

# **The Joint Standards Initiative Global Stakeholder Consultation Report**

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## Table of Contents

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definition of Key Terms . . . . .	iv
Quality and Accountability Initiatives - An overview . . . . .	v
Executive Summary . . . . .	vi
1. Introduction . . . . .	1
2. Background to the JSI Consultation Process . . . . .	1
3. Methodological Approach . . . . .	2
4. Purpose and scope of the research . . . . .	6
5. Key Findings . . . . .	7
5.1. The use and accessibility of the standards . . . . .	8
5.2. Standards implementation . . . . .	16
5.3. Verification and compliance of humanitarian standards . . . . .	22
5.4. Future views on humanitarian standards . . . . .	29
6. Concluding remarks . . . . .	36
7. Proposals for the way forward . . . . .	38
Annex 1: Methodological outline . . . . .	40
Annex 2: Key informants . . . . .	50
Annex 3: Countries consulted . . . . .	58
Annex 4: Focus group discussions overview . . . . .	61
Annex 5: Survey questions . . . . .	65
Annex 6: Bibliography . . . . .	70
Annex 7: Terms of Reference . . . . .	71

## Tables

Table 1:	Numbers canvassed by the consultation
Table 2:	Organisational use of standards
Table 3:	Most used standards in addition to HAP, People In Aid and Sphere
Table 4:	Use of standards in South Sudan
Table 5:	Approaches to verification and compliance
Table 6:	JSI-identified challenges
Table 7:	JSI-agreed decisions
Table 8:	Recommendations

## Graphs

Graph 1	Use of standards
Graph 2	Type of standard used
Graph 3	Use in programme cycle
Graph 4	Use of main standards
Graph 5	Frequency of use
Graph 6	Benefit of using standards
Graph 7	Challenges
Graph 8	Possible improvements to standards
Graph 9	Best way to ensure consistent use of standards
Graph 10	Region of respondent
Graph 11	Organisation type
Graph 12	Size of the organisation
Graph 13	Language of survey responses
Graph 14	Sector of the respondent's organisation
Graph 15	Type of organisation

## Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definition of Key Terms

CAAP	IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations
Consolidation	Bringing together the standards into, for example, one physical location, or one handbook. Consolidation is a form of merger.
DfID	UK Department for International Development
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
ELHRA	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
FGD	Focus group discussion/s
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
Harmonisation	Common language and messages and absence of duplication across the standards.
HoA	Horn of Africa
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
JSI	International Network for Education in Emergencies
LEGS	Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Q&A	Quality and accountability
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
Sphere	The Sphere Project
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Quality and Accountability Initiatives - An overview

The common starting point for many of the quality and accountability initiatives was “The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief” (the Code), which in turn has its roots in International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian principles.

The genesis can be traced back to 1991, when the French Red Cross proposed a Code of Conduct. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) took this idea and developed it into the current Code of Conduct, published in 1994, which today has become the guiding framework for the humanitarian sector. However, the Code does not include any compliance mechanisms.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide highlighted the accountability deficit in humanitarian assistance and the 1996 Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda included numerous recommendations around further promoting the Code of Conduct, improving staff management, learning and including the voice of affected people. These recommendations were taken up as the starting point for the three standards initiatives involved in the JSI.

People In Aid emerged as a result of a specific research project on the management and support of staff during the Rwanda crisis. After 1995, 12 agencies led a sector-wide collaboration and consultation from which the People In Aid Code of Good Practice was published in 1997. People In Aid became a registered charity in 2000 and the Code was revised and became the Code of Good Practice in 2003.

Rooted in efforts to gather best practice in disaster relief work dating back to 1995, the Sphere Project was officially launched by a group of NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in July 1997. Its goal was to develop a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian response, resulting in the Sphere Handbook. After a trial edition in 1998, the first handbook was published in 2000 with revised editions published in 2004 and again in 2011. As well as minimum standards the handbook includes the Humanitarian Charter.

The HAP International story is more complex. After the Rwanda evaluation, the British Red Cross suggested the idea of a humanitarian ombudsman. The idea gained international traction, along with concerns about its feasibility. The Humanitarian Accountability Project was established with three field trials in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Cambodia. The report on these trials recommended an international self-regulatory body focused on affected populations. This prompted a move from the idea of an ombudsman to a quality and accountability membership organisation. The HAP Standard, a quality assurance system against which humanitarian organisations can self-regulate, was published in 2007 and revised in 2010.

The three initiatives were thus developed in parallel, whilst developing their own distinctive characteristics (human resources, technical standards and the humanitarian charter and beneficiary accountability). While a clear identity was important, there was also a lot of overlap in membership and constituency.

## Executive Summary

The Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) was established by three leading humanitarian quality and accountability (Q&A) initiatives (HAP, People In Aid and Sphere) in order to review and seek coherence of current humanitarian standards. The ambition of the initiative is to ultimately improve humanitarian action in favour of those affected by conflict and disaster<sup>1</sup>. The JSI is adopting a number of different approaches to achieve coherence, a central one of which has been a large scale consultation with stakeholders.

At the end of November 2012, the JSI engaged a team of consultants in order to conduct a global stakeholder consultation over a period of four months. Finalisation and approval of the approach to be adopted within the consultation by a designated JSI Advisory Group took three weeks and data collection took place over a period of just over two months.

The consultation team was asked to focus on four key thematic areas to contribute to the JSI process:<sup>2</sup>

- The use and accessibility of standards
- Implementation of standards
- Compliance with and verification of standards
- Future needs

Some 2,000 people from 114 countries representing around 350 organisations were canvassed in order to provide their views and opinions on the above. The consultation focused on data collection through the following means:

- Documentary review
- On-line survey (which was responded to by 1,001 individual aid workers)
- Individual semi-structured interviews with 116 stakeholders
- Consultant-led focus group discussions (FGDs) in 15 locations with more than 315 people
- Stakeholder-led FGDs in 27 different locations with the participation of some 421 people. These discussions were hosted and facilitated by 56 different organisations.

To analyse the data and information collected, the consultants used methods drawn from social science research, namely statistical and qualitative analyses. The consultants are confident that the resulting findings represent a robust and representative view of the humanitarian sector.

Towards the end of the data collection process a conference was convened in Copenhagen where the consultation team had the final opportunity to gather stakeholder inputs through a series of workshops, discussions and panel debates.

