

2018 in focus

hqyai

HUMANITARIAN QUALITY
ASSURANCE INITIATIVE

TAKING THEIR VOICES INTO ACCOUNT

HQAI PROVIDES HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS WITH THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICES GROUNDED IN FEEDBACK FROM VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND AT-RISK COMMUNITIES.



Country programme in Ethiopia:
women focal group meets the auditors



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CONTRIBUTING TO THE GRAND BARGAIN

“We have to do much more far better” states the preamble of the Grand Bargain document adopted by major donors and humanitarian agencies following the May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. HQAI’s raison d’être and ambition is to assist humanitarian and development actors in the pursuit of this goal by offering independent quality assurance services to organisations working with vulnerable communities throughout the world.

One of the distinctive features of HQAI’s certification and verification services is to include field visits, which enable the audit reports to give a strong voice to affected people. This represents one of HQAI’s contributions to a Grand Bargain’s commitment, namely to “include people receiving aid in decisions which affect their lives.”

By making, through its Subsidy Fund, its services financially accessible to national organisations in countries affected by crises or disasters, HQAI may also contribute to facilitating these organisations’ direct access to humanitarian funding, another Grand Bargain commitment to “improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs.”

A challenge we faced in 2018, was the slower than expected growth of the demand for our quality assurance services. We are well aware that these services may represent for our audited partners a significant investment of both human and financial resources and that their decision to use our services depends, in part at least, on the overall benefits of certification

FOREWORD

or verification for the organisation in its relations with donors. I am confident that the concern for greater quality is still very much present among all stakeholders and that the interest for quality assurance will rapidly expand.

I express my deep gratitude to the governments of Denmark, Germany and Switzerland both for their financial support to HQAI and for the quality of the dialogue we have developed with them. I also extend my appreciation for the support we received from other donors and strategic partners.

Moreover, I convey my heartfelt thanks to all my HQAI colleagues for their steadfast commitment to the mission of our institution: to the secretariat and our auditors led by Pierre Hauselmann, to the members of HQAI who, on the Board of Directors and other bodies of our association contribute to HQAI's progress by very generously sharing their experience and expertise.

Prof Jacques FORSTER
President



HQAI HAS REACHED THE ADULT STAGE

A fairy tale serves as a golden thread to this report. The tale leads the reader through the achievements of HQAI since its inception three years ago. This approach should however not lead to believe that HQAI is an infant. On the contrary, we can safely state that in 2018 HQAI confirmed solid adulthood. Obviously the coming of age of an organisation does not come without challenges – that are reported in this document – but several aspects of our work and the related external context demonstrate HQAI's maturity:

The whole discussion on safeguarding put HQAI on the front line and demonstrated that HQAI's third-party quality assurance renders a service to the sector – for safeguarding and beyond. The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) showed to be an effective and flexible framework for establishing and measuring the performance of management systems that minimise risks of abuse and take corrective measures if abuses do happen. Discussions around safeguarding led HQAI and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to develop a partnership that will unfold in 2019.

As the first organisations that have used HQAI's services underwent the second or third audit in their certification cycle, it became evident that getting certified is one thing, keeping certification is another one. Improvements to correct weaknesses need to happen timely to maintain a certificate. While HQAI is doing all it can to support its audited partners throughout

and beyond the auditing process, it is also an independent organisation that will withdraw a certificate when necessary. Fortunately, no certificate had to be withdrawn in 2018, but several were suspended.

The robustness of HQAI's quality assurance services has been confirmed by its accreditation in December 2018 as a certification body under ISO/IEC 17065:2012 standards. This attests that HQAI operates its certification in conformity with high professional standards, in application of the Verification Scheme of the CHS Alliance. Accreditation is the certification of the certifying body. By being audited ourselves, we practice what we preach.

Being adult does not mean we cannot progress. 2018 was a year of important upgrades to our system, and continuous improvement remains in our focus for the years to come.

