

Minutes of Quality and Accountability Initiatives Meeting
November 16th 2009
Hosted by ALNAP in London, 2:00 – 5:00pm

Present: Dayna Brown (CDA), Catherine Russ (RedR/ELRHA), Jonathan Potter (People in Aid), Rachel Houghton (ECB), John Damerell (Sphere), Olivia Collins (Groupe URD), Tzvetomira Laub (by phone, INEE), Kim Scriven (ALNAP), Paul Nolan (CAFOD/KCS), Lucy Heaven (Oxfam GB/KCS), Rory Downham (Bioforce/DRSS), Mariama Deschamps (Plan International/KCS), Nick Stockton (by phone, HAP)

Regrets: Marian Hodgkin (INEE), Monica Blagescu (HAP), Francois Fiard (Coordination Sud)

1. Follow up from items at May meeting in Geneva:

- a. Minutes of the last meeting in Geneva were approved.
ACTION POINT – all organizations should put minutes up on their website, clearly visible.
- b. Downloads/hits on Q & A info and minutes on websites:
Members shared the number of hits on their websites, related to the minutes from Q & A meetings (ex. HAP had over 600 hits)
- c. Q & A initiatives FAQ document—time to update it with additional members and ensure it is on all of our websites. Update is still a work in progress (led by Sphere). Deadline had been extended until end of August - only People in Aid, ALNAP and HAP had provided info. Those who are not included can send their new texts to John Damerell at SPHERE who will update it. All organizations involved commit to putting the FAQ document on their websites, and all should have a page on Quality and Accountability on their websites.
ACTION POINT: Organisations to send updates to John Damerell before the end of the year (December) so that document can be updated in January 2010.
- d. Update on info/messages provided to GHD via Sida
We finally developed a message, it was not easy to agree on a message which all parties could agree to. Unfortunately the Q&A initiative message arrived 1 week too late for the training at Sida! The message will however be distributed and shared with others at Sida (just not during the training as planned).
- e. Update on the Communities of Practice
Background – an idea discussed with Sida, a working group was set up, with People in Aid, Sphere, ALNAP, ECB and HAP. However work came to a halt, as a feasibility study is necessary, which involves funding, but there is currently limited funding available. Telephone conference call scheduled for 14th December, when funding and next steps will be discussed. Might any organizations involved be prepared to fund approx US\$2000, in order to conduct a feasibility study, to ensure that there is a need, before asking for funding from Sida?
- f. Update on 'Introduction to Humanitarian Accountability Initiatives' paper (finally entitled 'Taking the initiative – Exploring quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector: an introduction to eight initiatives')
Paper has been completed by Sphere and circulated to all Q&A initiatives in August 2009 with a request that the document be posted on websites. The paper was shared with Sida, drawing favourable feedback. The production of training materials, based on the paper, is underway (Sphere).
- g. Discussion on interoperability paper. Agreement not to update at this time. Some organizations are already working on initiatives together, as has been discussed (see organizational updates).
- h. Fundraising. A difficult time for many organizations. Is any joint-fund-raising necessary? To be discussed with agency updates.

2. Project updates and discussion of potential opportunities to collaborate

HAP Update:

- Involved with Sphere in trying to find areas of coherence between the HAP Standard and the Sphere Handbook on Minimum Standards, both of which are undergoing revision processes, with the hope of facilitating the extent to which interested organizations can use both Sphere and HAP standards simultaneously. A number of joint consultations have taken place, but unclear yet as to specific outputs. Both Sphere and HAP are working with their own governing bodies.
- Interesting evaluation conducted on behalf of DFID, to look at HAP/Sphere in Myanmar.

