

Minutes of the Quality and Accountability Initiatives meeting, Wednesday 28th November 2007, 2.00 – 5.30.

Approved during the Madrid meeting (3rd June)

Hosted by Handicap International, chaired by Groupe URD

Presents

ALNAP (John Mitchell), Coordination Sud (François Fiard, Akofa Bernasconi and Nathalie Herlemont), SCHR (Eva von Oelreich), Groupe URD (François Grünewald and Véronique de Geoffroy), People In Aid (Jonathan Potter), Sphere Project (Alison Joyner and John Damerall), HAP (Nick Stockton), CDA / Listening Project (Dayna Brown, by phone)

Minutes prepared by Akofa Bernasconi and François Fiard

Jean-Baptiste Richardier; Executive Director of Handicap International welcomed the participants during the lunch.

First introduction and presentation of the new members of the Q&A group :

- Eva von Oelreich, from SCHR (Standing Committee for Humanitarian Response)
- Dayna Brown, from the Listening Project participating on phone from Washington.
- François Fiard and Akofa Bernasconi from Coordination SUD

Comment on the agenda

François Grünewald (URD) proposed to adopt a flexible approach to the agenda items, in order to adapt to the scheduled phone call of Dayna from Washington.

One item added to the agenda : SCHR presentation

Item 1: Review of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting emphasizes the following issues :

- What kind of formalism should adopt the Q&A group ?
- Which kind of membership ? How to deal with solicitations of other actors to join the group ? How to keep an efficiency if the group carry on to increase?

François (URD) suggested to make a point on the agenda about those questions.

Item 2: Updates from the different initiatives

HAP

Efforts made to work with other Q&A group members:

- Meetings with People In Aid, in order to use their two productions in a joint process of certification. The next step is to find possible candidates to test this joint process.
- A new office based in Pakistan. HAP wish to create a possible link with URD offices in Afghanistan. They already find some field staff links with ECB in Nairobi and Somalia
- A training session was planned to be made with Sphere in Bangladesh, but it couldn't take place because of the cyclone.

People In Aid

Building african networks with ECB:

- A benchmarking work was made to see which organisations work with Interagency Working Group (IAWG) in Nairobi. ECB agencies are part of this group. A meeting is planned with ECB on this subject.

Coordination Sud

- Launch of a new Fund allocated by the French MFA, in order to improve internal structure of NGOs. One of the proposals covers the use of Compass (URD)
- Stand-by for the AFAQ-AFNOR¹ project on labelisation of governance of associations. But remains a main issue for next year.

Sphere

Testing joint activities

- The e-learning project continues and it is planned to develop other training packages with People In Aid
- Emergency shelter cluster working group : Sphere works with IFRC and UNHCR to develop a project management system for emergency shelter
- Two global trainings of trainers took place in the year
- Try to propose joint activities with HAP, but didn't find a common field protocol
- For the future: SPHERE plans to implement a field study on chronic emergencies

ALNAP

- Review of Humanitarian Action will be published in January 2008: on organisation changes, evaluation system on Pakistan earthquake
- Second evaluation : joint evaluation on assessment of quality
- Third document will publish on lessons learned from flood disaster
- ALNAP Strategy: to be presented and discussed with members by the beginning of December 07.

Groupe URD : Efforts to spread the Q& A approach with European NGO's :

- Seminar organised with HAP in Islamabad: Ideas for another kind of meeting in Afghanistan in February on the issue "Responsibility of donor's aid in Afghanistan".
- Focus point in 2007 on the communication of the "shared vision". First way : via the first newsletter "Aiming for quality" of Groupe URD. Second way within the process of assessment of Quality approaches in Spanish humanitarian sector (the article presenting the results will come soon)
- Various Compass training courses took place: in Dakar, Madrid, Kabul, and one training session on Quality issues is planned in January with Portuguese NGOs.

