systems, staff development, practice tools, further action research)
- Revising the agency's HAF (Accountability Framework) or refining the implementation plan
- Planning the specific steps that need to be taken prior to undertaking the HAP certification audit (addressing corrective actions)
- Communicating findings and lessons across the organisation (especially country programmes).

Getting the most out of the baseline – tips

Agencies that have completed the baseline analysis suggest the following tips for other agencies preparing for the process.

✓ **Good preparation** - ensure staff are aware of what the baseline is, why it is being done and encourage them to raise concerns, ask questions and engage fully.

- ✓ **Engage senior management** in the decision making and planning for the process. This helps to establish their commitment to the ongoing improvement process that will need to be managed and supported beyond the baseline.
- ✓ **Appoint one or two people to work alongside the HAP baseline facilitators** as a learning process, and to ensure that some key staff have an overview of the information and ideas it generates.
- ✓ **Actively follow up the report** within two months of receiving it by making action plans and identifying strategies to address gaps and weaknesses identified.
- ✓ **Integrate the processes used** to review accountability commitments and plan for improvements into the agency's ongoing annual planning and review processes.
- ✓ **Arrange a training session** on the benchmarks that require attention immediately after the report is received (e.g. complaints handling or providing accessible information to affected communities). This will help engage staff in shaping and taking forward improvements to policy, systems and practice.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE HEAD OFFICE AND PROGRAMME SITE BASELINES?

The head office baseline explained

The head office baseline analysis involves:

- review of website and key documents
- an onsite visit of between two and four days involving:
    - assessment of the agency's HAF (accountability framework) - content, stage of implementation, accessibility and levels of awareness
    - identifying and assessing the extent to which the accountability and quality commitments are enabled through the agency's quality management systems
    - assessing status of compliance with the HAP standard – through documents, interviews and observation of systems and practice
- analysis of findings and development of recommendations
- preparation of a report with feedback from the agency
- follow-up meeting to discuss action on baseline recommendations, moving toward certification and HAP services that might be of assistance.

What documents should the agency provide?

The proposed list of documents required for the baseline is included at the end of the guidelines (page 23-24). It includes the information or documents required as background briefing and documentary evidence, mapped against different parts of the HAP Standard. Each agency will use different titles for key documents so the words used in the guideline may not exactly match those used in your agency.

In sending the requested documents to HAP we ask that the agency prepare a schedule using the template included in the guidelines. This allows for documents to be listed against each part of the standard. Some information and documents will be available on the agency's website. If this is the case show the content/document in the website column. Others should be provided on CD or USB stick and forwarded to the lead facilitator nominated in the Terms of Reference.

As far as possible we want the agency to limit the documents to those that have direct relevance to the benchmarks. We ask that references to sections and page numbers are provided if you have referred to a large policy or operations manual.

The initial schedule will be amended if additional documents are provided during the site visit.

The agency may choose to create a folder of hard copies for use on site by the baseline facilitators, or for their reference. In the interests of the environment, this is discouraged, although some older documents may only be available in hard copy.

Interviews with staff

During the head office site visit the facilitators will speak with staff representing all parts of the organisation. This includes the Director or CEO, senior managers and staff in programmes, communications, finance, human resources and administration. Interviews usually take 45 minutes to an hour. In small agencies the process can easily involve the majority of staff. In larger agencies we speak with representatives of different sections or talk with staff in teams or groups.

Interviewing staff from across the agency helps test assumptions and theories about what is known and how things are done. It allows for a deeper and more accurate understanding of how policies and systems are working and for staff to learn from each other in the process.

The facilitators focus the interviews on aspects of the Standard most relevant to each staff member's area of responsibility and what they are likely to have information about. The schedule of interviews negotiated with the agency will flag the discussion focus areas for each position so that staff know what to expect.

Staff do not need to prepare for the interviews as the baseline is about building a picture of current practice and knowledge in relation to the requirements of the Standard. Finding lack of awareness of a policy or different experience of how the policy is implemented is helpful. Recommendations can then be given to improve the policy or attend to inconsistencies in understanding or implementation.