- MoU agreed with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative to develop a tool to analyse the impact of the HAP Standard.
- HAP to run a session on the effect of beneficiary feedback on programmes at the November ALNAP meeting.
- Field research on complaint handling systems has been completed. The report is in the final editorial phase and will be shared when it is finalized.
- Standard Review Consultation meetings in Abidjan, Dakar, Colombo (2 meetings) and Dhaka (2 meetings). One of the meetings in Dhaka was a joint HAP-Sphere consultation, hosted by the ECB Project Phase II Bangladesh country consortium.
- Christian Aid is leading a HAP standard review working Group on partnerships and Save the Children UK on handling complaints about exploitation and abuse.
- Standard Review consultations planned for Kenya, India, Southern Sudan, all hosted by members. Options for hosting consultations in South America and facilitating a meeting in the US are being explored.
- A two day meeting was held with People in Aid (resulting in a draft cooperation agreement), and exploratory sessions have been held with ICVA and ECB with a view to developing formal cooperation agreements.
- Membership applications from Amel Association, Association Najdeh, Norwegian Church Aid, PMU Interlife, SEEDS and Transparency International approved.
- New membership applications during this period have been received from agencies in Sweden, Norway, India, Lebanon and Pakistan.
- Roving team deployed to Sri Lanka from July to October 2009. Six Guided Self Assessments were conducted by the Roving Team during the Sri Lanka deployment. After Action review conducted and report currently being written. It was challenging because they could not even use the term "accountability" as it is controversial.
- The Pakistan programme was ended in the first half of 2009. CWS Pakistan / Afghanistan employed the two remaining staff of the programme to continue accountability related work and support throughout the region.
- 12 HAP baseline analyses completed so far during 2009, including UNHCR.
- Conducted Complaints Response Mechanisms (CRM) workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya and Myanmar. An investigators learning workshop held in Abidjan.
- CAFOD certified by HAP on 1 September 2009.
- Christian Aid Head Office audit in London and Dublin was completed in June 2009 and the Field Audits in India and Burkina Faso were completed in August and September respectively.
- Consultations on the HAP accreditation process commenced with ACT International and Social Equity Audit in India.

People in Aid

- Interoperability – have been talking to HAP about joint certification processes, looking at the "people" side of the HAP processes.
- Quality marks recently awarded to CAFOD, World Vision UK, Sightsavers, Christian Aid, TEAR Australia. Those working hard, and close to completion, include Everychild, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Tearfund, Hijra, Mercy Malaysia.
- Member numbers now over 160, latest 12 all from Africa.
- EPN has now been integrated into People In Aid. Conferences and the online network are now promoted under the rubric Humanitarian HR.
- Research projects ongoing include 2 pieces of work on leadership, one on rewards (as affected by the current crisis), the 'management agenda' (what is taxing managers about their people issues).
- Recent reports released: an analysis of staff care in the sector, a template HR manual.
- Upcoming events will take place in Jakarta, Bangkok, Melbourne, Paris, London, Nairobi.
- We have contributed to Sphere's revision process; will be contributing to HAP's, talking to ALNAP re shared interests (eg leadership).
- We now have a regional consultant in East Africa (ex-Oxfam and AAH Country Director).
- A new income stream in recent months has been our members, and non-members, asking us to deliver workshops in-house or undertake audits or HR consultancies for them.

Listening Project (CDA)

- Listening Exercises will be completed by the end of the year. In 2009, we have facilitated them in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Mindanao, Burma/Myanmar, Solomon Islands. Upcoming one in Mali (November 30—December 11). Reports available on our website.
- Feedback Workshops have been held in Washington, DC, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Jordan this year. More are planned in the coming months, including: Bonn (November) Mali (December), Senegal (December), Nairobi (Dec or Jan), Manila (Dec or Jan), Bangkok (Dec or Jan), London (Jan/Feb), Australia (Feb/Mar), New York (March). Others will be organized as funding allows.
- Additional Issue Papers are being revised or drafted including on the following themes, and we welcome feedback/input on these and papers already written (on our website):
 - Relationships in the Aid System
 - Expectations of International Assistance
 - Listening in the Aid System
 - Corruption
 - Who Benefits?
 - “We Don’t Understand Why”
 - Accountability
 - Who Does the Work
- The final publication (a book) will be written in 2010, and we will hold a consultation once the Feedback Workshops are concluded and the feedback has been incorporated and a book draft is ready for review (probably summer /fall 2010).
- The Listening Manual will be revised and made public (in consultation with other CDA projects) by spring of 2010. This is based on a number of requests from agencies to have tools and training materials to improve staff skills in listening and analysis.
- CDA recently hosted a donors’ conference to highlight common issues we have seen across our projects that affect, including 1) The gap between policies that set out priorities and principles and the translation of these policies into programmes and actual field results; and 2) How to assess results in ways that match with and reflect the concerns of the people in the societies we seek to support.
- Held discussions with ECB on potential collaboration and participating in Sphere Standards review process.
- LP will co-facilitate a session on user-generated innovations at the ALNAP Meeting.
- We are raising additional funds for more feedback workshops, analysis/writing and dissemination.
- Mary Anderson retired from CDA in October, and Steve Darvill (currently Humanitarian Aid Adviser with OECD/DAC) will be taking over as Executive Director of CDA in February 2010. For more information on all of the CDA projects, see our recent newsletter at [CDA Newsletter October 2009](#)
- Inter-operability--KCS mentioned that they have a manual on listening to children.