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1 JSI Proposal (June 2012)

2 JSI Stakeholder Consultation Concept Note (October 2012)

## Findings

The JSI literature identified the proliferation of standards as a cause for confusion among users; that better defined and applied standards would ensure improved costs to support their implementation, greater programme effectiveness and an increased focus on affected populations. The consultation could only partially confirm this assumption. Some found the number of standards confusing whereas others were less concerned with proliferation highlighting that the standards themselves were increasingly aspirational in current complex and shifting operating environments.

### Use and accessibility of the standards

Finding 1	Standards are well known and used by a high majority of the traditional international humanitarian actors although a need for further awareness raising and training was highlighted.
Finding 2	Awareness of the standards is significantly lower amongst national and smaller NGOs when compared to larger INGOs, the UN or the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement.
Finding 3	Sphere is the most frequently used, followed by HAP and People In Aid.
Finding 4	Anecdotal evidence shows that use of the standards improves the quality of programming and is also considered to be the greatest benefit of using them. There is however limited concrete evidence to support this.
Finding 5	Language and terminology hinder access to standards compounded by lack of common terminology and structure within the texts of the three standards.

The majority of “traditional” humanitarian actors were found to be aware of the standards with national NGOs using standards significantly less than their international counterparts. A disconnect was seen between headquarters staff/management and their field counterparts with headquarters staff being more of the opinion that the standards were being implemented and field staff highlighting the challenges they face in adherence and implementation. In addition, standards were seen to be less known in Latin America and the Middle East. A total of 88% of the on-line survey respondents stated that their organisations used standards predominantly in programming, auditing and quality assurance and at the planning, design and implementation phases of the project cycle.

Of the three JSI initiatives, Sphere was found to be used most frequently (88% of survey respondents). There were concerns however that the use of Sphere was at times considered a “tick-box” exercise. The technical standards and indicators were considered to be very useful but less emphasis was placed on the Core Standards and Humanitarian Charter. HAP was the next frequently used (55%), mostly by larger INGOs although not necessarily for certification purposes. People In Aid was the least known and used by those who completed the survey (37%) and took part in individual interviews<sup>3</sup>. Persons interviewed

3 It is understood that the People In Aid code is used to define internal policies and practices which are generally applied by human resource practitioners rather than programme staff or humanitarian workers. Therefore the 37% of survey respondents who know and use the People In Aid code might be a reflection of a lack of understanding and awareness by humanitarian workers.

mentioned challenges in using People In Aid in their contexts, notably difficulties in applying the level of human resources management required; the limitations in covering organisations based on networks or with large voluntary elements; and the focus on transparency which in some cultures is not a priority. Those who were aware of People In Aid found it easy to use and were particularly appreciative of the networks and resources that are provided. Use and awareness of over 50 other standards was noted.

The lack of availability of all the standards in other languages (whilst acknowledging that some, particularly Sphere, were translated in a number of languages) or in forms which are accessible by illiterate populations is considered to be hindering access, particularly by conflict and disaster-affected communities and volunteers.

## Implementation of the standards

Finding 6	Lack of knowledge and inadequate training is the main barrier to implementation of the standards.
Finding 7	Contextualisation of the standards in complex and fluctuating environments is difficult for aid workers whose capacity is often stretched or limited.
Finding 8	When working with partners, focusing on standards is often not the priority for INGOs and the UN.
Finding 9	Embedding the standards into operational procedures and training of current and potential users, including identifying champions or focal points, is one step to ensuring increased implementation.
Finding 10	Lack of systematic presence and uniform support from Q&A initiative staff in the field is impeding increased implementation.
Finding 11	Dedicated financial resources would assist in standards implementation.

A number of key challenges were identified in implementing standards including:

- Lack of knowledge and inadequate training, notably amongst national NGOs.
- Impact on workload was cited by both national and international NGOs as a barrier to standards implementation.
- The disconnect between headquarters and field level was again emphasised with the flow of knowledge often being poor combined with unrealistic expectations relating to levels of implementation.
- Duplication and complexity, particularly during the height of an emergency response, were a concern. These issues were more of a concern for headquarters than field staff. Those in Latin America/Caribbean and Oceania found the standards more impractical to apply than in other parts of the world.
- Contextualisation of the standards was an issue that was raised as a key challenge particularly within the diverse and changeable humanitarian space in which aid workers are active today.
- Insufficient donor emphasis on implementation of the standards was cited by a number of organisations with inconsistencies in donor approach causing confusion for those receiving support from different donors.

A number of donors require their partners to confirm application of certain standards but do not necessarily have a systematic way of following up on this.

A number of potential improvements were proposed including increased joint and on-line training and dissemination; embedding the standards into organisational operational procedures; harmonising and consolidating standards; more systematic and uniform support and presence by the standards bodies across the globe; standardisation of terminology between the three bodies; and the creation of one online platform to accommodate all the standards and improve access to them.<sup>4</sup>

## Verification and compliance of humanitarian standards

Finding 12	No consensus was reached with regard to the best approach for verifying compliance with the standards - Internal <sup>4</sup> verification was however favoured over external verification although many sought a combined approach.
Finding 13	A mandatory approach was favoured over a voluntary approach although many concerns were raised about introducing a punitive approach and were cautious that discussions around mandatory versus voluntary systems should not be the priority particularly with new and emerging actors.
Finding 14	The role of donors is seen as fundamental in any verification system.
Finding 15	The majority are in favour of having a verification system combining different levels that can be aspired to.
Finding 16	Inclusion of affected populations in verification systems is seen as important.

Each of the three initiatives has different approaches to compliance and verification of their standards and principles. The compliance and verification issue was considered to be particularly complex and a wide range of views were put forward as to the most appropriate approach to adopt.

Pros and cons were suggested for different forms of both internal and external verification processes but the majority of those canvassed leaned towards internal verification followed by external peer review of some form. The majority felt that the verification processes should be designed to encourage learning as opposed to imposing punitive measures for non-compliance.

Whilst the survey showed a preference for mandatory verification processes, this was not fully supported through the qualitative data collection processes. These highlighted that this could exclude a number of stakeholders particularly non-traditional and emerging actors as well as French and Spanish-speaking NGOs.

The call for increased linkage of donor funding to standards usage was emphasised but this was balanced with the concern that implementation should not be donor-led particularly as it might have negative repercussions in terms of the impartiality and independence of humanitarian aid.

<sup>4</sup> Internal verification is considered to be verification that is carried out by the aid organisation itself. External verification would be carried out by another body.

