



Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Response: HQAI Approach

4 July 2019, BRAC Center Inn, Mohakhali, Dhaka, Bangladesh

1. Background and objectives of the Seminar

Every day, all over the world, countless people from all walks of life are moved to act in response to the humanitarian imperative - the desire to prevent and alleviate humanitarian suffering wherever it happens. HQAI as an independent and financially sustainable non-profit organization that provides humanitarian organizations with professional third-party quality assurance services grounded in feedback from vulnerable and at-risk people and communities. Through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data, influence the practice of organizations that work with vulnerable and at-risk people and communities. COAST Trust has a formal certification from HQAI. As HQAI's activities, imperativeness and process of getting certification is not clear and popular in Bangladesh. To inform about benefits of having certification of HQAI and to integrate the humanitarian standard of quality and accountability in Humanitarian response, COAST Trust arranged a seminar titled '**Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Response: HQAI Approach**' at the capital's BRAC Center Inn on 4th July, 2019. *Mr. Pierre Hauselmann, the Executive Director of HQAI, national and international NGOs representatives were*

present there and they emphasized ensuring the quality and accountability in humanitarian response programs. The panelists and representatives from different organizations emphasized on taking emergency programs and instantly to ensure the dignity, rights and security of the people affected by crisis. As it takes in a hurry, there could be mistakes or negative impact to the people. If so, then the people affected by crisis could put at more risk or be affected. So, it is important to ensure quality and accountability in humanitarian response programs.

2. Objectives

- I. To know and integrate the Humanitarian Standard of quality and accountability in Humanitarian Response.
- II. To share the issues of Quality and Accountability with Mr. Pierre Hauselmann, the Executive Director of HQAI.
- III. To interact with each other and discuss primary ideas on how to multiply these standards in humanitarian response

IV. 3. Detail Discussions



Mr. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury,
the Executive Director of COAST Trust and also the moderator of the seminar;

He expressed his sincere gratitude to the guests and the participants for attending the seminar. He shortly brief the procedures of getting certification of HQAI and elaborated the present condition of certification process of COAST Trust. He mentioned that HQAI play a very vital role for ensuring humanitarian standard and accountability in humanitarian response. "The process of getting Certification from HQAI is rigorous but have a positive impact. We applied for certification and subsidy ago and Thank You HQAI for accepting our application. They are very much professional and audited our field and central activities, reviewed our documents and tested in different fields whether we are on right track or wrong. Finally we got certificate from HQAI." Mr. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury added. He further stated that COAST was suspended from certification after the recent HQAI's six months maintenance audit. Through hard work and revised some of our procedures and policies according to the demand of the HQAI, finally a few days ago our certificate was reinstated." Then he pointed out some keys benefits of HQAI certificate and moderated the whole session very effectively and successfully.



Mr. Iqbal Uddin, *Assistant Director, COAST Trust;*

Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) has 9 commitments which are very crucial for organizational development. The experience of COAST in certification process is consisting the Initial audit, Year-1 maintenance audit, Year-2 Mid-term audit, Year 3 maintenance audit and Year-4 rectification audit. The overall experience of in certification process have a positive impact indeed. We have developed and prepared policies and ensuring practices, e.g. CRM system, partnership for multiplication of standards, certification with own ability and a 3rd party verification system. We faced some challenges in certification process:

comprehensive auditing with verification process, managing staff, beneficiary and stakeholders. Although the certification process very challenging, but it is very helpful for upholding organizational standard and accountability.



Mr. Pierre Hauselmann, *the Executive Director of HQAI;*

HQAI's objective is to improve the Quality and Accountability of organizations working with people in need through the provision and promotion of meaningful and adapted independent quality assurance. CHS has a 9 set of commitments. We, the humanitarian practitioners can use these as standards. HQAI has up to 90% subsidy option for conducting audit or small organizations can jointly apply for certification which will reduce the audit cost. HQAI offers three core services: **benchmarking, independent verification and certification.** They build on similar principles, processes and tools which makes them compatible one with another. He added that right now 37 NGOs from worldwide are taking HQAI services.



Mr. Khodadat Hossain Sarkar,
Advisor-Resilience, NIRAPAD;

The certification process of HQAI is very much rigorous especially many organizations of Bangladesh are not fully aware about the certification. And they even do not know what the benefits of the certification are. Many organization especially the local organization don't care about the humanitarian standard, quality and response. On the other hand donors also have lack of comprehensive monitoring system. So, comprehensive monitoring system should be ensured and Govt. should focus on Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).



