"It is not only what we do, but also what we
do not do, for which we are accountable"

Molière
Today, the importance of accountability, especially to crisis-affected populations, is unquestionable.

The correlation between accountability and the quality of programmes has been established, and the need for universal standards as a guide for organisations is as urgent as it ever was. It is reassuring to see that accountability towards affected populations is gaining momentum, in no small part due to the work of HAP and our dedicated members working in over 70 countries across the world.

The United Nations transformative agenda has made accountability to affected populations a priority for Inter Agency Steering Committee members. The Joint Standards Initiative - a collaboration between HAP, the Sphere Project and People In Aid - is looking at convergence between their different standards while the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response is exploring new ways to look at certification. The role of standards is no longer confined to individuals and organisations, but has implications for the humanitarian sector as a whole.

For the past 10 years, HAP has been at the forefront of the promotion of accountability in the sector. Because over 1,900 people in 56 countries contributed to the review process of the 2010 HAP Standard, its benchmarks are not radical new ideas but rather the distillation of the humanitarian sector’s best practice. HAP founded the first comprehensive certification system in the sector, and has been a constant advocate for the wider adoption of accountability mechanisms which focus on the needs of crisis-affected populations.

This Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard explains the links between the different benchmarks and the rationale for adopting them as a coherent quality assurance system that is based on a commitment to improvement. In doing this, it also shows that accountability is not a complex mechanism, but in fact is grounded in a lot of common sense. This Guide provides plenty of tools and case studies to illustrate how organisations can become more accountable in the way they design, implement and evaluate their programmes.

I would like to thank our HAP members, donors and supporters for contributing to the development of this Guide. Active use of the HAP Standard helps to maintain our focus on accountability to crisis-affected populations. And it helps us as humanitarians to improve. So let’s get to work!

Lisa Henry
Chair, HAP Governing Board
January 2013
# PART II - THE HAP STANDARD

## 1. The 2010 HAP Standard

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**Centro Cultural Ethno-Botanico Anchatosi, in Peru, a cultural centre that educates young people about indigenous culture, including local languages, music, and medicinal plants**

*Photo: Oxfam America/Percy Ramirez*
Acronyms

**ACBAR**  Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief

**ACFID**  Australian Council for International Development

**ALNAP**  Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

**ANCB**  Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau

**CARB**  Certification and Accreditation Review Board

**CBHA**  Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies

**CDAC**  Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities

**DEC**  UK Disasters Emergency Committee

**DENIVA**  Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (Uganda)

**DFID**  Department for International Development (UK)

**ECB**  Emergency Capacity Building Project

**ELRHA**  Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (UK)

**HAP**  Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

**ICVA**  International Council of Voluntary Agencies

**IFRC**  International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**INTOSAI**  International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions

**JSI**  Joint Standards Initiative

**ODI**  Overseas Development Institute

**SCHR**  Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response

**URD**  Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement

**VOICE**  Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (Europe)
Purpose of this Guide

This Guide is a companion to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management. It has been developed to replace the interim Guide to the 2010 Standard and in response to the need and demand for a more detailed supporting document to the HAP 2010 Standard. It provides guidance and resources for organisations aiming to put the HAP benchmarks into practice and supports those looking for practical suggestions, tools and case studies in their efforts to develop a coherent approach to accountability.

This Guide is aimed at organisations committed to improving the accountability and quality of their programmes. It can be used by senior managers, programme staff, facilitators and trainers to build awareness and understanding and strengthen the implementation of quality management and accountability in relief and development work. It reflects the collective effort of HAP Members and other organisations which have used the HAP Standard to strengthen accountability and quality in their work.

Acknowledging the diversity of organisations and their operational models, this guide provides a wealth of resources which reflect the different ways HAP members and other organisations have implemented the HAP Standard and strengthened accountability and quality in their work. The resources shared in this Guide have been generously provided by HAP members, other organisations, and their dedicated staff working all across the world. These resources reflect the diversity of the HAP membership and their efforts to overcome the contextual, organisational and operational challenges when meeting their accountability commitments.

Organisations interested in applying for and understanding the HAP certification process should use the HAP Guide to Certification, which presents key information about the process and its main components.

This Guide consists of the following parts:

**PART I — OVERVIEW**
Provides an introduction to HAP International, the services it offers, its collaboration with other quality and accountability initiatives and explains the revision process of the HAP Standard.

**PART II — THE HAP STANDARD**
Presents the various sections of the 2010 HAP Standard, including:
- Introduction
- Purpose and scope of the Standard
- Terms and definitions
- The HAP Standard Commitment
- The HAP Standard Requirements.

**PART III — THE HAP BENCHMARKS**
Explains the six benchmarks of the 2010 HAP Standard in detail.

**PART IV — RESOURCES**
Contains a list of tools, and presents case studies against each of the benchmarks, which provide examples of how the requirements can be met.

In addition to the printed version, this Guide is available to download for free from the HAP International website (www.hapinternational.org). The soft copy contains all the hyperlinks for those documents listed in the Resources chapter and elsewhere in the Guide. Should you have any questions or queries, please contact secretariat@hapinternational.org
PART I OVERVIEW
The history of HAP International

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), established in 2003, seeks to achieve and promote the highest principles of accountability through self-regulation by members, linked by a common respect for the rights and dignity of the people they seek to assist.

HAP members¹ range from organisations with a mandate for emergency relief and development activities to institutional donors. They are committed to meeting the highest standards of accountability and quality management.

The formation of HAP was prompted by the findings of the Rwanda evaluation in 1996. The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (1996) recommended that agencies strengthen their systems for improving accountability to recipients of assistance by establishing mechanisms for consultation with people affected by humanitarian emergencies. The sector acknowledged that if humanitarian organisations were to avoid similar shortcomings, then it needed to guarantee improved accountability to crisis-affected populations, not only for ethical reasons but also because it would result in better programme quality management.

In the late nineties, a humanitarian ombudsman project² was hosted by the British Red Cross in London. It researched the applicability of ‘ombudsman’ systems in humanitarian situations. After two years, it recognised that an international humanitarian ombudsman was not a realistic approach to accountability problems in the sector. ‘Ombudsman’ systems, it was concluded, were only effective in societies with well-established public services and fair, effective and accessible judicial systems.

Organisations remained aware of the accountability ‘gap’ in humanitarian situations and a new phase of the project - The Humanitarian Accountability Project - was created to identify, test and recommend alternative approaches to accountability. The Project was hosted by the IFRC in Geneva. From 2001 to 2003, some seventy staff and consultants conducted field operations in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Cambodia, undertook five research projects, and engaged in advocacy on accountability.

The main conclusion to emerge was that humanitarian accountability could best be strengthened and implemented through the creation of a strong

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¹ For an updated list of members, visit www.hapinternational.org/members

² The Steering Committee for the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project included the British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International (UK), DFID, Merlin, Oxfam GB, RedR, British Refugee Council, Save the Children (UK), ODI and World Vision UK.
international self-regulatory body, able to insist on monitoring and compliance while providing strategic and technical support to member organisations. This recommendation was endorsed by the Chief Executive Officers of fourteen humanitarian organisations in January 2003. Two months later, HAP International was formally registered as an association in Geneva.

The creation of the HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management and the complementary system for certification means that it is now possible for humanitarian organisations to demonstrate their compliance with proven good practices in humanitarian work.

This is the first international standard of its kind, designed to assess, improve and recognise the accountability and quality of humanitarian programmes. It represents a broad consensus of what matters most in humanitarian action. HAP International’s notion of accountability is entrenched in the six benchmarks of the HAP Standard. The 2010 edition of the HAP Standard is the result of an extensive review process that involved wide consultation with different stakeholders and therefore offers a coherent formulation of best practice rather than proposing a radical new approach.

Through an independent verification process, HAP also certifies organisations that are in compliance with the HAP Standard, providing that the organisation is meeting its accountability and quality commitments.

**Why a standard on accountability and quality management?**

A standard on Accountability and Quality Management enables an organisation to achieve the goals and objectives set out in its policy and strategy more effectively and efficiently, keeping the people it seeks to assist at the heart of its work.

Non-governmental organisations exercise significant power in humanitarian crises through their control over essential goods and services such as food, medical aid and shelter. However, until recently, the “helping power” of emergency relief organisations has been unregulated, as few organisations formalised procedures to allow crisis-affected communities to participate in decisions about services or complain about poor practice.

Immediately following its launch in 2003, HAP set about developing a set of Principles of Accountability. These summarised, for the first time, core elements of good practice in accountability in humanitarian situations.

HAP found, however, that organisations were not able to demonstrate the quality and accountability of their actions based on principles alone. Therefore, in 2005 HAP members asked the Secretariat to develop a set of benchmarks and indicators for accountability and quality management in humanitarian work. HAP did so, consulting with crisis-affected communities and staff from over 120 organisations over a two-year period. The result of this process was the HAP 2007 Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, which was revised in 2010.

The HAP Standard enables organisations to design and implement accountability processes in line with clear requirements, to inform stakeholders of the approach, and to have a clear basis for assessing and improving their practice. The HAP benchmarks form a coherent system of mutually reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

1. By establishing and then delivering on commitments, organisations make a public commitment, setting objectives and a baseline against which they will be held accountable while also allowing for the measurement of progress against these objectives.

2. Once accountability-related objectives are set, they can be used to ensure staff competencies are in line with the organisational requirements. Recruitment, induction, codes of conduct and training can be adapted to make certain an organisation employs staff with the right skill set and appropriate understanding of the organisational culture and ethos.

3. By complying with the requirements around sharing of information, an organisation ensures transparency in the way it communicates, and also allows its stakeholders to hold it accountable for what it said it would deliver.

4. With participation built in at all stages of the project management cycle, an organisation ensures its programmes are and remain relevant by allowing constant feedback to challenge its approach.

5. In the case of unintended consequences, having a mechanism to handle complaints gives crisis-affected populations and staff an opportunity to identify shortcomings, wrong doing, abuse or fraud, and offer redress.

6. Finally, systems that allow learning and continual improvement prevent organisations repeating mistakes while reinforcing good practice.

The HAP Standard is not meant to be used as a standalone instrument or a checklist against accountability commitments. Neither is it intended as an instrument to be used only by accountability focal points. Rather, it aims to impact the organisational culture and mainstream accountability throughout the project cycle so that its mechanisms are understood and used at all levels of an organisation as it fulfils its mission.

**Revision of the HAP Standard**

According to international standards, guidelines, and principles of continual improvement, the HAP 2007...
Standards (fifth edition, 2004). Drafting of International

www.hapinternational.org /other/links/quality/joint-standards-initiative

For more information on how HAP is involved in the JSI, please visit

The standards of the three organisations are available in over 15 languages along with the latest news about JSI at: www.jointstandards.org.

In addition to the Standard itself, HAP offers the following services to its members and the wider humanitarian and development community:

- Capacity building through training and advice on accountability
- Setting up complaints handling systems by providing training and advice on complaints and response systems, as well as prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers
- Emergency Response Support (field deployments), providing on-the-ground support to organisations on accountability
- Sharing of good practice in the form of tried and tested resources and publications on accountability issues
- Baseline analysis to assess organisations’ current accountability practices against the HAP Standard
- Certification through external verification of an organisation’s accountability practices against the HAP 2010 Standard

More information on HAP

More information about HAP is available on its website: www.hapinternational.org
The list of HAP members is available here: www.hapinternational.org/members.aspx
The full list of HAP Services is available here: www.hapinternational.org/projects.aspx
More for more information on other quality and accountability initiatives, please see: www.hapinternational.org/other/links/quality.aspx

4 For more information on how HAP is involved in the JSI, please visit www.hapinternational.org /other/links/quality/joint-standards-initiative
PART II THE HAP STANDARD

The Danish Refugee Council delivers aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon in October 2012

Photo: DRC/Jesper Guhle
Accountability and the HAP Standard

HAP was established to champion the rights and dignity of crisis-affected communities and make humanitarian action accountable to them. HAP and the HAP Standard place crisis-affected people at the heart of all decisions and actions. Traditionally, accountability was understood as the way in which those authorised to act on others’ behalf used the authority as agreed. For example, in a democratic society, citizens authorise elected representatives to act on their behalf under agreed terms.

Accountability is now also understood as a right of anyone affected by the use of authority. This recent meaning of accountability is the foundation for the HAP Standard.

For the purpose of the HAP Standard, accountability is defined as the means through which power is used responsibly. It is a process of taking into account the views of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily the people affected by authority or power.

