



**Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International**  
**9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly,**  
**held 12 & 13 May 2011,**  
**at the MIE2, Chemin de Balexert, Geneva, Switzerland**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

**1.1 Welcome from the Chairman of the Board**

The Chair of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), Antonio Donini of Tufts University, welcomed all the participants, and introduced the new Executive Director, Angela Raven-Roberts, who took up her post with HAP in March. He highlighted the rapid growth of HAP – since the last General Assembly, and four more new members currently under consideration. United Nations involvement in accountability to beneficiaries is increasing, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is focusing attention on the issue. Our challenge as a partnership is to ensure we use the current interest and opportunities to further the work, and to find the necessary finances to fund the work. The Chair ended by thanking Katharina Samara-Wickrama and Barb Wigley for their hard work taking over the reins after the departure of the previous HAP Director.

**1.2 Welcome from the Executive Director of HAP**

Angela Raven-Roberts welcomed the participants, and said how honoured she felt to be selected to work with the hardworking secretariat and important membership of HAP. As a way of introducing herself, she mentioned four individuals who have been an inspiration in her life: Sergeant Biru of the Ethiopian Red Cross, Fatuma Ado, Deputy-Chair of Afar Region Zone 5 in Ethiopia, Catherine Hamlin, founder of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, and Abraham Verghese, medical ethicist and author of *Cutting for Stone*. She explained that these are the people who taught her and inspired her on the importance how to engage in ‘field-craft’ the importance of commitment, empathy and solidarity as principals of how to engage with communities– the same qualities that are the key for the HAP partnership in engaging with the communities we are working for.

**2. Adoption of the agenda for the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

The agenda was adopted.

### **3. Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, held 6 & 7 May 2010**

#### **3.1 Approval of the minutes:**

The minutes were approved with one correction, as follows:

Page 7 Section 10 The First Draft of the 2010 HAP Standard: CARE International clarified that it was a field review commissioned by the Emergency Capacity Building Project which highlighted the need for improved coherency between the SPHERE common standards and the HAP standard.

#### **3.2 Matters arising:**

Minute 11 Policy and Governance Proposals (a) Standard Review: The HAP Board approved the revised Standard and it was published in January 2011.

#### **3.3 Treasurer's report:**

This report was given by Rein Paulsen, Board member, in the absence of the Board Treasurer, John Mitchell. He presented the 2010 audited accounts as summarized in the 2010 HAP Secretariat Report. He noted that revenue from institutional donors was around CHF 300,000 less than in 2009. There was a net loss of CHF 271,652 in 2010, leading to a decline in reserves to CHF 291,993. The strength of the Swiss franc affected the value of donations relative to expenditure. The number of HAP members increased, but cost recovery was not as high as predicted, although demand for services did begin to increase in the last quarter of 2010. Rein noted that it was a challenging year of transition for the Secretariat, and praised Pascale Guillot's management of the accounting function within the HAP secretariat.

The General Assembly then approved the 2010 audited accounts.

Rein then shared his reflections on the financial situation in 2011. He pointed out that the current financial climate has caused problems for all agencies in the humanitarian field, including HAP. HAP's current financial situation is not stable or secure. The Board has been looking at the issue, and the Secretariat has made and is making great efforts to raise funds. Rein encouraged the membership to help look at ways to improve the sustainability of HAP. The Board has identified as priorities expanding the institutional donor base, widening the grant pipeline (especially core funding), revising the cost recovery structure so that it reflects more accurately the real costs of the services being provided (whilst ensuring that they continue to be affordable to the smaller organisations), and changes to the membership dues. Larger organizations and institutional donors will see a small increase in their annual membership dues.

##### **3.3.1 Discussion of Treasurer's Report:**

**3.3.1.1 Overlapping mandates of quality and accountability agencies:** Frustration was expressed at the need for organizations to pay membership dues to several different quality and accountability networks with overlapping mandates. HAP was encouraged to work with the others to seek coherence, thereby also achieving cost savings for all involved.

