



HAP INTERNATIONAL

Humanitarian Partnership International



“ *In my field work I saw humanitarian action at its best – heroism, courage, creativity, flexibility – but also at its worst: lack of understanding, respect for the mission and the beneficiaries.*

Humanitarian action does not exist for our sake. We are involved because we want to protect, rebuild, and restore. Human beings must be at the centre of our responsibilities. **”**

**Soren Jessen-Petersen, Stability Pact, former
Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees**

What is accountability?

Accountability may be defined as involving two sets of principles and mechanisms: those by which individuals, organisations and States account for their actions and are held responsible for them; and those by which individuals, organisations and States may safely and legitimately report concerns, complaints and abuses, and get redress where appropriate.

HAP International

Ultimately, and whether we want it or not, our humanitarian accountability is being judged on a daily basis by millions of uprooted people.

Vincent Cochetel, Chief of Investigation Unit, UNHCR

There are different ways of defining accountability. There are different groups who expect humanitarian assistance organisations to account for their actions and be held responsible. These groups include donors, supporters, staff, governments and the media.

For HAP International and its members one group comes first. It is the people directly affected by disaster and conflict. For members of HAP International accountability to the claimants or beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance is fundamental.

It's about the right to a say...

Most foreign assistance agencies didn't want to listen to us and our expertise. They didn't want to make changes to their plans based on our realities. We were so disappointed. It was not only that they did not recognize that we exist, but they also refused to hear our voice.

Igballe Rogova, Coordinator, Kosovo Women's Network (Motrat Qiriazi)

We cannot demand trust. We cannot take it for granted. Trust has to be earned – from public, donors and from the people we work for and with. And to be trusted, we must be accountable. We cannot claim to be speaking for the victims without first having listened to them.

Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, HAP International

HAP International sees accountability as a task that demands both a principled and a practical approach. Before this task can be accomplished, those who work in humanitarian assistance must acknowledge that, like health or social workers, managers or other professionals, they are answerable to the people to whom they provide services.

In addition, those in receipt of humanitarian assistance must be able to express their views – even report complaints – about the aid they receive or the conduct of those who provide it. Speaking up may not be easy, particularly in time of war or disaster. But members of HAP International know that the right of vulnerable people to a say has to be part of humanitarian assistance.

....and the duty to answer questions.

Why is it that during the rainy season beneficiaries don't get new plastic sheeting? Why do we have overcrowding in shelters, a situation that creates the environment for sexual exploitation, sexual violence or other forms of gender-based violence? Why are multiple families sharing one shelter, a situation that often times leads to tension and extreme hardship? Why are living conditions so deplorable that they increase the rate of morbidity and totally undermine life with dignity?

Sinta Mansaray, Protection Partner and Country Representative,
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Sierra Leone

In order for us NGOs to fulfil our role as effective practitioners, good and trusted partners and watchdogs, we must also be willing to hold ourselves accountable as a sector, to be open to criticism.

Ken Giunta, Vice President, InterAction, USA

Humanitarian assistance personnel work in dangerous places. Their intervention and the risks that they take mean that lives are saved and suffering is alleviated. But trusted agencies must also address questions such as those above from Sierra Leone.

In order that beneficiaries and humanitarian agencies get a fair hearing when assistance is questioned, and that appropriate action is taken if things go wrong, HAP International was established.

HAP International

We know that beneficiaries have rights to what we provide and a right to a say in what we deliver and how we operate. Credibility in the humanitarian sector depends upon our being transparent and accountable. Oxfam is prepared to commit itself to HAP International because we believe that we must hold each other to account collectively to make progress.

Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam GB

HAP International is the humanitarian sector's first international self-regulatory body. Its work is based on the findings of a pilot phase that started in 2001 (though its origins go further back, to the Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda).

During work in India, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Cambodia, researchers and staff piloted and field-tested different approaches to accountability in humanitarian assistance. In their research with international and national agencies, they found that commitment to the principle of accountability was strong. However, upholding accountability in practice remained a challenge for most.