Assessing systems for quality management

We use the document review and interviews to identify the processes and systems the agency uses to deliver on its accountability and quality commitments. Such systems may be agency wide or specific to humanitarian, development and other programmes. Mapping the existing systems ensures the facilitators do not recommend parallel or duplicate systems and that they can suggest improvements.

The agency's Humanitarian Accountability Framework (HAF) is the document that describes the agency's commitments and makes them public (Benchmark 1). While the primary focus of the baseline analysis is on the HAF Standard, where the HAF is documented, the baseline process can also support the agency to review how well its head office quality management systems currently support the HAF.

Core elements of any quality management system are:

- policies and procedures (programming, operations, communications, finance, HR, risk, security)
- plans and reports against them (organisation wide, programme, and project levels)
- risk matrices and register (global, country and project levels)
- templates and tools that support field work
- data bases - project monitoring, reports, knowledge management
- meetings – Management, teams and general staff meetings
- staff performance management systems
- governance processes and reports to the board.

During the site visit we look into the way some systems work in terms of access, functionality, consistency of application and whether they meet the requirements of the HAP standard. This includes:

- checking a sample of personnel files
- reviewing share drives and intranet facilities
- checking how financial data and reports are maintained
- review of data bases used
- storage and use of project, programme and management reports
- review of toolkits and other resources developed in support of practice.

These systems are not interrogated in detail but the review helps to verify information gained through interviews.

Interviews with partners

Where the agency works closely with international or national partners, it can be very helpful to include interviews with partners to see how they understand the agency's accountability and quality commitments and how they experience these commitments through the partner relationships.

In developing the schedule of interviews, agencies will be asked whether there are key partners that could provide input to the baseline process. At the head office level this might be a major donor, an operational partner or an organisation the agency is affiliated with.

How are the findings scored?

After collating and analysing findings from the document review, interviews and observation of systems and practice we arrive at one of three scores against the 19 requirements. Note it is the specific requirement not the overall benchmark that is scored. Requirements will be scored as:

Met – where the evidence from documents, interviews and practice observation align to demonstrate good practice against the requirement.

Partially met – where the agency might have documentary evidence but inconsistencies in practice or use of systems. Alternatively, the agency might have weaknesses in policy guidance but interviews and observation confirm good practice.

Not met – where there is very limited or no evidence that the requirement is being observed.

Presentation of preliminary findings

After the interviews are completed, the facilitators consider the findings and form a preliminary view about the results of the baseline. The findings are then presented at a meeting of managers and staff, with time allowed for discussion and clarification. It is ideal if all staff that have participated have a chance to hear the feedback first hand.

This meeting is followed by a short meeting with the Director/CEO, senior managers and the accountability focal point to discuss action needed and next steps.

The baseline report

The report is written and sent to the agency within three weeks of the baseline. The agency has the opportunity to comment before the report is finalised.

The style of report stays true to the goal of improvement and organisational development. It records findings against each part of the standard and a score against each requirement. The report includes recommendations for improvement based on ideas generated during the process and the experience of the baseline facilitators.

Where a qualifying norm or requirement is not met, the report identifies what steps need to be taken ahead of the certification audit. This helps the agency prioritise follow-up action in preparation for certification. Recommendations can be implemented over the longer term, as it will be difficult for agencies to act simultaneously on many fronts.

The report is structured as follows.

- Introduction to agency
- Summary of findings
- Detailed findings against:
  - Qualifying norms
  - Humanitarian covenant
  - Six benchmarks

The baseline analysis is not complete, however, without the programme site baseline where there is an opportunity to talk with country programme and field staff, local partners and beneficiaries. A separate report of the programme site baseline is provided to the agency together with a summary of the overall findings.