- 3.3.1.2 HAP's environmental costs:** HAP was asked to consider its carbon footprint, and thus produce accounts which include the environmental costs.
- 3.3.1.3 Fundraising strategy:** HAP was asked to share its fundraising strategy with its members to facilitate practical collaboration by members with their donors. Rein affirmed that HAP was intending to increase visibility to leverage the strong relationships members have with key donors, and to seek help from members to access donors that HAP has not approached before.
- 3.3.1.4 Threat to HAP's reserves:** It was pointed out that if this year is like 2010, there would be a threat to the reserves that HAP had carefully built up.
- 3.3.1.5 Joint fundraising possibilities:** People In Aid shared information about joint fundraising possibilities. People In Aid is putting together a proposal to a new donor, which includes a joint research agenda with HAP, and possibly also for certification.
- 3.3.1.6 Member fundraising for accountability support:** PiA further suggested that members consider including in funding proposals to institutional donors a budget for accountability support, and then contract HAP and People in Aid to deliver the services.
- 3.3.1.7 Economies by HAP Secretariat:** Several members asked how the HAP Secretariat will tighten its belt to ensure that expenditure is not higher than income. Rein confirmed that the Secretariat is looking to see how it can reduce costs, but it is already operating under significant pressure and understaffed, particularly in view of the rapidly increasing numbers of members.
- 3.3.1.8 Advice from HAP members welcomed:** Angela Raven-Roberts thanked the participants for their advice and offers of support and help. She confirmed that she would welcome any further suggestions, and underlined the fact that the Secretariat is currently in a contingency planning mode because of responding to delays in promised funding from some donors, the exchange rate situation and changes in other donor funding priorities for 2010/2011.

## **4. Announcement of nominations: Board members**

### **4.1 Nominations**

Nine nominations were received, and are listed below. In all but one case, a representative from the nominating organization spoke briefly about their nominee. Polling opened at the beginning of the lunch break and ended at 1:30 pm, and the results were reported in the afternoon (agenda item 8).

#### **4.1.1 Representatives of humanitarian beneficiaries**

- Agyedho Othwonh Bwogo
- Esther Mujawayo-Keiner
- Godfrey Lokuju Peter
- Farah Shukri Osman
- Selvadarshini Thevanesan Cross

#### **4.1.2 Persons of high standing**

- Elizabeth Ferris
- Randolph Kent

- Jemilah Mahmood
- Chris Kaye

## 4.2 Responsibilities of independent members

It was noted that the role of the independent members is to bring a variety of perspectives into the Board's deliberations and to challenge the Board when necessary.

## 5. Proposed changes to the HAP Statutes

### 5.1 Proposal 1:

**5.1.1 Proposal and purpose:** It was proposed that the membership obligation of producing an accountability work plan soon after joining HAP be dropped, and that the annual reporting requirement for full members be against an accountability framework, in line with the agreed structure as outline in the HAP Standard requirement 1.1.

The purpose of this change is to streamline the process for new HAP members. If an agency decides to go for certification at some point, the Accountability Framework will provide a stepping-stone. HAP will advise organizations on the development of the framework.

### 5.1.2 Voting and resulting specific changes of wording to the Statutes

After discussion and clarifications, full members voted on this and the amendment was passed with 32 votes for, 2 against and 0 abstentions.

Wording of the Statutes will therefore be changed as follows:

#### **Article 16 point 4**

"Ensuring HAP International objectives are implemented (for instance, but not exclusively, monitoring full member compliance with their *accountability work plan*, reviewing complaints as per the complaints procedures)."

**Change to be made:** "accountability work plan" will be replaced with "their membership obligations".

#### **Article 20 point 4**

"Describe how it intends to implement HAP International's Accountability Principles and the time-frame (the accountability work-plan)."

**Change to be made:** This point will be deleted.

#### **Article 22 point 1**

"Self-monitor and self-report on their implementation of the HAP International Accountability principles at least annually."

**Change to be made:** This point will now read as follows:

“Develop an Accountability Framework in accordance with the HAP Standard requirement 1.1 within the first annual reporting cycle and regularly monitor its performance against this.”

### **Article 23 point 1**

Members submit a report to HAP International each year on their implementation of *the accountability principles*.

**Change to be made:** “the accountability principles” will be replaced with the wording “their Accountability Framework”.

## **5.2 Proposal 2:**

**5.2.1 Proposal and purpose:** It was proposed that reference in the Statute to the Principles of Humanitarian Accountability is replaced by reference to the HAP Standard.