Most were in favour of a stratified approach to verification that would be less likely to exclude smaller organisations and those new to standards. The workshops at the Copenhagen Conference strongly stressed that whatever model is agreed upon, affected populations need to be at its heart.

## Future views on humanitarian standards

Finding 17	Broad consensus is seen for action on greater awareness, consolidation/harmonisation, putting affected populations at the centre of standards and for humanitarian principles to be at their cornerstone.
Finding 18	A more detailed concept for consolidation of standards was proposed although it was not of high priority for aid workers.
Finding 19	The implications for the structure of the three initiatives is not a focus of feedback although a coherent approach implied greater harmonisation between the organisations and the services offered and closer proximity to humanitarian action.
Finding 20	Aid workers do not want the current situation <sup>5</sup> to continue as it is or to face undue pressure from donors and systems that would lead to the exclusion of some actors.
Finding 21	There is a need for a structure to oversee governance of quality and accountability with broad representation of all stakeholders.

Finally, the consultation attempted to identify what stakeholders would like to see in the future in terms of standards for guiding humanitarian work and what they would least like to happen. Four key areas where consensus was largely heard throughout the consultation were as follows:

- The need for greater awareness, dissemination and training were identified as the highest priority.
- Harmonisation and consolidation of the standards with a focus on harmonising texts to avoid overlap and highlight complementarity.
- Inclusion of conflict and disaster affected populations at the heart of developments.
- The desire for a set of humanitarian principles to be the foundation point.

The concept of a detailed overall consolidation of the standards texts came up in a number of different discussions including in Copenhagen. However, those canvassed did not echo a broad consensus for this solution mainly because their priorities were elsewhere, notably the need for greater awareness of what exists and a practical harmonisation that could be undertaken relatively quickly.

Concerning the future structure of three standards initiatives, the consultation was not able to identify what stakeholders are looking for as this was not a priority for the large majority of aid workers or other stakeholders. However, the strong desire to move towards a more harmonised and simplified structure of standards indicated the need for coherent support services and field presence. A global framework needs to be put in place to consider requests for new standards wishing to join any harmonised model in order to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

<sup>5</sup> The current situation is characterised by lack of harmonisation between the standards, insufficient centralisation of disaster-affected populations within standards development and monitoring and humanitarian principles not being sufficiently at the core of all Q&A standards for humanitarian programming.

Those interviewed highlighted a number of issues of concern that should be avoided in the future. These included the imposition of standards by donors (which to some extent contradicts the earlier call for increased linkage of funding to standards implementation); maintenance of the status quo; a dilution of the Sphere standards and indicators; and the creation of new sets of standards by larger organisations which would be inaccessible to smaller ones and those in the Global South.

## Conclusions

Drawn from these findings, the consultation team came to six key conclusions:

### Conclusion 1

Today organisations have to balance many priorities including implementation of standards, an issue that was particularly felt at the field level. In this regard, although the issues of duplication and potential confusion upon which the JSI has focused to date were raised, the majority of those reached through the consultation felt that the existing standards were not sufficiently known, clear, used and supported – notably in non-English speaking regions and amongst national NGOs. Further, the consultation has served to highlight the outstanding need for greater awareness and the intelligent contextualisation of standards to avoid organisations being indicator-driven without actually meeting the needs of those they are meant to assist.

### Conclusion 2

Throughout all four themes covered in the consultation there is a constant call for the inclusion of affected populations, host governments, new and emerging actors and government donors in all areas of standards development as well as continued input from current users. This is not a call to abandon existing standards but this consultation believes a three-step process is required:

- Step 1 - issuing of a succinct and concise set of core standards – 10 maximum - drawn from the current body of humanitarian standards (these three and others, potentially taking the Sphere core standards as a starting point) that will serve as an entrance level for current and potential standards users and as a key awareness tool
- Step 2 - a series of immediate actions to harmonise the three standards in text, terminology and structure
- Step 3 - a longer term approach to consider a more detailed consolidation of the three standards and other relevant ones with the humanitarian principles at their cornerstone.

It is recognised that incorporating the thinking of and reaching agreement with relevant stakeholders on a detailed consolidation will be a lengthy process but if real and tangible engagement with all stakeholders is to be achieved, as universally requested through the consultation, then the time required to do so needs to be acknowledged. If the Q&A initiatives themselves and those that support them are willing to adopt this approach then the potential is a significant positive change in terms of finding common ground amongst a large number of stakeholders.

### **Conclusion 3**

A universal message which emerged in the research was that whatever is built for the future, the voice and the power dynamics of conflict and disaster-affected populations needs to change within the process and they cannot be seen purely as recipients. Their inclusion in a well thought-through and practical manner not only in the creation and adaptation of standards but also in ongoing feedback regarding the implementation and validation of standards in the future is seen as of critical importance, as viewed by this consultation.

### **Conclusion 4**

The issue of compliance and verification including how best to establish a system, which would meet the needs of all stakeholders generated a number of diverse options with no global consensus found. Where there was broad agreement was that any system would need to include a series of levels and be educative rather than punitive as well as having accountability to affected populations at its core. Examining the various options, the one most viable seen by this consultation appeared to be the combining of internal assessments with external peer reviews and audit, but this would need to be further tested with the community. Again, in order to ensure a system, which is recognised and supported by all actors, will take time and effort to ensure that dialogue and agreement is found, particularly with new and emerging actors. It is also important for donors to have a consistent approach to standards in both resource allocation and M&E. However, the lack of a comprehensive solution yet for compliance and verification shouldn't be an obstacle to moving towards a harmonisation of standards as described above. It is anticipated that these findings will be of use to the current certification review of the SCHR.

### **Conclusion 5**

The feedback gathered from aid workers focused primarily on the standards themselves and not the organisational aspects of the three organisations which respondents found to be more difficult to assess. However, what can be extrapolated from the feedback for the organisational modelling that is foreseen is two points: the desire for harmonised standards implies that the services of the three initiatives should be harmonised, notably in communications, training, field support and policy development. On this basis it could be argued that the three initiatives and other initiatives such as the Sphere companion standards need a consistent set of support services which could potentially include training, outreach and support to ensure greater implementation of standards. Secondly, the limited awareness of standards seen in some regions, for example in Latin America and Middle East, which could be partially due to the physical absence of standards initiatives or representatives and the distance between their European headquarters and the field.

