

## **Meeting of the Quality and Accountability Initiatives**

DARA Office  
Madrid  
3 June 2008

### **Present:**

Chair: Jonathan Potter – People in Aid  
Minutes: Nicholas Stockton – HAP-International  
Ben Ramalingam – ALNAP  
John Mitchell – ALNAP  
François Fiard – Coordination Sud  
Véronique de Geoffroy – Groupe URD  
Peter Morris – Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative/OFDA

### **Apologies**

Nathalie Herlemont – Coordination Sud  
Dayna Brown – Listening Project

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1. Agenda adopted as proposed
2. Draft Minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2007 approved subject to corrections from the Listening Project and Sphere.
3. Updates

- **Coordination Sud Update (written)**

- 1) Coordination SUD launch a working group on the “transparency” issue :**

- Context : multiplication in France of (private or public) initiatives of analysis on the transparency of NGOs (Idea solidarity, ESSEC, AFAQ-AFNOR, Scan-ONG, Prometheus) ... often based only on the screening of websites !*

- Aims of the working group are :*

- *to produce a frame of reference on transparency for NGOs and to see how to implement it, to monitor and to control,*
    - *to update the “code of conduct” of members of Coordination SUD and, if relevant, to see how to monitor and control its respect by members of our platform*

- 2) Fund for capacity building inside NGOs (FRIO)**

- *12 actions of capacity building (from 12 different NGOs) have been funded since dec'07 on different issues : north/south partnership (3), communication (3), global strategy & management (3), quality approach (1), governance (1), human resource (1)*
    - *Short term perspective of 15 new actions funded until end of the year.*
    - *Perspectives for 2009 : to develop more specific tools such as, ie : diagnosis of the organisation, support to the definition of a global strategy, support of the definition of a training strategy,...*

- 3) Articulation with peer national platform/umbrella**

- Publication of Q&A information on websites.**

- *Information on Q&A already published on [www.coordinationsud.org](http://www.coordinationsud.org)*
    - *Didn't manage to publish this information on [www.ngo-ong.org](http://www.ngo-ong.org) (website of the International Resource Center, which links the different national platforms). The present architecture of the website (political positions on different subjects) is not designed for “capacity building” information (they need to develop and to fill up a specific section)*

- Workshops with African platforms on criteria of quality in partnership.**

Following the publication of the "North/South partnership Guide", we organise two workshops with our homologues in Togo and Benin on the issue of quality of the partnership, by an African point of view.

#### **4) Perspectives / Articulation with peer national platform/umbrella**

**Aid effectiveness : Which impact on NGOs and which place for NGOs in the process ?**  
29th and 30th June in Paris : Concord (European Development NGO platform) launch a process of reflection (for NGOs and with NGOs) on "effectiveness of NGOs". By this process, NGOs want to contribute to the general debate on Aid effectiveness and promote specific criteria for NGOs.

The Paris meeting aims to define governance, objectives and expected results of the process.

#### **French presidency of European Union : Coordination SUD leads a program including seminar with national and regional umbrellas**

In the frame of the French presidency of European Union, the national platform of the president country leads a parallel program Civil Society presidency. France will host the presidency by July and Coordination SUD host also a CS program. In this frame, we will organise, end of October, a huge seminar with all national NGOs platforms (80 platforms awaited). One of the aims of this seminar is to work on an ethical code of conduct (a common one if possible) for NGOs platform. (Written submission)

**Discussion:** Coordination Sud clarified that funding under FRIO is for French NGOs only. ECHO does not have such a fund. ALNAP informed the group that ODI has won a £5 million grant from DFID under the Governance and Transparency scheme for work on "Strengthening Citizen Demand for Good Governance". (The DFID fund is now fully allocated)

- **Sphere Update (written)**

- **New Chair** - Ton van Zutphen of World Vision International takes over from Ed Schenkenberg of ICVA, who completed his 2 year term. A newly agreed ToR for the Sphere Chair includes participation in meetings of the Chairs (and equivalents...) of the quality and accountability initiatives.

- **Revision process** - proposal and budget approved by Sphere Board at their meeting in May, fundraising now begins. 18 month process is envisaged, 1 year of revision process during 2009, 6 months translation and production in 2010. Exact timing depends on funding, more details at the meeting.

