

Quality and Accountability Meeting
Hosted by Sphere Project - Wednesday 20 June 2007

Present:

Jonathan Potter – People In Aid (Chair)
Nicholas Stockton - HAP
John Damerell- Sphere Project
Ivan Scott – Oxfam (representing ECB2)
François Grünewald – Groupe URD
Nathalie Herlemont – Coordination Sud
John Mitchell – ALNAP
Renaud Colombier – Coordination Sud

Apologies: Véronique de Geoffroy (Groupe URD)

Lydia Beauquis – note taker

1. Welcomes, apologies and introductions

Jonathan Potter, Chair of the meeting, welcomed all the participants who introduced themselves briefly.

2. No matters arising from **minutes of last meeting** (9 October 2006) which will not be discussed later in the meeting.

3. Minutes of 9 October 2006 - were very concise minutes and were officially approved after its circulation. It had been decided that the minutes would be posted on the different websites, so there may be a need for slightly more extensive notes, but maintaining same format.

Updates:

ALNAP and People In Aid have shared a written update before the meeting (attached).

- **Sphere Project:** the Sphere board has met in May 2007, the revision of the handbook has been put on hold, and in addition, ‘accompanying modules’ may be developed to cover emerging complimentary areas (e.g. livestock, education). The Board also encouraged a meeting of Q&A Chairs. First Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop in Arabic has just started in Amman. Sphere is also evaluating the opportunities for a deployment of resources personnel to Darfur or Haiti.
- **URD** – has just received an important financial contribution from ECHO. URD had been facing a difficult financial situation for the last 6 months which has taken up a lot of energy. On a positive note, Quality Compass has become better known by the different agencies and used in the field. It is regarded as a powerful evaluation tool. URD is collaborating with ICRC on a project management cycle training and IFRC has expressed interest in Quality Compass. A new version (version 2) is being finalized.

- **ECB** – the initiative is coming to an end (end 2007). Discussions are taking place for possible continuation and a decision will be taken by October/November. ECB has held discussions with SCHR concerning the shaping of its next peer review process but acknowledging that it (the peer review) will be a long-term project. ECB has proved to be a tight and useful project of peers. Joint evaluation with ALNAP not concluded yet.
- **HAP** – has recently welcomed four new members. The certification scheme is now established and the first two organisations have now been certified. Demand for certification appears to be in line with planned expectations. The HAP 2007 Standard Implementation Guide has gone for publication by Oxfam Publishing and is expected to be available in September or October. A new Chair has been elected, the SG of the Danish Refugee Council as of end June. Building Safer Organisations (the project set up by ICVA to provide capacity building for prevention and investigation of sexual exploitation and abuse within aid agencies) has now been transferred to HAP.
- **ALNAP** – The ALNAP strategy draft has been shared for consultation with its membership and was discussed at the last ALNAP meeting. Next step is to receive feedback from its consistency, the integration of comments of the Steering Committee and ratification by ALNAP.
- **Coordination Sud** - Synergy Quality has been translated in English. Renaud and Veronique would update the group later on current issues.
- **People In Aid** – its Board will carry out an ‘environmental scanning session’ looking at the Q & A initiatives from the agency perspective.

(It is noted that only 2 Q & A Initiatives shared written updates before the meeting. While appreciating the verbal contributions made during the meeting itself, there appears to have been an imbalance in contributions. This matter should be clarified by the next Chair before the next meeting – either all agree to submit written updates ahead of time or everyone makes verbal contributions during the meeting).

4. Complementarities Study

The Chair reminded the group of a recommendation in the Complementarities Study report on constructive meetings to improve coherence. Key to successful collaboration of the initiatives is to be serious in exchange and remain coherent, share these signals with donors and field workers. Overall there was some concern about the sector continuing to initiate new quality initiatives while at the same time expecting the six established ones (present here) to invest considerable energy in realising expectations, particularly donors’.

a) Reactions received –

The group debated the concerns raised for not publishing the *DARA* pre-meeting report; this has been perceived as a lack of transparency. Most reactions received were process orientated and far less on content. Nevertheless, the release of the *DARA* pre-meeting report now may actually reinforce misperceptions as it was intended to be an information-collection exercise to allow the Oxford meeting to be as productive as possible. Although the *DARA* pre-meeting report can be made available on request, it was agreed it would not be “published” on Q & A websites. The *DARA* pre-meeting report should be considered as a working document.