I am looking forward to that.

Pierre HAUSELMANN
Executive Director





Bangladesh: auditors meet with a school teacher

SOMETHING NEW ON THE HORIZON



Once upon a time, an initiative came to life. An NGO that would measure how well organisations working with people in need apply a standard. An NGO that would travel the world and speak to those most affected to understand how *they* perceive the organisation, its services, staff conduct and measures for participation and complaint. An NGO that would take organisations by the hand and show them where to improve.

Innovation

The services the initiative offered were common practice in other areas but new in the aid sector. Hence the organisation was considered a strange object, sometimes even relegated to the status of an unnecessary gadget.

But the initiative continued its work with all its heart. People in humanitarian and development contexts are vulnerable and at risk. "Continuously improving the quality and accountability of the services they receive is not only a worthwhile mission, it is crucial from a human and ethical point of view," said the leaders of the initiative.



(continued on page 8)

CHAPTER ONE: WE ARE

WE MEASURE.

A NEW SERVICE TO THE SECTOR.

Over the last decade and more specifically since 2014 the humanitarian sector at large has invested in the development of the CHS and the independent quality assurance against this standard. This process triggered the establishment of **HQAI IN 2015 AS A NON-PROFIT NGO** under Swiss law.

Organisations that work with people in need have to be accountable to the people they serve, their donors, the public and other interested parties. Concerned by the quality and accountability of their services, many have decided to apply the CHS. HQAI provides these organisations with **THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE** services grounded in feedback from vulnerable and at-risk people and communities. In other words: HQAI verifies that organisations work according to defined standards from the head office to the field. Professional and independent, HQAI audits involve document reviews, interviews with staff and partners, direct observation at selected project sites and the direct input of communities receiving assistance as well as from other stakeholders.

Its systemic approach to quality and accountability makes HQAI a **TIMELY INNOVATION** in the humanitarian and development sector:

- HQAI's quality assurance methods are centred on the audit of management systems and their performance. Processes are tracked all the way from the head office to the field and then reported back to the organisation's management;
- The systemic approach provides a high level of assurance that the findings of the audit are applicable to the whole of the organisation;
- Audits are systematically informed by feedback from affected populations which is collected during field visits;
- HQAI has integrated corrective action and innovation into its operating model, learning from experience and feedback from stakeholders.

HQAI makes sure that the services it provides remain relevant and accessible to the diverse organisations and institutions involved. Endorsing the **LOCALISATION AGENDA**, HQAI has established two mechanisms to facilitate access to its audit services: a subsidy fund that can cover up to 90% of the cost of an audit, and a group scheme, which enables several small organisations to join in an audit and benefit from economies of scale.

HQAI lives and exists through its 16 members, 6 directors, 5 members of the Advisory and Complaints Board, 3 members of the Subsidy Fund Management Committee, 5 secretariat staff and 21 registered auditors. To read their bios and see their smiles, please check our website:

» www.hqai.org/structure



Philippe BESSON

Head, Multilateral Division, Swiss Agency for
Development and Cooperation, SDC

HQAI is a principled institution offering third-party assessments that are evidence-based, rigorous, and centred on the CHS.

THE CHS AND HQAI HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO EMPOWER THE WHOLE ECO-SYSTEM, including humanitarian aid and development actors."

October 2018

MEGATRENDS

THE MEANING OF PARTNERSHIP

Under the cover of localisation still happens a lot of sub-contracting. Local responders are not considered as equal partners but “execute” the programmes of bigger – often international – NGOs without proper fora to share their own expertise. HQAI audits show that the way partnerships are handled directly influence on the delivery of CHS commitments on the field.

INCREASING VISIBILITY OF THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE IN 2018

Reports alleging inadequate reporting and handling of sexual misconduct by humanitarian NGO staff during the 2010-11 Haiti earthquake response were released in February 2018. Initial media coverage was followed by subsequent revelations across the aid sector regarding sexual misconduct. In the aftermath of these events, third-party quality assurance gained increased visibility

THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE: STILL FULL OF MYSTERIES.