### **Conclusion 6**

Through this consultation and the JSI in general, the humanitarian community has provided a mandate to bring about change in humanitarian standards and the quality of humanitarian aid. This consultation has produced a series of proposals for the way forward to establish a more harmonised and effective set of standards. To bring these proposals to fruition, the support of the three initiatives and other Q&A bodies, the major INGOs, NGO networks, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies and OCHA will be key. This consultation believes that further thought will be needed as to what body will oversee a more harmonised approach now and in the future.

## Proposals for the way forward

Based on the findings emanating from the consultation, a number of proposed options are suggested for the way forward in order to help the JSI and the three initiatives progress. Some proposals can be acted upon immediately but others will require more time to put into place and will require dialogue and inputs from a broad range of stakeholders. The proposals for action are therefore separated into those that can be implemented between June and December 2013 and those for implementation between December 2013 and December 2015.

Recommendations	Supporting findings and conclusions
<b>Immediate – June – December 2013</b>	
1. Awareness raising and training: The three initiatives should work together to boost awareness and training, especially in non-English speaking regions and for national NGOs, facilitated through: a single web portal; a common evidence based study; and a common training module adapted to local contexts.	Findings 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 18 Conclusion 1
2. Initiation of a core standard process: A process should be initiated by the three initiatives with the aim of producing a simplified set of standards, with a limited number of points (maximum of ten), drawn from the existing body of standards. Sphere’s six core standards could be used as a starting point for this.	Findings 2, 18, 19 Conclusion 2
3. Harmonisation of three standards: A study should be commissioned or carried out by staff of the three initiatives and/or their members to harmonise the three standards in terms of structure, text and terminology and adjusted accordingly. This would then lead to a common handbook as already suggested by some representatives of the initiatives <sup>6</sup> .	Findings 5, 18 Conclusion 2
<b>Long term – December 2013 – December 2015</b>	
4. Increased implementation: The three initiatives should work together to increase integration of the standards within humanitarian organisations, notably through consistent guidance and support to organisations.	Finding 9 Conclusion 5
5. Inclusive approach: The three initiatives should work on reaching out to two key groups and include them in their discussions: the affected populations and the new humanitarian actors. Further consultative processes would be required for this, which may include discussions with other actors who have been engaged in discussions of this sort for some time. At the same time, dialogue needs to continue with other key actors such as the UN, NGOs, governments and donors.	Findings 16, 17 Conclusion 2, 3

<sup>6</sup> The suggestion was put forward at the Workshop on Building More Coherence in Quality and Accountability Initiatives held in Geneva on 20 July 2011 which was attended by initiative members.

6. Detailed consolidation: A more in-depth consolidation of the three standards and other ones needs to be studied and considered.	Findings 17, 19 Conclusion 2
7. Compliance and verification: As the consultation did not produce findings based on a broad consensus, it is proposed that options put forward in this paper are used as a basis for discussion within the SCHR certification review.	Findings 12, 13, 15 Conclusion 4
8. Donor role: Donors should work further on operationalisation of principles and commitments that they have made regarding the standards and have a consistent approach on the use of standards in both resource allocation (funding decisions) and evaluation and assessment, within the limits of national priorities and specificities. The availability of dedicated financial resources for partners would assist in standards implementation.	Findings 11, 14 Conclusion 4
9. Organisational model: The organisational review should take into account the two key relevant findings of this consultation: The need for harmonisation of support services (such as training, outreach, support and guidance) and proximity to humanitarian field operations.	Findings 10, 20 Conclusion 5
10. Oversight model: The leadership of the humanitarian community should consider how standards will be governed at the highest level including the potential need for an oversight body/framework to oversee the broad questions of where standards are needed and where duplication and cross-referencing is required.	Findings 21 Conclusion 6

Gathering opinions and views from a range of stakeholders from across the globe has required significant effort from a number of individuals and organisations over recent months (and prior to this consultation process). Their inputs have been invaluable in the definition of a set of proposed steps and actions for ensuring the continued evolution of a more coherent set of standards and a more comprehensive approach to standards which is in tune with the fluctuation of the contexts within which these individuals and organisations operate today.

# 1. Introduction

The Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) is a collaborative process being undertaken by HAP International (HAP), People In Aid and the Sphere Project (Sphere). It aims to review current humanitarian standards, seeking coherence for users of standards, in order to ultimately improve humanitarian action for conflict and disaster-affected populations and propose recommendations for their improvement.

As part of its review process of existing humanitarian standards, the JSI engaged a team of consultants to support a key element of this process, namely the Stakeholder Consultation. The stakeholder consultation aimed to generate evidence from a wide range of actors across the humanitarian sector, to assist in shaping the development of the process and inform the decisions made by the Boards of the three initiatives on the future of the Joint Standards Initiative. This document is the key output from the consultation process alone and is therefore limited in scope.

The stakeholder consultation focused on the four following areas:

- Use and accessibility of the three standards<sup>7</sup>
- Standards implementation
- Standards compliance and verification
- Future needs in terms of standards

## 2. Background to the JSI Consultation Process<sup>8</sup>

Over the last 20 years the humanitarian sector has grown into a multi-billion dollar venture and consequently has become increasingly professionalised. With this has come the creation of a variety of standards and accountability mechanisms to promote high quality humanitarian aid.

Increasingly, governments, donors and the general public are seeking assurances that the support they provide will be used in the best possible way, both in terms of cost-effectiveness as well as programmes having a positive impact and being focused on affected people.

While there was an absence of standards until the early 1990s there are now at least 100<sup>9</sup> standards initiatives in existence. Field workers and HQ staff have stated that they have experienced challenges in implementing the number of standards in an efficient, complementary, and effective way. In a sector characterised by high staff turnover, the need to rapidly train new staff in the wake of crises and a wide variety of different types

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7 The term “standards” is used throughout this report to cover the standards, indicators, codes and principles of HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project.

8 Taken and adapted from “Overview of the JSI” (January 2013)

9 Cosgrave J: “Humanitarian Standards – Too much of a good thing?” (2013).

of agencies, from the smallest of community based organisations to very large federated networks, the JSI works on the assumption that this has rendered it difficult to apply standards consistently.

### 3. Methodological Approach

A variety of methods were adopted for the consultation process with a methodological approach being approved by the JSI Advisory Group<sup>10</sup> in December 2012, prior to the start of the research phase<sup>11</sup>.