AP – John (ALNAP) will write a short note as an introduction to the DARA pre-meeting report and talk to DARA.

François (URD): draft a message for dissemination using the 3 points discussed and agreed, in coherence with the vision statement.

Deadline - 15 July 2007 – finalised note to be sent to Jonathan (People In Aid, Chair) along with e-mail addresses of anyone who should receive the DARA pre-meeting report, in order that Jonathan may send out the note and the pre-meeting report by e-mail as the Chair.

AP – Improved communication approach – to be included on the agenda of the next meeting.

AP - Table with summary of facts of the agencies to be attached to the Complementarities Study report – revision of annexes (pages 19-25 of the Complementarities Study report).

b) Relevant outcomes from ALNAP biannual: although the ALNAP Strategy mentioned the synergy required between the initiatives, some felt that what was included did not go far enough – ALNAP members will respond with their views on how to integrate in the 5-year strategy.

c) Actions:

The Oxford meeting had identified a number of multilateral and bilateral collaborations which would benefit the sector. Section 3 identified these priority action points and the initiatives which had agreed to lead on these collaborations, as well as picking up other possible activities and areas of collaboration.

c-i. Strategic vision (Sphere/URD) - The draft was shared at the meeting for comments. The group exchanged their initial views and considered this a good step forward. A commitment by the 6 Q&A Initiatives to work together should be included in the vision and introductory note to the report. The group confirmed that the meetings of the (currently 6) Q&A Initiatives should be open to other quality and accountability initiatives.

AP - URD/Sphere revise vision and share for comments before end of month

AP - Coordination Sud will produce a French translation to be shared

AP - ALNAP to discuss with HPN the possibility submitting an article on the specific issue of collaboration between the Q & A initiatives etc.

c-ii. Joint e-learning activity (People In Aid/Sphere) - Sphere and People In Aid have been in contact to discuss possible interaction. Sphere is moving ahead with an e-learning tool and People In Aid will feed into the process; following discussion, it was agreed that Sphere/People In Aid should link up with Groupe URD as the revised Quality Compass website has been developed as an e-learning tool.

AP - Sphere/People in Aid to link up with Groupe URD when developing the joint e-learning activity. Contact names within ALNAP and HAP were also suggested.

c.iii. Joint training modules (Sphere/HAP) – initial contacts have been made to discuss the opportunities of a joint training module to allow for a comprehensive introduction to the different Q&A tools available at field level for information. URD and HAP have collaborated by filling in on different tools (compass and certification process) at respective trainings.

AP - *Sphere/HAP to reshape the module to be an information module, introducing quality tools rather than developing a comprehensive training package.*
Deadline: End July

c-iv. Strategy for umbrellas – Coordination Sud shared their short paper on its specific context and the problems they are facing with the different control tools as well as an overview of the involvement of Coordination Sud at the different platforms and raised the concern regarding certification by the French MFA of all associations. As more systems of certification are encouraged by donors so donors seem to be further from achieving their aim. It was acknowledged that the HAP certification scheme is based upon a “bottom-up” process where disaster survivors play a key role in judging quality and performance.

AP - *All initiatives should remain aware of the steadily increasing number of certification processes, and should share information on these processes.*

AP - *Coordination Sud to draft half-page briefing (elaborating on the 3-point message being prepared by François (URD) (above)) for dissemination to the different umbrella organizations (national platforms). Coordination Sud should consider to use the International Rescue Centre website to share information between the national platforms*

AP - *ALNAP to disseminate briefings to SCHR, VOICE, and ICVA.*

c-v. Fieldwork protocol – no action has been taken so far.

AP - *Sphere to identify contact person and link with Barb Wigley at HAP.*

d) Next steps:

d-i. Joint website – A joint website would require continued investment in financial and human resources, whereas links on respective Q & A Initiatives’ websites (on front page?) to the other Initiatives may be more appropriate. The initial idea was to have a page – containing the same information and references within the respective websites. Discussions also included the (in)ability to find the Q & A Initiatives when entering appropriate words into the Google search engine. These days, this is important, as is inclusion in Wikipedia.