ALNAP:

- In July, ALNAP published review of humanitarian action – keystone of their work. 3 main components: performance, impact assessment, innovation.
- Working on how beneficiary surveys can be used to monitor performance.
- Performance: State of the System Pilot, has been written by Humanitarian Outcomes. Wide review of evaluations in ALNAP database, plus evidence from a range of sources. Report to be presented at the ALNAP meeting.
- Impact assessment: ongoing work, been well-received; work has been taken on board by OCHA etc.
- Work on the subject of innovation in humanitarian aid: has been an exciting new development for ALNAP, and has brought together more people for the ALNAP meeting tomorrow than ever before.
- John Mitchell has been contributing to SPHERE work on the revision on the standards.
- ALNAP has been contributing to the working group discussing the need for a joint space where people can go to get information on the Q & A initiatives.
- Feedback that website is now easier to navigate.
- For further information and update, see <http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/bulletin0909.pdf>

Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)

Accountability & Impact Measurement (AIM) The Adviser Group for AIM will meet on 19th & 20th November. This will lead to greater clarity on the scope of work within the AIM component of ECB over the project period. Some work, however, has already been progressing:

Good Enough Guide: The team implementing the ECHO-funded project to develop supporting materials for the AIM Good Enough Guide has now conducted field consultations in the Horn of Africa, Bangladesh, and Peru. They've collected some fascinating perspectives from field staff and country managers. One country programme manager commented on her surprise at how much participation and consultation can be done in the first phase of an emergency. Working to change the old perception that accountability is a time consuming luxury in the early stages of a response is exactly what the GEG – and this follow-on project – are designed to do.

ECB sent 30 GEG's to a recent Sphere ToT in Bangkok. There have subsequently been more requests for the GEG for another Sphere ToT as well as a VOICE training. We need to discuss the possibility of providing these in bulk for a reduced price with those with whom we develop a Partnership Plan.

Joint Needs Assessment: ECB has a significant piece of work to further develop the common needs assessment tool developed in Phase I, and pilot this in different contexts. Linked to this is the development of a database in order to enable capture of information from this tool in 'real-time', as well as the development of training around use of the tool and database. The Staff Capacity group is looking to develop 'common' surge capacity around needs assessment and will also be involved in this work.

ECB is in discussion with OCHA's NATF and HUNASP on this work, and ECB colleagues recently presented learning from recent experience with the tool in the West Sumatra earthquake at an NATF meeting. This noted some of the positives (commitment from a wide range of actors including government, UN, INGOs and NGOs to use a common tool) but also acknowledged some of the challenges (lack of training for staff, version and translation control, no functioning database). The presentation was well received, and the discussion that followed suggested that attendees, mainly global cluster leads (UN agencies) and OCHA staff, with a few donors, understood the key points we were making: that simple is better and that success in initial rapid assessment depends on existing capacity in or near disaster zones rather than complicated approaches that depend on global 'fly-in' capacity. The head of the NATF has agreed that ECB work should be included in the NATF workplan and budget.

Accountability Baseline: ECB AIM Advisers have agreed on five common areas of accountability that much of ECB's joint work in this area will be based around. These are: transparency; participation; DM&E; feedback mechanisms; leadership / governance.