The research team consisted of two key consultants with a solid understanding of humanitarian operating environments but with a distance from quality and accountability (Q&A) initiatives themselves. They were supported in this work by two additional consultants with extensive experience in undertaking regional consultations to assist in undertaking interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) at regional events/forums and translation activities. The four person team conducted their research in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. In addition, a member of the teaching staff from the London School of Economics was engaged by the research team to advise on methodology, statistics and sampling. Guidelines were established to assist member organisations and networks in supporting the consultation by undertaking FGDs with affected populations and humanitarian workers. The consultants were requested by the JSI to:

- Design a reliable research process
- Support consultation activities and events
- Undertake data analysis
- Write and present the final report

An expert Advisory Group (previously called the “Working Group”) oversaw the consultation process and will analyse the findings and offer their own recommendations to the three Boards. The Advisory Group assisted the consultation team by reviewing and approving the consultation methodology and facilitating access to key stakeholders as well as supporting regional and field events throughout the process. The Advisory Group reviewed the draft consultation report and provided inputs prior to its finalisation and submission to the JSI Coordinator on behalf of the JSI Steering Group.

This research aims primarily to provide a set of clear recommendations for the JSI Advisory Group based on the key lines of enquiry covered under the following themes:

- Use and accessibility of the three standards
- Standards implementation
- Standards compliance and verification
- Future needs in terms of standards

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10 The Advisory Group was set up by the JSI Steering Group and is made up of representatives from the Boards of the three initiatives, the UN, donors, the certification of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and independent members.

11 See Austin, L. & O’Neil, G. (December 2012) Final Methodology - Support to the JSI Stakeholder Consultation.

The key methods adopted through the research were as follows:

- Desk research / literature review of key literature<sup>12</sup>
- Semi-structured stakeholder interviews conducted in Arabic, English, French and Spanish (in-person and by telephone)<sup>13</sup>
- FGDs at country and regional level<sup>14</sup>
- FGDs focusing on affected populations and national staff undertaken on behalf of the Consultation by member organisations and networks<sup>15</sup>
- An on-line survey of humanitarian organisations in Arabic, English, French and Spanish (focusing on current and potential users of standards)<sup>16</sup>
- An international event in Copenhagen with panel debates, workshops and keynote speakers.<sup>17</sup>

The following table summarises both the planned and actual number of persons canvassed by the consultation:

*Table 1: Numbers canvassed by the consultation*

Research method	Target population/stakeholders	Planned Number	Actual Number
Semi-structured interviews	Humanitarian organisations, donors, standards bodies and companion standards bodies, academia, governments	Approx. 150 100 by consultants 50 by members <sup>18</sup>	116 <sup>19</sup>
FGDs	Affected populations and national staff from selected countries from each region	5-10 reaching some 100 people	39 reaching some 421 people <sup>20</sup>
Internet survey	Humanitarian organisations: international NGOs, UN agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and national NGOs with humanitarian focus	960	1001 <sup>21</sup>

12 See Annex 6 for bibliography.

13 See Annex 2 for list of key informants.

14 See Annex 4 for breakdown of where focus group discussions were held and by whom.

15 Ibid.

16 See Annex 5 for survey questions.

17 Global Leaders Conference on Humanitarian Standards 11-12 March 2013 (hosted by Danida and facilitated by Dan Church Aid).

18 It was envisaged that members and networks would undertake 50 interviews on behalf of the consultation. However, this proved impractical and members/networks focused on organising FGDs where the number organised exceeded expectations.

19 Requests for interview were made to a total of 174 individuals but 57 of those contacted did not respond or were not available during the consultation timeframe.

20 More than this were reached but a small number of FGD reports did not state how many people were involved.

21 A total of 1,509 survey responses were received. After eliminating incomplete responses and duplications, 1,001 responses were considered. A full explanation is provided at Annex 1.

Regional workshops (discussion groups)	Humanitarian organisations meeting in selected locations such as, Beirut, Brussels, Cairo, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Juba, Nairobi, New York, Panama, Washington DC.	6-8	32 reaching some 315 people <sup>22</sup>
<b>Total people accessed:</b>		1300	<b>1853</b> <sup>23</sup>

In total, the consultation reached over 2,000 people from the humanitarian sector and stakeholders from 114 countries from all regions of the world, including over 350 international and national humanitarian organisations. This process was assisted by over 50 organisations hosting FGDs on behalf of the consultation. The consultation aimed to be as representative as possible and based its approach on previous estimates of some 4,000 national and international organisations working actively in the humanitarian field<sup>24</sup>. In this regard, the consultants are confident that views were canvassed from a broad range of actors within this sector. It should be noted that the so-called “new” or “non-traditional” humanitarian actors (i.e. predominantly host governments, military, emerging NGOs and the private sector) were not the main focus of the consultation but were consulted where possible.

An inception/briefing was held at the end of November 2012 with the Advisory Group to ensure a common understanding of the task and outputs. This was followed by a process of finalisation of the methodology, which was approved by the Advisory Group.<sup>25</sup>

### Opportunities and constraints

A number of opportunities as well as constraints presented themselves during the research process as follows:

#### Opportunities

- Large and willing networks promoting the consultation process.
- Open mindedness of key informants to hear about and discuss standards.
- Open communications and support from the three standards initiatives.

#### Constraints and how they were approached

- Accessing field staff – the research team was reliant on JSI Advisory Group members and Steering Group members and other networks to put forward names of relevant field staff at all levels for key informant discussions but it proved difficult to get engagement on this.
  - Approach adopted – Consistent and regular messaging to the Advisory Group members both directly and via the JSI Coordinator asking for proposals of relevant staff to access.

22 Of which 90-100 were present at the Copenhagen Conference organised by ACT Alliance/DanChurch Aid.

23 Some of these people may have been reached through two different approaches e.g. one-to-one interview plus on-line survey.

