

Editorial

This issue of the Newsletter opens with a new feature focusing on *HAP members working in partnership*. This month we speak with DanChurchAid and their Malawi-based partner, ELDS. From their own perspectives, both discuss the partnership, working together to strengthen humanitarian accountability and the impact of the HAP Standard on their programmes. In the coming issues we hope to provide more interviews with members and their partners.

The HAP roving team's report from Sri Lanka provides an update on activities from their three-month deployment. An update on the Standard Review highlights opportunities for our readers to contribute to this process, including with a view of strengthening coherence between the HAP Standard and the Sphere Project's Handbook. Whether you choose to send us direct feedback, complete an on-line survey or facilitate a consultation meeting, your views are extremely valuable in shaping the next edition of the HAP Standard!

Since our last Newsletter, a number of members have provided case studies of good practice in humanitarian accountability. We have provided short summaries on some of these case studies on page 9; you can find full details of case studies and tools on the resource section of the HAP website.

If you would like to make any contributions to future issues of the Newsletter, please contact Jamie Munn (jmun@hapinternational.org)

*making humanitarian action
accountable to beneficiaries*

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Welcome to our five newest full members

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Accountability in Partnership: Interviews with DanChurchAid and ELDS on the implementing the HAP Standard



ELDS was established in 1989 as a response to requests from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi and the government with the aim to provide assistance to Mozambican refugees. Since then, the agency has developed programmes to aid local communities, with a focus on food security, functional adult literacy, reforestation and safe and clean water. ELDS is a partner of DCA (a HAP certified agency) and affiliated with a number of other HAP members, including ACT International, CARE International, Christian Aid, the Lutheran World Federation, and Norwegian Church Aid.

The first interview was held with ELDS staff, Judith Jere and Alick Kaonda

Different organisations are improving accountability for different reasons. Why is it important for ELDS to focus on accountability to communities and what does this mean, in practice?

We see accountability as a fundamental aspect of our operations; accountability is about putting into practice ELDS's core-values and improving our work through feedback from the communities; this instils and restores confidence and trust in ELDS from partners and communities.

“we were in the dark, now our eyes have opened. The era of imposing things on us is now over”

Why and how is the HAP Standard relevant to the work of an organisation such as ELDS?

We first heard about the HAP Standard while participating in workshops and seminars on humanitarian accountability; we were then invited by DanChurchAid to observe their HAP certification audit in Copenhagen, Denmark. As an agency, ELDS was able to learn a lot about implementing the HAP standard and we saw the benefits that compliance to the HAP Standard would have to our own programmes. We made the decision to begin the process of mainstreaming the Standard in all ELDS programming. Since ELDS undertakes both humanitarian and development work, the Standard allows us to examine our programmes through a “checks and balances approach” as we execute our work, improve efficiency and effectiveness through putting in place standard operating norms, policies and benchmarks.

The HAP Standard helps organisations manage themselves to better deliver promises they made. How has the HAP Standard impacted your organisation? How has it affected your relationship with communities, and the performance and quality of the work you deliver?

Working with the HAP Standard has assisted us in developing procedures, policies and practice that allow us to share information with communities and partners across our programmes.

We have seen three major improvements in our working relationships. Firstly, communities are now able to track the project implementation activities that affect them. Our field staff are able to track down budgets, procedures and policies in greater detail than ever before. This has brought back confidence and morale in the field staff, and as a result, it has greatly improved their quality of work.

Also, as a result of the introduction of the HAP standard at community level, our relationship with beneficiary communities has improved tremendously as they are able to follow our complete programme

management cycle and they are able to make a complaint or request more information if they believe something is not in accordance to the promises made to them, or in line with our policies and standards. During a recent meeting in Sitafa, Chikwawa where we operate with the support of DanChurchAid, one village representative told us, “we were in the dark, now our eyes have opened. The era of imposing things on us is now over”.

As part of improving the accountability of your programmes, could you tell us about your experiences of implementing an effective complaints handling procedure?

Our complaints handling procedure has been developed based on programme beneficiaries’ needs. This has allowed us to establish a system with the support of communities. Finally, we believe that by engaging communities in the development of our complaints handling system we are seeing more people accessing and using it.

What impact has the implementation of effective complaints handling procedures had on your programmes?

We have seen a remarkable impact since the complaint handling procedure was put in place. We have received feedback and complaints from the project beneficiaries and as a result we have changed our plans on such things as deliverable materials. For example, after delivering a community project a number of chickens as part of a livelihoods programme, we received some complaints on the chicken survival rate. Once we met with the community to listen to their concerns and come to a mutually beneficial arrangement, the decision was made to provide the more resilient guinea fowl in place of chickens. Part of the decision to replace the chickens came from discussions with representatives from the most vulnerable community group members. They told us that guinea-fowls are easy to keep and hardier than chickens.