The programme site baseline explained

The programme site baseline analysis helps the agency assess accountability practice and quality management at the operational level. HAP works with a wide range of agencies. Some of these are not operational humanitarian or development agencies, for example humanitarian advocacy and international coordinating bodies. Some operational agencies work almost entirely through partners, others deliver through their own country offices and affiliates. Depending on the type of agency the programme site baseline may take different forms. For example:

- In the case of international agencies with country offices, we select one country office and visit one or two project sites.
- International agencies may also deliver programmes through national partners, in which case a partner in a given country is selected. The baseline is used to assess how the agency works with partners and how the partner in turn works with affected communities.
- National agencies may have regional offices or a number of project sites, and the process is tailored to their structure.

For the agency as a whole, the programme site baseline is used to test out the extent to which policies, systems and management processes enable its accountability commitments. While the findings may not be generalised absolutely, the programme site baseline will be instructive about improvements that could be made at an operational level across countries, programmes and project sites.

The process looks at practice from the perspective of staff and a sample of partners (where applicable) – identifying strengths, gaps and strategies for improvement. One of the most important elements is the involvement of affected communities and beneficiaries. The programme site baseline seeks to understand the experience of beneficiaries – whether they know who the agency is and what they can expect; how they are involved in planning and decision-making and whether and how they can raise concerns. It explores whether they experience the agency's work as good practice using the benchmarks and requirements as criteria.

The specific focus of the programme site baseline will vary depending on the type of agency, the way it is structured and how it works in the field. HAP will negotiate with each agency whether a programme site baseline makes sense and what form it will take. In most cases the process includes:

- document review – local policies and systems
- interviews with country office staff
- interviews with selected national partners
- one or two project site visits – this may include meetings with beneficiaries, other community representatives, local field staff and partners
- observation of practice – country office and project site
- meeting to provide feedback and preliminary findings – (project site and country office).

In the case of international agencies, the programme site baseline is usually supported by a staff member who was involved with the head office baseline, the manager with oversight of the country office and the programme officer with responsibility for the selected field trip. In the case of national agencies, the principle of providing some continuity from meetings with the main office and programme sites remains important. If there is an accountability and quality coordinator at the country level this person is important to involve, as they will have a key role in supporting change and follow-up.

Preparations – steps and responsibilities

Choosing a country

The location and timeframe of the programme site baseline is discussed at the end of the head office baseline as part of the action points meeting with management. The agency selects the country for the programme site baseline, with advice from HAP on factors to consider, as follows.

- The country/programme office is willing to be involved and is likely to see value in the process from their point of view.
- Its structure, programmes and ways of working are broadly representative of the wider agency.
- It is not the best or worst example in terms of likely findings and the way it is perceived by other offices.
- The office is not in crisis or under any major internal pressures at the proposed time, e.g. high turnover of staff and a number of current vacancies.
- There is willingness to share lessons from the baseline more widely in the agency.
- Where there are high security risks, the safety of agency and HAP staff can be managed during the process.

The agency is responsible for explaining the process to the country office and getting their agreement to be involved. This guide should be provided to the country office manager or programme lead person to assist their preparation.

Providing relevant documentation

The Terms of Reference will require the agency to provide relevant country or local documents.

Based on knowledge of the agency gained through the head office baseline, HAP will develop a tailored list of required documents mapped against the HAP standard for the country office manager to compile. The country office/programme site should be provided with the list of documents used in the head office baseline to avoid duplication of effort.

Documents should be provided at least 10 days before the commencement of the programme site visit.

The agency will also be asked to supply details of staff and partners and list of current projects to aid development of the programme site baseline schedule and selection of one or more project sites. This information should be provided well in advance so that preparations are completed in a timely way.

Choosing project sites within the selected country

As part of finalising the terms of reference, HAP will discuss with the country office or programme manager possible locations to visit as project sites. This decision is made by the agency, usually through the local manager in discussion with their head office. In selecting the project or programme field site to visit consideration should be given to the following criteria.