24 See: <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/349.pdf>, <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=17>

25 See Annex 1 for further methodological detail.

- A limited timeframe<sup>26</sup> within which to reach people to arrange interviews or FGDs.
  - Approach adopted: Concerted effort of research team to engage with those who were willing to hold FGDs on behalf of the consultation; flexibility of research team in terms of work days carried out and funded.
- Cultural complexities in reaching respondents with some countries and regions not used to responding to emails from unknown researchers or responding to on-line surveys or speaking by phone with people they have not met before.
  - Approach adopted: The creation of a mixed-gender and mixed-nationality research team with fluency in four languages and experience of undertaking research with a variety of stakeholders was created to ensure as broad a reach and cultural understanding and sensitivity as possible. Advice was sought from organisations working in different cultural settings as to the best approach to adopt.
- Defining the humanitarian sector and consequently being able to determine a representative sample for the research.
  - Approach adopted: reference to recent sector-wide studies<sup>27</sup> in order to estimate the size of the sector and adaptation of the sampling approach accordingly.
- The three Q&A initiatives that make up the JSI are predominantly western initiatives with limited networks within the south, which hampered access to southern inputs.
  - Approach adopted: Consultation beyond the existing networks to consult with non-traditional and southern actors where possible.
- Lack of awareness of the existence of the standards in some regions, which required conducting workshops to present the standards before holding the consultation.
  - Approach adopted: Adaptation of FGDs and interviews to allow time for explanation and discussion.

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26 The first interview was held on 9 January and the last FGD was held on 26 March giving some two and a half months to undertake all interviews and FGDs.

27 For example; ODI, Op. Cit., ALNAP (2012), State of the Humanitarian System – 2012 Edition; HAP (2011), The 2011 Humanitarian Accountability Report and DARA (2011), Humanitarian Response Index.

## 4. Purpose and scope of the research

The overall purpose of the research within the stakeholder consultation process was to explore key lines of enquiry within the following four themes:

- Use and accessibility of the three standards
- Standards implementation
- Standards compliance and verification
- Future needs in terms of standards

These themes relate to the three standards bodies that form the JSI. The more detailed lines of enquiry within them were approved by the JSI Advisory Group prior at the start of the research.<sup>28</sup>

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28 See Annex 1 – Methodological Outline.

## 5. Key Findings

The key findings from the JSI consultation process are presented under the themes that have guided the consultation process:

- The use and accessibility of the standards
- Standards implementation
- Verification and compliance of humanitarian standards
- Future needs

A contextual overview is provided first in order to highlight the environment in which the key lines of enquiry for the stakeholder consultation were discussed.

The JSI literature identifies the current proliferation of standards as a cause for confusion among users and suggests that more clearly defined and rigorously applied standards may offer assurance to governments, donors, and the general public. In addition, it maintains that this clearer definition and application would provide assurance to this group in that the funding and resources they provide would be used in the best possible way, both in terms of value for money as well as programmes being effective and focused on affected populations.<sup>29</sup>

These assumptions have, however, not been fully confirmed through this consultation. Although some organisations found the number of standards available overwhelming, others stressed that the proliferation of standards is not the core problem. According to them the core problems is that standards are increasingly aspirational as aid workers and their organisations have to deal with increasing demands and priorities. While some found the standards to be confusing, others such as Water/Sanitation/Hygiene (WASH) engineers, for example, found the relevant technical standards to be clear. Apparently, the standards are considered to be known and widely adopted by this profession.

The frequently changing nature of the humanitarian environment was identified as a challenge by those canvassed through the consultation. Issues raised included the growing role of the new/non-traditional actors, the multiplication of NGOs, the increased voice of affected populations, the weakening of “principled” humanitarian action and the rapid uptake of information and communication technology in crises<sup>30</sup>. The general consensus was that standards cannot be designed in the same way that they were ten years ago as the humanitarian landscape has been transformed and continues to evolve.

Finally, while those consulted generally endorsed the need for Q&A standards in humanitarian action (99.8% of survey respondents saw value in them), concern was linked to the agility and flexibility of humanitarian organisations to respond in times of crisis, with the worry that the standards must not hamper this flexibility.

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29 “Overview of the JSI” (January 2013).

30 These issues correspond to key issues raised in recent analyses, as found in: ALNAP (2012), State of the Humanitarian System – 2012 Edition; HAP (2011), The 2011 Humanitarian Accountability Report.

## 5.1. The use and accessibility of the standards

*“Many of the standards are still far too high to be achieved even in the best of situations in developing countries even without a disaster taking place”*

*(Aid worker, India)*

**Finding 1:** Standards are well known and used by a high majority of the traditional international humanitarian actors although a need for further awareness raising and training was highlighted.

**Finding 2:** Awareness of the standards is significantly lower amongst national and smaller NGOs when compared to the larger INGOs, the UN or the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement.

**Finding 3:** Sphere is the most frequently used, followed by HAP and People In Aid.

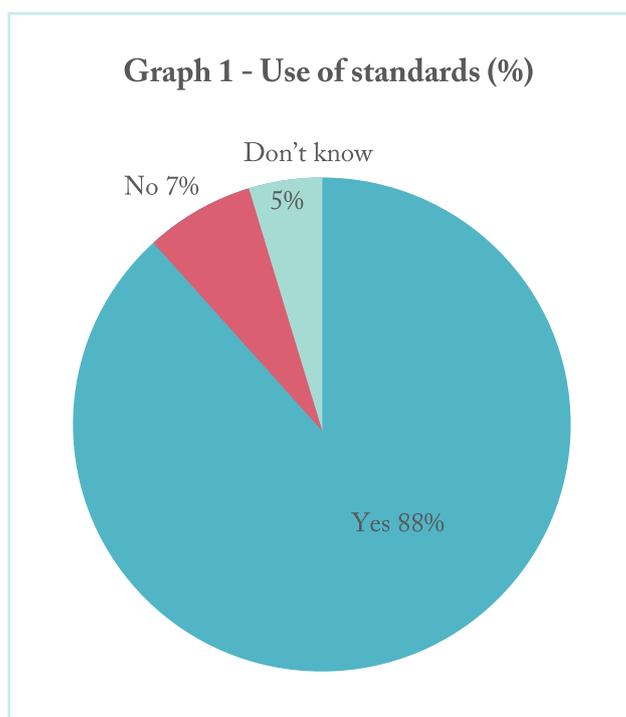
**Finding 4:** Anecdotal evidence shows that use of the standards improves the quality of programming and is also considered to be the greatest benefit of using them. There is however limited concrete evidence to support this.

**Finding 5:** Language and terminology hinder access to standards compounded by lack of common terminology and structure within the texts of the three standards.