HQAI’s experience reveals a lack of understanding of the requirements related to quality assurance in the sector, and specifically related to certification: During an assessment, auditors might find non-conformities in the application of the standard. These lead to corrective action requests (CARs) that need to be closed (corrected) by the organisation within given timeframes through short- and long-term actions to ensure the

issues identified by the audit are corrected and will not reappear. This is a requirement, not a “desirable output” and time is crucial: CARs that are not addressed within the specified timeframe can have serious consequences for the maintenance of the certificate.

HQAI works hard on informing, training and reminding audited partners and to-become partners on such specificities of third-party quality assurance.

GROWING RECOGNITION FOR THE CHS

The uptake of the CHS since its creation in 2014 is steadily on the rise. Humanitarian and development actors increasingly refer to the CHS in their strategies and policies. “The CHS has been a major source of inspiration for the ICRC’s approach to ensuring accountability for affected people. (...) While the actions of field staff ultimately ensure accountability, these need to be underpinned by efficient, effective and transparent systems and processes. The ICRC has



The logo for the Core Humanitarian Standard. It features the words "Core Humanitarian" in a red, sans-serif font, with "STANDARD" below it in a larger, bold, dark grey, sans-serif font. The text is centered on a white background.

designed these systems and processes to be verifiable, allowing for strengths and weaknesses to be identified and for progress to be assessed,” says Yves DACCORD, Director-general at ICRC (Humanitarian Accountability Report, 2018).

At DFID’s safeguarding summit in October 2018, 22 countries have committed to “demonstrate adherence to (...) the CHS and (...) look to review and strengthen measures for verification of that adherence (...).”

and HQAI is now considered one key instrument to achieve the sector's commitments to safeguarding, do no harm and accountability.

An increasing number of governments and donors start to refer to, recognise or require HQAI audits in their due diligence processes, which should lead to a significant growth of the demand for HQAI's services in 2020 and beyond.



DON'T LET YOUR FOCAL POINT ALONE

"Yes I do" is a strong engagement. "Yes I do CHS" and - even more so - "Yes I do certification against the CHS" concern the whole of an organisation and require an integrated approach. A high level of engagement of the governance and senior management is fundamental to carry out improvements at the right level and ensure sustainable changes.

As part of its commitment to share knowledge and expertise with the sector, HQAI is embedding topics like integrated engagement in its trainings on quality assurance, providing useful insights for organisations on how to embed changes through adequate governance and internal quality control frameworks. With the buy-in from senior management, *bien sûr!*

TOWARDS PARTICIPATION

A recent survey by ALNAP analysts (The State of the Humanitarian System 2018) reported that only 36% of humanitarian aid recipients were able to give opinions on programmes, make complaints, or suggest changes to aid agencies.

"It's low, but a jump from only 19% in 2015," says IRIN Senior Editor Ben Parker in his article "Six aid policy priorities to watch in 2019."

An increasing uptake of the CHS and related third-party quality assurance will boost participation and effective complaint mechanisms.



Country programme in Bangladesh: women appreciate the opportunity to speak to the auditor



(continued from page 4)

GROWING IMPACT



Three years down the road the NGO is still actively measuring the performance of aid organisations around the globe, from head offices to country programmes. People are reassured by the impact of its services, its professionalism and flexibility, but also by the teeth it has.

And the output it produces creates trust and attracts attention from more and more institutions, including donors and governments. Doing the right things, doing them together and doing them well makes the entire sector stronger.

Mirror mirror on the wall

The organisation's "H" stands for humanitarian, but also for humble and human. More and more stakeholders seize the opportunity to work in partnership with the initiative and improve together. "You gave us a mirror to see ourselves," said the focal point of an audited organisation.

