

Working with Quality and Accountability Initiatives

What?

ECB has made concerted efforts at an early stage to work with other quality and accountability initiatives. These bilateral efforts have strengthened relationships, provided mutual guidance and critique, and led to some joint work.

Why?

Improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action is a task that cannot be accomplished by any one initiative.

10.1 Who are the quality and accountability initiatives?

The critical findings of the Rwanda joint evaluation in 1994 led to the creation of ALNAP and Sphere in 1997 and the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project in 1998 (later to become HAP). This evaluation challenged humanitarian actors to do better quality emergency response work.



The more the merrier...

Most of the ECB agencies are also involved in other quality and accountability initiatives.

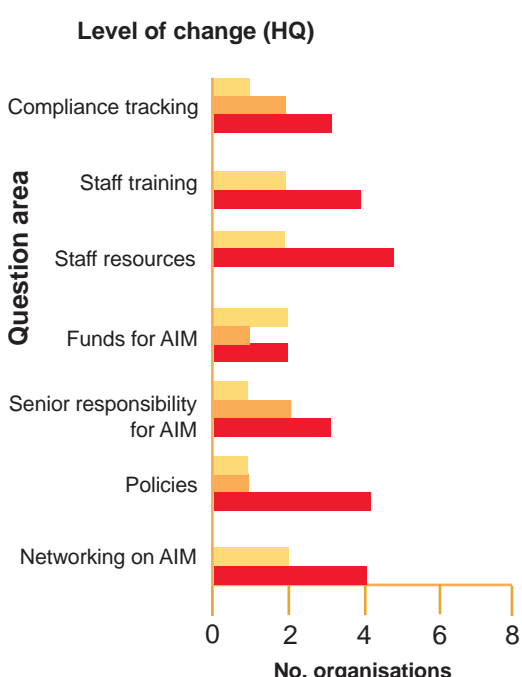
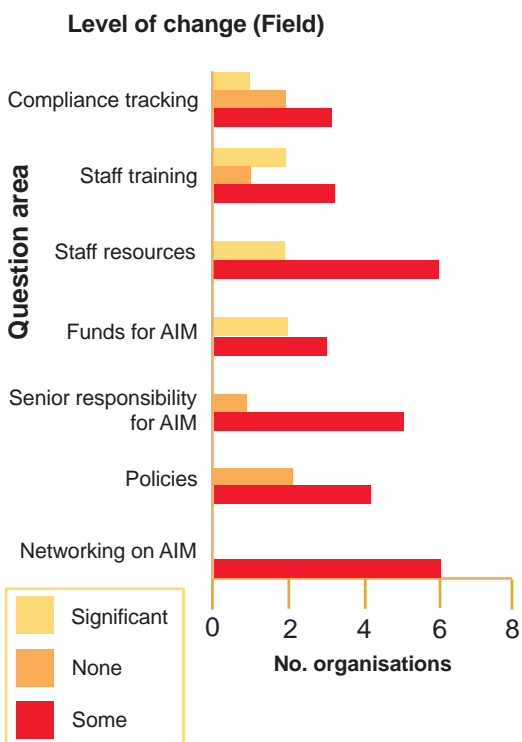
- IWG agencies participate and have informed the development of these quality and accountability initiatives.
- Most IWG agencies are members of ALNAP and a World Vision staff member chairs ALNAP.
- CARE, OXFAM, Save-UK and World Vision are members of HAP and a CARE staff person chairs HAP.
- All IWG agencies carry out Sphere trainings and CARE and World Vision are members of its board.

With more initiatives there is more complexity. But collaborative work means we all make faster progress to becoming more accountability agencies that can implement high quality work and track its results. More and more, agencies are recognizing the need to build professional communities that promote good practice and critique of each other's work.

10.2 Why do we believe in working with them?

Reason 1 – Combined influence

Since the start of the ECB project, IWG agencies have seen improvements in quality and accountability that can be attributed to the combined influence of several initiatives.



CARE: at field level significant change was evident where Q&A networks such as HAP, Sphere, the Listening project and ECB2 were active.

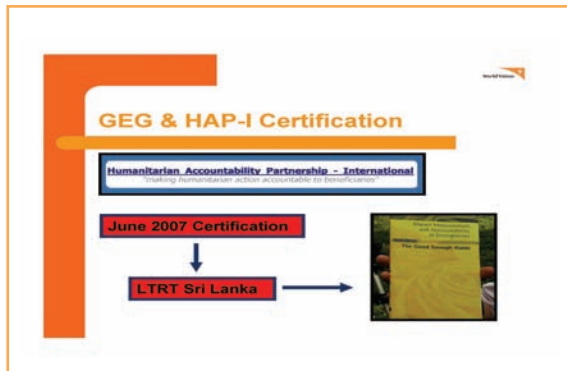
Catholic Relief Services: CRS's involvement in Quality and Accountability Networks has both widened and deepened. Prior to ECB, CRS' primary involvement was with Sphere. Since 2005, however CRS has expanded its involvement with other Q&A networks notably People in Aid (joined in 2005) and ALNAP (joined in 2006) and is now accessing HAP membership.