Organisations which assist or act on behalf of people affected
by disasters, conflict, poverty, or other crises have significant power in their work to save lives and reduce suffering. In contrast, crisis-affected people have no formal control and often little influence over these organisations. It is difficult for those people to hold organisations to account for actions taken on their behalf.

Being accountable to affected communities helps organisations to develop quality programmes that meet people’s needs and reduce the possibility of mistakes, abuse and corruption. When accountability processes are in place and managed effectively, organisations perform better, protect communities from harm, and uphold the rights and dignity of those affected by crises.

Contents of the HAP Standard

The HAP Standard consists of:

- **Section 1** Introduction
- **Section 2** Scope of the HAP Standard.
- **Section 3** Main terms and definitions of the Standard.
- **Section 4** HAP Standard Commitment, which includes the principles that organisations applying the Standard make a commitment to.
- **Section 5** General and specific requirements (benchmarks), that organisations adhere to and can be audited against.

Contractual requirements and legal or statutory requirements are not covered by the HAP Standard. Organisations should use all sections of the HAP Standard, as each part reinforces and builds on the others. Applying the benchmarks without grounding them in the Principles set out in the HAP Standard Commitment might result in an organisation having good systems in place, but decisions and practice might not be based on values and principles that non-profit and humanitarian organisations uphold.
2
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE HAP STANDARD

Purpose
The HAP Standard helps organisations to design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes. It outlines the policies, processes, procedures and practices that an organisation needs in order to be accountable to crisis-affected communities. The HAP Standard can be used on its own or with other tools, frameworks and standards.

Scope
Accountability is critical in every phase, decision, and action we undertake as organisations, be it to mitigate emergencies or poverty. Recognising this, the scope of the HAP Standard was widened and the 2010 HAP Standard can now be applied to single- or multi-mandate organisations and their work in the areas of humanitarian assistance, development and advocacy. It is also relevant to disaster preparedness and recovery, and supports approaches that recognise and strengthen the capabilities of the people living in crisis-affected or disaster-prone areas.

As a result, the HAP Standard applies to all types of local, national, and international organisations that assist or act on behalf of people affected by or prone to disasters, conflict, poverty, or other crises. This includes HAP members, non-members, multi-mandate organisations, organisations that deliver direct assistance and those that work with partners.

Multi-mandate organisations
During the revision period, HAP members and other organisations which applied the HAP Standard in their humanitarian work highlighted that they found its application equally beneficial and important in their advocacy and development work. Indeed, there are strong calls for a more integrated approach by organisations and affected communities alike.

Recognising that the lines between relief, rehabilitation, recovery and development are unclear and at times arbitrarily drawn, terms used in the HAP Standard, particularly the term “humanitarian”, should be interpreted broadly, depending on each organisation’s decision of the scope of application of the 2010 edition. Organisations that implement different types of programmes at the same location are encouraged to work towards meeting the HAP Standard across all the programmes at that location.

Organisations working with partners
The revision process highlighted the need for more clarity on the application of the Standard...
to organisations working with partners, in particular in relation to the respective obligations of organisations and their partners. Recognising that organisations work in a variety of ways with partners, the 2010 HAP Standard can be used by organisations that:

- Deliver direct assistance to the people affected by a crisis;
- Provide financial, material or technical support to other organisations but do not directly take part in providing the assistance; or
- Combine both these approaches.

While an organisation that works with partners will not be in a position to meet the HAP Standard in the same way as an organisation that delivers direct assistance, it can apply the HAP Standard in relation to its partners and agree on appropriate ways for partners to meet the benchmarks.

**Users of the HAP Standard**

The HAP Standard is designed for all those providing, contributing to providing, receiving, observing, assessing and assuring the quality of humanitarian action. The HAP Standard enables:

- Organisations to design and implement accountability processes in line with clear requirements, to inform stakeholders of their approach, and to have a clear basis for assessing and improving their practice.
- Stakeholders to identify, assess and comment on the accountability and quality of an organisation, using clear benchmarks and associated requirements.
- Assurance practitioners to review and comment on an organisation’s accountability and to assess its performance from the perspective of crisis-affected people and other stakeholders.

The HAP Standard offers the basis for assessing and recognising organisations that comply with its requirements through the HAP certification scheme. For this reason, requirements have been written as criteria that can be audited and the term “shall” has been used.

The HAP Standard can also be used by:

- Advisors and consultants to assess and comment on accountability and quality management systems, and to help in designing and implementing them.
- Professional development and training practitioners to build competency in accountability and quality management systems.
- Other standards bodies to bring a clear understanding of accountability into their own work.
The HAP quality and assurance certification scheme

For organisations interested in verifying their compliance to the HAP Standard, HAP offers the possibility to participate in the HAP certification scheme.

Through the certification process, an organisation is formally recognised for its commitment to accountability to crisis-affected communities. Its processes and practices are verified and validated by HAP, through an audit process which is undertaken by registered, independent and trained auditors. The results of the audit are approved by the Certification and Accreditation Review Board (CARB) or by another body accredited by HAP.

Certification is voluntary and is open to HAP members as well as non-HAP members who meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. The organisation is formally declared as a not-for-profit organisation in the country or countries where it is legally registered and where it works.
2. The organisation meets the requirements for financial accountability under the law in the country or countries where it is legally registered and where it works, and has a reliable internal control system to ensure funds are used properly.
3. The organisation makes its accountability framework public, has reviewed its status of compliance with it, and has a plan for improving its performance against it.

The HAP Eligibility Criteria is available on the HAP website and is free to download.

Relationship to other initiatives

The HAP Standard is intended to complement other standards that relate to accountability to people affected by different types of crises, as well as issue-specific standards and guidelines on quality management systems, human rights, and protection from abuse and corruption.

Organisations are free to use other frameworks and standards in conjunction with the HAP Standard, such as:

- Relevant ISO standards
- UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13)
- Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and NGO Sector Supplement of the Global Reporting Initiative
- One World Trust Global Accountability Framework
- Transparency International Handbook on Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations
- IASC Transformative Agenda and Operational Framework for Accountability to Affected Populations

In particular, the HAP Standard is intended to complement the work by People In Aid, the Sphere Project, the Emergency Capacity Building Project, Groupe URD (Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement), the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) and national self-regulatory schemes that focus on accountability and quality in the non-profit sector.

If your organisation is interested in seeking HAP Certification please visit the following pages on the HAP website:

- HAP Certification Process
- Register of Certified Organisations & of Independent HAP Auditors
- Certification & Accreditation Review Board
- The Guide to HAP Certification

Should you have any questions regarding the certification process, please contact secretariat@hapinternational.org
3 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS OF THE 2010 HAP STANDARD

Each organisation has its own terms and definitions, and uses language appropriate to its specific needs. The purpose of the following definitions is to promote a shared understanding of terms used in the HAP Standard. The definition of those who are the primary subjects of the HAP Standard is given first, followed by the other terms in alphabetical order.

People an organisation aims to assist
Women, men, boys and girls or groups with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, that an organisation is committed to assisting. Alternative terms used by organisations include beneficiaries, target community, target population, participants, claimants and rights-holders. An organisation might not aim to assist all the crisis-affected people at a specific location. For this reason the HAP Standard differentiates between “people the organisation aims to assist” and all “crisis-affected people” at a specific location.

Crisis-affected people
All those affected by or prone to disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises at a specific location. An organisation might not aim to assist all people affected by a crisis, as explained above.

Other stakeholders
Other people, groups or entities (than the two groups mentioned above) that the organisation has identified as having an influence on, or being influenced by, its decisions and actions. This definition does not, therefore, include all those who may have knowledge of, or
Each organisation has its own terms and definitions, and uses language appropriate to its specific needs

Accountability
The means through which power is used responsibly. It is a process of taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of power.

Accountability framework
A document that specifies what stakeholders can hold an organisation accountable for. Details of what is required in an accountability framework are given in Benchmark 1 of the 2010 HAP Standard. The accountability framework enables organisations to communicate, implement, monitor and improve on commitments that they make. To this end, an overarching accountability framework is adapted to specific contexts.

Competencies
The knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that staff need in order to be effective in their roles, and that ultimately determine an organisation’s success.

Complaint
A specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by an organisation’s action or who believes that an organisation has failed to meet a stated commitment.

Complaints procedure
A specified series of actions through which an organisation deals with complaints and ensures that complaints are reviewed and acted upon. Details of what is required in a complaints procedure are given under Benchmark 5 of the HAP 2010 Standard. Organisations that meet the HAP Standard have procedures for handling all types of complaints, including those related to sexual exploitation and abuse of crisis-affected people by staff.

Humanitarian action
Assistance, protection and advocacy actions undertaken on an impartial basis in response to human needs resulting from complex political emergencies and natural hazards (ALNAP).

Informed consent
Agreeing to an action based on a clear understanding of the facts, implications and consequences of the action.

Organisation
A legal entity with defined structures, assigned tasks, rules and regulations, and staff to perform a set of activities. The HAP Standard can apply to a whole organisation, part of an organisation, or a group or partnership of organisations. Organisations have different structures, governance and management arrangements.

Partnership
A formal arrangement for working jointly to achieve a specific goal, where each partner’s roles and responsibilities are set out in a written agreement. Different organisations have different types of partners. For example, the members of associations or membership organisations that meet this definition may also be partners. Informal arrangements are not considered to be partnerships under the HAP Standard, though organisations applying the HAP Standard may choose to expand this definition.

Quality management system
A set of co-ordinated processes that enable an organisation to continually improve its performance in meeting the needs and expectations of its customers. In the HAP Standard, such processes enable organisations to improve performance in meeting the needs and expectations, and respecting the dignity, of the people they aim to assist. Details of what is required in a quality management system according to the HAP Standard are given in Benchmark 1.

Risk management
Identifying, assessing and prioritising risks, followed by coordinated and efficient use of resources to reduce, monitor, and control the probability or effect of unfortunate events, or to make the most of opportunities. The risks with the greatest loss and the greatest probability of happening are handled first.

Staff
An organisation’s national and international permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers, consultants and any others who interact with the people the organisation aims to assist on behalf of the organisation.

Staff code of conduct
A statement of principles and values that establishes a set of expectations and standards for how staff will behave, including minimal levels of compliance and disciplinary actions (Transparency International).
The HAP Standard Commitment
This section of the HAP Standard outlines the values and principles organisations need to uphold when working with communities affected by crises, host governments, and other stakeholders. The six commitments and the HAP Standard Principles highlighted below collectively make up the HAP Standard Commitment, and should be included in organisations’ accountability frameworks.

- Recognising that the essence of accountability is to respect the needs, concerns, capacities and situation of the people they aim to assist, and to be answerable for their actions and decisions to these people and other stakeholders;
- Respecting international humanitarian law, international refugee law, human rights law, and other relevant international treaties and national laws;
- Reaffirming the primary responsibility of states for all persons on their territories and their duty to provide assistance and protection to people in need;
- Upholding the right of people in need to receive assistance and protection on the basis of their informed consent, and everyone’s right to offer assistance appropriate to people’s needs;
- Acknowledging the duty of care shared by all those involved in humanitarian action for the well-being of the people they aim to assist; and
- Recognising also that the responses to the humanitarian imperative can take different forms, and may be affected by external constraints.

The HAP Standard Principles
The HAP Standard 2010 has built on the original 2007 HAP principles of accountability and adopted ten “HAP Standard Principles”. The ten principles are derived from the principles set out in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and the original 2007 HAP Principles of Accountability. The principles apply to both humanitarian and development work.

The HAP Standard Principles are:

- **Humanity**
  Concern for human welfare and respect for the individual.

- **Impartiality**
  Providing humanitarian assistance in proportion to need, and giving priority to the most urgent needs, without discrimination (including that based upon gender, age, race, disability, ethnic background, nationality or political, religious, cultural or organisational affiliation).

- **Neutrality**
  Aiming only to meet human needs and refraining from taking sides in hostilities or giving material or political support to parties to an armed conflict.

- **Independence**
  Acting only under the authority of the organisation’s governing body and in line with the organisation’s purpose.

- **Participation and informed consent**
  Listening and responding to feedback from crisis-affected people when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes, and making sure that crisis-affected people understand and agree with the proposed humanitarian action and are aware of its implications.

- **Duty of care**
  Meeting recognised minimum standards for the well-being of crisis-affected people, and paying proper attention to their safety and the safety of staff.

- **Witness**
  Reporting when the actions of others have a negative effect on the well-being of people in need of humanitarian assistance or protection.

- **Offer redress**
  Enabling crisis-affected people and staff to raise complaints, and responding with appropriate action.