This is to ensure that the procedures and processes of HAP can continuously keep abreast of the latest versions of the HAP Standard. This has evolved since HAP was first set up, when the accountability principles were put together before the first Standard. Now the Standard is the instrument, which expresses the principles, and we are all working against the Standard rather than directly against the principles.

### **5.2.2 Voting and resulting specific changes of wording to the Statutes**

A vote was held, and the proposal was passed with 37 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

Wording of the Statutes will therefore be changed as follows:

### **III-HAP International Vision and Mission, Article 4**

“The purpose of HAP International is to achieve and promote the highest *principles of accountability* through self-regulation by members linked by common respect for the rights and dignity of beneficiaries.”

**Change to be made:** “principles of accountability” to be replaced by “standard of accountability”.

### **IV Objectives, Article 5**

“The objectives of HAP are:

- 1) To develop and maintain *principles of accountability to beneficiaries* through research, consultation and collaboration;
- 2) To support members and potential members of HAP International *in adhering to the principles of accountability to beneficiaries* by providing training and advice;
- 3) To communicate, advocate, promote and report *on principles of accountability*;
- 4) To monitor and report on implementation of *HAP International’s principles of accountability to beneficiaries and to accredit* its members accordingly;”

**Wording will change to:**

- 1) To develop and maintain *the HAP Standard* through research, consultation and collaboration.

- 2) To support members and potential members of HAP International *in applying the HAP Standard* by providing training and advice;
- 3) To communicate, advocate, promote and report on *the HAP Standard*;
- 4) To monitor and report on implementation of *the HAP Standard and to certify its members accordingly.*”

#### **Article 14 Role of the General Assembly point 4**

“Reviews regularly HAP International accountability principles.

#### **Wording will change to:**

“Reviews the HAP Standard regularly.”

#### **Article 20 Application by new members, point 3**

“State that the organization undertakes to implement HAP International’s Accountability Principles or other such Accountability Principles as the membership determines.”

#### **Wording will change to:**

“State that the organization undertakes to implement the HAP Standard.”

### **5.3 Proposal 3:**

#### **5.3.1 Proposal and purpose**

The proposal was for the membership obligations to be expanded to include a requirement to have – or, otherwise, develop – a Staff Code of Conduct within a stipulated timeframe, which specifies prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. It must be included in the agency’s accountability framework and annual progress report to HAP.

The purpose of the proposed change is to ensure that HAP members actively commit to managing the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by their staff through implementing a Code of Conduct, which specifies sanctions, and through setting up a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with the Code. At present, HAP does not require members to have such a Code (except for certified members).

#### **5.3.2 Rewording of the proposed amendments**

Following considerable discussion, a small group worked on refinements to the wording of this amendment, to make it clearer. They then proposed the following:

#### **Article 20**

#### **It is proposed that a new requirement be added, as follows:**

*8. State that the organization has a staff code of conduct that prohibits sexual exploitation and abuse, or undertake to develop, through dialogue with its staff, partners and other stakeholders, a draft Code of Conduct within six months of membership. The code of Conduct should include:*

- *the responsibility of staff to report abuses,*
- *being sensitive to local culture;*
- *management’s responsibility to create and maintain a safe environment;*
- *the consequences of not adhering to the Code.*

## **Article 22**

**It is proposed that a new requirement be added:**

*5. All members report annually, as part of the annual reporting cycle, on the implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct and other PSEA measures.*

### **5.3.3 Results of the vote**

A vote was held on the redrafted amendment (text above), and agreed with 29 in favour, 3 against and no abstentions.

## **5.4 Proposal 4:**

**5.4.1 Proposal and purpose:** The proposal was to revise the full membership criteria in the HAP Statutes to allow quality and accountability initiatives and donors (who may join HAP as associate members) to be elected to the HAP Board.

### **5.4.2 Voting and resulting specific changes of wording to the Statutes**

A vote was taken and an amendment passed, with 34 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

Wording of the Statutes will therefore be changed as follows:

### **Article 10 Rights of Associate Members**

“Associate members are:

- 1) Entitled to attend general meetings of HAP International and speak
- 2) Able to participate in committees and working groups of HAP International if invited to
- 3) Entitled to lodge proposals
- 4) Entitled to nominate persons to stand for election to the Board

They are:

- 5) Not entitled to vote at general meetings
- 6) Not eligible for election to the Board.”