Impact Measurement: ECB has requested expressions of interest for a partner to work with ECB on IM through the course of the project. This call went out via the ERLHA website. This week's meeting will be an opportunity to talk more about IM within the context of ECB. The group intends to develop a concept note on the basis of the meeting and we should have more to share at the next Q & A discussion.

General:

- The Bangladesh Consortium recently hosted a joint HAP / Sphere consultation workshop. Monica Blagescu and Rachel Houghton attended.
- As noted above, ECB has supported a Sphere ToT with GEGs; we need to discuss provision of this resource going forward.
- ECB and Sphere are currently discussing the potential for developing a Partnership Plan between the two initiatives.
- The project is currently recruiting the M & E Manager. A draft M & E framework has already been developed by Peta Sanderson.
- The project is also currently piloting consortia and agency on-line questionnaires in order to define a baseline in the three thematic areas of the project.

Staff Capacity

Staff Capacity Development. Many of the individual plans (CEPs for consortia, and AIPs for agencies) developed by the partners in the ECB Project included activities to develop a common competency framework and curriculum for two key groups: (i) national staff at the frontline of emergency response and (ii) national and regional managers likely to be in leadership roles in any response. These have been brought together into a Joint Action for Staff Capacity development, to ensure coherence, combine the expertise and knowledge across the partners in this area, and make the best use of resources, including seeking funding for this integrated work.

ECB is now partnering with the CBHA Consortium in a project funded by DfID in this area of work. This provides an exciting opportunity to advance the priorities established by the consortia and agencies in their plans, as well as to develop partnerships with external networks to bring the best expertise in the humanitarian community to bear. This will be strongly based on the experience with and learning from the

ECB National Staff Development Programme developed in ECB Phase I, as well as on the experience of CBHA agencies and partners. Work will seek to:

- Agree a common set of core humanitarian competencies.
- Develop simple means to assess existing staff and organisational capacities and identify potential gaps
- Map capacity development resources that already exist
- Build a common framework and tools that can be adapted to suit specific contexts and agency means.
- Develop a system to measure the impact of the programme, learning from it and adapting accordingly.
- Implement the programme in a phased manner including piloting in four of the five ECB consortia

Surge Capacity This piece of work is being led by CARE Intl and World Vision Intl, and they are currently developing a concept note. The initial focus, as noted above, will be on developing 'common' needs assessment capacity.

Disaster Risk Reduction The DRR Advisers are moving forward with the concept for a practitioner's guide to DRR and Climate Change Adaptation. This responds to demand for such a tool from consortia, agreement around a Joint Action at the Peer Review workshop in May, and further discussion at the Bellagio meeting in June. The rationale for the project is the need in country and field offices to improve consistency of understanding and practice of DRR and CCA at field level, and the lack of a highly concise guide to DRR that can be utilized across cultures and contexts to build community resilience and reduce risk to disasters of all types. It will be loosely modeled on the AIM Good Enough Guide, and will present some tried and tested methods for putting DRR and CCA into practice in a field context. It will draw on work of field staff, NGOs, and inter-agency initiatives, including the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for DRR, the ProVention Consortium, and other practitioner-based DRR networks.

In addition, the ECB Horn of Africa consortium included in its CEP activities to build an evidence base for integrating DRR / adaptation into participatory planning process and poverty reduction programmes. In consultation with the ECB team, a consortium led by Oxfam and including CARE UK, Save UK and World Vision UK, as well as ODI, applied for and received funding from DFID for a programme entitled Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance Programme (ACCRA). This will undertake this and related work in three countries: 2 in the Horn (Ethiopia and Uganda) as well as Mozambique (not an ECB country).

Communications

- The ECB Newsletter has now been launched. The first edition was circulated in July; the second is due this month.
- ECB's Communications Manager has been active in the development of the Q & A CoP.
- The ECB Website is currently being updated with news of project activities which have now started across agencies and consortia.
- The ECB ExtraNet (SharePoint) site will be upgraded to 2007 edition in the coming months.