- **Transparency**
  Being honest and open in communications and sharing relevant information, in an appropriate form, with crisis-affected people and other stakeholders.

- **Complementarity**
  Working as a responsible member of the aid community, coordinating with others to promote accountability to, and coherence for, crisis-affected people.

The HAP Standard Commitment guides humanitarian assistance to be more principled and accountable.

The HAP Standard Requirements
Any organisation that wishes to comply with the HAP Standard, irrespective of whether they undergo certification or not, must fulfil the following general and specific requirements:

**General Requirements**
“In order to meet the HAP Standard, an organisation shall meet all its requirements” (5.1.1)

This statement acknowledges that all requirements in the HAP Standard are interconnected, reinforcing and building on each other. Therefore, organisations should aim to meet all the requirements, except in the following case.

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3 www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct

4 HAP encourages organisations to deliver assistance in line with relevant frameworks, standards and codes. For example, organisations formally or informally subscribing to the The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief may include it as a commitment in their accountability framework and highlight how it is being implemented in their work. (See Benchmark 1, establishing and delivering on commitments, for more on accountability frameworks.)
"An organisation that is unable to meet the HAP Standard in a specific situation because of external constraints shall explain and justify the reasons for that to its stakeholders. The organisation’s explanation shall reflect its approach to risk management and the HAP Standard Principles, which provide guidance for organisations facing difficult choices. Not meeting requirements related to one principle may be unavoidable in order to meet another principle in that specific situation” (5.1.2)

This requirement recognises that there are circumstances outside the control of the organisation that may prevent it from meeting all of the requirements of the HAP Standard at all times. As outlined in the Sphere Handbook, “Sometimes, difficulties of access to the affected population, lack of cooperation from the authorities or severe insecurity make standards impossible to meet.” In such a case, the organisation should have a clear explanation as to why certain actions were not undertaken and justify their decisions in light of the contextual constraints. The organisation should indicate what it can and cannot do in the given operational circumstances and outline some minimum steps that can be taken until the context improves. So in the case of restricted access to populations, the organisation as a minimum could consult with those most familiar with the affected population (e.g. a diaspora), which may act as a reliable “proxy” reference group.

We suggest that organisations have a clearly documented risk management policy and system in place. These should guide the organisation on how to deal with contextual constraints which might restrict and impede practicing humanitarian values and principles, and also guide them to improve accountability as and when the context allows.

“The organisation shall make public a declaration of additional interests. These include additional affiliations, interests and values that may directly affect the people it aims to assist. The purpose of the declaration is to give a broad understanding of the nature of the organisation and vested interests in the organisation. Where appropriate, the declaration may become part of an organisation’s accountability framework” (5.1.3)

The HAP Standard requires that organisations make additional interests and commitments public. The purpose of the declaration of additional interests is to encourage a “no surprise” approach, giving all stakeholders an opportunity to better understand the nature of the organisation and to ensure greater predictability in, and understanding of, its relevant affiliations, policies, partnerships and relationships.

**What should be included in a declaration of additional interests?**

It would be impossible to produce a list of all the additional interests that could be defined as being of direct relevance to the well-being of disaster survivors and other stakeholders. Instead, a simple classification of the kinds of interests that may be relevant is provided in the table below, with some examples given for illustrative purposes only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affiliations</td>
<td>National, regional and global networks ACBAR and ANCB (Afghanistan), Coordination Sud (France), InterAction (USA), ACFID (Australia),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional, technical or thematic networks ALNAP, People in Aid, the Sphere Project, Inter-Agency Working Group and ECB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnerships and federations e.g. Caritas Internationalis, ACT Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>‘Client’ group focus Women (e.g. Women’s Commission on Women Refugees and Children), Children (e.g. Save the Children), elderly persons (e.g. HelpAge International), people with disabilities (e.g. Action on Disability and Development), refugees (e.g. Refugees International)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical or functional focus Water (e.g. Water Aid), Health (e.g. Medicins du Monde), animal health (e.g. Vétérinaires Sans Frontières)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and</td>
<td>Values Religion (e.g. Islamic Relief, Christian Aid, CAFOD), Human Rights (e.g. Human Rights Watch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies</td>
<td>Policies Red Cross Movement and NGO Code of Conduct in Disaster Response, People in Aid Code, Do No Harm, ACFID Code of Conduct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Specific Requirements: the HAP Standard Benchmarks

A benchmark is a reference point against which performance or achievements can be assessed. Each one of the six HAP benchmarks has related requirements which are indicated by the word “shall”. Next to this are the means of verification, which enable an organisation to assess if the requirement has been met or not.

### The six benchmarks are

1. Establishing and delivering on commitments
2. Staff competency
3. Sharing information
4. Participation
5. Handling complaints
6. Learning and continual improvement

The diagram opposite explains the six benchmarks in greater detail.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the benchmark:</th>
<th>e.g. “Establishing and delivering on commitments”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What the benchmark states:</td>
<td>e.g. &quot;The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### REQUIREMENTS

Requirements are the policies, procedures and practices that should be in place to enable you to meet the benchmark.

The first requirement of each benchmark relates to the organisational policy or corporate statement and is followed by requirements regarding practice.

**Remember that:**

Policy is a written statement of principles and positions that guide an organisation’s operations and services.

Practice refers to established actions or ways of proceeding and is often guided by policies and procedures.

#### MEANS OF VERIFICATIONS

Means of verification indicate where you should look in order to assess if you are meeting the requirements.

These have been identified for each benchmark and include a combination of documents, interviews with a cross section of relevant stakeholders (partners, affected communities, people we seek to assist, staff, etc.), and observation of practice.

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**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

To support organisations which work with partners, each of the benchmarks describes additional requirements that can help strengthen accountability when working in partnership.
Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management

Benchmark 1: Establishing and delivering on commitments
The organisation sets out the commitments that it will be held accountable for, and how they will be delivered.

Benchmark 2: Staff competency
The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation's commitments.

Benchmark 3: Sharing information
The organisation ensures that the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities.

Benchmark 4: Participation
The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions.

Benchmark 5: Handling complaints
The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process.

Benchmark 6: Learning and continual improvement
The organisation learns from experience to continually improve its performance.
The drought in Kenya has hugely affected the population in Isiolo, Kenya. Through PMU’s humanitarian effort, food was distributed and people were also educated on how to better cope with drought in the future.

**This section aims to:**
- Explain each of the Standard benchmarks
- Describe why the benchmark is important
- Define the requirements to meet the benchmark
- Provide suggestions of good practice

**This section is organised as follows:**

- **Benchmark 1:** Establishing and delivering commitments
- **Benchmark 2:** Staff competency
- **Benchmark 3:** Sharing information
- **Benchmark 4:** Participation
- **Benchmark 5:** Handling complaints
- **Benchmark 6:** Learning and continual improvement
What is this benchmark about?
An organisation that wishes to deliver against the 2010 Standard must develop a publicly available document called an accountability framework.

The accountability framework establishes the organisational commitments against which an organisation can be held to account by its stakeholders. The framework also outlines how it shall implement these commitments and improve upon them. The accountability framework is put into practice through a quality management system.

The accountability framework and quality management system should:

- Identify key stakeholders
- Outline relevant ‘quality’ commitments
- Define milestones for each commitment
- Attribute management responsibilities, including for the governing board
- Outline processes that ensure resources are used properly to achieve objectives
- Commit to partners on issues of mutual accountability, respect and continual learning
- Specify a knowledge management strategy that includes monitoring, evaluation, learning and improvement objectives.

Why is establishing and delivering on commitments important?
For an organisation to be held accountable by its stakeholders, it must describe what its commitments are and how these will be delivered to all relevant stakeholders, most importantly to the people it aims to assist.

An organisation’s accountability commitments should include the HAP Standard Commitment and the benchmarks, as well as other commitments specific to the organisation. An accountability framework will describe those commitments in their entirety.

A quality management system includes the policies, procedures and processes that help the organisation to plan, support and implement its accountability commitments. A clear accountability framework and management system for implementing commitments and standards will enable an organisation to move beyond statements of aspiration to improving programme planning, delivery and evaluation.

An organisation that undertakes to deliver against the 2010 HAP Standard through a quality management system will:

- Ensure that affected communities are able to influence programmes and activities that significantly impact their lives
- Enable stakeholders to make better informed decisions
- Strengthen coordination between operational partners
- Foster a culture of learning and continual improvement
- Streamline accountability practices within the organisation
- Clarify priorities of the organisation

As a result, it will:

- Increase predictability of results
- Improve the impact of interventions
- Improve the efficiency of the organisation
- Manage potential risks in a coherent manner
The organisation shall produce a written accountability framework that:

1. identifies its stakeholders, with the people it aims to assist as priority;
2. states its commitments, with reference to the people it aims to assist;
3. includes the HAP Standard benchmarks;
4. has been approved by its leadership; and
5. has milestones for each commitment.

The organisation shall implement its accountability framework through a management system that:

1. makes clear the management roles and responsibilities, including for the governing board;
2. is based on a set of processes that ensures resources are used properly to achieve objectives;
3. involves staff in decision-making; and
4. enables continuous improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **1.1** The organisation shall produce a written accountability framework that:  
1. identifies its stakeholders, with the people it aims to assist as priority;  
2. states its commitments, with reference to the people it aims to assist;  
3. includes the HAP Standard benchmarks;  
4. has been approved by its leadership; and  
5. has milestones for each commitment. | • The accountability framework |
| **1.2** The organisation shall implement its accountability framework through a management system that:  
1. makes clear the management roles and responsibilities, including for the governing board;  
2. is based on a set of processes that ensures resources are used properly to achieve objectives;  
3. involves staff in decision-making; and  
4. enables continuous improvement. | • Records of each point in the requirement relating to commitments in the accountability framework  
• A strategy or plan for putting the accountability framework into practice  
• Interviews with staff at different levels |
Additional requirements for organisations working with partners

For organisations working with partners, the accountability framework should document a commitment to working in partnership based on mutual accountability, respect, and continual improvement. The organisation should also document the joint approach when working in partnership to deliver services, the process for engaging in a partnership, and the criteria based on which partners will be selected. The accountability framework should also highlight what aspects of the document apply to partners.

The organisation should agree with each partner on: the partner’s expectations; what the working arrangements should be between the two organisations; the commitments of the partner to the people they seek to assist; and how they will meet these commitments. The organisations should also agree on how they will interact with the people they aim to assist.

The organisation should work with partners on the areas identified for improvement with regards to putting the accountability framework into practice. This would involve undertaking a joint assessment of the partner’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to the 2010 Standard and developing a plan for improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> The organisation’s accountability framework shall reflect a commitment to working in partnerships based on mutual accountability, respect, and continual improvement.</td>
<td>• The accountability framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> The organisation shall document: 1. its overall approach to working in partnership; 2. the process and criteria for selecting partners and the role of accountability in assessing potential partners; and 3. what is negotiable and non-negotiable when working with partners, referring specifically to the accountability framework.</td>
<td>• Documents on the organisation’s approach to working with partners • Documents, such as staff guidance, on selecting partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5</strong> The organisation shall work with each of its partners to agree: 1. expectations and working arrangements; 2. the commitments of partners to the people they aim to assist and how these commitments will be met; and 3. if and how the organisation will interact with the people it aims to assist.</td>
<td>• Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process • Partner agreements, or other relevant documents that guide partnership arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.6</strong> The organisation shall work with its partners to improve how partners put relevant parts of the accountability framework into practice.</td>
<td>• Interviews with staff about, and records (such as workplans and reports) of, activities to improve partners’ practice • Examples of improvements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggestions for good practice
This section gives some suggestions about how to develop an accountability framework and establish a quality management system. Most organisations will already have systems and documentation policies in place, so this may be treated as a checklist, although it is not definitive or applicable to all organisations.

Step 1: Make quality an organisational goal
Secure a definitive statement about quality and accountability by the highest authority in the organisation. This is key to ensuring that:
- Quality and accountability are cornerstones of an organisation’s philosophy. The process of doing so may also help to clarify an organisation’s priorities and what it can, and cannot, commit to
- Ensure that the board is committed and the CEO has overall responsibility

Step 2: Define Stakeholders
- Define the organisation’s stakeholders
- Clarify their needs and expectations in terms of quality and accountability
- Clarify how the organisation’s stakeholders are consulted or represented. This may raise very important questions concerning the organisation’s governance

Step 3: Make a list of ‘quality’ commitments
- Ensure that the organisation’s commitments are relevant to its own stakeholders and in particular to the people it assists
- Review the organisational mission and/or mandate and identify all relevant ‘corporate’ quality and accountability commitments
- Review and record all relevant commitments made at head office level
- Review and record all relevant commitments made at field level
- Agree on milestones to measure progress against commitments.