**Wording will now be changed, as follows:**

“Associate members are:

- 1) Entitled to attend general meetings of HAP International and speak
- 2) Able to participate in committees and working groups of HAP International if invited to
- 3) Entitled to lodge proposals
- 4) Entitled to nominate persons to stand for election to the Board
- 5) *Eligible for election to the Board if they are a quality and/or accountability initiative or a donor to an organization whose core activities include humanitarian action.*

They are:

- 6) Not entitled to vote at general meetings
- 7) Not eligible for election to the Board *unless they meet the criteria of Article 10 paragraph 5, above.*

## **6. Voting opened for elections of independent members to the Board**

## 7. 2010 Full Members' Annual Reports

### 7.1 **Toireas Nibhriain, Concern Worldwide, Dublin**

Toireas shared the experience of Concern Worldwide in undertaking the HAP certification process over the past eighteen months. A member since 2007, Concern decided in 2009 to seek certification for both their humanitarian and development programmes.

For Concern, accountability was not an add-on, but to be integrated into project cycle management as a programme quality issue. In some countries, additional resources of staff and time were provided, as focal points were needed. Kenya was the pilot for a baseline analysis, observed by senior programme staff from five other countries, who then carried out a baseline analysis for their own programmes. Staff were trained in the HAP standard over two days prior to each baseline survey. Challenges included developing country-specific accountability frameworks, and strengthening accountability when working with partners.

Concern was successful in achieving the HAP certification in June 2010.

### 7.2 **Samina Khan, Sungi (Pakistan)**

Sungi was established in 1989 in Pakistan and registered as an NGO in 1990. They became a HAP member in 2007, and have just successfully completed the HAP certification process. Samina explained how the involvement with HAP has given Sungi a mechanism to strengthen its policies, systems and procedures to ensure accountability.

Samina also gave suggestions as to how accountability might be improved with respect to local organizations, as follows:

- Local language interpretation offered at cluster meetings;
- Prompt allocation and approval of funds in emergencies;
- Capacity building to increase number of trained humanitarian professionals in the south, including strengthening of training options offered through local colleges/universities;
- Core funding by donors would help local organizations retain good staff members.

## 8. Results of election for independent Board members

From a total of 38 ballots, the following were elected:

**Representative of humanitarian beneficiaries:** Esther Mujawayo-Keiner (thirteen votes)

**Person of high standing:** Elizabeth Ferris (eleven votes)

## 9. 2010 Members' Annual Reports

Members shared these in small groups, highlighting their achievements, challenges and learning.

## 10. Annual Reports Plenary Session

Note: Agency-specific annual reports are available on the HAP website.

Here follows a summary of the feedback from the discussions by the five small groups on their challenges and successes in implementing the HAP Standard in 2010, and their views on the potential for peer support between member organizations on accountability issues.

### 10.1 **Challenges:**

- **Costs** – of staff, training, time out from other activities, and not just a one-off cost, the issue has to be kept alive as new people join and others forget. The challenge of convincing donors to fund these costs.
- **Integrating accountability work with existing policies and procedures:** Getting colleagues to understand that this is an integrated approach. Time is needed for a change/improvement to the machinery of an organization and to people's mindsets. There is a need to build momentum, and keep accountability as a priority, yet there are lots of priorities competing for time and attention.
- **Translating global standards into local delivery** - especially when working through partners. There is sometimes a perception that this could be a northern agenda we are inflicting. Partners may have their own code of conduct, and resist having a different one imposed.
- **Different agendas** - of organizations, donors, government and beneficiaries. Sometimes the local government has a plan, which is not supported by the population, and the organization can get caught in the middle.
- **Complaints response mechanisms** – setting these up is a particular challenge for new members. Dealing with the potential for misuse – for example, in Haiti, gangs tried to use the complaints response mechanisms to manipulate the agencies.