- The location has more than one project and the opportunity to consider different programme responses or approaches (e.g. emergency, resettlement, livelihood assistance or development initiatives).
- The location has involvement of field staff and local partners (where this is a method typically used by the agency).
- There is scope for engagement with beneficiaries and affected communities. An important part of the programme site baseline is the feedback we get from people directly affected by the emergency or crisis.
- The project sites are accessible. This includes consideration of distance, cost of transportation and security for agency and HAP staff.
- The logistics are manageable within the timeframe available. HAP facilitators usually spend an average of two days at project sites.
- The experience has good potential for learning - through raising awareness of accountability practice, sharing good practice within the agency and developing staff. Listening to the experience of peers can be motivating for others and a source of practical ideas for improvement.

Developing the schedule of interviews and meetings

Once the programme site or country is selected, HAP will draft a schedule for the visit as a basis for discussion. A programme site baseline usually takes between three and five days, although the process can take longer if travel and access to affected communities is difficult. Depending on the size of the programme and agency structure, a typical schedule might include:

Days 1-2

- Briefing all staff and clarifying details of the process
- Interview staff in country office (managers, programme staff, finance and administration staff)
- Practice observation
- Interview partners at country level

Days 3-4

- Travel to project or field site and brief local staff and partners
- Interview local staff and meet partners
- Meet with and interview beneficiaries and community representatives
- Feedback to local staff and partners and travel back to main office location

Day 5

- Complete any outstanding interviews or review of systems/documents
- Meet with staff to present preliminary findings
- Meet with relevant decision makers to discuss action.

Informing staff and assigning responsibilities

Country programme and field staff have extremely busy schedules and they may not, at first, feel the baseline analysis is a priority or that it will benefit them or the communities they are working with.

For their part HAP baseline facilitators will be sensitive to the needs of staff. They will try to balance the demands we make on staff time with a commitment to ensuring high quality and useful baseline process. Once on site, they will always communicate why they are there, what the process involves and how the baseline analysis can add value to their work and improve outcomes for affected communities.

However the success of the process also relies on good briefing and preparation of staff before the site visit. Preparation needs to begin at least one month prior to HAP facilitators arriving.

Head office staff should brief their country office managers about the baseline purpose, what will be required from the country office and what has been learned through the head office baseline analysis.

Country office managers should in turn prepare other staff for their involvement and responsibilities in the process. Specific tasks to be assigned are:

- Collating and forwarding documents
- Coordinating the schedule and negotiating times for interviews
- Informing partners and getting their agreement to be involved
- Meeting/s with affected communities at the selected project site to explain the process, invite participation and get their input how interviews are organised.

Interviews with staff

At the country office (international agencies) or head office (national agencies) we interview staff across management, programme, communications, finance and administration. During visits to project sites, we interview the project coordinator or manager and meet with local staff as a group. Where projects are delivered through partners, we meet with their staff or volunteers.

In small agencies it is often possible to see the majority of staff. In the case of large agencies we aim to meet with a selection of staff involved in different aspects of the programme.

As with the head office baseline, interviews are based around the HAP Standard and the agency's HAF (Accountability Framework). The schedule of interviews flags the areas of focus for different staff roles.

It is important that staff understand their views are important and that the purpose of the baseline is to gain an accurate picture of current performance against the Standard. This is an opportunity to discuss current practice, to establish strengths and weaknesses and plan for improvements based on feedback from everyone involved and guidance in the HAP Standard.

Staff will feel more comfortable in the process if:

- they see it as a process to assist the agency achieve better outcomes in affected communities
- they have any questions or concerns clarified (either before the facilitators arrive or through attending the initial staff briefing)
- they understand each staff member has something to contribute.

Involving beneficiaries and affected communities

An important part of the baseline analysis is asking beneficiaries how they perceive the work being done by the agency and its partners. HAP baseline facilitators will talk with beneficiaries and community representatives in ways that are appropriate to a particular community context or project, and take advice on this from the agency. Where possible we aim to use different methodologies, including:

- small focus group discussions with beneficiaries
- meetings with beneficiaries and other community members
- individual beneficiary interviews or interviews with households
- meeting with local representatives involved in with the project.