- **'Sphere Companions'** - the Sphere Board has endorsed a process for other initiatives that have developed standards for humanitarian response to apply to become 'Companion Standards' to Sphere, according to criteria including the use of a 'Sphere-like process' in their development, terminology and format compatible with Sphere, and at least one year of field testing on the basis of which revisions have been made. INEE is the first applicant and their acceptance as 'Sphere Companion standards' should be formalised at the next Sphere Board meeting in October 2008. Other initiatives are interested in applying, but none are yet at a stage ready to apply.

- **Sphere support in emergencies**

- **Myanmar** - update at the meeting, current situation as above.

- **Haiti** - a consultant was hosted by ActionAid Haiti with a view to supporting a 'chronic emergency' on Sphere. However she arrived a few days before the food riots began in early April, so had to leave before doing any training. Sphere support may be followed up later, after the cyclone season, using Sphere-trained Haitian staff of NGOs and local government.

- **Q and A training materials** - update to be provided at the meeting, currently reviewing applications for consultant.

- **Training plans for 2009**- Sphere is exploring the idea of developing workshops (2-3 days) that will bring together people who have already participated in a Sphere ToT, to follow up on their experiences, learning and challenges. This is with a view to giving more support to existing Sphere trainers, and building more active national and regional networks around support on the use of Sphere (relevant also to support in emergencies as above). We are also planning to co-fund ToTs as far as possible in future.

- **Humanitarian Performance Project** - John Borton presented an overview of the project to a

*few Geneva-based Board members in April. The discussion was around ways in which Sphere indicators could be used to support the development of some form of indicators of performance for humanitarian response. (Written submission)*

**Additional information & discussion:**

**Q & A Initiatives training materials project:** Sylvie Robert, Ana Urgoiti and Emma Jowett have been recruited to the Sphere's Q & A Initiatives training materials project. Offers of financial contributions to the project from the Q & A initiatives would be appreciated. The first draft of the materials should be completed by the end of July. The aim is to get a consensus on the way that the Q & A initiatives are presented. Each of the Q & A Initiatives are encouraged to nominate a focal person to act as liaison person for the project.

**Sphere "companions":** Q & A initiatives are welcome to apply for Sphere "companion" status if they are interested in being considered to become 'Sphere Companion Standards' (criteria soon to be available on the website).

- **Groupe URD Update (verbal)**
  - Considering making the Compas Qualité available free for adaptation by NGOs
  - Quality Compass training in English will be run in Plaisians in June 2008
  - Completing two papers commissioned by French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative on needs assessments and programme quality.
  
- **ALNAP Update (verbal)**
  - 2007 Review of Humanitarian Action published
  - First draft of real-time evaluation guide issued. Plans to pilot this over the 9 months, coinciding with the IASC pilot extension.
  - Published "lessons-learned" for the Cyclone Nargis response in Myanmar. Much unsolicited positive feedback received.
  - Background paper on the media prepared for the Madrid biannual
  - Humanitarian Performance Project has completed first round of interviews and has mapped the various relevant data resources. There appears to be lots of data but not joined up and often not used. John Borton has mapped these resources for further discussion at the biannual.
  - ALNAP and ICVA has convened a meeting with some regional humanitarian networks. There appears to be many "southern" networks, but little investment in them.
  - Starting a study on humanitarian leadership
  
- **HAP-International Update (written)**
  - *New Members since November 2007:*
    - *Sungi Development Foundation*
    - *COAST Trust*
    - *Muslim Aid*
    - *ACTED*
    - *Church World Service – Pakistan/Afghanistan*
  - *HAP Certification completed since November 2007*
    - *MERCY Malaysia*
    - *Danish Church Aid*
    - *Tear Fund UK*
  - *New publications*
    - *Guide to HAP Standard published and launched in Geneva and London*
    - *"To complain or not complain: still the question" – Beneficiary Based Consultation published*