### 10.2 **Successes:**

- **Complaints response mechanisms:** Some members have been able to set up complaints response mechanisms with clear parameters, respectful of local situations – one organisation has even set up a centralised database to track complaints.
- **Linking the accountability agenda to the organisation's core values** – to make it clear that it is not something new and different, but all part of one process.
- **HAP membership for partners:** Christian Aid and others have enabled their partners to become HAP members.

- **Regional advocacy for accountability:** There have been successes in bringing people together to advocate in regional settings. Important messages around accountability are getting out in this way.
- **Impact at programme level:** Examples: In Haiti, the community asked for money instead of kitchen sets, and the programming was changed accordingly leading to a successful outcome. In Ethiopia, a complaints response mechanism uncovered corruption in allocation of services. Once this was realized, the issue was successfully addressed.
- **Capacity building workshops:** Help the organization to focus and provide a meaningful way of keeping accountability on the agenda.
- **Using new media:** Using Twitter and Facebook in advocacy projects, beneficiary consultation and feedback strategies. This is a democratic means of communication, and provides an opportunity to build in accountability structures from the start. Libby Powell of Medical Aid for Palestinians offered to share their experiences of this directly with any interested HAP members.
- **Accountability working groups in emergency responses:** A good way of getting these types of discussions to practitioners.
- **Pilots:** Piloting work at local level where people are receptive to the ideas, and using this as a way of spreading the message – bringing staff from elsewhere to look at the successful pilot. This is easier to implement in a new emergency, as people can be more open-minded in such circumstances. It is more difficult to change ongoing programmes.
- **Getting buy-in from senior management:** Country Directors are absolutely key - without their involvement, there will be no progress.
- **Funding:** Putting money behind accountability is very important. One large agency directs 2% of all programme funding to accountability.
- **Accountability to vulnerable groups:** Mainstreaming disability and accountability. Patients' charters.

### 10.3 Potential for peer support

- **Complaints response mechanisms:** Concern & CAFOD, amongst others, have put a lot of time and thought into complaints response mechanisms, and have examples, which can be shared.
- **Joint training workshops and complaints response mechanisms:** Many HAP members are working in the same locations. Training for Country Directors can be done jointly, as well as complaints response mechanisms. This would lead to economies of scale.
- **Information sharing:** Documents can be shared, discussions can be held by phone or skype, tools and models can be shared – there could be an opt-in email list of focal points (to share ideas, including talking through HAP processes themselves), or an on-line platform.
- **Rapidly evolving emergencies in conflict situations:** International Medical Corps recounted their challenges in seeing how best to be accountable to beneficiaries in

their work providing medical treatment for victims of the current conflict in Libya. They stressed that they would welcome advice from colleagues with experience in such settings.

- **Latin America:** HAP has no Latin American organizations as members, but peer support could still be possible because a number of HAP members based elsewhere have programmes in Latin American countries.

#### 10.4 Discussions

- **Knowledge management system:** It was suggested that this might be better than an email list, given the volume of emails we all have to handle these days. It was further suggested that the quality and accountability initiatives consider the possibility of having a shared knowledge management system. Smruti Patel pointed out that there is currently a shortage of capacity in HAP to do quality control for such a system, but that HAP does put information from members, once checked, onto its website. HAP will also shortly add a “wiki” page to its website.
- **Accountability research agenda:** With help from members, HAP has developed some good relationships with academic institutions, including the University of Copenhagen, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the University of Manchester. The University of Manchester is making HAP’s new Executive Director an Associate Fellow. It is intended that they should have PhD students researching accountability in emergency situations. HAP is also looking to make stronger connections to universities in India and across Africa. Part of the work of capacity building is to help develop the research capacity of the disaster-affected countries. HAP would welcome members’ input into their research needs around accountability, as well as their involvement in hosting PhD students to do their research. The HAP Chair encouraged HAP members to consider participating in the upcoming world conference of the International Humanitarian Studies Association, which will take place at Tufts University from 2 to 5 June this year.

#### 11. HAP Board office bearers

The Board proposed the following as the new office bearers:

- Chair: Matthew Carter (CAFOD)
- Deputy Chair: Lisa Henry (DanChurchAid)
- Treasurer: Rein Paulsen (World Vision)

No other candidates were proposed, and the above individuals were elected.