The findings were discussed with a worldwide network of humanitarian assistance agencies. These agencies resolved to strengthen their accountability in the field. They determined to demonstrate their resolve by establishing HAP International and a transparent process of self-regulation.

Building self-regulation in our work

Self-regulation is designed by those who understand their values, field and organisations best. It can target identified problems and take steps to prevent problems occurring. It is more flexible than externally imposed schemes.

Sara Davidson, Accountability Advisor, HAP International

The emphasis on self-regulation and HAP International's "staircase approach" accommodates the necessary flexibility, is not very bureaucratic and leaves room for differences among the participating organisations.

Andreas Kamm, Secretary General,
Danish Refugee Council (Dansk Flygtningehjælp)

Self-regulation is not intended to stifle the courage and creativity with which most humanitarian assistance agencies work. Commitment to self-regulation, however, gives an assurance to humanitarian claimants and others that humanitarian agencies will do all they can to help one another strengthen their performance and find solutions to common concerns.

They will also be prepared to answer questions and hold one another accountable if things go wrong. Commitment to self-regulation is implicit in HAP International's principles of accountability and explicit in the importance it attaches to monitoring and compliance.

HAP International: principles of accountability

We prefer humanitarian NGOs and other humanitarian actors to regulate themselves according to the ethics and codes that are at the heart of humanitarian action. No one knows better than you the detail, difficulty and key principles of humanitarian action.

Carsten Steen, State Secretary,
Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

HAP International helps its members develop and implement accountability to crisis-affected individuals and communities in a number of ways. These include workshops and training, monitoring, identification of solutions to concerns and complaints, and accreditation. Its activities are, for the most part, member-driven.

However, at the heart of HAP International's work are the principles of accountability with which all members must comply. The principles require members of HAP International to:

- Respect and promote the rights of beneficiaries
- State the standards they apply in humanitarian assistance work
- Inform beneficiaries about the standards and their right to a say
- Involve beneficiaries in project planning, implementation, evaluation and reporting
- Demonstrate compliance with the standards they apply in humanitarian assistance work through monitoring and reporting
- Enable beneficiaries and staff to report any complaints and to seek redress safely
- Implement these principles when working through partner agencies

HAP International: monitoring and compliance

Humanitarian aid is still the only human welfare sector without professional mechanisms which would ensure compliance to minimum quality standards, with redress procedures in place, should lapses occur.

David Verboon - Operations Director and Quality Manager,
Modan, Switzerland

HAP International's approach to accountability is both practical and principled. New members have immediate access to the practical support and resources necessary to help each draw up its individual accountability plan. This plan will enable it to start applying HAP International's principles of accountability in the field and at head office within three months of becoming a member.

But membership of HAP International means more than signing a document or requesting technical services. If an agency wishes to become a member of HAP International, it must also commit itself to compliance with the principles of accountability. Compliance is part of the work of any self-regulatory body, in any vocation or profession.

In accordance with the membership requirements, each member reports annually to HAP International on its compliance with the principles of accountability, using its individual accountability plan as a basis. Self-monitoring is central to this process but members also agree to monitoring by HAP International.

Complaints about humanitarian assistance

In the Red Sea hills of north-east Sudan we had a large food distribution, and part of our system was a full-time 'complaints desk' that was designed to receive representations from people from all over. Did it work? It was not infallible but it made an enormous contribution to the quality of the programme overall; it was part of the mechanism that made decision-making hang together. And it cost comparatively little.

Michael Hanson, Deputy Humanitarian Director, Oxfam GB

HAP International believes that humanitarian assistance agencies should not be afraid of complaints and dealing with them. It is the duty of each member agency to handle and respond to any complaint about its work itself. Members commit themselves to establish complaints referral systems within their own agency and programmes. HAP International can assist them in doing this.