Item 3: Presentation of SCHR

Created in 1972, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response is mainly a "Peer review" process, formed by different type of organisations : NGOS, Red Cross and Red Crescent family.

¹ AFAQ-AFNOR : Association Française pour l'Amélioration et le management de la Qualité - Association Française de Normalisation. The term "AFAQ" is now use as one of the certification trademarks of the "AFNOR".

SCHR is a group of free and frank exchange about all humanitarian problematic or others organisation's challenges. Monthly analyses are edited on specific topics; for example, the group already worked on following themes in accountability frameworks:

- The place of power in humanitarian aid,
- The way of working with south partners,

Finally the group uses SCHR to capitalise accountability process in agencies and proposes workshops and trainings in communication strategies.

The SCHR is currently launching a process of Peer Review on Accountability Processes. Eva explained in few words what would be the process, its objectives and modalities.

Groupe URD noted that this Peer Review was focused on Accountability and didn't look at Quality processes, which could be also relevant (e.g. looking at quality of management in organisation). Groupe URD should express officially the question to the facilitator of SCHR group so that he can consider this side of the subject. A joint work is planned with Sphere on the manual.

ALNAP remarked that the group seems to be closed to its own members. SCHR agreed that the aim of the group is not to become a big network, but is also to be open to discussion with other networks, to share works, lessons learned and points of view.

Item 4: Presentation of the Listening project (Dayna)

CDA (Collaborative Development Association): Listening Project (phone call from Washington)

- Presentation of the contents of the survey
- The purpose is to study the cumulative long term impact of assistance; no general conclusion by now but country reports available.
- Power point available?

Item 5: update on the humanitarian index initiative John Mitchell (ALNAP)

John Mitchell presented the ongoing work on the humanitarian index of performance. The concept note is ready to be presented to ALNAP members around November (next meeting). This kind of index is developed in other sectors, the aim is to create confidence among "consumers"/donors, and to demonstrate that the humanitarian sector has become mature, accountable and can measure its improvement. ALNAP made wide consultation for many months to come at this final draft proposition.

This index will use available data from different sources, including data emerging from opinion review ruled by DAC criteria. The objective is not to rank organisations, but to build confidence in the whole system.

Participants discussed about the term "performance" and insist on the risk to generalize and measure NGO's performance because of the diversity of organizations in the sector.

The principal advice to ANALP is to go beyond donors criteria, in order to consider what could be the specificity of performance in humanitarian action, and to assert that it cannot be in any way based on an economic model.

Item 6: Publications

The question is how and who to spread Q&A group initiatives and ideas without worsening the variety of members approach. Can a member of the group talk or write an article, or a position in the name of the group?

In last meetings the group acted that each organisation should put the shared vision document on their website. Coordination Sud is working on a short paper to present the group, but has already publish on it's website information about the group. ALNAP didn't include the document on their site for the moment.

First discussion on the initiatives' chair's meeting but this should be one subject for the next skype and face to face meetings.

Q&A is an independent group but should exist more via more visible communication (develop and improve "the shared vision", write a dialogue article expressing the diversity of the group - starting with John' draft article-), more visible joint activities and more frequent meetings.

Need to imagine a way to communicate or to meet regularly. A proposition was to alternate the virtual. Thus these three points could help to improve our interaction: to develop the exchanges of E-mail // to organize some Skype meetings // to program two or three real meetings in the year // to organize a meeting with chairs and real meeting.

For next steps:

- URD will try the dialogue article experience in their effort to do joint activities with ALNAP.
- People In Aid will chair the next face to face meeting (Madrid).
- Date of the next face to face meeting to be confirmed (early June).

Item 7 : Next meeting:

The next meeting will be a Skype meeting on 31st of January 2008, 14.00 Geneva Time; Organized and chaired by Allison from Sphere.

In June a real meeting will be hosted in Madrid immediately afterwards a joint seminar including ALNAP and URD. Logistic aspect will be allocated to URD (François Grünwald), and the chairing to People In Aid (Jonathan Potter)