#### 12. The 2010 Secretariat Report

The 2010 Secretariat Report was introduced through presentations by the three teams in HAP, as follows:

##### 12.1 **Regulatory Services - Katharina Samara-Wickrama**

Who knew that penguins can fly? Katharina shared a YouTube video clip of penguins taking flight and drew a memorable parallel with the great potential of the accountability movement.

Highlights of 2010 for Regulatory Services were:

- **Training of independent auditors in the HAP certification system:** Nigeria, Kenya, Ireland, UK and Pakistan are now covered, and another cohort will be trained in 2011. This gives enhanced credibility to HAP certification. HAP is also working on a memorandum of understanding with Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan for the coordination of an accountability group and provision of auditors.
- **Certifications:**  
New: Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan, COAST Trust, CONCERN Worldwide, and Sungi.  
Re-certifications: Danish Refugee Council and OFADEC Senegal.

## 12.2 Membership Services – Smruti Patel

Highlights of 2010 in Membership Services included:

- **Training workshops in India, Lebanon, Kenya, Norway, Bangladesh and Ethiopia** – 200 staff members of agencies were involved altogether and 400 beneficiaries.
- **Broadening of language options for training** – training is now available in English and French. Also, in Lebanon, trainers have been trained to deliver HAP training courses in Arabic (and all the materials have been translated into Arabic).
- ***Change starts with us, talk to us!* report published:** Independent research commissioned by HAP and authored by Corinne Davey, Paul Nolan and Patricia Ray on effectiveness of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian aid workers. This report will help determine the direction of the work of the HAP membership on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

## 12.3 Programmes

### 12.3.1 Barb Wigley, Programmes Coordinator

- **Deployments:** There were four deployments of the roving team last year – Haiti, Dadaab (Kenya), Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan. Former team member, Emily Rogers, joined Catholic Relief Services to stay in Haiti, and new team member, Gregory Gleed (formerly an intern with HAP), was recruited.
- **Baseline analyses:** Demand for baseline analyses increased during the year – Jamie Munn joined the team as organizational development adviser.
- **Secondments:** Secondments to the team offered a new and exciting way of working with members. In 2010, HAP was assisted by Elie Gasagara (World Vision Kenya), Lies Dewaleff (Reseau National des Droits Humains - RNDDH) and Rita Mamai (LWF Kenya).
- **Advocacy work and collaborations:** Worked on building up advocacy work, looking at influencing the cluster system and feeding into the system at different levels. Developed collaborations with the Communication with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC) and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

### 12.3.2 Maria Kiani, Roving Representative

After giving a presentation with more details about the deployments in Dadaab and Pakistan, Maria took the opportunity to emphasize that the aim of the roving team is to provide support to the agencies tailored to the context and environment, according to what the needs of the members are. The members, as hosts, determine what the HAP team does, and the feedback and input of the membership is greatly valued by the team. The Roving Team is heading back to Dadaab in mid-May, and then may be deployed to Libya and/or Côte d'Ivoire.

## 12.4 Discussions

- 12.4.1 HAP self-reflection:** HAP was asked if the Secretariat comes together to consolidate thinking. Katharina Samara-Wickrama replied that the structural changes in HAP in 2010 were because of just such discussions and learning. The publication of the new Standard was the result of extensive consultations. In 2010, HAP was able to engage the membership more closely, and be more responsive to what the membership was saying.
- 12.4.2 Furthering learning from deployments:** A member from a large organisation expressed his feeling that the HAP deployments are very useful, that they have an impact at community level and are useful in terms of getting the word out about accountability. He suggested that HAP should undertake a synthesis of the learning from the deployments each year. He also encouraged HAP to be prepared and ready to deploy at short notice to respond to needs of members.
- 12.4.3 Joint deployments with other quality and accountability agencies:** It was noted that HAP has done joint deployments with SPHERE in the past, and asked whether HAP had future plans for joint work with other quality and accountability agencies? John Damerell from SPHERE responded, saying that SPHERE is ready to deploy jointly with HAP when it is appropriate, and the decision is made on a case-by-case basis.
- 12.4.4 Sharing of HAP's work plan with the membership:** It was suggested that HAP consider sharing its annual or even quarterly work plans with the membership, which would help members to engage more effectively and enable them to build a more effective integration with HAP.
- 12.4.5 Sharing of information on HAP focal points by country where they are located:** HAP was asked, and agreed, to share details of HAP focal points within countries, to facilitate communication between them, including the possible setting up of accountability working groups at country level.
- 12.4.6 Low cost accountability:** There was a call for consideration of how accountability systems can be developed in constrained resource situations. Members could share their experiences of building low cost accountability systems with HAP, who could collect and publish them as a collective learning exercise. Others then suggested that this could include consideration of traditional complaints systems, which are often lower cost and more sustainable, yet are sometimes ignored and a new complaints response mechanism just imposed over the top of them. Smruti Patel of HAP felt that such a piece of research would be helpful in giving weight to the importance of taking into consideration existing complaints structures.