We also believe that as a result of the transparency on project details (including budgets and costs of project materials) we have seen an increase in beneficiary participation across our programmes. Community members are now able to trace project deliveries and plans together with our field staff, creating an environment of trust and commitment. But we recognise that we also have to continue with these achievements, for us the challenge is to improve. Part of this requires that we continually strive to communicate with community members through regular awareness meetings with staff, community leaders and beneficiary groups focusing on our complaints handling procedures which not only holding ELDS accountable but also local community committees, local leaders and local government.

As you know, the HAP Standard has a compliance verification and certification system attached to it. This means that agencies that are committed to applying the Standard in practice can be recognised for their achievements through an external review process, and their practice continuously improved according to an agreed plan. What does it mean to you that you are working with DCA, a HAP-certified agency?

It has assisted us to move together with DCA in improving our way of doing things and be more accountable to both partners and communities.

What advice would you give other agencies about applying the HAP Standard?

If agencies want to be effective and provide quality service delivery to communities, they ought to apply the HAP standard across their programmes. It is about doing self-assessments for their systems, standards and policies and how these are executed on the ground. The HAP Standard has contributed to more accountability and transparency for ELDS.

What other lessons would you like to share with our readers?

Although the HAP standard has improved our relationship with all stakeholders and brought confidence and trust between the agency and the communities, we did have a lot of work to do with the help of DanChurchAid to orientate ourselves to the principles of accountability in the Standard, sensitise our staff and build an awareness campaign for both the HAP standard. The results, however, were well worth it!

The second part of our interview was held with DanChurchAid's Lisa Henry, Humanitarian Response Director and Lennart Skov-Hansen, DCA regional representative in Malawi



DanChurchAid has partnered with ELDS for some time; could you say a few introductory words on the partnership?

ELDS, Malawi, is affiliated with The Lutheran World Federation/World Service and has been a partner of DCA for more than 10 years. The partnership has grown in strength and professionalism over the years and ELDS is currently one of the biggest partners of DCA in Malawi. We can say with confidence that ELDS has been a partner that takes initiative to try new things and speak out about issues in the partnership which concern them.

Different organisations are improving accountability for different reasons. How does DCA see its role in promoting accountability with partner agencies, such as ELDS?

LSH: DCA is in Malawi in order to help partners build their capacities to effectively and efficiently serve people in need. Accountability is a mutual obligation for both parties to ensure good stewardship of resources. Likewise, promoting accountability towards beneficiaries is also a mutual obligation, one in which DCA and ELDS endeavour to uphold peoples' dignity and rights.

LH: DCA strives to be accountable and transparent in its partnerships, therefore, it is important that we "walk the talk" of accountability. To prove this to ourselves and to staff member at ELDS, DCA invited the ELDS executive director and relief officer to attend the DCA baseline study conducted by HAP. This rigorous and honest exposure of what DCA is good and bad at, in the presence of one of our partners was one of the many ways that DCA promotes accountability with its partners.

Has DCA collected evidence on the impact to beneficiaries from sharing accountability learning with its partners?

LSH: Yes, especially through the complaints mechanism the usage of which is a result of

ELDS and other partners sharing more information and being accountable towards beneficiaries.

LH: We are just in the beginning phase of making a systematic collection of stories which should tell us the tale of the impact improved accountability to beneficiaries has had. The first study from a field researcher who spent 1 month with a community in Malawi where the complaints system has been put into place should be finalised in September 2009. Further field studies will follow and we hope to share the researchers' reports.

What role has the HAP Standard had in your focus on accountability in partnerships?

LSH: The HAP Standard is a mechanism for systematising and enhancing accountability and it contributes significantly towards raising the partnership to a more equal level. It also contributes towards enhancing services for people in need.

LH: Accountability in partnerships has been a corner stone of DCA work for years, but the HAP standard has brought some interesting issues to light, especially with respect to our actual work with the Code of Conduct and Sphere Minimum standards. In addition, we now want to be more transparent about funds available and decisions on spending. We have started a series of partner platform meetings where all DCA partners are invited to hear about each other's work, budgets, challenges and success stories. In Malawi and Ethiopia we are prioritising peer review and in Cambodia and India DCA is doing collaborative programming, across many different partner organisations. This pushes all partners to be more open about what they are doing, why they are doing it and how they are planning. The last but not most significant impact that we in DCA have felt, is we have naturally had to prioritise DCA staff spending considerably more time in the field with the partners and communities. That interaction is invaluable.