AP - *All Q & A Initiatives to ensure an appropriate page on their website with minimum common content (FAQ paper; Complementarities Study report; minutes from Q & A Initiatives meetings; links to websites of other Q & A Initiatives) and no more than 2 clicks from front/home page.*

AP - *Nick (HAP) to explore possibilities and process for having Q & A Initiatives entered in Wikipedia, after finalization of vision statement.*

d-ii. Use of ECB jigsaw puzzle – Ivan shared the illustration developed by ECB. The group thanked ECB for this initiative but concluded it wasn’t really what was needed. When considering a ‘mapping exercise’, reference was made to the report that contained the basic information. It was agreed that no further steps were required and that use of the jigsaw puzzle would not be promoted.

Given that there is often mis-information about the number of Q & A Initiatives in existence, the group agreed to state in future correspondence and communications that there are six

Initiatives working together and to list them alphabetically by name in a move towards clarity on this issue.

d-iii. Reaching field workers – has been covered already in previous discussions. Agreement on the statement will increase the reach-out to field workers. It was noted also that there are different ways of raising awareness, including at headquarters level.

d-iv. Common activities requiring common funding – re. AHA concern about missed opportunity to attend Q & A meetings (for example, ALNAP biannuals) and the possibilities that exist in the various organizations to support travel costs of African NGOs. ALNAP used to fund travel costs of southern organizations, but a change in policy now allows all its members to apply for support. John (ALNAP) indicated that one ALNAP member had suggested to provide funds to support the future participation of southern partner organizations, such as AHA, to attend relevant events. Other initiatives include bursaries in project funding applications. The seminar in Pakistan on accountability being organized jointly by HAP and Sphere is of a different nature in as much as it is anticipated that resources will be identified locally with external input focusing on the agenda items.

d-v. Chair's meetings – The purpose of such a meeting is not clear. Earlier attempts have been made to organize such a meeting, including a provisional agenda, but without success. It was noted that the chairs of three of the Q & A Initiatives are likely to meet informally around the Global Humanitarian Platform meeting (12/13 July). It was agreed that the group would continue to encourage their respective chairs to meet but to allow adequate time for the group to develop an agenda.

d.vi. Membership of group – agreement on the common vision should allow other interested parties to determine whether (or not) they would benefit from attending this Q & A Initiatives meeting. It is important that like-minded organizations come together.

In line with this, it was recommended that the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative should be invited to attend the next meeting; and then determine as a result of this whether they want to/should be a member.

AP - *Next Chair to invite GHD to next meeting.*

It was noted that SCHR is embarking on its next round of peer reviews on 'accountability to beneficiaries'. After some discussion, it was agreed to invite the SCHR Executive Secretary to make a presentation of the peer review during the relevant section of the next meeting.

AP - *Next Chair to invite SCHR Executive Secretary to make a presentation at the next meeting.*

e) Feedback on bilateral activities which have been taken forward: the group understood that bilateral activities had been reported throughout the meeting in the earlier sections of the agenda.

5. Other Discussion topics

a) AHA e-mail - has been covered under item 4.d.iv. (above).

6. Scanning of the scene

a) Professional association: update on new initiatives - Jonathan (People In Aid) informed that group that SCF-UK has submitted 2 proposals for funding for the establishment/operation of a 'professional association for aid workers'. People In Aid, requested by its last EPN conference on 'professionalism' had been tasked to take this issue forward as well. InterAction (US) is also considering such a body. It was agreed that People In Aid would keep the group informed on this issue.

In addition, an Oxfam International initiative was discussed – IANGO (International Advocacy NGOs) Charter that has teamed up with a global reporting initiative and the mechanism for compliance is being developed. Nick (HAP) indicated that HAP had been invited to contribute to the process.

7. AOB

It was agreed that the next meeting would be hoisted by Coordination Sud in Lyon, France on 28 November 2007, with Groupe URD (François) serving as Chair.

AP - *François (Groupe URD) to confirm date of meeting and Renaud (Coordination Sud) to confirm the venue.*