We aim to hear from different groups within the affected community – women, young people, older people and people with disabilities. HAP facilitators will look at what groupings and process makes sense in a given project in consultation with programme staff.

While project staff should accompany the facilitators to the field and introduce them to beneficiaries and community representatives, they should not be present in interviews and focus group meetings with beneficiaries. This provides scope for beneficiaries to be more open in sharing their experiences about the project.

Before the visit to communities, we rely on the agency to meet with the affected community to explain the baseline process and ask if they would consider participating. It is important that beneficiaries nominated to participate in the process understand:

- what the process is about – improving the way the agency works with and accounts to beneficiaries
- who is coming, what they hope to do and how long they will be in the community
- that it is not a needs assessment or consultation on what assistance they have received – rather, it is about what they know about the agency and how they work with communities (e.g. what information have they received, are they involved in project decisions, have they been treated with dignity and respect)
- that staff will introduce the baseline facilitators but not be directly involved in meetings and interviews
- that interpreters will be available to assist
- that information they give is confidential and will only be used by the agency to improve the way it listens to and works with communities.

The most important outcome of the preparatory meeting is to **get permission** to speak with individuals, households or small groups, and advice from them on how this is organised so it is not too disruptive.

Involving local partners

Humanitarian and development agencies define partners in various ways and most have different types of partners: implementing partners, partners collaborating or working alongside the project, donors and agencies they are affiliated to as part of networks (for example members of local ACT Forums).

The HAP Standard requires that agency's explain their accountability and quality management obligations as HAP standard bearers to their partners and seek ways to improve the partnership with respect to these commitments.

Relationships with partners may be at a country, programme or project level. By sending a list of projects and partners in the preparation stage, the lead HAP facilitator will be able to discuss with the country office manager which partners to include. The process will ideally include at least two partners. Where the agency works through local implementing partners we give priority to interviewing this type of partner.

It is preferable to interview partners where they work if this is practical. This means they may be interviewed during time spent at the country office or as part of the project site visit.

Interviews with partners look at each of the benchmarks and requirements in two ways - **how the agency works with partners and how the partners work with communities**. A primary consideration is how the agency supports its partners to enable them to be accountable to affected communities and to adopt good practice in relation to their accountability and quality commitments.

A briefing of partners by the agency before the interviews is very important. There are some key points to get across.

- The agency is the focus of the baseline analysis, **not** the partner.
- The aim is to understand the type of partnership and how it works.
- HAP will look at practice of the partner so as to understand what support has been provided to the agency in relation to its accountability and quality commitments and to raise partner awareness of standards for good practice.
- It is a learning process for the agency undertaking the baseline and for the partner.

Logistics and costs

The cost of the baseline is determined based on agency size and is normally decided through the terms of reference for the head office baseline.

Travel and accommodation

For the programme site baseline, HAP facilitators will organise their own international travel (visas, flights, health checks etc.). The agency may be asked for advice in relation to local airport and visa procedures and transportation to and from the airport.

During the programme site baseline HAP facilitators will meet their own costs (accommodation, meals, transport) while the agency is expected to meet its own costs associated with transport, meals and accommodation at project sites.

Although HAP meets its costs, we normally ask the agency to book local travel and accommodation because they are in the best position to assess options and coordinate the arrangements.

Interpreters

The agency should organise interpreters if they are needed for interviews with staff, partners and/or affected communities. It is preferable not to use agency staff as this can make it hard for interviewees to be honest in their feedback about the agency's work. Local people or staff from another agency can be used where they have appropriate language skills. It may be necessary to pay for interpreter services. Any such payment should be in line with the agency's normal policies and practice and discussed with HAP prior to engaging the interpreter. HAP will reimburse any such reasonable costs.