Sphere:

- Handbook revision process: a great deal of expectation and involvement from a whole range of stakeholders in the process. In addition to the revision of the sectoral chapters, the Humanitarian Charter is also being revised. It is expected that 'protection' will be strengthened in the new handbook, but hasn't yet been determined how best to place it within the book (separate chapter or in 'Common Standards'). Interaction with a number of the Q&A initiatives in the revision process – ALNAP, People in AID, HAP. Working with INEE (also reviewing their minimum standards) for linkages to reflect 'Companionship Agreement' entered into between Sphere and INEE.
- The Sphere Board has recently approved its 'Strategy 2015' for Sphere and the Project is currently 'wrapping up' its 2007-09 program and finalising a new program for 2010-2012 that will also reflect the Strategy 2015.
- The Myanmar deployment with HAP has concluded; a number of questions have been raised about sustainability after the event, as the coordinator finished her assignment at the end of June with a focal point identified only towards the end of the deployment.
- Sri Lanka: Sphere decided against deploying an international presence following the end of hostilities but instead drew upon capacity that already existed in the region. Staff from CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan were deployed directly to Sri Lanka. Sphere will continue to increase local/regional capacities for deployment rather than internationally.

- Likewise, in the DRC (Goma), the deployment of an international resource person was hampered by a deteriorating security situation and Sphere is now engaging with local capacities to provide additional training workshops on Sphere.

INEE

- Updating handbook: Engaged in a similar process to Sphere, not doing a major revision, but a thorough update.
- Workshops for handbook update: 12 focal points leading the group and workshops, to see what needs to be updated and what needs to be changed. Workshops should be completed by end of November.
- Handbook will be updated early 2010, and finalized in April/May 2010.

Groupe URD

- COMPAS Training of Trainers Module: A training of trainers module has been developed in 3 languages (French, Spanish, English) and 2 week-long training sessions have already taken place. More than 20 COMPAS trainers have now been trained, in France and Spain (Groupe URD HQ in the Drome, and Madrid). TOT training will eventually take place in English, though more COMPAS trainings are necessary before - a COMPAS training in Pune, India (through RedR) will be held in January 2010.
- Introduction to Quality Module: A basic introduction to Quality concepts has been developed - a 'serious game'. This interactive downloadable module will be available in 3 languages. The objective is to introduce humanitarian workers, at field level, to concepts of quality.
- Humanitarian Management Software: Our Humanitarian Management Software aims to improve collection, planning and reporting processes. Developed at the request of a number of NGOs who now constitute a working group directly involved in the project, this product will help NGOs focus more on the quality of their projects, and less on administrative obligations, and allow them to report to donors more effectively. Many donors are beginning to use computerised information management systems for the projects they fund, an opportunity therefore exists to make the exchange of information between humanitarians and donors easier, by providing them with information management software which is compatible with donor systems. Based on an assessment of NGO needs, a survey of the computerisation of donor reporting and lessons learned from the Dynamic COMPAS software, this project is now ready to be implemented.
- Observatory of Humanitarian Practices in Chad: The Observatory has been operational in Chad since March 2009, working with humanitarian and development organisations to improve the quality of aid practice in the field, the link between relief and development, and to reduce the environmental impact of aid. Multi-disciplinary teams conduct real-time evaluations and use action research methodology, but have a continual presence in-country in order to accompany organisations to make real changes on the ground.

ACTION POINT: Introduction to Quality Module – to be shared with Sphere for possible inclusion in the training materials being developed from the 'Taking the initiative – Exploring quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector: an introduction to eight initiatives' paper.

3. 3 new initiatives shared information and discussed opportunities to collaborate

a. Keeping Children Safe Coalition (see PowerPoint)

Presentation by the KCS Coalition. Clarification that the standards are internal to organizations, rather than external, however it was suggested that links could be made with, for example, the Child Protection Cluster. KCS expressed their interest to be more involved in the Q&A Initiative, and since it is not a membership group, it is open to those who are interested in these issues such as KCS.

b. RedR/Bioforce Disaster Response Support Service initiative (see PowerPoint)

Bioforce is a training and certification organization, based in France. This is a joint initiative by RedR and Bioforce. Both organizations felt that it was important to participate in the Q & A group, as there are many similar initiatives running concurrently. For example, an ECHO funded project to develop key focal points for quality in Africa and Asia.