Independent quality assurance still faces some questions in the sector, but when — during an audit interview — a female employee reports that conditions have significantly improved for women since, and thanks to, the last audit, a wave of encouragement and satisfaction makes our auditors' faces beam.



(continued on page 14)

CHAPTER TWO: OUR IMPACT

PROFESSIONAL THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE BENEFITS VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS, THE AUDITED ORGANISATIONS, DONORS AND THE ENTIRE SECTOR.

HQAI provides independent and objective assessments of where organisations stand in the application of the CHS. The audits reach from the top level management systems to their application at project sites. A sample of communities involved with the organisation, either directly or through partners, is visited on site and interviewed by HQAI auditors; their views are key elements in assessing the extent to which the CHS is *de facto* applied. Combined with information from other stakeholders this input is fed back at the system level of the organisation, forming a continuous **LOOP OF DATA** informing the whole of the organisation.

This process gives a strong **VOICE** to affected people. Their views, de-identified, are the ultimate information on whether the quality and accountability mechanisms of the audited organisation effectively work. The audit report, that lands on the desk of the CEO creates thus a bridge that brings the voice of people to the ears of top management of the organisation.

For audited organisations, third-party quality assurance helps identify critical action points and focus resources where they are most efficient for improvement. Within the certification scheme, weaknesses that are not corrected in an agreed timeframe lead to the suspension and possibly the withdrawal of the certificate. This creates a strong incentive to indeed address deficiencies in the delivery of quality and accountable assistance to populations.

Vulnerable people and communities hence benefit from **GROWING ACCOUNTABILITY** and improved quality of the services they receive. In parallel, audited organisations can credibly demonstrate their performance to vulnerable communities, donors and other stakeholders. The **TRUST** that is built in this process can improve and facilitate donor-recipient relations. More so if due diligence requirements, including those related to safeguarding, are aligned with the CHS. Certification is considered the most robust approach to third-party quality assurance to generate a

reliable, objective assessment of the extent to which a standard is applied. Thousands of organisations across sectors use the process to credibly demonstrate compliance with standards and as a tool for learning and continuous improvement.

In an ideal world, third-party quality assurance, particularly certification, would create efficient links in the chain of quality and accountability that goes from donors to fragile populations. This is still not the reality, but HQAI works to promote this concept.

WE WALK THE EXTRA MILE

HQAI is driven by its mission and considers organisations and donors as partners with whom we want to reach a common goal: improve the delivery of assistance to affected populations. We are not "in-out" auditors, but we support our audited partners throughout the audit cycle. From the beginning of the process a competent and dedicated team at HQAI's head office advises the audited organisation on audit schemes and



Marta VALDES GARCIA
Deputy Humanitarian Director,
Oxfam International

*HQAI's **METHODOLOGY** facilitates a systematic review of policies and practices (...) and the auditors showed great **FLEXIBILITY** to react on and adapt to a changing context.*

The certificate is helping Oxfam to re-build relationships and trust.

October 2018

requirements. They continually liaise between focal points and auditors, and HQAI audit teams have a reputation of being flexible - within the boundaries of the professional rules of auditing, as they are identified in ISO standards. After the audit HQAI continues to share learnings, best practice and trends with its network of partners (feedback sessions, learning events) with an objective of continuous collective learning.

PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL OF HQAI

The year 2018 was challenging. It was marked amongst other by the safeguarding scandals that broke up at the beginning of the year and concerned most of the sector. While it was immediately obvious that a rigorous application of the CHS can help in designing functioning safeguarding mechanisms — and therefore HQAI third-party auditing against the CHS is a potentially useful tool to check their implementation — it was only towards the end of the year that a majority of donors jointly announced that they would rely on the the CHS (and another standard) to ensure their partners have the right tools in place. The subsequent *wait and see* attitude of the sector, which lasted for most of the year, had an impact on the demand for HQAI services, which did not grow as fast as we had projected. Notwithstanding, HQAI's **VISIBILITY** and maturity increased significantly over the year. We believe that 2019 will see an increased recognition of our audits as part of donors' due diligence requirements, which in turn should lead to a more rapid growth of the user base of our services.