Security

If the programme site baseline is in a country or area where there are high security issues, HAP will expect the agency to provide information on the security arrangements that will be made to keep HAP and agency staff safe during the process. HAP reserves the right to make its own assessment of these security arrangements and to form a view about whether the baseline can proceed, or about any aspect of the baseline - for example, timing, communities included in the process, style of accommodation and mode of transport.

Feedback on findings

HAP baseline facilitators will provide feedback on baseline findings at two stages.

- At the close of the project site visit local staff and partners are invited to a meeting to share findings from discussions in the field and to clarify next steps in the process. This feedback focuses on strengths as well as areas of practice that could be improved. This might be based on feedback from the affected community or on interviews and observations of the working relationship between the agency and its partners. Where appropriate HAP facilitators use this opportunity to share examples of good practice from elsewhere and suggestions for improvements based on the HAP standard or agency-wide guidance.
- As a final step in the programme site baseline, the HAP facilitator/s will present the preliminary findings and provide country or central programme staff with an opportunity to clarify issues or discuss lessons from the process.
- This meeting will be followed by discussion with the relevant agency decision makers on action points and next steps.

The programme site baseline report

The programme site baseline report follows the same format as the head office report. It is for the specific use of the country or programme office but is also used in conjunction with the head office baseline to provide a more rounded picture of policies, systems and practice of accountability and quality.

Recommendations are directed in two ways – to the country office itself and to head office. It differentiates those improvements that can be managed at the programme level from actions that may need to be taken by agency head office (e.g. where policy enhancements or new practice guidance are needed). The report seeks to highlight experience and lessons that can be shared.

The draft report will be completed within three weeks of the baseline or as specified within the terms of reference. The country office and the attending representative from head office will have an opportunity to comment on a draft of the report before it is finalised.

LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS - HEAD OFFICE BASELINE

In the table below please list the documents that you are submitting in support of the Baseline Analysis against the HAP Standard. Please note:

- You may not have all of these documents – just list what you have
- If the document is on your website you do not need to copy it, but do identify by ticking the column to show there is information on the website.
- If the policy guideline is part of a manual, it may be easier to provide the whole manual. If this is what you decide to do please reference by page or section the relevant policy
- We may request some additional documents on site where these are identified by staff as important.

Section of HAP Standard	**Documents or information for review**	**Supplied on CD or USB** Name of document and reference if in Policy Manual or Operations Manual	**Available on the web** Tick if applies
HAP Accountability Principles	Agency Accountability Work Plan (HAP members)		
Agency profile	Vision, mission and values Current strategic plan Annual report for previous year (narrative) Overview of programmes and countries Agency governance and membership structure Staff organigram or list		
Qualifying norms	Certificate of registration Statute/Constitution Audited financial reports for last two years Accountability Framework (HAF)		
Benchmark 1 **Quality Management** (The HAF will also be relevant here)	Operational plan (agency and/or humanitarian programme) Guidelines on monitoring and evaluation Risk assessment – risk analysis matrix and/or policy Agency-wide toolkits or templates used in programme management		

Benchmark 2 **Information to stakeholders**	Policy guideline on information dissemination and/or communication (refer to section if in manual) Example communication strategy at field level Case study or example from report that describes information provision to beneficiaries		
Benchmark 3 **Participation**	Policy guideline on participation (refer to section if in manual) Example to show how participation is reported on Case study or example from project evaluation		
Benchmark 4 **Staff competency**	Policy guidelines ▪ staff recruitment ▪ performance appraisal ▪ staff induction ▪ staff development Status with People in Aid (if applicable)		
Benchmark 5 **Complaints handling**	Complaints Handling Policy (refer to section if in manual) Policy on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse Whistle blowing policy Staff complaints or grievance policy/procedure		
Benchmark 6 **Continuous Improvement**	Copy of any relevant reviews or evaluations Policy or system for learning and knowledge management Reports generated from reviews or membership of other quality and accountability initiatives		
Working with partners	Policy on partnerships List of partners Template or examples of partner agreements		