The HAP Standard helps organisations manage themselves to better deliver promises they made. How has DCA shared their experience with partner agencies in these regards?

LSH: As Lisa has just indicated, DCA is frequently bringing partners together in programme platform meetings. Partners share their "HAP" experiences with DCA and with each other, it is through the sharing of these experiences and best practises that partners increasingly begin to realise the benefits of working with the HAP Standard.

LH: DCA staff and partners are encouraged to hold peer introduction and training sessions at forum meetings held worldwide as part of our network Action By Churches Together (ACT), DCA partner platform meetings and at DCA annual humanitarian response

workshops. In addition, DCA staff members travel to other countries to work with colleagues, training, sharing lessons learned and gathering momentum behind the accountability theme. For example, DCA Malawi relief officer, Agness Banda, has travelled to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Ethiopia in order to train her colleagues there. Finally, DCA staff and DCA partners are actively encouraged to participate in new training opportunities like NEP, as they did in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma. Finally, DCA has worked in Europe to motivate other ACT sister organisations to commit to HAP, given the common standards which make for more effective humanitarian action.

How has it affected your relationship with your partners and the quality of the work being delivered?

LSH: Humanitarian accountability is about having a professional working relationship with partners, but implementing the HAP Standard has allowed us discover mechanisms that enhance trust which is crucial for a good working partnership.

LH: To answer this question, I can provide some examples of improved accountability and transparency. One that comes to mind in Malawi relates to the size and placement of kitchen gardens. Although, there was no formal complaint this matter came to light during the monitoring visits and conversations. We discovered that the community gardens were too far from an adequate water source and by putting women together in groups the gardens didn't fulfil the needs as well as having smaller, single gardens closer to water sources and individual homes.

One area that has improved is to do with beneficiary targeting. In Ethiopia it came to light that some beneficiaries on the lists did not meet the criteria but were included due to relationships with government officials, a situation that had to be put right. Also, during discussions in an "Under 5" feeding program in Zimbabwe it became clear that there were misunderstandings in the community around the targeting criteria. The resulting community consultations and posters developed in the local languages helped to clarify the criteria and the community members got an improved service with less controversy.

A last example comes from Malawi: with the establishment of a complaints mechanism came some interesting discussions on how the new system may impact on the existing power structure in the village. We are still at the early stages of this project.

What advice would you give other agencies about applying the HAP Standard when working with

partners?

LSH: The HAP Standard is a must, if we seriously want to walk the talk and promote partnerships on equal terms. Being mutually obliged to manage the resources effectively and efficiently is key.

LH: Just try it! Talking systematically and practically about beneficiary involvement is something which turns most humanitarian workers on. The idea of working more intensively on accountability with DCA partners has struck a good note and it has happened at a good time for us and our partners. Of course, it can be difficult because partner relationships intensify as the level of knowledge and transparency increases and it takes time to let ideas percolate up, down and around but this is the right direction to move in. Definitely!

What other lessons would you like to share with our readers?

It is important that we "walk the talk" of accountability.

LSH: In promoting HAP with partners it is important to ensure institutional ownership of the process. It is vital to start the process slowly, be focussed and always in a participatory manner.

I would suggest that establishing the complaints mechanism is a good entry point, because the mechanism is a consequence of taking on board a "rights based approach" and it helps partners understand the benefits of sharing information with beneficiaries and being accountable to them.

The challenge, of course, is to translate the HAP Standard into local vernaculars without losing the true meaning.

LH: Invite national partners and senior management to join or shadow your organisation as you travel the HAP route. Whether small or large in size, single or multi-mandated, I believe that organisations who really are committed to the theme of improved accountability and respect for basic rights can adjust their systems, policies and staff procedures to meet the HAP standard. I think it is time we as humanitarian actors all step up to the plate and commit to being certified by external auditors through the lens of improved accountability to beneficiaries. Through the HAP certification process, I feel DanChurchAid has been through the most rigorous and honest test of whether we as humanitarian actors are abiding by the Code of Conduct and striving to meet SPHERE minimum standards. It is a good long road to travel!

HAP Team in Sri Lanka

The HAP field team arrived in Sri Lanka on 23rd July 2009 to work with HAP Members, their partners and other interested agencies in a joint effort towards improving understanding about, and strengthen performance of, NGO humanitarian accountability and quality management practices. The HAP Team will remain in country for three months during which it will work with some of the seventeen HAP Members currently responding to the humanitarian crisis in Northern Sri Lanka.