The list of commitments must be documented in the organisation’s Accountability Framework.
**Step 4: Identify and evaluate current policies, practice, and procedures related to accountability**

- Identify and evaluate where the organisation currently stands in relation to its quality commitments in order to establish a baseline. This should include all relevant policies, practices, and procedures.
- Once the baseline has been established and gaps identified, define a plan with milestones for improvement.

**Step 5: Improve the quality management system**

- Identify the systems, mechanisms, processes and resources that are currently being used, and what is now needed for implementation. Systems might include operations, logistics, financial, human resources, marketing/ fundraising, policy and learning.
- For each system, clarify the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS TO CLARIFY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management responsibilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assign responsibility for implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create specialised posts to enable implementation if required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Include reference to the HAP Standard in job descriptions, work plans and targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure responsible staff can integrate the relevant elements of the quality and accountability commitments into their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure all staff who need to know about the HAP Standard do know through induction, refresher training and information hand-outs, newsletters, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make knowledge and delivery of the HAP Standard a part of the performance appraisal process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge management procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Include this at all stages of programme design, implementation and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider how it can apply to different programmes, projects, countries and contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make the HAP Standard visible in the work place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budgets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that implementation of the HAP Standard is budgeted for, whether this is under a single budget holder or decentralised to all relevant budget holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring and evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Put in place processes to ensure that the implementation plan is functioning, that it is monitored and continually improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clarify what documentation is required for the quality management system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify staff who are responsible to produce, revise, use, and lead on the quality management system and what restrictions apply to its distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 6: Monitor and evaluate

- Institute a monitoring process to check how quality and accountability commitments are being met. This will require setting up systems and processes for monitoring, indicators for measuring progress, and capturing lessons learned and feeding them back into the system.
- The monitoring process should cover the following dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management responsibilities</th>
<th>Organisational structure; job descriptions; interviews with a range of staff (varying levels, types of work etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Training manuals (induction and refresher); staff handouts; job descriptions, work plans, appraisal reports; visibility of the HAP Standard in the workplace and interviews with staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
<td>Key organisational documents for references; field visits; interviews with the people the organisation assists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgets</td>
<td>Budget allocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>Partner assessments and feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation reports. Monitoring needs to take place at two levels to find out: 1) Whether the quality management system is working; 2) Whether the ‘quality and accountability’ commitments are being met. Commitments e.g. gender policy will require different indicators (e.g. targets for female staff, or inclusion of females in community committees) to those used to measure the actual system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For organisations working with partners, the accountability framework should document a commitment to working in partnership based on mutual accountability, respect, and continual improvement.

Step 7: Continually improve

- Capture feedback and lessons learnt for improving the process in line with HAP Benchmark 6.
- Ensure new standards and good practices in the humanitarian sector are reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.
What is this benchmark about?

Staff competencies are the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that individuals bring to an organisation. They are an organisation’s most important asset. They can, however, also be a risk for the organisation.

No matter how good an organisation’s management system is or how good their intentions are, an organisation is only as good as its staff. The competency of staff will greatly affect the quality of services received by crisis-affected people and determine to what extent the intentions of the organisation are reflected in practice. Good people-management processes are critical to the delivery of quality and accountable services.

The major drivers of the benchmark on competent staff are:

- Ensuring that people with the appropriate skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes work for the organisation
- Providing optimal services for crisis-affected communities
- Ensuring that the people an organisation seeks to assist are protected from further danger and exploitation by aid workers (e.g. sexual exploitation)
- Ensuring that staff work in an environment where skill sets are continually improved in order to better meet the commitments of the organisation

Why are staff competencies important?

Humanity and respect for crisis-affected communities are fundamental attributes in a humanitarian or development worker. However these need to be matched with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a job effectively and efficiently.

In many circumstances, staff members’ skill sets need to be developed in accordance with their roles and responsibilities and the commitments of the organisation. Adequate systems need to be in place for recruiting, training, supervising and supporting staff. In addition, an organisation has a duty of care towards the people it employs.

An organisation needs to clearly define the responsibilities and boundaries within which an employee is supposed to work. The organisation must provide guidance and oversight so that individuals adhere to its code of conduct at all times and achieve their professional objectives. If employees’ roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, the organisation is at risk of the employee behaving in a manner that is not consistent with the values of the organisation. It is paramount that the staff code of conduct is understood, signed, and upheld, making it clear to employees what their role is and how they will be held accountable for their actions.

“The organisation ensures that staff have competencies that enable them to meet the organisation’s commitments”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2.1** The organisation shall clearly define and document the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that staff need to meet its commitments. | • Job descriptions, recruitment procedures and files, vacancy notices and staff codes of conduct  
• Interviews with staff responsible for recruitment, appointment, staff development and performance review |
| **2.2** The organisation shall have in place a staff code of conduct which refers to:  
1. not exploiting and abusing people, including sexual exploitation and abuse;  
2. being sensitive to the local culture; and  
3. the responsibility of staff to report abuses. | • Staff code of conduct and related policies |
| **2.3** The organisation shall ensure that staff understand the code of conduct and their responsibility under the accountability framework. | • Staff induction and briefing procedures  
• Samples of contracts and copies of the signed code of conduct  
• Interviews with staff |
| **2.4** The organisation shall regularly and consistently review and act on staff performance relating to knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes needed to meet commitments. | • A documented process for, and records of, reviewing staff performance  
• Interviews with staff  
• Examples of consistent actions following from reviews, including when staff fail to meet the code of conduct |
| **2.5** The organisation shall continually develop its staff so that commitments are met more effectively. | • Examples and records of staff development activities, including training reports  
• Interviews with staff on the effect of staff development activities |
Additional requirements for organisations working with partners

For organisations working through partners, it is important that the staff who interact with the partner organisation are aware of and understand the partnership agreements and obligations of both parties. The organisation should agree with its partners on the competencies that the partner’s staff should have in order to meet the agreed commitments. Organisations should also work with their partners to assist in implementing and monitoring the partners’ staff code of conduct.

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| **2.6** The organisation shall ensure that staff who interact with its partners understand the partnership agreements, the implications of the organisation’s accountability framework for partners, and each partner’s obligations. | • Records of, and interviews about, a process for relevant staff to understand the partnership agreements and their implications  
• Interviews with staff of both the organisation and partners about the purpose, content and relevance of partnership agreements |
| **2.7** The organisation shall work with its partners to agree the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that a partner’s staff need to meet agreed commitments, and to ensure these are reflected in a staff code of conduct (as in requirement 2.2). | • Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process  
• Partners’ staff codes of conduct |
| **2.8** The organisation shall work with its partners to improve how partners implement and monitor their staff codes of conduct. | • Interviews with staff about, and records (such as workplans and reports) of, activities to improve partners’ practice  
• Examples of improvements |
Suggestions for good practice
Competent staff are essential for any work that an organisation does. All staff should have a current job description before they start work, and training should be provided on an ongoing basis to ensure that staff have the requisite skills and knowledge. Regular performance reviews are also important.

Step 1: Set up systems
An organisation aiming to strengthen its accountability and the quality of its services should have a personnel-management system that takes these priorities into account, ensuring at a minimum to:
- Keep job descriptions and staff competency statements up-to-date.
- Implement a performance management system (i.e., ongoing verification that staff are fulfilling their role professionally, effectively and efficiently) that takes into account the context of the emergency/operations and the timeframe of the projects.
- Appraisal schedules must be flexible enough to cover projects that only last a few months as well as those that last for years.
- Develop and implement a training plan that covers key general topics including the organisation’s accountability framework, as well as job-specific training needs.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these procedures.
- Ensure that its recruitment policy provides guidance on equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Step 2: Define staff competencies
Organisations should define a core set of competencies that applies to all positions within the organisation, as well as specific sets of competencies for different functions frequently found across the organisation, such as: project manager, administrator, finance officer, logistician, sector specialist, programme officer and so on. Creating a standardised set of competencies for each role will facilitate the rapid creation of context-specific job descriptions that take into account variations in these roles depending on levels of authority, the nature of the work, and the project goals and objectives.

Stating the required competencies necessary for any role will give a clear indication of the combination of skills and experience necessary to perform a specific function. Competencies are often broken down into the following categories:
- Required knowledge
- Professional skills
- Personal qualities

Step 3: Manage performance and development
Performance management is central to meeting the HAP Standard as well as Principle 3 of the People in Aid Code. Yet training needs can often be overshadowed by busy schedules, urgent deadlines, and a sense that other activities are more immediately important. Organisations should commit to and set up a systematic approach to staff development and performance improvement. This may seem like a daunting task, but many organisations already have tools, which may simply need to be refined and developed into a coherent performance support system.

It is important to remember that training can take many forms, for example:
- Coaching and mentoring – one of the most effective methods
- Internal training courses (combination of classroom and practical)
- External training courses
- Self-teaching – reading required material and familiarisation with guidelines and processes used by the organisation.

Some ways to keep a performance management system simple and feasible include the following:
- Use the competencies set out in the job description to develop a self-assessment checklist which staff members can complete. This will allow their supervisor or line manager to ascertain how confident they feel about their role, identify what training they require, and agree on a plan for staff development.
- Ensure that managers know how to use varied means to verify people’s skills and knowledge, including by observing them, reviewing their work output, interviewing colleagues and the people the organisation assisted, and through formal and informal appraisals.
- Make certain that managers update performance assessment lists with their employees and deal with any gaps before the next appraisal. It is the responsibility of the organisation to monitor and evaluate that these processes are occurring and to ensure that managers are trained to carry out appraisals and manage performance.

Step 4: Keep records
A minimum amount of recording-keeping is essential. This is to protect the people the organisation assists, staff, and the organisation. Record-keeping ensures continuity, improves communication, and facilitates good planning.
What is this benchmark about?
By definition, information is of value to the receiver because it informs. If it does not inform, it is just raw data, noise or propaganda. Communication takes place when information flows backwards and forwards between people and through networks. This benchmark seeks to improve communication between an organisation and its stakeholders, while focussing on the particular requirements that an organisation must fulfil as a provider of information.

Why is sharing information important?
The sharing of accurate, timely and accessible information strengthens trust, increases understanding, deepens levels of participation, and improves the impact of a project. The sharing of information and knowledge can create a platform for a range of stakeholders to work together more cohesively, better coordinate efforts, and improve the effectiveness of a response.

The provision of information by an organisation to its stakeholders in an accurate and timely way is the key to meeting the principle of transparency. Traditionally, the emphasis of communication in aid work has been on accountability to donors, while information dissemination to other stakeholders, such as crisis-affected communities, has been weaker.

Sharing accurate and timely information with the people an organisation seeks to assist is also critical to effective programming and risk management. If an organisation does not share information appropriately with the people it aims to assist, it can contribute to:

- **Confusion and delays**: a lack of understanding on the process of identifying and selecting those who will receive assistance can lead to misunderstandings. This can subsequently cause setbacks during various stages of the project cycle.
- **Waste**: if an organisation does not share information with those it seeks to assist before implementing a project, it can result in inappropriate projects.
- **Increased insecurity**: a lack of information- and knowledge-sharing, or providing inaccurate or incomplete information, can result in negative perceptions of the organisation, which can lead to frustration and anger. This can create security issues and could result in organisations not being able to operate effectively.
- **Sexual exploitation and abuse**: a lack of knowledge of basic rights, the staff code of conduct, and complaints procedures can leave the people an organisation seeks to assist vulnerable to the misuse of power and to exploitation and abuse, including that of a sexual nature.

It is important to note that this benchmark is about the flow of information to and from the people an organisation aims to assist and other stakeholders. This information is shared in order to improve the quality of services they receive and the impact of the programme, and to increase their involvement in the programme and their ability to exercise the right to make informed choices; it is not about public relations, visibility or promotion of the organisation.
Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management

The organisation shall define and document processes for sharing information, covering:
1. commitment to accurate and timely information sharing;
2. what information it will share with the people it seeks to assist and other stakeholders;
3. how decisions will be made on when and how to share information; and
4. criteria used for deciding not to share information.

The organisation shall share with the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders information appropriate to their needs, including:
1. its background and contact details;
2. its accountability framework, staff code of conduct and complaints procedure;
3. its goals and project objectives, expected results with the time frame, and a financial summary, as well as summaries of evaluations and progress reports;
4. staff roles and responsibilities;
5. criteria for selecting target groups and deliverables as agreed in requirement 4.2; and
6. how input from participation activities has contributed to decisions.