## 13. Highlights from the 2010 Humanitarian Accountability Report

### 13.1 Dadaab documentary *Our Say*:

The participants watched a short documentary produced by refugees in Dadaab Camp through FilmAid, *Our Say*, in which a number of refugees express their opinions about accountability and the agencies in the camp. The film gave a clear and immediate representation of the feeling of confusion and dislocation from the agencies felt by this group of beneficiaries.

### **13.2 John Borton: Overview of humanitarian accountability in 2010.**

John gave a presentation based on his review of humanitarian accountability in 2010, which makes up the first chapter of the HAP 2010 Humanitarian Accountability Report.

He noted that there were two major humanitarian responses in 2010 – the earthquake in Haiti in January, and the flooding in Pakistan in July and August. He summarized developments around accountability in the humanitarian sector, including those of NGOs, the United Nations system, networks and donors. He noted two major themes/challenges in the year:

- The rapid growth in the use of Information Communication Technology as a vehicle for improved communication with affected populations;
- Disjointedness of current efforts to improve quality and accountability. He suggested the following factors contributed to this: Limited sources of information providing an overview, too many agencies in some operations, lack of a shared definition and vision of accountability in humanitarian action, insufficient collaboration (and leadership) by the quality and accountability initiatives, and a continued lack of commitment to affected populations within the leadership/governance levels of the humanitarian system.

### **13.3 Presentations by the Panel**

#### **13.3.1 Simon Lawry-White, Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Secretariat.**

Simon clarified first that he was speaking in a personal capacity and not representing the IASC at this meeting. He confirmed that the IASC is putting a high priority on accountability to beneficiaries, and that heads of agencies are putting accountability on their change agenda. He noted that the challenge today is to ensure that every single humanitarian organization meets a basic minimum standard for accountability, and that there is one system for this and the communities see “the agencies” as a homogenous body, and we should not have multiple ways of approaching and consulting with them. The IASC subsidiary body on the cluster approach is charged with investigating the possibility of an inter-agency system for accountability to beneficiaries, and this will be debated in December 2011 by the IASC principals.

#### **13.3.2 John Damerell, SPHERE**

John noted that the large number of initiatives in the quality and accountability sector lead to challenges in coordinating efforts. More needs to be done at governance level, and positive steps are being taken in this direction. The SPHERE Board will meet this month, and one of the items on the agenda for discussion is achieving greater complementarity with other quality and accountability bodies. The situation is complex, as much depends on the context – several participants during this part of the meeting highlighted the fact that it is difficult even to settle on a universally applicable definition of accountability.

### **13.3.3 Takeshi Komino, Church World Service Asia/Pacific**

Takeshi introduced his organization, explaining that they are the SPHERE focal point in Pakistan, assisting the SPHERE focal point in Afghanistan, as well as being certified in ISO 9001 and USAID management standards and HAP members. They are highly committed to accountability, and have built up a positive organizational culture, which supports this. Their organisation emphasises that accountability is important because it raises the quality of services, and not just because it is currently a trend in the humanitarian sector. Takeshi sees promoting this commitment amongst implementing partners as one of the biggest challenges facing the humanitarian sector – to find a way of mainstreaming quality accountability.