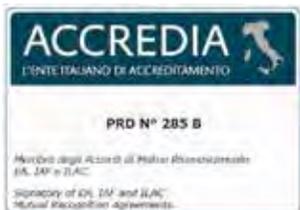
HQAI is a young organisation. Three years down the avenue we identified not only that the uptake for HQAI's services is steady but slower than expected, but also that the resources needed to operate audits are more important than anticipated. After a careful analysis, members and donors judged our **BUSINESS MODEL** realistic. Our historical donors (Denmark, Germany and Switzerland) renewed their support and a new donor (United Kingdom) joined the pool of our financial partners for 2019. However we have had to review our projections, including the threshold for financial sufficiency. This should be reached in 2023, with about 220 organisations using our services. We expected previously that breakeven would be reached in 2021 with 200 organisations within the system.

IN SHORT

ACCREDITATION

The quality control of HQAI's work is ensured through several mechanisms, incl. post-audit satisfaction surveys, witnessing of a sample of audits by HQAI qualified staff, reporting to the Board of Directors by the secretariat, and the **ACCREDITATION OF HQAI UNDER ISO STANDARDS**.

Accreditation is the "certification of the certifying body" by an official accreditation body, usually a government agency. This process ensures that HQAI complies with ISO relevant standards relating to professionalism, independence, transparency and management of conflicts of interest. HQAI received accreditation against ISO/IEC 17065:2012 in December 2018. The accreditation covers HQAI-operated certifications against the CHS. HQAI operates within the CHS Alliance Verification Scheme.



> 70% OF HQAI AUDITED PARTNERS CHOOSE

CERTIFICATION
THE MOST TRUSTED
THIRD-PARTY QUALITY
ASSURANCE SCHEME.

WHO BENEFITS?

- > affected **populations**
- > audited **organisations**
- > **donors** and **governments**
- > humanitarian and development **sector**

22 governments.

Following DFID's safeguarding summit in October 2018, 22 bilateral donors – representing 90% of aid – committed to "demonstrate adherence to (...) the CHS and (...) look to review and strengthen measures for verification of that adherence." A clear commitment.

PSEA

THE PSEA SCANDALS HAVE GRADUALLY INCREASED HQAI'S VISIBILITY AND **RECOGNITION AS AN IMPORTANT ACTOR FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY** IN THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT SECTOR.

FOLLOWING ITS AUDIT EXPERIENCE, HQAI HAS INITIATED THE REVISION OF THE CHS PSEA INDEX BY THE CHS ALLIANCE AND THE INTER AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE, HENCE APPEALING FOR MORE CLARITY AND CONSISTENT INTERPRETATION OF THE ELEMENTS RELATED DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO SAFEGUARDING.

AUDITORS SPEND
SEVENTY PERCENT
OF THEIR FIELD TIME
COLLECTING INFORMATION DIRECTLY
FROM COMMUNITIES.

> **80%**
OF AUDITED PARTNERS
DECLARE: THE PRO-
CESS STRENGTHENS
INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING.

183K CHF

We work on making our services accessible to a majority of organisations: A group scheme allows for significant economies of scale (e.g. for networks) and HQAI's subsidy fund has granted 183K CHF in 2017/18 to small organisations.

KEY EVENTS 2018



ACT ALLIANCE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

More than 150 member organisations participated in this year's General Assembly of the ACT Alliance network. HQAI was present with a booth focusing on national organisations, explaining the benefits of our services and the **SUBSIDY FUND**.



HNPW

The Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) is a unique forum to address humanitarian issues. HQAI partnered with CHS Alliance and Groupe U.R.D. to organise a full-day thematic station about **PUTTING THE CHS INTO PRACTICE**.