The organisation shall ensure that information specified in requirement 3.2 is presented in languages, formats and media that are appropriate for, accessible to, and can be understood by the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders.

The organisation shall ensure that its staff identify themselves to people they aim to assist and other stakeholders.

### REQUIREMENTS

| 3.1 | The organisation shall define and document processes for sharing information, covering: 1. commitment to accurate and timely information sharing; 2. what information it will share with the people it seeks to assist and other stakeholders; 3. how decisions will be made on when and how to share information; and 4. criteria used for deciding not to share information. |
| 3.2 | The organisation shall share with the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders information appropriate to their needs, including: 1. its background and contact details; 2. its accountability framework, staff code of conduct and complaints procedure; 3. its goals and project objectives, expected results with the time frame, and a financial summary, as well as summaries of evaluations and progress reports; 4. staff roles and responsibilities; 5. criteria for selecting target groups and deliverables as agreed in requirement 4.2; and 6. how input from participation activities has contributed to decisions. |
| 3.3 | The organisation shall ensure that information specified in requirement 3.2 is presented in languages, formats and media that are appropriate for, accessible to, and can be understood by the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders. |
| 3.4 | The organisation shall ensure that its staff identify themselves to people they aim to assist and other stakeholders. |

### MEANS OF VERIFICATION

- Documents on processes for sharing information, such as a corporate statement and staff guidelines
- Records of, and interviews with staff and crisis-affected women, men, boys and girls about, a process for developing a context-specific information plan
- Observation and interviews with staff and with crisis-affected women, men, boys and girls to confirm that information is shared
- Examples of media and records of information sharing activities
- Observation, records, and interviews to confirm a process for deciding appropriate and accessible languages, formats and media
- Interviews with people the organisation aims to assist and other stakeholders
- Observation, records, and interviews to confirm how staff identify themselves, including through identity cards with validity dates, organisation name and contact details
- Interviews with people the organisation aims to assist and other stakeholders
Additional requirements for organisations working with partners

Organisations working with partners should make publicly available their main joint activities, the names of partners and organisations involved, and the corresponding financial summaries. This should be based on an agreement between the organisation and the partners on how information will be shared, both generally and specifically with the people they aim to assist. Finally, an organisation working with partners should work with them to help improve their information-sharing strategies and better meet Benchmark 3.

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<td>3.5</td>
<td>In agreement with its partners, the organisation shall make public the names of its partners, the main joint activities, and a financial summary of the programmes it funds.</td>
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<td>• Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process</td>
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<td>• Examples and records of information sharing activities</td>
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<td>The organisation shall work with its partners to agree how and when they will share information, including with the people they aim to assist, and to put this agreement into practice.</td>
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<td>• A plan on what information partners will share</td>
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Suggestions for good practice

Developing an Information Policy

It is important to prepare an information policy before a programme is launched so that information about the organisation can be disseminated from the outset. Organisations will need to review their information plans, which are based on the overall information policy, on an ongoing basis as the programme develops and as their own knowledge increases. An information plan could consist of the following components:

**Step 1: Guiding**

- Define organisational commitment to accurate and timely sharing of information and transparency
- Clarify what information should be covered by a non-disclosure and restricted circulation policy, and what information will be shared with the people the organisation seeks to assist and other stakeholders
- Explain how decisions will be made on when and how to share information and define the criteria for deciding not to share information
- Confirm the commitment of senior management to support the policy
- Ensure that information is an integral part of all the activities undertaken by the organisation. For example, if an operational objective is to supply water to a camp, it will be necessary to consider the ways in which information about this will be provided to crisis-affected communities and other stakeholders

**Step 2: WHAT information to share**

- Organisational background and contact details, staff roles and responsibilities.
- Accountability framework, code of conduct.
- Goals and project objectives, expected results with a timeframe, and financial summary along with summary of evaluations and progress reports
- Complaints handling procedures
- Criteria for selecting target groups and deliverables agreed
- Information on how input from participation activities has contributed to decisions

**Step 3: WHO to share the information with - the ‘target audiences’**
- Stakeholders with whom the organisation should communicate could include the people the organisation assists, host communities, the organisation’s staff and other people or groups
- Assess prevailing causes and practices of information discrimination (differential access to television, radio, the internet)
- Assess the different needs of specific groups, such as women, children, elderly people, and people with disabilities or mobility restrictions

**Step 4: WHEN to share information**
- At all stages of the operation, during the design phase, start-up, implementation, evaluation and exit
- At regular agreed reporting times throughout the life of the project
- When there are any significant changes to the plans

**Step 5: HOW to share information**
Consider the different types of information specified in the benchmark and:
- Ask the people the organisation seeks to assist what formats they would like to receive information in
- Decide on the best method for presenting information to different stakeholders; options could include annual reports, leaflets, booklets, posters, website, organigram, community notice boards, billboards, radio, photographs, workshops, role plays, meetings, verbal feedback, images and so on
- Adapt information and make it available in different ways (print, audio-visual etc.) so that it will be accessible to all recipients taking into account diversity issues such as literacy levels, gender, age, ethnicity, race, and disability
- When working with partners, consider what information needs to be shared with the people the organisation seeks to assist via the partner

**Step 6: Risk analysis**
- Consider the potential impact of sharing information on the security of both the deliverer and the receiver
- Assess the consequences of non-disclosure and restricted circulation policies
- Develop criteria to be used for deciding when not to share information
- Inform staff on what information they can and cannot share

**Step 7: Establish editorial guidelines for information materials**
- Test information to ensure that it is accessible to and understood by the target audience
- Ensure information is relevant, useful and accurate.
- Update information in a timely manner
- Check that information does not mislead or cause harm to the people the organisation seeks to assist or to the organisation, and that it respects the dignity of all
- Provide opportunities for feedback

**Step 8: Set clear and achievable (SMARTER: specific, measurable, agreed/aligned, relevant, time-based, evaluate and review) objectives and indicators**
- Prepare a list of information materials to be produced. This might include a summary of commissioning authority, purpose, author, format, distribution method, cost and feedback mechanism

**Step 9: Allocate budget**
- Ensure that the costs of the information policy/plan can be met

**Step 10: Monitor and evaluate processes**
- Review and refine the information strategy at regular intervals. Strengthen communication as the context improves and the information needs of the community increase
**What is this benchmark about?**

An organisation should seek the informed consent of those people it is privileged to be in a position to help. Participation is the process through which crisis-affected people can actively exercise their right to informed consent.

The concepts of participation and empowerment are closely related. Empowerment is sometimes described as the ability to make choices, but it must also include the ability to shape the choices on offer. Empowerment does not necessarily mean reversing existing realities, for example challenging power hierarchies or disempowering organisations. It is about enabling people affected by crises to make their own choices, to speak out on their own behalf, and to control their own lives.

Participation and informed consent are key processes in achieving this.

The HAP Standard draws out two aspects of participation:

- **Participation in programme decisions**, where individuals or community representatives actively engage in decision-making processes throughout the project cycle. Because of the context or pre-existing power differentials (based upon gender, race, class, caste, or other characteristics), participation may not occur spontaneously. Instead, participation may need to be stimulated and facilitated, and aid organisations may have to foster a process of mutual learning and dialogue. Particular attention needs to be given to groups or individuals traditionally excluded from power and decision-making processes. These may include women, children, elderly persons, people with disabilities, landless or homeless persons, and ethnic, racial and religious groups – not necessarily in a minority. Specific opportunities and facilitation may have to be provided to enable the active and meaningful participation of people who are usually excluded.

- **Informed consent**, where an individual or a community (through representation) gives its consent to programme activities based upon an appreciation and understanding of the facts and implications of an action. Consent may take varied forms, including expressed willingness, permission or a voluntary agreement.

**Why is participation important?**

The people an organisation seeks to assist are always the most important stakeholders in the delivery of appropriate and fit-for-purpose services. Participation should focus on mobilising the leadership and skills within crisis-affected communities so that they are better able to make informed choices and decisions about their well-being. Participation also makes for more effective programming based on a sound understanding of the local context and culture. It increases trust and co-operation and enables crisis-affected communities to regain control over aspects of their lives.

To meet this benchmark, a participatory approach should be built in at every stage, from project design, to implementation, through to evaluation.

Participation will increase both efficiency and effectiveness at the various stages of a project:

- **Initial assessment stage**: participation improves the likelihood of culturally appropriate and context-specific projects, as crisis-affected people are better able to define their own priorities.

"The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions"
Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management

- **Design stage:** participation contributes to more effective interventions based on crisis-affected communities’ sound understanding of the context

- **Implementation stage:** participation results in more efficient interventions by reducing waste and losses

- **Monitoring and evaluation stage:** participation facilitates learning and continual improvement and encourages adaptive responses

### Additional requirements for organisations working with partners

For organisations working through partners, an agreement should be made on how target groups and selected communities will participate throughout the project. The organisation should also work with partners to define and improve how partners include the element of participation in all the actions and processes of their work, from needs assessment to evaluation - this will help to ensure that the people the organisation aims to assist are able to play a role in the decision-making process.

### REQUIREMENTS

| 4.1 | The organisation shall define and document the processes through which it will: 1. identify the people it aims to assist and their representatives, referring to gender, age, diversity and special needs; and 2. enable women, men, boys and girls that it aims to assist, and other stakeholders, to participate in different stages of the project. | • Documents on participation processes, such as a corporate statement and staff guidelines |
| 4.2 | The organisation shall develop and put in place processes appropriate to the context so that the people it aims to assist and other crisis-affected people provide feedback and influence: 1. initial assessment; 2. project design, deliverables, criteria for selecting target groups and the selection process; 3. project implementation; and 4. monitoring and evaluation. | • Records of, and interviews with staff and with crisis-affected women, men, boys and girls about, a process for developing a context-appropriate participation plan |
| 4.3 | The organisation shall enable the people it aims to assist to provide feedback and influence or make decisions about the project in a way that is continuously adapted to the context and the intervention. As a minimum, informed consent shall be obtained for the action. | • Observation, records, and interviews to confirm a process through which the organisation assesses the capacity to participate and decides what is appropriate |

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<td>• Records of informed consent and other participatory activities</td>
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<td>• Examples and records that input is affecting decisions</td>
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The organisation shall work with its partners to agree how the people they aim to assist will participate in different stages of the project, and to put this agreement into practice.

**MEANS OF VERIFICATION**

- Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process
- Documents, such as a plan, on how the people they aim to assist will participate
- Interviews with staff and with people the organisation aims to assist to confirm that participation takes place as agreed

The organisation shall work with its partners to improve how partners meet requirements 4.1 to 4.3.

**MEANS OF VERIFICATION**

- Interviews with staff about, and records (such as workplans and reports) of, activities to improve partners’ practice
- Examples of improvements
Suggestions for good practice
Participation and informed consent are important ideals but they are not always easy to achieve. Success depends upon two factors in particular:

- Organisation-wide recognition and commitment to their importance.
- Participation that offers genuine engagement rather than superficial involvement.

When seeking informed consent, consider the following steps:

**Step 1: Needs assessment interviews**
Interviews with crisis-affected people are about soliciting and providing information in accordance with Benchmark 2. It is good practice to ask for feedback after sharing information – was the information understandable, appropriate, timely and safe? The exchanges and discussions can be documented formally or informally depending on the situation. Confidentiality and safety must always be considered and suitable measures taken to guarantee these conditions.

**Step 2: Crisis-affected persons selection criteria**
The crisis-affected community and the organisation need to work together to agree a set of criteria for the selection of the people the organisation will seek to assist. Communication of these criteria is vital once they have been agreed. It is especially valuable to include women in this process, as they may be able to identify people or groups who might otherwise remain excluded, for instance single women, women-headed family groups or households, and child-headed households.

**Step 3: Participatory evaluation**
The project outcome should be evaluated jointly with the affected community in order to obtain an accurate picture and learn lessons for the future.

**Step 4: Complaints-handling**
Inevitably, some crisis-affected people will not receive adequate information or will disagree with the decisions that are taken. An accessible and safe complaints-handling system will make it easier to deal with any complaints that arise – see Benchmark 5.

**Step 5: Verifying informed consent**
Verifying whether informed consent is given or whether levels of participation are adequate can be complex and difficult at the best of times. In emergencies, the situation is further complicated by contextual constraints and realities. People may express consent without fully understanding the implications or without having a comprehensive grasp of the issues. A degree of consent and participation may have to be assumed based on observation, knowledge, or legal or other documents (e.g. contractual agreements with the community).

