

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

"making humanitarian action accountable to beneficiaries"

8th BOARD MEETING 28 April 2006 – 14:00 to 17:00 Maison Internationale de l'Environnement II – Geneva

Approved Minutes

Welcome and Introduction

Chair: Denis Caillaux (Care International)

Board Members: Treasurer: Andreas Kamm (DRC), Ton Van Zutphen (World Vision International), Mamadou Ndiaye (OFADEC), John Farmer (Medair), Jane Cocking (Oxfam GB), Ken Caldwell (SCF UK), Antonio Donini (independent), Astier Almedom (independent)

Absent with apologies: Magda Ali (independent), Belinda Coote (MAP), Harsh Mander (independent)

Invited Participants: Andrew Lawday (consultant), Andrew Tanswell (consultant)

HAP Staff: Nicholas Stockton, Darren Hart

Adoption of Agenda

Agenda adopted.

Denis welcomed the board and new members, Astier, Jane and Ken. Nick spoke on the importance of induction of new board members.

Decision: (i) Secretariat will send full documentation on history, governance and policy framework of HAP necessary to new members for feedback and questions. (2) Teleconference for further discussion and briefing of new Board members can be arranged on request to the Secretariat.

Approval of Minutes of 7th Board Meeting

Minutes adopted.

Decision: (ii) Inaccurate comments concerning Secretariat staff turnover to be struck from the minutes.

Future Board Meetings

Discussion centred on the merits of 2 two-day board meetings per year rather than 3 one-day meetings. Annual reports would be linked to General Assembly in April and budgets and work plans would be discussed in November.

Decision: (iii) Two Board Meetings per year from now on with next meeting Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd November to look at revised budget and two year rolling work plan.

2005 Annual Report - Comments

(1) Discussion on the annual report centred on a strict deadline for comments of 5th May, for a first print run of approximately 200 for HAP members before the end of May. (2) The first section of the Annual Report is potentially very useful to policy makers. (3) Members should be able to download from web site to print for their staff.

Decisions: (iv) First print run by end May; pdf of report on HAP site by end May so members and others can download; (v) Member agencies to inform Secretariat how many hard copies of the Annual

report that they require. These will be printed and posted at the Secretariat's expense. (vi) Format of annual report to be reviewed in November Board Meeting.

Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP)

Nick explained how there were no massive strategic issues involved in the MTSP as it remained in accordance with HAP's statutes, its vision and mission. The key issues for consideration are more about speed and prioritisation.

Concerns:

Certification

- (1) MTSP is ambitious plan, assuming certification will begin in 2007, but some members will not be ready for this.
- (2) Different standards introduced in 2007 and 2009 could cause confusion.
- (3) HAP2006 to HAP2009 is the way to achieve "continuous improvement", though perhaps 2009 is too early to introduce a higher standard. Must be a standards raising process as continuous improvement is required by ISO, SAI etc.
- (4) Bringing about change across whole sector will induce real tensions. The requirement that "HAP2006" certification be achieved by 2009 puts positive but realistic pressure on members. If members are not willing to aim to achieve the 2006 standard by 2009, they should reconsider their membership of HAP.
- (5) HAP is not a private club that can ignore outside world, but members should shape HAP's future, not donors. If not, "We are sharpening the knife to cut off our own heads." Certification must incorporate a regime of audit, monitoring and evaluation. InterAction has now accredited 6 child sponsorship agencies, whereas a few years ago InterAction was against third-party certification. SGS is promoting their NGO benchmark, as is AccountAbility. It is up to HAP's member agencies to do it their own way or face somebody else's way.
- (6) While there is a moral imperative driving accountability, certification is acquiring a political imperative. In the near future ECHO is likely to demand SGS or similar certification before funding. It could be imposed on HAP members in a shape and form that they do not like. OCHA wants something similar as do many donors.
- (7) Secretariat should encourage rather than "push" members. Large organisations have inbuilt mechanisms for making haste slowly, especially if they are federated or confederated. Might the least certified have their position on board compromised?
- (8) MTSP redefines priorities - complaints handling and monitoring are de-prioritised. Different agencies will be able to move at different speeds.
- (9) Certification is right for HAP because: it is inevitable; this way the sector gets to define its own standards. HAP will offer training for large and small agencies to get on board and work their way up.
- (10) John Farmer (Medair) stated that the MTSP was clearly focused, but that certification was a direction in which Medair had less interest because the agency was already certified under ISO 9000. Medair would prefer a greater focus upon developing tools to improve accountability, although it recognises that other members are interested in certification.
- (11) Although Oxfam's commitment to accountability is unshakeable this does not mean that it could achieve certification in 2007. Oxfam is concerned that the standards may not be appropriate.
- (12) What if an organisation has not made it by 2009? Can they continue to be a member of HAP? How long can one be an associate member whilst making little effort to be certified? If you cannot change organisational culture over the three years allowed to reach the standards, then there are deep problems in the organisation itself. The bar should not be too high at the beginning because we must not fail.
- (13) There should be no special status for founding members. If you let your standards drop you could let down the whole sector. There should perhaps be a 3 or 4 year time limit for associate members to become full members so HAP is not used as an alibi. A momentum of aspiration to the standard has to be built.