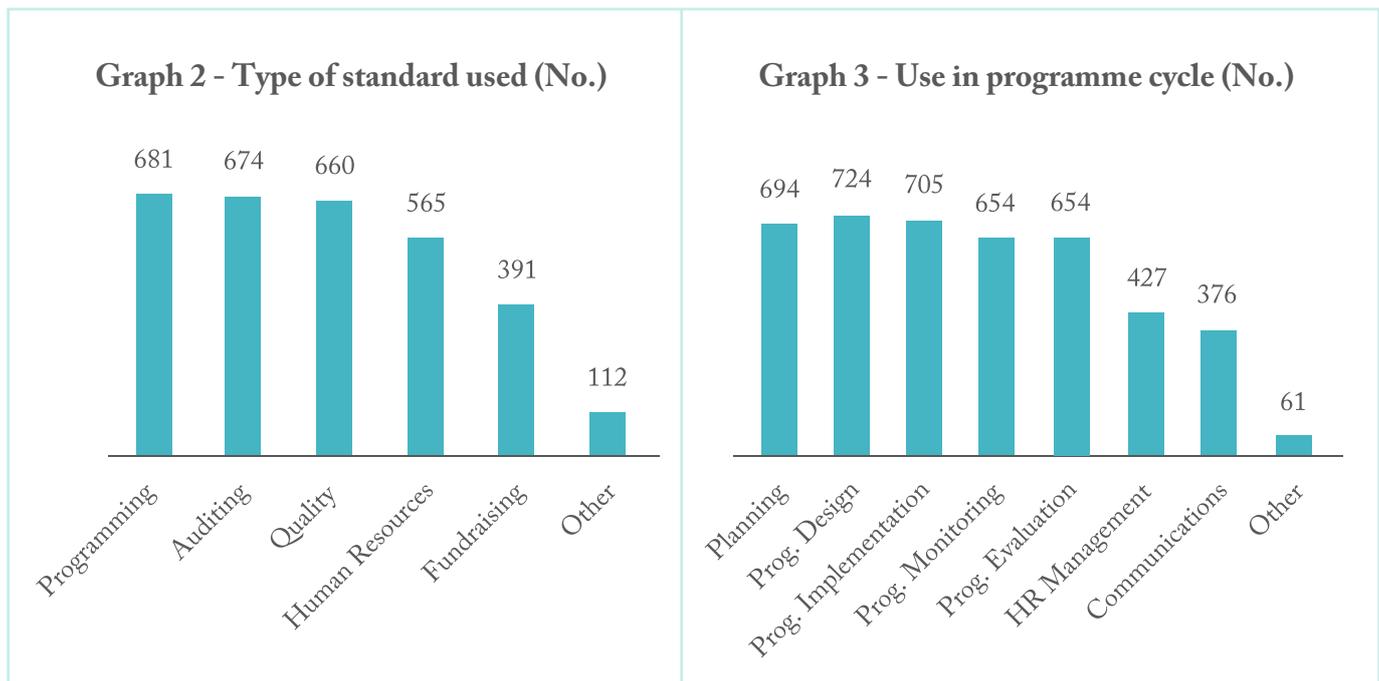
### *Use and Awareness*

The consultation sought stakeholder views on a number of issues including which standards were used in daily work by aid organisations and whether HAP, People In Aid and Sphere, in particular, were easy to apply. Accessibility and relevance of the standards were also covered.

The research data gathered by the consultation confirmed that humanitarian standards were known by the majority of aid workers employed by traditional humanitarian actors with some differences being observed with regard to the size and type of organisation. However, although known, a need for further awareness-raising was identified: some 30% of all suggestions in the survey of aid workers focused on the need for more awareness and better understanding through training. Aid workers participating in the survey confirmed that 88% of their organisations were using standards (humanitarian or other) as seen in graph 1. The biggest use was seen in *programming, auditing and quality assurance & control* as displayed in graph 2. In terms of the programme cycle, interviews and focus groups found that the standards were mostly used in *the planning, design and implementation phases* with smaller organisations less likely to use them in the programme



cycle. This was confirmed in the on-line survey as displayed in graph 3. In a recent study on the use of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) minimum standards for education<sup>31</sup>, a companion standard to Sphere, usage was mainly found in *project design* and *assessment*.



Differences in usage amongst aid workers were found on the basis of organisation size, type, region and HQ or field level as summarised in the following table:

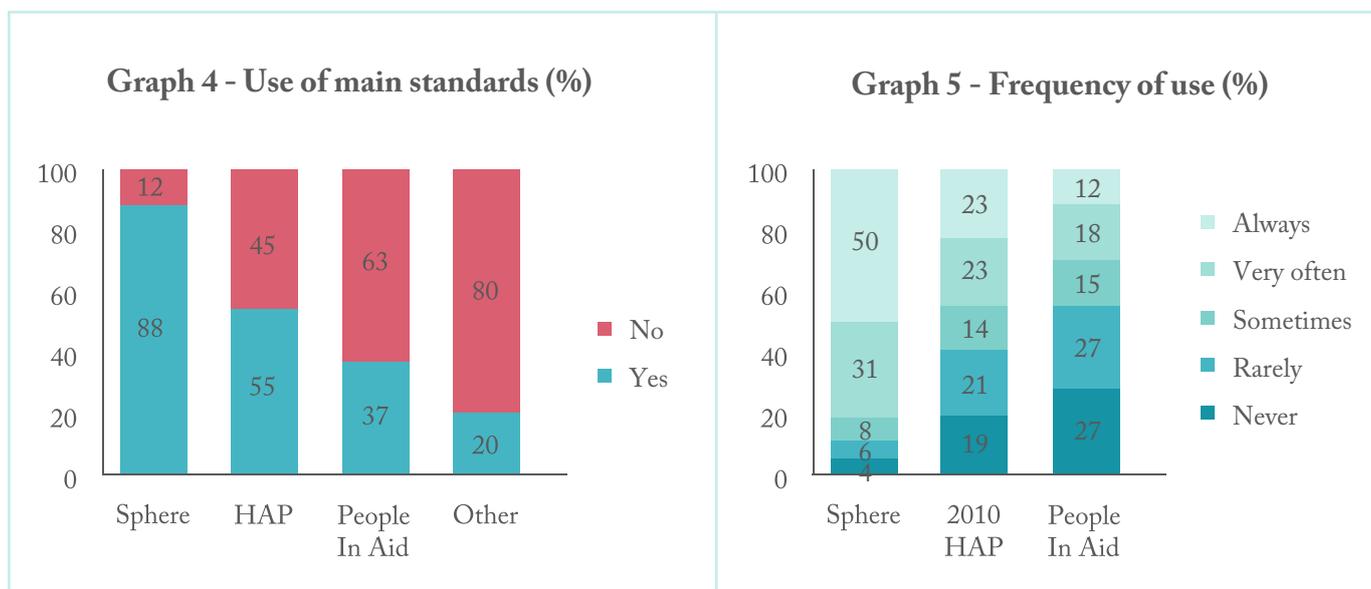
**Table 2: Organisational use of standards**