Any complaint about a member addressed directly to HAP international is referred first of all to the agency concerned. At the request of the agency or the Board of HAP International, the secretariat will assist the member in reviewing the complaint and finding a solution to it.

Who should be a member of HAP International?

Why should we become a member of HAP International? What do we get out of it? It is important to exercise leadership within the humanitarian sector. We must convince each other and the outside world that we do not shy away from monitoring and reporting. This new organization will provide the right forum for achieving accountability standards together.

Raymond Johansen, Secretary General,
Norwegian Refugee Council (Flyktningerådet)

Membership of HAP International means

- Making a public and verifiable commitment to accountability
- Receiving support to help managers and staff assess and develop accountability in your organisation
- Gaining access to field-tested tools, training, action learning and resources that will help improve accountability, programme delivery and advocacy
- Enhancing trust in your agency among those with an interest in its work
- Being open and accountable to your beneficiaries – and a leader in the sector

Full membership:

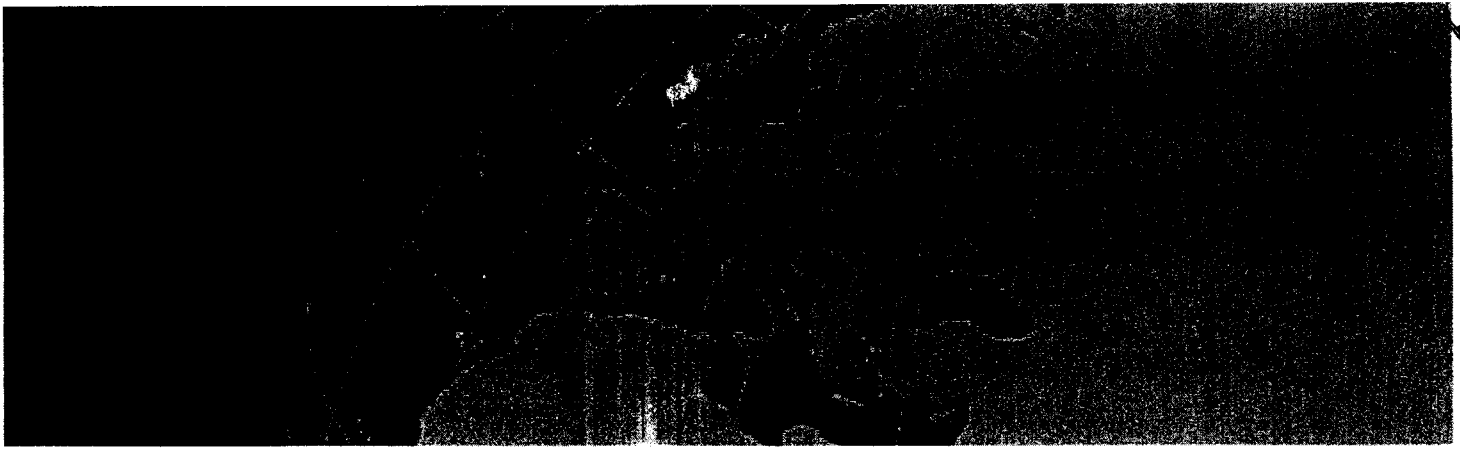
For an agency to become a full member of HAP International it must be actively involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance or emergency relief. It must be registered or recognised as a not for profit organisation in the country where it has its headquarters.

Associate membership:

Other organisations whose activities and management practice are consistent with the vision, purposes and objectives of HAP International are eligible for associate membership.

For further information about membership and fees, please contact the HAP International secretariat or see the website: www.hapinternational.org

HAP International is an initiative of the British Red Cross Society, CAFOD, CARE International, Caritas Internationalis, Danida, Danish Refugee Council, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Rescue Committee, Medair, Norwegian Refugee Council, OFADEC, Oxfam GB, SLANGO, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, World Vision International



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