**Step 6: Coordination**
Informed consent of the people an organisation aims to assist needs to take into account the plans and activities of other stakeholders, including other organisations, local civil society groups, the UN and the government. It is necessary to identify all stakeholders operating in the area and share information with them in order to avoid duplication, confusion and other related problems.
“The organisation enables the people it aims to assist and other stakeholders to raise complaints and receive a response through an effective, accessible and safe process”

What is this benchmark about?
No matter how good an organisation’s quality management system is, an organisation is not impervious to processes needing improvement, fraud, or abuse of power. Therefore, a good quality management system must recognise the risks of processes not functioning as planned, malpractice, manipulation, and exploitation. The 2010 HAP Standard follows a logical order by which risks can be mitigated through the creation of organisational policies, procedures and practices that strengthen an organisation’s capacity to deal with these risks.

A complaints-handling mechanism is a process through which an organisation can redress serious issues and is an essential component of a quality management system. An effective complaints-handling procedure will be accessible to and safe for all stakeholders. It should also be noted that this benchmark requires a procedure that is accessible to others, most notably staff and humanitarian partners, as power dynamics will be at play within organisations. To this end, a grievance procedure should be in place to deal with staff complaints, and a system for dealing with problems and concerns between the organisation and its humanitarian partners should be instituted.

When developing and implementing complaints-handling mechanisms, organisations should bear in mind vulnerability issues, as well as gender and power dynamics of the context they are working in. Within any crisis-affected community, large or small, there will be power dynamics and political, social and cultural norms that may impact directly on peoples’ opportunity to participate. Organisations must ensure that these dynamics are properly assessed in order to inform their programming and their interactions with communities. Particular attention should always be paid to the specific needs of women, and to ensuring they have a voice in the design and implementation of complaints-handling systems.

As a result of these assessments, extra measures should be taken to ensure that the complaints procedure is accessible to the most vulnerable and socially excluded,
for instance by using methods for soliciting feedback that are culturally and socially appropriate. Organisations should also provide a variety of means for giving feedback to accommodate the needs of those who are unable to read or write, or articulate their concerns for other reasons.

Why is handling complaints important?
Accountability is a two-way flow, a dialogue: it is about the right to have a say and the duty to respond. Being accountable to the people organisations seek to assist requires that humanitarian organisations take into account their opinions, concerns, suggestions, and complaints. Most communications from crisis-affected people consist of information an organisation can adopt, challenge, or disregard. A complaint, in contrast, contains a specific grievance from a person who has been negatively affected by an organisation’s actions or who believes that an organisation has failed to meet a stated commitment.

An accountable organisation should consider handling complaints as a positive process that can:

- Provide an indicator that a process or plan is not working
- Safely highlight a concern
- Provide a respectful means for addressing grievances
- Increase transparency
- Provide valuable management information
- Protect the dignity of users
- Highlight cases of fraud, inefficiency, or abuse.
### REQUIREMENTS

#### 5.1

The organisation shall define and document a complaints procedure, covering:

1. the people it aims to assist, staff and other stakeholders who have the right to raise a complaint and receive a response;
2. the purpose and limitations of the procedure;
3. how complaints can be raised;
4. the steps taken to deal with the complaints, the procedure for investigating them and the response time frame;
5. the process for fast-tracking allegations of exploitation and abuse, including those of a sexual nature;
6. confidentiality, non-retaliation, appeal and support for people who complain and any witnesses; and
7. the process for safely referring to a third party people who complain if the complaint is about issues the organisation cannot handle, such as medical attention and psychological, social or legal support.

The organisation shall identify and put in place complaints procedures that are based on the preferences of the people it aims to assist, staff and other stakeholders, after consulting them.

#### 5.2

The organisation shall ensure that the people it aims to assist, staff and other stakeholders understand the complaints procedure.

#### 5.4

The organisation shall ensure that it handles complaints in line with its procedure and that it acts upon complaints.

### MEANS OF VERIFICATION

- The complaints procedure
- Records of, and interviews with staff and with crisis-affected women, men, boys and girls about, a consultation process on the complaints procedure and the appropriate term to refer to it
- Examples and records that consultations guided the development of the complaints procedure
- Records of, and interviews with staff about, a process to confirm that the target audiences understand the complaints procedure
- Observation and interviews with staff and with crisis-affected women, men, boys and girls to confirm that they understand the complaints procedure
- Records and interviews to confirm that the complaints procedure is followed, referring specifically to responses and timescales
- A sample of current complaints and those which have been settled
- Interviews with staff, people the organisation aims to assist, and other stakeholders
- Examples of action taken as a result of complaints
**Additional requirements for organisations working with partners**

Organisations working through partners should agree with partners on how they will raise and handle complaints against each other. This agreement should be put into practice and improved upon over time. The organisation should also try to ensure that the people they aim to assist are able to raise a complaint with the partner, and clarify the circumstances under which a complaint will be referred to the organisation. Finally, the organisation should work with partners on how they will improve on meeting the requirements of Benchmark 5.

### REQUIREMENTS

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| **5.5** The organisation shall work with its partners to agree how they will raise and handle complaints against each other in a safe and accessible way, and to put this agreement into practice. | • Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners about, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process  
• Documents on how the organisation and its partners will handle complaints  
• Observation, records, and interviews with staff to confirm that both the organisation and its partners follow the agreed complaints procedure |
| **5.6** The organisation shall work with its partners to agree ways in which they will enable the people they aim to assist to raise complaints with the partners, including when partners will refer the complaint to the organisation, and to put this agreement into practice. | • Documents, such as a complaints procedure, on how the partner will handle complaints  
• Observation, records, and interviews to confirm that complaints are handled as agreed |
| **5.7** The organisation shall work with its partners to improve how partners meet requirements 5.1 to 5.4. | • Interviews with staff about, and records (such as workplans and reports) of, activities to improve partners’ practice  
• Examples of improvements |
Suggestions for good practice

Ideally a complaints procedure should be set up at the start of all programmes and run throughout the project. Although many programmes will have been set up without such procedures, it is still better to set them up later than not at all.

An organisation committed to accountability should view complaints it receives as opportunities to improve the service it is providing. Information received from a complaint helps to inform the organisation about:

- The impact of its work
- The appropriateness of its work in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable
- Satisfaction of the people the organisation aims to assist
- Potential risks and vulnerabilities
- Possible security issues

In order to be effective, a complaints mechanism for the people an organisation aims to assist needs to be:

- Safe to use for the people an organisation aims to assist and staff
- Accessible to the people an organisation aims to assist, especially vulnerable ones
- Trusted by the people an organisation aims to assist and staff

Complaints procedures can be simple, although they need to be carefully planned and follow certain key principles. A badly designed or managed complaints procedure can be harmful. Mechanisms to handle complaints should be designed with the following considerations:

- Prior to determining how affected communities should register complaints, a thorough analysis of the context should take place, incorporating the needs of the specific programme and sector.
- The people an organisation aims to assist should be told about the complaints-handling mechanism and have the confidence to use it knowing that their concerns will be answered. This will only be the case if there is mutual trust.
- The people an organisation aims to assist should have the right to complain about anything linked to the organisation's work and commitments. This includes accountability framework commitments, humanitarian plans, quality of delivery of services or assistance, and staff conduct.
- Organisations should actively solicit complaints from the people they seek to assist. Soliciting complaints makes it clear that the organisation is willing to provide redress when justified.
- The complaints system's procedures and parameters should be clearly understood by all potential users. Particular effort is needed to communicate these to marginalised groups.
- No complaint should be ignored.
- Although complaints may have common features, each one is unique and should be dealt with accordingly.
- All issues outside the control and responsibility of the organisation should be clearly explained to the complainant. If applicable, the organisations should refer these complaints to other relevant organisations or bodies, in circumstances which do not jeopardise the well-being and safety of the complainant.
- Staff should understand, appreciate and accept the organisation's commitment to a complaints-handling policy.
- All allegations of staff misconduct received from the people an organisation aims to assist or other staff must be investigated according to the official investigation procedures of the organisation. Organisations should have formal investigation procedures that adhere to the principles of confidentiality, independence and respect. Investigations must be conducted in a thorough, professional manner and meet legal standards. The Building Safer Organisations Guidelines on receiving and investigating allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation by humanitarian workers provides details of the investigation process.
- A clear referral system should be in place for cases where national or international law has been broken.
- The organisation should always follow its own procedures strictly.
- Information and communication systems and complaints mechanisms are linked; often complaints may arise because of a lack of information.
Complaints-handling procedures for organisations working through partners require special consideration. The procedure will need to allow the people the organisation seeks to assist to complain to the partner and to the organisation itself, as well as enable the partner to complain to the organisation about its own concerns. The organisation should develop a complaints-handling procedure to be adopted and used by partners which:

1. Is based on consultation with partners so that appropriate methods are used in handling complaints.

2. Is documented, accessible and understandable to partners, and includes:
   - Rights of the people an organisation aims to assist to make a complaint
   - Purpose, parameters and limitations of the procedure
   - Details on how to submit a complaint
   - Steps to be followed once the complaint is submitted
   - Assurances of confidentiality and non-retaliation (particularly for complaints relating to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, given the social stigma associated with this and the very real danger that women/children reporting such abuse could face from perpetrators, and from their own families and communities)
   - Commitment to refer complaints that the partner and organisation are unable to handle
   - Commitment of the humanitarian partner and organisation to give a response
   - The right of the people an organisation aims to assist to complain directly to the organisation instead of going through the partner (contact details of the organisation should be given on all information material concerning the complaints-handling procedures).

3. Outlines the process by which the partner can complain to the organisation and vice versa.
What is this benchmark about?
Learning from past successes and failures and applying these insights to modify and adapt future work is a cornerstone of accountability and quality management. A culture of learning and continual improvement should lie at the heart of a professional and committed organisation. Continual improvement is achieved through an effective monitoring and evaluation system, which ensures regular reviews of the work, impact and effectiveness of the organisation, and that identifies lessons for improving future operations.

Why is continual improvement important?
Continual improvement is the central objective of a quality management system. Its realisation demonstrates that an organisation is making the interests of its stakeholders paramount. This will ensure that the people the organisation aims to assist receive the best possible services, and will also ultimately benefit its staff and its donors. Public and institutional donors will be assured that their funds are being used effectively, and the organisation itself and the humanitarian or development sector as a whole will consequently enjoy a strengthened reputation based on the confidence and trust of its stakeholders.

Organisations have regular and multiple monitoring and evaluation processes in place. However, these processes usually fail to include how an organisation’s accountability commitments and objectives, as outlined in its accountability framework, will be reviewed and improved. Furthermore, the key lessons and areas identified for improvement are often not addressed systematically. It is important that learning is shared effectively and appropriately and that there are clear ways in which it can be translated into improved actions.

In its learning cycle, an organisation should include a review and improvement plan for its performance related to its accountability framework, staff competencies, sharing information, enabling participation, handling of complaints, and learning.
The organisation shall define and document processes to learn effectively, including from monitoring, evaluations and complaints.

**Means of Verification**
- Documents on learning processes, such as a corporate statement and staff guidelines

The organisation shall regularly monitor its performance, including in relation to the accountability framework, staff competencies, sharing information, enabling participation, handling complaints, and learning.

**Means of Verification**
- Progress reports, including on the HAP Standard benchmarks
- Interviews with staff, crisis-affected people and other stakeholders, on monitoring processes

The organisation shall include in the scope of evaluations an objective to assess progress in delivering its accountability framework.

**Means of Verification**
- Evaluation terms of reference and plans
- Sections in evaluation reports on accountability, including learning

The organisation shall ensure that learning, including on accountability, is incorporated into workplans in a timely way.

**Means of Verification**
- Records of, and interviews with staff about, a process to verify that learning is reflected in workplans
- Workplans for acting on findings from learning processes
- Interviews with staff and examples that findings from monitoring and evaluation, complaints and other learning processes contribute to improvements

“A community health worker for Organizasyon Sante Popilè (OSAPO), speaks to residents of Montrouis, Haiti, about steps they can take to prevent the spread of cholera.”

“Learning from past successes and failures and applying these insights to modify and adapt future work is a cornerstone of accountability and quality management”
**Additional requirements for organisations working with partners**

Organisations working through partners should agree with partners on how they will jointly monitor and evaluate various aspects of the partnership to improve mutual performance. They should put this agreement into practice and aim to continually improve their partnership.