### **13.3.4 Josh Harris, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)**

Josh highlighted a number of issues, including the following:

- The current focus on leadership in the humanitarian sector: A forthcoming ALNAP study on operational humanitarian leadership will challenge the traditional understanding of the humanitarian coordinator as individual heroic leader, positing that the complex nature of humanitarian work may be better suited to a dispersed, more collegiate, form of leadership.
- He sees the Communication with Disaster Affected Communities Network (CDAC) initiative as a promising step to improving accountability to beneficiaries. Both ALNAP and HAP sit on the steering committee for CDAC, along with humanitarian agencies and humanitarian media organizations.
- Humanitarian operations are still failing to integrate civil society organizations and local and national governments. The agenda on this must be moved forward if accountability is to be improved.
- There is more collaboration between quality and accountability initiatives now than ever before, and this HAP General Assembly has opened the door for increased collaboration through voting for representation of other quality and accountability agencies on the HAP Board.

### **13.3.5 Discussions**

**13.3.5.1 Leadership:** It was suggested that, as the quality and accountability initiatives are calling for leadership in the humanitarian agencies, they therefore also have a need to demonstrate leadership within their own quality and accountability sector. As they had only one joint meeting at Director level during 2010, something must be missing in the collaborations being developed.

**13.3.5.2 Political constraints:** We were reminded not to forget to factor in the political constraints in some areas of the world, which may lead to a ‘conspiracy of silence’ on certain issues. One agency suggested dealing with this by involving third-party accountability organizations and/or the media. Another member highlighted the importance of governments recognizing their obligations, and suggested that the IDRL guidelines will be a vehicle for the international community to open discussion on this with governments. The guidelines are aimed at assisting governments to become better prepared to facilitate and regulate outside relief when major

disasters strike. Others felt that it would be more effective to get closer to the beneficiaries, to understand their point of view, including through the use of beneficiary-oriented evaluation processes. A Board member pointed out that the Listening Project found a split amongst beneficiaries, between those encouraging organizations to work with governments whilst others were cautioning about the possibility that aid allocations can be used by a government to further its own agenda.

**13.3.5.3 Accreditation:** It was noted that the Swiss Development Corporation has initiated a discussion about accreditation of NGOs. Other governments have also expressed an interest. It was suggested that the quality and assurances initiatives consider how they might collaborate on this issue.

**13.3.5.4 Effective collaboration:** It was suggested that the HAP members could work collectively to harness the current interest in accountability most effectively, to strengthen our joint voice and avoid competing for resources. This will particularly help the smaller NGOs, for whom it is a big challenge to keep pace with developments and engage in a meaningful way. "We cannot afford to be exclusive – we need to find commonality". Others stressed the importance of this for the field offices also, where the accountability focal points are under pressure because of the multiplicity of quality and accountability initiatives.

**13.3.5.5 Information Communication Technology (ICT):** Some partners had been at the receiving end of a more negative aspect to ICT, where blogs using questionable methodology are highly critical of humanitarian operations, such as in the case of Haiti. Some of the criticism is grounded, some not.

**13.3.5.6 Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR):** It was mentioned that it would be helpful to know SCHR's vision on accountability. The Chair mentioned that the quality and accountability initiatives met recently with the SCHR and discussed the possibility of cooperation at institutional, strategic and field levels.

## **14. Dates for the 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, to be held in 2012**

The next Humanitarian Accountability Partnership General Assembly will be held on April 26 and 27, 2012.

## **15. Any other business**

None was raised.

## **16. Concluding remarks**

### **16.1 Appreciation to outgoing contributors**

Thanks were given by Angela Raven-Roberts and Lisa Henry of DanChurchAid to outgoing Board members, Antonio Donini and Mary Anderson, for their inspirational involvement with HAP over many years. The hope was expressed that they would continue to maintain their intellectual connection with HAP. Outgoing Secretariat staff member, Jamie Munn, was also acknowledged for his valued contribution and hard work. He will be taking up a position with Church World Service in Pakistan later this year.

## 16.2 Closing remarks by the Chair

In his closing remarks, the outgoing Chair called for the humanitarian enterprise to be less top-down, more democratic, more rights-based, and more in tune with the aspirations of the people we are trying to serve. He highlighted the threats and constraints caused by those attempting to use the growing field of humanitarian action as a tool to meet political objectives. In future, NGOs will be dealing with stronger states – “human values are being challenged by nationalism”. He also cautioned against the institutionalization of aid, and the appropriation of aid worker agency by head offices.

*The General Assembly closed at 1300 hours (UET) on 13 May 2011.*