CHS ALLIANCE LEARNING EVENT

HQAI's Executive Director participated on the panel of CHS Alliance's learning event in November, covering the value of the CHS in third-party quality assurance and HQAI's focus on **ASSESSING ORGANISATIONS' MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**.

ROUND TABLE

With the support of Switzerland HQAI organised a Round Table to demonstrate the **GROWING RELEVANCE OF THIRD-PARTY QUALITY ASSURANCE** for the humanitarian and development sector, including the donor community. Numerous speakers, representing governments, audited organisations and independent auditors, have managed to draw a complete picture of HQAI, its services and benefits for the sector.

» www.hqai.org/round-table



SAFEGUARDING SUMMIT

The UK government hosted a conference to drive collective action to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and harassment. HQAI participated in the summit and held a very lively booth together with the CHS Alliance. Donors, governments, independent experts and other NGOs were eager to **LEARN MORE ABOUT INDEPENDENT QUALITY ASSURANCE** and how it benefits vulnerable populations, audited organisations and donors.



LEARNING EVENT

In line with its strategic objective to analyse data and disseminate findings, HQAI held a joint learning event with the Geneva Graduate Institute. The event brought together over 70 participants from organisations, donors, academia and quality assurance to explore the **ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF PARTNERSHIPS IN AID**.

LESSONS LEARNED

HQAI AND ITS PARTNERS ARE LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER AND GROWING TOGETHER. IT IS A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OF HQAI TO COLLECT AND INTERPRET RELIABLE DATA ON SPECIFIC TOPICS IN ORDER TO SHARE SUCH INFORMATION AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNINGS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE SECTOR. HERE ARE SOME LESSONS LEARNED:

NO HUMANITARIAN VS DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE IN CHS AUDITS.

Within the portfolio of organisations audited since 2016, only three have chosen to restrict the audit scope to their humanitarian mandate. The vast majority of organisations have applied for independent verification or certification on both their development and humanitarian mandates. An important lesson after three years of operation is that the CHS and HQAI's processes can be applied across the board. Some interpretation can be required e.g. in terms of the timeliness criteria in development operations, but the CHS has proven to be a valid instrument to assess systems and performance in both contexts.

SAFEGUARDING RARELY STANDS ALONE.

HQAI measures both an organisation's performance and the efficiency of its systems in supporting this performance and drive change. Our audits show that safeguarding is transversal to several, related systems of an organisation and is better understood through an integrative lens, beyond specific PSEA mechanisms. Hence, adequate safeguarding management is clearly linked to efficient complaints and feedback mechanisms, and also to the systematic and early engagement with communities

on the identification of their constraints and risks, and more generally appropriate context analysis processes. Safeguarding is also supported by robust systems for risk management and internal control, as well as other aspects related to the very "culture" of an organisation, the way staff is recruited and trained, and processes for organisational learning and adaptation to change. The CHS is an excellent tool to work on safeguarding - and beyond safeguarding - as it allows a broader lecture that can contribute to breaking contra-productive silo approaches.

CERTIFICATION IS AN EFFICIENT DRIVER FOR CHANGE.

HQAI's first audited partners (who have used our services since 2016) have already gone through mid-term audits. These major surveillance audits allow for both the organisation and HQAI to observe improvement: The change processes in which the organisations have engaged to correct non-conformities since 2016 have been positive for their longer term performance. Progress is consistently reported in the areas of complaint handling processes, information to communities, and cross-cutting areas such as safeguarding and the assessment and control of risks to the communities. Audits are becoming an instrument to drive organisations' change and track improved performance.



Richard MILLER
Humanitarian Director,
ActionAid International

HQAI was very open and approachable to find a model that maximises impact and value for our group structure. With all this cooperation the process remained very independent. (...) The report highlighted immediate actions and longer-term improvements for ActionAid to address, including clear recommendations on the functioning of the group.

THE PROCESS WAS AN EYE-OPENER. *The organisation now knows its collective strengths and weaknesses.*

October 2018





(continued from page 8)

WHAT IF A VISION CAME TRUE?