Other accountability initiatives

- (14) Should relationships with other quality and accountability initiatives be in the MTSP? Drawing up the architecture of such a partnership has been agonisingly slow.
- (15) Twin problems of initiative empire builders and those that believed that minimum standards do not have teeth.
- (16) Inter-organisational relationships inevitably run with some tension - just like the board. Sceptics may say that meaningful consensus on standards cannot be achieved but if you put experienced technical people with real beneficiaries in a room they do find accord, as the Standards Development Project has demonstrated.
- (17) There can be no “mine is better than yours” as initiatives pull in same direction but with different focuses. If HAP can prove itself in its own area of focus then it can deliver credibility. Donors recognise that there were slightly different focuses between the initiatives.
- (18) HAP member agencies have a commitment to each other via these initiatives. HAP member CEOs are striving to streamline the process of who sits on which boards. ECB2 and HAP are going to work together on a project. Chairs of 4 quality initiatives were supposed to meet. This could be part of MTSP.
- (19) Would be good to share the MTSP with potential members or other accountability and quality initiatives.

Governance

- (20) Major imbalance in the Board as donors are not represented, although anxieties expressed about donors joining the Board as “partners”.

Funding

- (21) There are advantages and disadvantages of having a large number of donors.
- (22) Surprise that HAP does not have a dedicated fundraiser when over 70% comes from major donors.
- (23) Many donors still see HAP as a project, not as a sector wide movement.

Planning assumptions

- (24) Potential size and composition of HAP certification market is not clear enough. The MTSP “headline” objectives are a mixture of outputs and outcomes. At the headline level the MTSP should present outcomes only.

Conclusions:

Nick stated that compliance with HAP’s humanitarian accountability principles is all that is being proposed for the time being, and this is already a condition of membership. The 2 year workplan is the detailed instrument for taking the MTSP forward. There is a wide range of perspectives on the MTSP and not all differences can be reconciled. The Secretariat must bear the responsibility for proposing the middle path between the most and the least ambitious members. By and large the MTSP has achieved this. More detailed issues will be resolved through the revolving workplan process.

Denis concluded by observing that nobody wants a Secretariat versus Board syndrome. Both should feel ownership of the MTSP. It will be reviewed in all annual work plans. Slight modifications will be made. There are no “red flags” raised by the Board so we can now move on. Need to talk much more regularly, supporting Nick more than we have done. If Board members have new ideas and suggestions on rereading the plan, they should please communicate them. Call for the Board to stay together and stay engaged over next weeks and months. The Secretariat needs this.

Antonio pointed out that the timing and flexibility of the roll out of products were the main points of contention, not the products themselves.

Decision: (vii) Minor revisions of the MTSP will be incorporated and circulated to the Board. (viii) The HAP Secretariat will present the revised 2 year rolling work plan and budget for authorisation by the Board at the November Board Meeting. (ix) Detailed proposal for changes of governance to be tabled at the November Board Meeting.

Any Other Business

Dates of 2006-2007 Board and General Assembly meetings:

9th Board meeting: 2-3 November 2006

10th Board meeting and 5th General Assembly: exact dates to be decided – probably April 2007.

Decision: (viii) Circulate new contact details of Board members.