The HAP Team is hosted by Muslim Aid in Sri Lanka and has been seconded a staff member by World Vision Sri Lanka. Financial contributions to date for this deployment have been made by: ECHO, and pledged by CARE Sri Lanka, DanChurchAid and Habitat for Humanity.

The HAP team is focusing on a combination of inter-agency and agency-specific capacity building activities.

In particular the HAP team is delivering immediate and direct support to agencies to strengthen their accountability and quality management systems. Staff from interested agencies will be guided through a self-assessment process, reviewing planned and actual practice against the HAP 2007 Standard, in order to identify good practice and gaps to be addressed, where needed with support from the HAP team. To start this process, interested agencies participated in an Inter-agency workshop on accountability self-assessments held on 12-13th August in Colombo. Approximately 20 participants from 10 agencies attended the workshop.

The HAP team is also working towards facilitating inter-agency learning of good practice and exploring context specific approaches to strengthen humanitarian accountability and quality. These collective sharing and learning efforts are undertaken with a view that HAP and its Member agencies continually improve impact and practice in the current and future humanitarian responses.

Keep yourself updated on the HAP Team's activities in Sri Lanka by visiting the [HAP in Sri Lanka webpage](#).

17 HAP members are currently responding directly and/or through implementing partners:

ACFID, ACT, ACTED, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid, Danish Refugee Council, MERCY Malaysia, Muslim Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam GB, PMU Interlife , Save the Children UK, Tearfund, and World Vision.

Updates from the Complaints handling Unit

A new Inspectorate Project

To complain or not complain is a dilemma faced by many disaster survivors. Consultations conducted by HAP and Save the Children UK in 2007 and 2008 with over 600 children and adults living in humanitarian crises revealed that, despite efforts of humanitarian agencies to prevent the most egregious form of staff misconduct, sexual exploitation and abuse of aid recipients, it continues at alarming levels.

Women and children said that aid agencies make complaining about the most basic concerns, such as clean water, so difficult that people feel unable to complain about more egregious violations because they are confused, fearful, and do not trust agencies. Most communities reported that they are unaware of formal complaints handling procedures and have no idea how to report staff misconduct. When they do, they feel their complaints are not taken seriously, not kept confidential and not investigated. Participants from one refugee camp even claimed that sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers is so common that it is considered 'normal'. Unless staff and agencies know exactly what is required of them and are held accountable for their actions, or inaction, the problem will continue.

As a result of the consultation findings as well as discussions with HAP members and other humanitarian agencies, HAP in collaboration with Save the Children UK have set up a global Inspectorate Project to increase the accountability of humanitarian workers for protecting children and people who are vulnerable from exploitation and abuse by agency staff. Building on earlier work, this project will promote the consistent implementation of procedures, policies and expertise on prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse by member agencies and their partners, through compliance verification.

The main activities of the project will be to:

- A) Gain consensus among agencies on the elements of the Inspectorate project.
- B) Review the HAP Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management 2007 Standard so that it explicitly refers to prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and develop indicators against which

compliance verification can be conducted.

C) Enhance global learning and accountability of under-complaining with an aim to improve agencies complaints handling and response systems and increase the number of agencies reporting externally on number and type of complaints and how they address allegations of exploitation and abuse by their staff.

The aim is to ensure that children and women who are abused by humanitarian staff will have someone to turn to, someone to complain to, knowing that abuse will not be tolerated and will be acted upon.

Upcoming Open Complaints Handling Unit Trainings:

September

28- 2 Open BSO Investigations Workshop (in French), Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

October

26-30 Open BSO Investigations Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya

The BSO Investigation Workshop trains mid to senior level staff in how to conduct fair, thorough and confidential investigations into complaints of staff misconduct, with a focus on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of disaster survivors by aid workers. We are currently accepting applications for both upcoming Workshops, [click here](#) to go to the HAP booking webpage. Please note, the Investigations Workshop in Cote D'Ivoire will be conducted in French and the Workshop in Kenya will be conducted in English.

For all other details on future activities or to enquire about agency-specific training opportunities, please contact Smruti Patel (spatel@hapinternational.org)



The Sphere Project



HAP and Sphere take on joint approaches to standard revision processes

Sphere and HAP have agreed to work together to promote greater coherence between the Sphere Project's Handbook and the HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management and to strengthen the practical linkage between the two standards.

From August 2009, Sphere and HAP will promote and support joint consultations on areas of common concern, incorporating practical suggestions from members of the HAP Standard Review Steering Committee, the Sphere Common Standards working group, and other interested individuals. HAP and Sphere will ensure that the principal stakeholders (disaster survivors, field staff, and donors) have the opportunity to help current inconsistencies and promote greater practical coherence between the two standards.