Sajid Raihan, *Country Manager, Start Fund Bangladesh;*

On start Fund Bangladesh, we were experiencing the similar kinds of experiences while we are selecting the local NGOs for the Start Fund Membership. It was a rigorous process

and everybody appreciated it. But there was frustration in terms of the NGOs, every times every donor, every INGO has to go through the same process. The concern having common passport system or a certification system. It needs to contextualize the process for country context, as every country has different situation, demand and governance system. Besides it's the high time for thinking that how HQAI will act in terms of educating the quality of evidence. So, there need advocacy with the donors have a common certification system.



Rafiqul Alam, Executive Director, Dip Unnayan Sangtha (DUS) ;

The Local NGOs are not have affordability to maintain the quality and standard as they are working in high risks and vulnerable areas. Even they get support from the outside, there are lots of barriers fulfilling the standards and demands of donors. The donors are not interest to provide fund to the local NGOs. Moreover we have observed competition of getting fund among the local and international NGOs. Therefore, local NGOs should be given priority on capacity development and ensuring the standard.



Gowhar Nayem Warha, Disaster Forum, Bangladesh;

We should consider the local environment while conducting the audit. HQAI needs some practical auditing. Donors organizations or international organization maintaining double standard where the local NGOs have low management cost. So, it will be very difficult for the local NGOs to maintain the standard with a limited fund and management cost. NGO affairs bureau and its assigned audit firm conduct only financial auditing where there should be CHS standard auditing. So, we need national system where these NGOs can improve their standard. There academic need of documenting experiences for the betterment of the situation.



Mr. Kazi Shahidur Rahman, Humanitarian Specialist Adviser, UNRC;

He pointed out three points consisting of legal system, accountability and quality as well as coordination. In the context of Bangladesh the legal system is too complicated. For example, in Bangladesh there are Disaster Management Act which is not clear. Almost all local NGOs face the challenges and complication imposed by NGO Bureau. So, there need a collaboration between Govt. and CSO/NGOs to support one another. Accountability, quality and coordination is very important. Especially coordination between local and International NGOs are must for sustainable development.



Suman Islam, Humanitarian Leadership Community;

We should concentrate on our commitment and values rather than collecting donor fund.



Mr. Dr. M. Ehsanur Rahman, Executive Director, Dhaka Ahsania Mission;

Thank you HQAI and COAST Trust for the initiatives. In the case of Humanitarian Standard, we follow the CHS. NAHAB is always promoting localization. We have two major scenario in the context of Bangladesh. One is frequent natural disaster and Bangladesh is the champion on managing natural disaster. Another phenomena is Rohingya Crisis. We all now concentrating Rohingya issue but we need to concentrate on other issues too. We need to contextualize the standard of the context where we are working. We have to clarify the issue of accountability whether we are trying to regulatory body or financial body. The importance of certification need to be addressed and the certification payment must be affordable for the local NGOs.



Mr. Seakeb Nabi, Country Director, Christian Aid;

Humanitarian response is a complex system. We need partnership and experience personnel. It is very much frustrating that the Rohingya Response project are very short time basis. In some cases, we find that the project duration is sometimes only 15-30 days. Therefore it is quite impossible to ensure the quality within this short time. That's why we need an effective mechanism. HQAI certification process is too much complicated, it needs to be much more flexible. Besides keeping the certificate live is even more challenging through following all the procedures given by HQAI. Certification fees should be considered according to the income of the organization. HQAI needs to advocacy with donors for resource mobilization. They also need to localize the certification process and the mechanism should be recognized by the Govt. of Bangladesh.



Mr. AKM Musa, Country Director, CONCERN Worldwide, Bangladesh;

The process of being certified and continue the certification of HQAI must be flexible and local organization demand and affordability oriented. Fund rising mechanism need to be addressed especially for the local small NGOs. Collective advocacy is needed to pressure the Govt. and other related stakeholders. It will be very helpful for organizations for their betterment. Whereas self - assessment system can be a good option to run the in built policies and procedures vibrant within the organization.



Mr. K.A.M. Murshed, Director, BRAC;

We should consider the certification process as the means of efficiency, capacity building and achieving organizational mission. There should not have any category in certification process. The HQAI certification will be more effective and helpful if it meets the demands and interest of the organizations.



Md. Harun-Or-Rashid, Additional Secretary, Department of Disaster Management;

It seems the audit subscription fee for getting HQAI certification is too high for local and small NGOs. It should be reduced so that more NGOs can come together under the umbrella of HQAI. HQAI plays a very important role for establish accountability and quality ensuring of the organizations. Our Govt. is very much concentrated and helpful for ensuring sustainable organizational development and always ready for extending helping hands for maintaining quality and accountability in Humanitarian response.

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