- **New Emergencies**
  - *Response to Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh*
  - *Joint response with Sphere to Cyclone Nargis*
- **Governance**
  - *Board – agreed to seek greater inter-operability with Q & A products*
  - *General Assembly – agreed to seek closer ties with Sphere on standard revision process*
- **Organisational**
  - *Merger with Building Safer Organisations completed*
  - *Pakistan Office extended for 2 years (Written submission)*
- **People In Aid Update (written)**
  1. *EPN: conferences have taken place in Nairobi and Istanbul. EPN Online has attracted great participation and exchange of information between all 5 continents.*
  2. *Workshops/conferences have taken place recently in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Baltimore, Melbourne.*
  3. *Burma: we produced an information sheet on the country gleaned from members and EPN Online participants.*
  4. *Membership at turn of financial year (April 1st) was 131 in 27 countries.*
  5. *Strategy to be reviewed by the Board in September; comments welcomed from Q&A colleagues.*
  6. *We have launched an HR self-assessment tool aimed at smaller NGOs and INGO country programmes. (Written submission)*
- **Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative Update (verbal)**
  - The GHD is supposed to be wound up before the end of 2008, but it is not certain that this will happen
  - GHD is trying to understand “evidence-based” decision making and “needs-based” decision making in the humanitarian sector. However, criteria for what constitutes evidence
  - Sweden has designed a training course on needs-based decision making
  - The future of GHD as a body depends upon the willingness of any of its members to offer to chair it.

Discussion: Some concern that GHD may be just another “talking shop”. However, some of the Q & A Initiatives feel that the GHD principles provide an important accountability framework for the GHD donors and that the GHD process itself provides a forum where this can be further strengthened.

## **Matters Arising from Lyons and January 2008 teleconference**

### **4a. Future meetings and Minutes**

- i. Joint Directors’/Chairs meetings: (discussion deferred to later in meeting)
- ii. Translations of Minutes: Groupe URD & Coordination Sud offered to translate the minutes of the Q & A Initiatives meetings into French as a contribution in kind. Sphere offered to prepare the Spanish version. HAP, ALNAP and People in Aid agreed to contribute to the Spanish translation costs, to be invoiced by Sphere.
- iii. Dissemination of minutes on websites should proceed as proposed in Lyons.
- iv. Telephone conference calls (telecons): Agreed that to keep “normal business” flowing between the Q & A Initiatives it would help to have contact every three months, but that it would not be necessary to do this on a face to face basis. The agenda for telecons would be determined by specific business needs rather than using the standard update and scanning agenda used for the 6 month face to face meetings. The Chair and note-taker for the telecon should be agreed at the previous 6 monthly meeting, with the Chair having the prerogative to cancel the

telecon if no business is tabled. It was agreed that complex issues would be dealt with in the 6 monthly meetings wherever possible.

#### **4b. Communications**

- i. Wikipedia update: HAP explained that Wikipedia entries need to be made by a person who can honestly declare that they are not marketing a product or organisation. Therefore an entry about the Q & A initiatives would need to be submitted by an independent person or body. (There is already an entry about Sphere). In addition, without an agreed “vision” text, or at least an updated version of the Q & A Initiatives FAQ (now quite of date), there is really nothing that could currently be uploaded to Wikipedia.
- ii. Dialogue article – François to be requested to let the group know how John’s first draft is being taken forward.
- iii. It was agreed that participants should be “encouraged” (rather than required) to put a link on their home-pages to the Q & A Initiatives documents (FAQ and minutes)
- iv. Future attendance: It was agreed that attendance be open to any humanitarian quality and accountability initiative that wishes to participate. Those wishing to attend may approach any of the current participants.

#### **4a. Directors/Chairs meetings**

It was agreed that participants and Chairs of the initiatives should avoid using the phrase “Quality and Accountability Initiatives” when only some of the participating agencies are involved. (This in reference to the letter written “on behalf of the Q & A Initiatives” that did not actually involve or represent Coordination Sud, Groupe URD, or the Listening Project). The participants agreed that it would be advisable for the Chairs to meet with the directors of the initiatives rather than separately.

The participants discussed the need to establish stronger strategic relations between the initiatives in order that more effective operational cooperation could be achieved. It was agreed that HAP would circulate an internal discussion paper about developing a strategic engagement with the Q & A initiatives, and that HAP and ALNAP would work together to prepare a Q & A strategic discussion paper for consideration at a future Q & A Initiatives meeting.

#### **Next meeting dates:**

Telecon: 16 September – Chair – John Mitchell; notes: ALNAP  
Meeting: December – linked to ALNAP biannual (date to be confirmed by ALNAP)  
Chair: Sphere  
Notes: Groupe URD