Continuous learning and improvement are part of the initiative's DNA. Its first three years were extremely instructive and the institution has learned from experience and feedback from stakeholders. The start-up has grown out of its children's shoes, its systemic approach to quality and accountability has made it an active and relevant member of the humanitarian and development sector and it has received formal accreditation for its certification scheme.

A growing pool of qualified auditors and head of office staff offer their services to roll-out independent quality assurance to the sector. The initiative offers financial solutions to facilitate access to its services, because it firmly believes in what it does.

Imagine a sector where organisations that work with vulnerable and at-risk people and communities are accountable, act effectively and in a timely manner, and are informed by the perspectives of the people they work with ... This is HQAI's vision for the future. Be part of it.



Certainly not the end. Keep following HQAI on our Website and social media.

CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING FORWARD

MOST LIGHTS ON GREEN

The CHS is on its way to being widely accepted by stakeholders in the humanitarian and development sector.

In this context, the relevance of third-party quality assurance and the benefits of HQAI as a “smiling partner with teeth” have been largely demonstrated and recognised by representatives of different stakeholders, including Denmark, United Nations, European Union, Germany, Norway and Switzerland who participated in HQAI’s Round Table in October 2018.

The past year has shown that HQAI is becoming an increasingly important and respected player in the humanitarian agenda. HQAI offers tools that facilitate the realisation of a number of commitments made by humanitarian donors, UN Agencies and iNGOs in the Grand Bargain framework, which was agreed upon at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. HQAI’s services can support the simplification of reporting requirements, increase transparency and facilitate funding of **LOCAL RESPONDERS** by providing assurance to donors that these work under international standards. HQAI expects that over the next years about 40% of its audited organisations will be national agencies. In 2017 this proportion was 18%.

HQAI is well aware that cost can be a barrier. We therefore established in 2017 a subsidy fund currently financed by Denmark and Germany. The Fund functions independently of the secretariat and stands ready to support more organisations in accessing independent quality assurance. Six national organisations are currently supported by the Fund.

» www.hqai.org/subsidies



FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIPS

HQAI cannot make its way alone. In the fulfillment of its mission it relies on the partnerships it establishes with audited organisations, as well as with donors, governments and other stakeholders.

HQAI has ambitious targets. We want to become financially self-sufficient while keeping the cost of our services to a strict minimum. To achieve this objective, we need a rolling average of 220+ organisations who use our services. We project to reach this target in 2023.



Tanya WOOD
Executive Director, CHS Alliance

This number also, and probably more importantly, represents what HQAI estimates to be the threshold to trigger a systemic change in the sector, towards more independently assured quality and accountability. Such change will only happen if we can work hand in hand with all our partners, get financial support to reach this stage and most importantly are able to align strategies around third-party quality assurance. In this perspective, we are working hard to have audit reports recognised by several institutions, including donors, within their **DUE DILIGENCE** requirements.

*HQAI is critical to the CHS Alliance. It brings the **INDEPENDENCE AND RIGOUR WHICH WE NEED TO HONOUR, RESPECT AND PROMOTE**. HQAI and CHS Alliance compliment each other for the same goal: how to better work with people in crises.*

October 2018

GROWING TOGETHER

37 organisations of different sizes, mandates and regions have used HQAI's services between December 2015 and December 2018. Audited organisations benefit from objective reports about areas for improvement. They focus their investments and improve trust with interested parties.

For confidentiality reasons HQAI only publishes the names of organisations who had finalised their initial audit by 31.12.2018, while other organisations that had signed a contract or were in the audit process at that time were excluded.

Audited partners



Third-party quality assurance is a robust means to credibly demonstrate compliance with standards and requirements. It is also an acknowledged tool for continuous improvement.