The RedR/Bioforce Disaster Response Support Service Initiative aims to support field staff, with a focus on national staff, in their activities in emergency response (ex. Tsunami, Pakistan, Myanmar cyclone). Focusing on partnership – to increase local capacity.

Discussion around the RedR/Bioforce initiative highlighted the following points:

- ECB has a rapid assessment tool, and has been working with OCHA. HUNAS project, focus on building capacity on an international level (for example a roster)
- Various overlaps which need to be identified, ironed out - how does the Bioforce/RedR initiative fit in with other initiatives? How can better coordination be ensured? Rapid needs assessments should be shared.
- RedR: Example of Pakistan, where HAP, Sphere, Bioforce etc were all present in the field, but a more coordinated approach would have been simpler. It is often a chaotic experience. Pleased to see that Sphere and HAP are working together.
- A nominal fee for training ensures buy-in from participants.
- Specific problem identified – when masses of new staff doing a job for the first time, they need support because they may not have worked in emergency response in the past.
- HAP – has member agencies, therefore often the members ask for support in the field, either for themselves or for partner organizations. Certainly no shortage of demand, so if we can look at ways to do joint deployment and manage resources in a collective way, that would be welcome. Next step may be to open bilateral discussions with member groups. In principal, HAP would be interested at looking for ways to work together.
- For information, Bioforce is also working on a larger initiative: how to recognize the skills which are being developed in field work, idea to use a certification process to develop and recognize these capacities.

ACTION POINT – Bioforce/RedR to approach individual organizations to see how coordination/interoperability can be ensured.

c. Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA) Scoping Study

- Trying to encourage academic institutions to work more closely with humanitarian organisations. Developing pathways and progression routes, as there are gaps linking Masters degree programmes to vocational development.
- Recognizing a vocational gap, and creating professional progression routes, to create new opportunities for agencies to be able to recruit.
- Currently, each agency has their own competency framework, idea to use transferable credits from one agency to another.

2 guiding principles:

1. Resolving issues, and solving problems that exist (what people need to get where want to go)
2. Link into existing systems, participatory, easy, affordable etc.

Needs assessment:

- An online survey has been conducted, with over 1000 responses so far (to be launched in French and Spanish). Running a workshop at ALNAP on Wednesday. Report coming out at end of March, with month of consultation, and a conference planned at end of April/beginning May. Hoped to get buy-in, tie into initiatives.
- Disseminate competencies – 3 levels already exist.
- Linking in with universities in Europe, America, South America, Asia, Africa, Australia etc
- Running focus groups in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Sudan, Nairobi etc.

Discussion around the ELRHA Scoping Study:

- **Past initiatives:** There have been various initiatives in the past in terms of professionalization in the sector. But changes have occurred, there is much more agreement now on the idea of shared competencies, between HR staff of different organizations.
- Importance of people management skills, so important in terms of quality and accountability. Core competency tends to focus on technical skills, rather than on processes.
- **Interoperability:** The possible link with the Harvard Initiative APHAP was discussed. Peter Walker is due to meet with APHAP in December. It was suggested that Q & A should contact APHAP and invite them to attend the next meeting.
- Does the Q&A Group have a TOR? No, always been careful to avoid allowing the group to become over-formalised, or like a club. There has not been a demand for more regular meetings. Worry that there are an increasing number of overlapping initiatives. We need to find the right kind of neutral venue to discuss these issues.
- **Future plans:** It was suggested that a meeting to discuss how to link up these ideas about core competencies and certification would be valuable. How can agencies be more accountable? Would the conference in April/May be a timely event to further discuss this? Better links with CBHA?

ACTION POINT: RedR/ELRHA + ECB to discuss and set a date for such a meeting.

4. Action Items/Closing

State of the sector – People in Aid suggested putting together a summary of the state of the sector. ACTION POINT: Organisations to participate in such an initiative, led by Jonathan Potter at PIA.

Set next meeting time, location, chair, and note-taker

ACTION POINT: RedR/ELRHA + ECB to discuss and set a date for such a meeting (Feb 2010?) Volunteer for chairing (Rachel, Jonathan or Catherine to chair)

Minutes – tbc

Venue - UK