**Requirements**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>The organisation shall work with its partners to agree how they will jointly monitor and evaluate programmes, the quality of the partnership, and each other’s agreed performance, and to put this agreement into practice.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with staff of both the organisation and its partners about, and records, such as minutes from meetings, of a joint decision-making process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Documents, such as a plan, on how each will monitor the other and evaluate the partnership</td>
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<td>• Interviews with staff and examples of how each responds to the other’s feedback, suggestions and learning</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td>The organisation shall work with its partners to improve how partners meet requirements 6.1 to 6.4.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with staff about, and records (such as workplans and reports) of, activities to improve partners’ practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Examples of improvements</td>
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Deutsche Welthungerhilfe financed a poverty reduction programme which trained villagers in the highlands of Bolivia in the art of cheese production, cattle breeding and more.
Suggestions for good practice

Continual improvement is an essential part of quality assurance and should thus be a part of all activities, both on a strategic level as well as in day-to-day management. It should start at the very beginning of the project cycle, continue through implementation, and be a feature at its end. The following project phases should all feature a learning component:

Design phase: continual improvement should be built into the design of the project. Project developers should take into account the organisation’s accountability framework when writing their proposals and plan goals, objectives, and indicators accordingly.

Implementation phase: regular internal and external monitoring and evaluation should take place during implementation to track lessons learnt, correct mistakes, and address weaknesses.

Final evaluation and review phase: a final project evaluation should take place once the project is over. In addition, a review of the accountability framework and quality management system should occur and any necessary revisions made.

There are a number of measures that make continual improvement a success:

- Senior management must demonstrate commitment to continual improvement in the organisation’s strategic objectives and resource allocation.
- The improvement process should be adapted to each level of management:
  - Head office level: review the strategy and quality management system (for example, the review cycle could be every three to five years, with annual monitoring).
  - Regional level: review the strategy and quality management system (for example annually, with monitoring every three to four years).
  - Country level: review quarterly, with monthly monitoring.
  - Project level: review monthly, with weekly monitoring.
- Emergencies will require a much shorter review cycle, such as weekly with daily monitoring.
- Internal and external monitoring and evaluation of specific programmes or projects should supplement the review processes.
- Quality assurance of the system means that managers throughout the system are responsible for ensuring that each level is complying and reporting.
- Problems (current or potential) need to be captured, discussed in designated management meetings at each level, and then acted on.
- Lessons learned should become part of the knowledge management system, and shared throughout the organisation.
- The people an organisation aims to assist and other stakeholders should be included in the monitoring and evaluation process.
PART IV RESOURCES

The resources listed below have been provided by HAP members and other organisations. The case studies, tools and other materials have been selected and organised according to each benchmark. The online version has links to each of the resources. To find a resource, locate the soft copy of this document on the HAP website. All these resources are available in the Case Studies and Tools section of the HAP website, which is updated regularly.

Some of the case studies and tools included in this Guide might refer to the previous (2007) HAP Standard. These tools and case studies have been tried and tested and therefore continue to remain relevant and useful. These resources can be used with minor adaptations and clarifications based on the 2010 HAP Standard.

USING THE RESOURCES IN THIS GUIDE

- State the source of the materials used clearly, i.e. the HAP website: www.hapinternational.org
- Acknowledge the organisation that has authored and shared the resource.
- Emphasise that the resource is only for learning purposes and each organisation will have their own ways of implementing the HAP Standard.
- If the resource you are using talks about the 2007 HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, please make sure to adapt the material according to the 2010 HAP Standard, the context, purpose and audience without losing the core message.

We welcome your ideas, experiences and good practice! We encourage all organisations to develop their case studies and share them with the HAP Secretariat. You can use the HAP case study template for further guidance.

In addition to the printed version, this Guide is available to download for free from the HAP International website (www.hapinternational.org). The soft copy contains all the hyperlinks for those documents listed in the Resources and elsewhere in the Guide. Should you have any questions or queries, please contact secretariat@hapinternational.org

Don’t forget to check the HAP website (www.hapinternational.org) regularly for new resources!
The Staff Competencies
Benchmark of the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management focuses on accountability towards the people an organisation aims to assist, whereas The Code of Good Practice is more focused on good people management processes which are central to quality programming and accountability. It outlines seven 'Principles' of good people management including health, safety and well-being. The Principles outlined in The Code of Good Practice are key in delivering on quality and accountability commitments in addition to the requirements of the HAP benchmark on staff competencies.

The Sphere Project: The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response
The Sphere Project is a voluntary initiative that brings a wide range of humanitarian agencies together around a common aim - to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors to their constituents, donors and affected populations. The Sphere Project, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, is an internationally recognised set of common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response. The Core Standards of the 2011 Sphere Handbook contain requirements that complement the Benchmarks of the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management, and contain elements of coherence with People In Aid Code of Good Practice, The Good Enough Guide, Quality COMPAS, and ALNAP.

The Emergency Capacity Building Project: The Good Enough Guide
The aim of the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project is to improve the speed, quality, and effectiveness of the humanitarian community in saving lives, improving welfare, and protecting the rights of people in emergency situations. The Good Enough Guide to Impact Measurement and Accountability is a practical guide for field practitioners which contains some tools and examples of good practice. In addition, the ECB project website contains an excellent pool of resources including tools and reports.

Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)
LEGS is a set of international standards and guidelines for livestock emergency interventions.

Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
The INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery is the only global tool that articulates the minimum level of educational access and quality in emergencies through to recovery.

Transparency International: Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations
Transparency International is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption. They have produced a handbook of good practice for Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations.

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)
ALNAP is dedicated to improving humanitarian performance through learning and accountability. There are a
number of useful resources on their website along with blogs and forums for discussion. The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) is a significant publication which provides an overview of entire humanitarian sector between 2009-2010.

**Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies: Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework**
The CBHA is an initiative for strengthening the coordination and capacity of the NGO sector to deliver appropriate, high quality, and quicker humanitarian assistance to populations affected by disaster. CBHA developed the Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework. A guide has been developed as a “hands-on” resource to help with the implementation of the competencies framework.

**Groupe URD: Quality COMPAS**
The Quality COMPAS is a quality assurance method with its own set of tools, training modules and consultancy services, which have been designed specifically for aid agencies with the overall aim of improving services provided to crisis-affected populations.

**Assessment Capacities Projects (ACAPS)**
The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) is dedicated to improving the assessment of needs in complex emergencies and crises. There are a number of useful resources and reports on their website.

**Protection: An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies (Overseas Development Institute, 2005)**
This resource provides guidance for humanitarian practitioners involved in providing safety and protection to vulnerable people as a consequence of war and disaster. It provides a four step framework for assessing, designing, implementing and monitoring humanitarian work with clear protection objectives.

The guide also outlines key principles of best practice for protection-focused humanitarian work.

**WASH Accountability Resources: Ask, Listen, Communicate (Oxfam, 2009)**
This handbook is a collection of accountability resources and case studies from the WASH sector presented through five dimensions of accountability: participation, transparency, feedback and complaints, monitoring and evaluation and staff competencies and attitudes.

**Selected case studies and good practice**
Kenya Programme’s approach to Improving Accountability to Beneficiaries in Kashmir (Tearfund, 2007)
This case study gives an overview of the activities undertaken to strengthen information sharing, participation, and complaints handling, and include observed advantages and lessons learned.

Disaster Management Team Good Practice Guidelines: Beneficiary Accountability (Tearfund, 2008)
This manual puts the importance of accountability in the context of the organisational values, outlines practical steps for improving accountability in the field, based on the HAP (2007) benchmarks, and contains examples. A good source for building understanding of accountability and its application.

**Scenario for discussing accountability and quality - The Bus Service (HAP, 2009)**
Developed as part of a HAP deployment to Sri Lanka, this scenario with accompanying facilitator notes has been used with NGO staff to start discussions on quality and accountability and introduce the benchmarks of the HAP Standard. Good for generating discussion. Also available in French.

**Quick Reference – ideas for resource allocation to support accountability (HAP, 2009)**
To use when discussing how to budget for accountability.

**Accountability Starter Pack (Oxfam GB, 2012)**
This good resource and a guide is for those staff who would like to learn more about how to implement activities that are accountable to people and communities. It is primarily aimed at country-level staff responsible for implementing development or humanitarian projects and programmes.

**How to Budget for Accountability (Save the Children, 2012)**
A tool on budgeting for accountability, for example setting aside the resources (funds and staff) necessary to ensure accountability. It is designed to help organisations insert accountability-related costs into any project budget. The resource is organised according to the six HAP benchmarks.

**Self-Assessment Methodology used to Review Agency Accountability During the Response in Northern Sri Lanka (ACTED, 2009)**
This case study summarises the approach and methodology used to examine practice against the HAP 2007 Standard. The methodology was used to encourage staff to go through a process of self-assessment.

**Accountability Snap-Shot and Action Planning Exercise (HAP, 2011)**
This exercise can be used by organisations to assess their performance against the 2010 HAP Standard. It is an interactive exercise which aims to generate discussion and debate and increase the understanding of staff on the benchmarks of the HAP Standard. It can be easily adapted and can be used with senior managers, partners and field staff.
SELECTED RESOURCES FOR BENCHMARK 1: ESTABLISHING AND DELIVERING ON COMMITMENTS

Accountability Frameworks from HAP Certified Organisations

The HAP Register of Certified Agencies and Auditors on the HAP website contains accountability frameworks of organisations certified by HAP.

This document proposes a framework which attempts to bring key elements of the established standards together in a way that enables organisations to translate the core elements of the standards into practical actions. This document was originally intended for members of the Emergency Capacity Building Project, but is a useful document for all looking to develop an accountability framework.

Developing and Implementing a Contextualised HAF (DRC, Sri Lanka 2009)
This document provides guidance on a country-specific and contextualised accountability framework. It includes steps in the development, implementation and sharing with staff, partners and beneficiaries and how affected communities can now hold DRC to account, and learning from the process. The latest version of DRC’s Humanitarian Accountability Framework for Sri Lanka programmes is available on DRC’s website.

CARE’s Humanitarian Accountability Framework (CARE, 2010)
CARE’s Humanitarian Accountability Framework is publicly available in a number of languages on CARE’s website. It is used in all emergency operations.

ACT Alliance Quality and Accountability Framework (ACT Alliance, 2011)
The ACT Quality and Accountability Framework summarises standards of quality towards which ACT can be held to account by its stakeholders.

Disasters Emergency Committee Accountability Framework (DEC, 2011)
This is another excellent example of an Accountability Framework from a membership organisation. The DEC Accountability Framework encompasses a number of activities designed to promote best practice, learning and accountability. The four main ‘pillars’ are:

1. Annual self-assessments against the DEC accountability priorities and the ways of working which sit beneath these
2. Appeal-specific reporting on plans and progress against these
3. A rotating system of independent external evaluation
4. Collective learning activities designed to ensure DEC members share learning and experiences.

Highly recommended for use at organisational and field level, and can help bring a greater understanding of the principles.

SELECTED RESOURCES FOR BENCHMARK 2: STAFF COMPETENCY

Policies, codes and templates

HAP Code of Conduct (HAP, 2008)
This document sets out what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour for staff and consultants, and the disciplinary procedures that will be followed to hold employees to account in case of misconduct. It also details what staff should do if they feel the Code of Conduct has been violated.

Policy Guide and Template; Codes of Conduct (People In Aid, 2008)
A policy guide on developing codes of conduct, useful for organisations revising or writing a code of conduct.

NGO checklist for developing or revising codes of conduct (HAP, 2010)
A checklist for organisations developing or revising their code of conduct. This checklist includes critical questions regarding policies or statements to include in any code of conduct. Also available in French.

Case studies and good practice

People in Partnership: HR in NGO Relationships (People In Aid, 2004)
The purpose of the research presented in this report is to provide People In Aid and agencies in the sector with an overview of Northern Non-Governmental Organisations’ (NNGOs’) relationships with their local partners with respect to human resource management.

Performance Management of International NGOs (People In Aid, 2005)
This report discusses practices of performance management of international NGO’s.

Gender, Equity and Diversity Strategy (CARE, 2006)
CARE’s Gender Equity and Diversity strategy (GED) has had a transforming effect on the organisation’s culture and programming practice. Implemented since 1998, it has built awareness and understanding of diversity issues, and the capability to address them, both within the organisation and in the communities where CARE is working. GED is now central to CARE’s mission.

[ 56 ]
**Disaster Response and Resilience Learning Project (Save the Children in Myanmar, 2009)**

This case study highlights key points to keep in mind when conducting training courses and workshops for staff in an emergency setting. It also highlights the use of innovative learning approaches to increase awareness of concepts and principles related to humanitarian work.