HQAI offers the following services:



CERTIFICATION

The independent and objective assurance that an organisation or a group of organisations meet the requirements specified in the CHS, good practices or commitments. A certificate is valid for four years, providing periodic checks confirm the continuing conformity with the requirement or standard, and allows for organisations to display their certification mark (see picture). HQAI's certification scheme is accredited under ISO/IEC 17065:2012.



INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION

An independent and objective assurance that one or a group of organisations are making demonstrated, continuous and measurable progress applying the CHS, good practices or commitments. The requirement is that the most serious weaknesses in the application of the standard are eliminated within a four-year-cycle.



BENCHMARKING

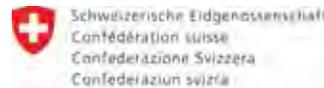
A one-time independent and objective diagnosis of the situation of one or a group of organisations with regard to the CHS, good practices or commitments.

HQAI provides these services against the CHS, as well as against other standards, commitments and good practices.



PARTNERS IN STRATEGY AND FINANCE

Strategic and financial partners



Strategic partners



HQAI was established as a start-up which requires donor funds to support its initial development until financial self-sufficiency is reached. None of HQAI's successes so far would have been possible without the precious core financial support provided by its historical funding partners: DANIDA, the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, the Swiss Confederation and the Republic and Canton of Geneva. In addition to their direct financial contribution, HQAI's major donors value the initiative, facilitate HQAI's activities and may sit on HQAI's Subsidy Fund Management Committee. Significant actors in the sector (CHS Alliance, DANIDA, DEC) recognise HQAI's audit reports for their own

due diligence processes. Thus recognising that HQAI's reports meet their current membership or partnership requirements, they provide invaluable support in explaining and promoting HQAI's services. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude for our partners' continuous support.

➔ full financial report:
www.hqai.org/publications



Morten JESPERSEN
 Permanent Representative, Ambassador,
 Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN

All Danish Civil Society Organisations operating in fragile or humanitarian contexts have to be third-party verified or certified against the CHS in order to receive humanitarian funding by DANIDA.

This mandatory approach is not only putting people at the centre, strengthening the focus on quality and accountability and leading to positive learning within the organisations. It also demonstrates DANIDA's own accountability toward the political leadership and tax-payers.

*Danish humanitarian assistance is demonstrably professional, timely, effective and accountable. **CERTIFICATION IS AN INVESTMENT WHICH DEMONSTRATES VALUE FOR MONEY.***

October 2018



Andy WHEATLEY
Humanitarian Adviser embedded in DFID

*An area where the sector needs to be a lot better is how we hear collectively from, and how we feed information back to those who we assist. It is crucial to understand what their views are on the work we are doing on their behalf. (...) If we start hearing that, that's **WONDERFUL EVIDENCE TO TAKE TO DONORS**.*

June 2018

www.hqai.org/andy-wheatley



Coleen HEEMSKERK
Church of Sweden

*We have gone through our second surveillance audit already, two years after initial certification. I must say that having an annual audit rhythm is beneficial to our work. It **HELPS TO ENSURE THE HIGH QUALITY** of our programs as well as putting people first.*

December 2018



Ed SCHENKENBERG VAN MIEROP
HERE Geneva

*The focus needs to be on bringing third-party quality assurance to scale and to **ALIGN INVESTMENTS WITH THE LEVEL OF RISK** taken by not complying with the CHS. There is a role to play for major donors to bring the CHS to the attention of the UN and make it central to our collective response.*

October 2018



Reza CHOWDHURY
COAST Trust

*Certification can help local organisations to **STOP WALKING ON BANANA SKINS** and start stand on their own feet, solidly on the ground. (...) I feel we've been waiting for this for 30 years. As local organisations we have to prove that we are efficient and the certification process has helped us to improve.*

April 2018

TAKE ACTION

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TAKING THEIR VOICES INTO ACCOUNT

*The **STRENGTH OF OUR SYSTEM** is that we are looking at policies and practices from the head office to the field and systematically take independent feedback from affected people.*



Annie DEVONPORT
Senior Auditor with HQAI

October 2018