HAP and Sphere will continue to work collaboratively with other Quality and Accountability initiatives throughout the revision processes and will explore opportunities for promoting greater coherence and inter-operability.

Please contact Monica Blagescu (mblagescu@hapinternational.org) or Avishan Chanani (avishan.chanani@ifrc.org) if you would like to:

- A) host or participate in a joint HAP-Sphere consultation ([Click here for guidance on the Joint consultations](#))
- B) Make suggestions for strengthening the joint consultation process
- C) Share your views about increased coherence and inter-operability between the HAP and Sphere standards.

Additionally, we encourage all readers to provide their thoughts and experiences by completing a short survey. Please [click here to visit the survey](#). We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information on the HAP Standard Review and to facilitate a HAP Standard Review consultation, please see the [HAP Standard Review](#) webpages.

From our Members

A number of new tools and case studies are now available on the **HAP website**, Special thanks go to all the members who have answered our call in the last Newsletter. Please keep them coming in!

Concern Worldwide's Bangladesh case study outlines the work undertaken with their partners to develop a participatory beneficiary selection process and Community Monitoring Committees, in order to increase levels of participation as part of their rehabilitation projects and provide a channel through which affected-communities could raise complaints.

Concern Worldwide uses a series of pictures in their *Booklet: to raise the awareness of beneficiaries about the Program Participant Protection Policy* (Ethiopia) in order to clarify the responsibilities of Concern staff and the standards of behaviour that beneficiaries can expect of them.

Muslim Aid Bangladesh - "*Developing a country-level accountability work plan - the process*" outlines the steps taken to strengthening accountability and quality management over a period of twelve months following Cyclone Sidr. This includes the process followed with staff in developing a country-level accountability work plan.

Muslim Aid Bangladesh - "*Participation in Shelter project - from design to implementation and monitoring*" captures the approach used to engage with beneficiaries in designing and implementing a shelter project following Cyclone Sidr.

Save the Children developed *Disaster Response and Resilience Learning Project* (in Myanmar) to enhance humanitarian capacity following Cyclone Nargis. The project targeted staff from national and international NGOs, using an innovative learning approach to increase awareness of concepts and principles related to humanitarian work.

Save the Children's Leaflet for staff: Code of Conduct was produced for field offices to communicate to staff what Save the Children considers unacceptable behaviour for staff as outlined in their code of conduct.

Save the Children produced a Children's Feedback report from an External Evaluation entitled '*Young Voices, Big Impressions*'. Designed by Apple, this child friendly report will be translated into Myanmar and provided to the children who were consulted during the evaluation. Alongside the Evaluation report, Save the Children in Myanmar also prepared a brief note on the Process and Methodology used.

World Vision submitted *Humanitarian Accountability Team WV Lanka: A Case Study*. It provides the reasons behind the development of HAT along with its scope of work, implementation, lessons, resources developed and future plans as a way to share these experiences with other agencies.

Also HAP's latest report on Bangladesh, ***Quality and Accountability during the Cyclone Sidr Response***, has been uploaded to the **HAP in Bangladesh webpage**. The report reflects upon our work with the HAP member agencies after Cyclone Sidr and documents the lessons learned.

Scheduled HAP Activities and Events

September

- 1 Certification and Accreditation Review Board (CARB) meeting, Geneva
 3 - 11 Secretariat Workplan meetings
 19 - 26 Christian Aid, Field site Certification Audit, Burkina Faso
 21 - 30 ACT International & Lutheran World Federation, Field site Baseline Analysis, Uganda
 24 - 2 Oct Open BSO Investigations Workshop (in french), Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
 28 - 3 Oct MERCY Malaysia Mid-term Progress Audit, Malaysia
 28 - 3 Oct MERCY Malaysia Mid-term Progress Audit, Myanmar

October

- 2 - 5 OFADEC Complaints and Response Mechanism training, Senegal
 5 - 12 Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan, Head Office and Field Site Baselines, Pakistan
 11 - 13 Standard Review consultation in Bangladesh, including joint workshop with Sphere, hosted by the Emergency Capacity Building Project
 12 - 16 ATHA CORE training workshop, Sweden
 25 - 31 UNHCR Field site Baseline Analysis, Georgia
 26-30 Open BSO Investigations Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya

Standard Review consultation meetings will be held at the locations listed above, depending on interests from member agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

Donor Funding for HAP

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Affairs (Norway), SIDA (Sweden).



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