Mercy Corps: Through the ECB there is a greater awareness and engagement with the range of networks involved in quality and accountability including People in Aid, ALNAP, the Listening Project and the Clinton NGO Impact Initiative. In March 2007 an initial accountability review will be done at HQ and field level that uses a framework that is based on HAP, Sphere and other accountability initiatives.

SAVE-US is active in ALNAP and is considering HAP membership.

World Vision: World Vision remained active in all the Quality and Accountability Initiatives. At HQ and regional levels there is growing interest in both quality and accountability. At field level we have begun to trial and test the HAP standard (Pakistan, Darfur and Sri Lanka) and the Good Enough Guide.

Here is one example of this complementarity:
Complaints Systems: One agency draws on ECB and HAP to fulfill its goals



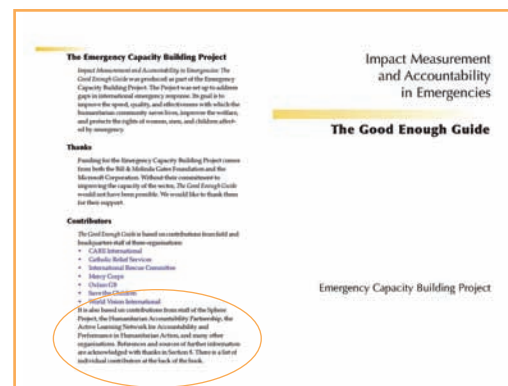
In the two years following the 2004 tsunami, World Vision has pioneered a unique approach to accountability in Sri Lanka. Joshua Pepall, Stakeholder Capacity Building Advisor, and a member of World Vision's Humanitarian Accountability Team (HAT), has developed several creative strategies to help support field staff in their efforts to communicate with and engage communities. The efforts of the Humanitarian Accountability Team have led World Vision Sri Lanka to apply for HAP certification and have drawn on tools like the ECB2's Good Enough Guide to fulfill HAP's Benchmarks. World Vision Sri Lanka is using the 'ECB Good Enough Guide Tool 12' to fulfill this:

Benchmark 5:
The agency shall establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies.

Reason 2 – Mutual Benefit

The ECB2 initiative has greatly benefited from the contributions and counsel of other quality and accountability initiatives. Starting from initiative II's first meeting in September 2005, Sphere, HAP and ALNAP representatives have attended meetings and shared their views on AIM practice. They have commented and inputted into the development of each version of the Good Enough Guide with HAP also on its editorial board. ECB has also participated in and supported the events of other quality and accountability initiatives.

Contributions to the Good Enough Guide



Sphere video

In Guatemala, ECB2 standing team members visited the field to speak to disaster-affected communities being served by Oxfam and CARE. Some of their reflections and conversations with community members were recorded by the Sphere project in a video produced to bring to light practical application of the Sphere humanitarian charter and standards.

Jointly-Defined Recommendations

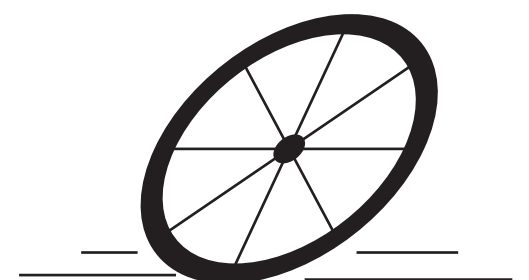
At a conference in December 2006, staff from various quality and accountability initiatives as well as from donor institutions, the U.N., and international and local NGOs jointly formed recommendations on accountability, impact measurement, coordination and collaboration for the IWG agencies. We believe that the validity of these recommendations has been strengthened because they were formed from such a diversity of well-informed perspectives.

Recommendations for IWG Agencies

- Prioritize systematic listening to disaster-affected people as the key way to assess impact and develop staff competencies and methods to do so.
- Build a culture of accountability to meeting the needs of disaster affected populations as expressed by those populations, from the field all the way up to senior management, and provide resources accordingly.
- Undertake a formal process led by CEOs to consider practical steps for greater integration of existing quality and accountability initiatives and their standards.

Reason 3 – Avoiding Duplication

When we don't work collaboratively, we reinvent the wheel by repeating work that has already been done, creating confusion among the program staff that must apply the standards and tools of various initiatives.



Summary

Changing the way that the humanitarian sector manages the quality of its work and demonstrates accountability to beneficiaries must be a concerted effort involving several humanitarian initiatives.

