

Goldan Gomara reflects on his secondment to HAP in Sri Lanka

Having worked for World Vision in Sri Lanka both as part of the Humanitarian Accountability Team in the Tsunami Response, and later as Accountability Officer for programmes in the North, Goldan Gomara is no stranger to the concepts and practice of strengthening accountability and quality management.

Here, Goldan talks to us about his experience during the three-month secondment to the HAP Roving Team in Sri Lanka (July to October 2009).

Why were you interested in this secondment?

“The director of Humanitarian Emergency Affairs called and informed me about the opportunity for the secondment. In the beginning I was a little bit reluctant to agree to this opportunity because I thought: how much can I contribute to achieving the goal of the HAP deployment in Sri Lanka? But I realised that I’m facing a challenge to encourage community engagement or community decision-making in the context where I was working. So I changed my mind and signed the MOU with HAP aiming to find ways by learning from other participating agencies.”

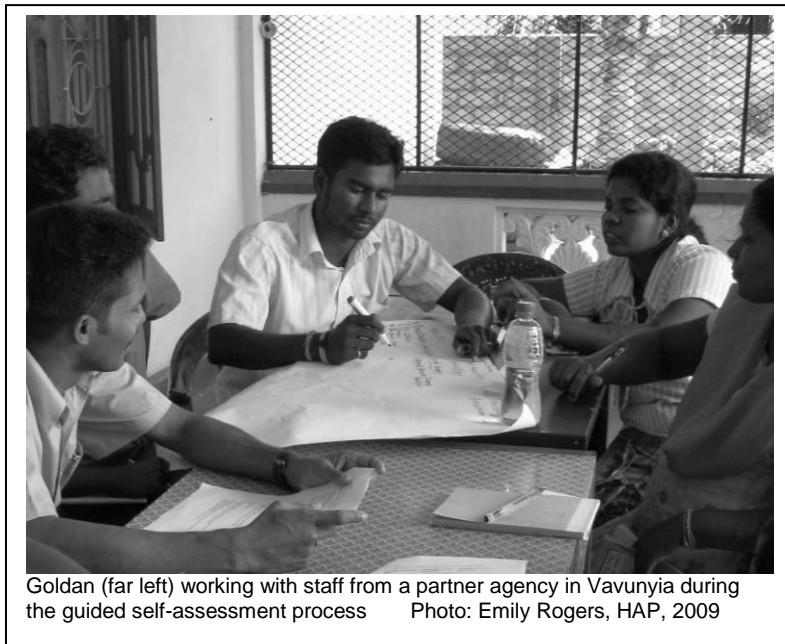
What were the main activities you were involved in, and what do you feel you gained from this secondment?

“When Emily and Maria discussed the terms of reference with me, I thought the assignment would be very challenging. I won’t forget my first day with the HAP roving team: we started with an introduction to the MOU, code of conduct of HAP, and the workplan. I saw immediately that this was a good example of implementing some of the HAP Standard benchmarks and I keep this in mind now as examples of facilitating the HAP Standard.

Early on, I was given a task of writing a case study to discuss in the upcoming workshop for senior staff and colleagues assigned to drive forward accountability improvements in their programmes. This was very interesting, as it represented a self-test of how I understood the accountability stuff. I was encouraged when the HAP team decided to use my case study in that workshop. This whole experience allowed me to think of how quality management and accountability concepts can be shared through a case study.

I was mainly involved in the guided self-assessments. This task provided an opportunity to learn about the practice of accountability from other agencies. In general, every humanitarian worker says that they are complying with the HAP Standard, and I also felt same, but when we did the self-assessment, I too realised how accountability can be improved in practice.

After participating in three training workshops conducted by Maria and Emily, I felt confident to facilitate a workshop on Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management on my own. The



activities used in the workshops to present the concept were very interesting. For example: The presentations on HAP benchmarks 2 - information sharing, 3- participation and 5 –complaint handling also explained the links to the rest of the benchmarks. These presentations really made sense of how all the benchmarks are related to one another.”

What do you hope to do next and what do you feel has been the impact from the work in Sri Lanka?

“World Vision plans to implement an Area Rehabilitation Programme in the north and east of Sri Lanka. My initial plan is to find a way to make information about our work more accessible to beneficiaries and host communities so that it adequately addresses their needs.

If there is an opportunity to work with the HAP team, I would like to encourage other staff to go for a secondment. This is a good chance to share our experience and learn from others.

I personally gained a lot while the HAP team was here in Sri Lanka. The findings from the guided self-assessment are definitely useful to appraise our accountability strengths and address the gaps. Other organisations also used this opportunity to enhance their knowledge and to share best practices.

As I was part of the team, I could get a clear picture of the process involved in the self-assessments and at the same time I supported with facilitation.

During my time seconded to the HAP team I can say I definitely learned how we can be more accountable to the beneficiaries with only a few changes - in a simple way.”