**Thinking about impact – a study from Cyclone Sidr (participants handout) and accompanying facilitator notes (HAP, 2010)**

This real-life example can be used to generate discussions on quality and accountability (in particular with regards to impact) and other aspects of the HAP Standard.

**The role of accountability in reducing the risks of corruption and SEA (HAP, 2010)**

Developed in Haiti, this training resource is aimed at introducing the role of stronger accountability in reducing the risks of corruption and sexual exploitation and abuse. The role play and the cartoon were developed specifically for a post-emergency context, and are based on a series of well-known proverbs. The facilitator notes and role play are also available in French, as is the cartoon.

**Introducing Accountability Issues through Accountability Cartoons (Christian Aid, 2010)**

Developed to introduce humanitarian accountability to staff and partners for internal training sessions. Also available in Spanish.

**Building Resilient Managers in Humanitarian Organisations (People In Aid, 2011)**

People In Aid, through this report, undertakes an initial exploration of the personal skill strengths, and organisational structures and practices, which can promote resilience in managers working for international humanitarian organisations.

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**SELECTED RESOURCES FOR BENCHMARK 3: SHARING INFORMATION**

**General resources**

**Infoasaid**

The overall goal of the project is to improve the quality of humanitarian responses by maximising the amount of accurate and timely information available to both humanitarian responders and crisis-affected populations through enhanced information exchange between them in an emergency. Consult Infoasaid website for the excellent e-learning course, diagnostic tools and more.

**CDAC Network**

The CDAC Network’s purpose is to position two-way communication with affected populations at the heart of resilience-building, preparedness and response. This will enhance the effectiveness of aid, foster greater accountability and transparency, and improve the outcomes experienced by affected people. Importantly, it will enable stronger communications within and between affected groups and other stakeholders. Please consult the CDAC website for useful resources.

**Case studies and tools**

**What is a non-disclosure policy? (HAP, 2008)**

This document suggests how an organisation may want to include a non-disclosure policy to explicitly outline the information an agency will and will not make public.

**Top Tips on Beneficiary Reporting (MANGO, 2008)**

This tool is aimed at helping agencies take into consideration the what, how and why of financial transparency to complement information shared about operational activities.

**Public Information Board Notes (Oxfam GB, 2008)**

This document highlights the pros and cons and points to consider when using information boards, and lessons learnt on what makes a good bulletin board.

**Need to Know List (Oxfam GB, 2008)**

The “Need to Know List” guides staff when communicating about programmes to ensure availability and consistency of information.

**Leaflet: Sidr Special Bulletin (Muslim Aid, 2008)**

This one page hand-out is an example of an organisation’s information sharing with a range of stakeholders, including the affected communities.

**Leaflet for staff: Code of Conduct (Save the Children, 2008)**

Produced for field offices to inform staff about what Save the Children considers unacceptable behaviour for staff, as outlined in their Code of Conduct. A good example on how to share key messages related to the staff code of conduct.

**Leaflet: Complaints Mechanisms Procedure Uganda (Danish Refugee Council, 2008)**

An example of how an organisation can use leaflets with pictures to communicate information regarding their complaints and response mechanisms with community members.

**Open Information Policy (OIP) (Christian Aid, 2009)**

This document outlines Christian Aid’s commitment to transparency and the six areas of information that will be shared with supporters, partners and the people they work with. Useful for organisations developing information policies.
Creating Information Centres in Myanmar (Save the Children in Myanmar, 2009)
Outlines the experience of operating Information Centres in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. A useful case study on how to overcome contextual barriers and operational constraints and share information and receive concerns safely. Also available in French.

How to strengthen accountability when working through partners – case study from Zimbabwe (DanChurchAid, 2009)
Outlines practical examples of how HAP Principles can be used on projects while working with partners, including examples related to information sharing and complaints handling.

Information provision guidelines (World Vision Field Tool Haiti, 2010)
A one-page hand out on how to provide information to communities.

Guidance on sharing information to communities when working through partners (CAFOD, 2010)
This document provides step-by-step guidance for CAFOD partners on how to share information with the communities they support through development and/or humanitarian projects. Useful for organisations working with partners. Available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Accountability to Children: Communicating Core Codes through Puppets (World Vision, 2011)
Using innovative ways to share key information such as codes of conduct with children, this tool is from a suite of community accountability tools developed by field staff for the field.

Feedback Mechanisms in International Organisations (CDA Collaborative Learning Project, 2011)
This report highlights current practices in gathering feedback and includes a section on how to use feedback in organisational decision-making processes to increase effectiveness. It also outlines approaches to strengthen feedback mechanisms.

How to Share Information (Save the Children UK, 2012)
A checklist of the information needed to share with partners, children and communities. Provides a checklist for participants to see if they are sharing this information, and address any gaps an organisation might need to address. This is part of a wider HOW TO series developed by Save the Children.

How to Share Information on Project Budgets (Save the Children UK, 2012)
Practical guidance developed on how to share information on project budgets. This is part of a wider HOW TO series developed by Save the Children.

Describes in detail the principles behind the proposal for an Integrated Financial Accountability Framework (IFAF), and the main benefits of IFAF for actors in humanitarian aid. The paper also provides examples of reporting templates and hypothetical test cases. INTOSAI developed a specific template for financial reporting for people they seek to assist and other stakeholders in relation to requirement 3.2.3 of the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management.

ACT Alliance Public Information Disclosure Policy (ACT Alliance, 2012)
A key element of transparency and accountability is addressing the legitimate information needs of your stakeholders. This is a good example of a public information disclosure policy.

SELECTED RESOURCES FOR BENCHMARK 4: PARTICIPATION

Practice Standards in Child Participation (Save the Children UK, 2005)
This publication presents a set of practice standards developed by Save the Children on the basis of its experience in children’s participation in countries across the world.

Community Activity Logs (Oxfam GB, based on a tool developed by Concern Worldwide, 2008)
This has been developed to encourage active participation, and enable communities to follow-up on actions promised by visitors.

Participation in Shelter Project - from design to implementation and monitoring (Muslim Aid Bangladesh, 2008)
A good case study which captures an approach used to engage beneficiaries in the design and implementation process, as part of Muslim Aid's Shelter project following Cyclone Sidr. It can be used to discuss participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups, and demonstrates how to allocate resources to the community and to increase their ownership and empowerment.

Participation Is a Virtue That Must Be Cultivated (Save the Children Sweden, 2008)
This is a comprehensive analysis of the methods and materials used by Save the Children to support children's participation. It looks specifically at the concepts, the promotion, key strategies and approaches, and what can be improved.

A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and
Public Complaints Policy (Oxfam, 2008)
This policy statement provides a single source of information on Oxfam GB's complaints policy and procedures. Receiving feedback and responding to complaints from stakeholders is an important part of improving one's accountability. Ensuring that stakeholders can hold an organisation to account will improve the quality of work in all areas of activity.

Implementing Oxfam Public Complaints Policy in the International Division Guidelines (Oxfam, 2008)
Ensuring that people living in poverty can hold an organisation to account improves the quality of programmes and brings greater impact. These guidelines outline how Oxfam's public complaints policy is implemented in the International Division.

Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008 (Danish Refugee Council, 2008)
This handbook focuses on how to establish complaint mechanisms in humanitarian projects. Aimed at practitioners and managers, it includes a step-by-step guide, as well as practical tools and exercises to help staff work through the process of designing a tailored complaints and response mechanism.

Building Safer Organisations Guidelines (HAP, 2008)
These guidelines are aimed at assisting trained investigators and managers in implementing good investigation practices in the field. The Guidelines build on the draft Model Complaints and Investigation Procedure and Guidance of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and take organisations from the first step of designing accessible complaints mechanisms to the final step of writing the investigation reports. This is a specialised handbook and should be used by people having prior knowledge of complaints handling.

Complaint and Response Mechanisms: A Resource Guide (World Vision Food Programme)

Management Group, 2009
This Guide contains a collection of resources for establishing and implementing a formal complaints and response mechanism, with a focus on community help desks and suggestion boxes, as part of World Vision's food distribution in a broad range of contexts.

Steps in Complaints Handling (World Vision, 2010)
One page document which highlights key points for staff with regards to the handling of complaints in emergency settings.

This manual has been developed and tested in the field. Developing a manual from scratch takes a lot of time, money and effort. Because of this, World Vision has shared the manual in Word format, where it can be adapted to an organisation's needs.

Case-studies and good practice
Complaints Handling Mechanism in Pakistan Earthquake Response Programme (Medair, 2006)
Details how Medair established a simple complaints procedure in which a daily "complaints hour" was allocated to receive complaints in person, which led to the identification and inclusion of 290 wrongly excluded families. Also translated into French.

Myanmar: Creating Information Centres (Save the Children in Myanmar, 2009)
A case study on how to provide information and allow community members to share questions, complaints and suggestions with staff. Also translated into French.

Timor-Leste: Establishing a Complaints and Response Mechanism (CARE International, 2009)
In 2008 CARE established a pilot CRM to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse in their partner communities. The goal of the
This document outlines 10
steps to setting up a complaints
and response mechanism. This
document is part of a wider series
of HOW TO guides developed by
Save the Children.

Working with partners
CRM Questionnaire for
Understanding Existing,
Practice Among Partners
in Handling Complaints
(Developed by HAP for Save
the Children, 2008)
This questionnaire was designed to
strengthen partner complaints
handling capacity by understanding
current practice. It can be adapted
and used by other organisations
looking to improve complaints
handling by partners.

From a Partners Perspective
(Christian Aid, 2009)
This case study outlines how
a partner organisation has
implemented HAP Principles in its
work and moved towards improved
accountability. It also highlights
how this has resulted in greater
benefits for the community and
organisation.

Senegal: Case Study into
Complaints Handling
(OFADEC, 2009)
In May 2008, OFADEC received
a complaint in relation to their
programme for scholarship
funding to refugee students. The
programme is implemented by
OFADEC and funded by UNHCR
and the German government. This
case study highlights OFADEC’s
handling of the complaint,
including the outcome and the
lessons learned.

A report in which children affected
by the programme have evaluated
its impact. A good example of
how all demographics among
affected communities can
participate in monitoring and
evaluation processes.

Real-time Evaluations of
Humanitarian Action
(ALNAP, 2009)
This pilot guide is intended to help
both evaluation managers and
team leaders in commissioning,
overseeing and conducting real-
time evaluations of humanitarian
operational responses. It’s
intended to be a flexible resource
that can be adapted to a variety
of contexts.

Quality Standards for
Development Evaluation
(Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and
Development, 2010)
The Network on Development
Evaluation, a subsidiary body
of the Development Assistance
Committee (DAC) at the OECD,
has developed the Quality
Standards for Development
Evaluation, which identifies the
key pillars needed for a quality
development evaluation process
and product. They are intended
for use by evaluation managers
and practitioners.

Sungi Cash for Choice –
Process Evaluation
(Sungi, 2011)
Gives concrete examples of how
affected communities can be
involved in the monitoring and
evaluation processes. Sungi’s
Humanitarian Quality Management
Committees (HQMCs) and
Community Accountability
Committees (CACs) contributed
to the monitoring and evaluation
of its programmes in the flood-
affected areas of Pakistan.

Harnessing the Power of
Evaluation in Humanitarian
Action (ALNAP, 2011)
This guidance focuses on
strengthening institutional
understanding, along with
capacities and processes, in order
to improve the use of evaluations
in humanitarian action.
Email the HAP Secretariat (secretariat@hapinternational.org) if you:
- cannot access the document you need
- did not find what you are looking for in this Guide
- have any questions and clarifications
- want to provide feedback on the Guide
- want to share examples and case studies of good practice from your organisation
The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International is a multi-agency initiative working to improve the accountability of humanitarian action to people affected by crises. Members of HAP are committed to meeting the highest standards of accountability and quality management.

The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management was developed through an extensive process of reviewing the 2007 edition. Over 1,900 crisis-affected people, aid workers and donor representatives contributed to this review, bringing to the process authentic experiences from the perspective of different groups. The Standard helps organisations that assist or act on behalf of people affected by or prone to disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises to design, implement, assess, improve and recognise accountable programmes. It represents broad consensus on what matters most when organisations engage in humanitarian action.

This Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management puts the 2010 HAP Standard into context, identifies challenges and solutions for organisations looking to instil accountability in their management systems, and provides the user with countless resources and case studies from HAP, its members and other organisations.