Type of organisation:	The survey results indicated that national NGOs used standards significantly less than INGOs, the UN or the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement. This was confirmed in the interviews and FGDs. The challenges in implementation highlighted are discussed below.
Size of organisation:	The survey results indicated that smaller NGOs were less likely to use standards than larger NGOs. The interviews and FGDs underlined that this lack of use by smaller NGOs could be due to the fact that they are not yet at the level of professionalism to know and give priority to Q&A in general, or that they are using the standards unknowingly as many work in partnership with larger NGOs and apply their guidelines which are in conformity with the standards. Another view is that organisations at the national or community level are guided more by government and local standards and guides and are simply not aware of Q&A initiatives such as those included in the JSI.
HQ or field:	A disconnect was seen between headquarters and their senior management staff and with field-based staff on their understanding and awareness of the standards, with some feeling that the main know-how was found in the headquarters and

31 See figure 12, p. 26, INEE (2012), INEE Minimum Standards Assessment Report, February 2012.

	with some feeling that the main know-how was found in the headquarters and not on the field, which at times restricts field usage to including standards only in reporting.
Region and language:	Based on the interviews and FGDs, standards seemed to be less known – or not at all - in some places in Latin America and in the Middle East. The survey results confirmed that aid workers who took the survey in English were from organisations that were more likely to use standards compared to those who took the survey in Arabic, French or Spanish.

Of the three JSI initiatives, Sphere was used the most frequently (88% - survey results), followed by HAP (55%) and People In Aid (37%).<sup>32</sup> This was also confirmed in the interviews and FGDs. Not only was Sphere the most used standard, it also seems to be the most useful. Over 80% of Sphere users use it *always* or *very often*. This figure was 45% for HAP and around 30% for People In Aid, as displayed in graph 5. Very often, these standards are used in combination. Some 28% of respondents were using at least two of them and another 28% were using all three.



Further findings on use and awareness by each of the three initiatives are discussed below.

**Sphere:** Accessibility is seen as one of the success stories of Sphere and of the three it was the most familiar to a range of actors including the UN with some clusters such as the protection and nutrition clusters referring explicitly to Sphere indicators. The survey results indicate that the UN, national and smaller NGOs use Sphere less than INGOs. Knowledge of Sphere has been boosted through ongoing training programmes and focal points in some regions. A key issue concerning the use of Sphere raised by persons canvassed was whether using and referring to Sphere has become mechanical and a “tick-box” exercise. However, Sphere

32 It is understood that the People In Aid code is used to define internal policies and practices which are generally applied by human resource practitioners rather than programme staff or humanitarian workers. Therefore the 37% of survey respondents who know and use the People In Aid code might be a reflection of a lack of understanding and awareness by humanitarian workers.

is considered to be embedded in the response analysis for many operational organisations spoken to by the consultation with the technical standards and indicators considered to be useful as a reference and guide (with the lack of focus on its humanitarian charter, principles and core standards of concern for some). The different approaches adopted by Sphere and its companion standards were raised, highlighting the lack of common format across all the standards. Responses from the Middle East region<sup>33</sup> showed an awareness of Sphere but responses on how it is used varied depending on the size and capacity of the organisations (as found in the survey results). Larger organisations tended to view Sphere as a minimum indicator for service delivery with smaller organisations using Sphere as a checklist and best-case scenario. Discussions with a limited number of practitioners in Latin America<sup>34</sup> revealed that Sphere is used to provide guidance for emergencies which often assists in saving time during the response phase but there was some confusion about how rigidly the standards needed to be applied. However, many organisations chose to also apply regional standards or guidelines produced by their own organisation or by host governments - which may or may not be coherent with Sphere and other standards.

*“There are many reasons related to contextual situations that can prevent the use of standards: history, language, cultural factors. Organizations may feel these are standards developed outside their cultural needs and far from their own practices by organizations from the North.”*

*(Aid worker – Latin America region)*

**HAP** sits between People In Aid and Sphere in terms of use and awareness and was generally known by those who are members of and/or are certified by HAP. The survey confirmed that HAP tended to be used by larger organisations, notably INGOs. Donors were aware of HAP but generally less concerned with organisations applying it (although some donors such as DfID do refer to HAP without necessarily checking on its application). Moreover, many of the HAP principles seemed familiar to Southern cultures, yet the complexity of the text gave the impression that they were foreign notions, hence discouraging implementation, according to Southern aid workers interviewed. Some, particularly in Asia, felt that HAP has been pushed by donors (although donor discussions as part of this consultation process do not necessarily support this view). A number of national NGOs that were interviewed were supportive of the HAP certification process but for larger INGOs functioning with multiple field offices or networks they perceived certification as being too resource heavy to undertake (thus although INGOs reported being the heaviest users of HAP in the survey they were not necessarily certified by HAP). Their approach could be summarised as taking elements of HAP (such as establishing complaints mechanisms) and implementing them within their existing Q&A systems.

**People In Aid** was frequently viewed as a body of standards that is not particularly well-known or culturally adapted to a range of environments with the least penetration with southern organisations, according to consultation interviews, FGDs and the survey. Persons interviewed mentioned challenges in using People In Aid in their contexts, notably difficulties in applying the level of human resources management required;

33 Primarily Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen.

34 Primarily Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Panama and Uruguay.

the limitations in covering organisations based on networks or with large voluntary elements; and the focus on transparency which in some cultures is not a priority. Those most familiar with and using People In Aid were the large INGOs based in Europe, with the lowest use seen in Latin America (confirmed by the survey). People In Aid was also potentially less visible than Sphere or HAP at the field level as it is more inclined to inform organisational policy rather than direct work with affected populations. Those who were aware of People In Aid and had applied it, mostly human resource managers, found it easy to use and felt that the access to good networks and training opportunities that it offers are important. Those who were familiar with all three standards felt that People In Aid was actually the easiest to use, as it is concise and contains good practice principles rather than standards.

**Use of other standards:** In the interviews and survey, aid workers mentioned nearly 50 other standards, guides and charters that their organisations use. The following table displays the top ten mentioned:

*Table 3: Most used standards in addition to Sphere, HAP and People In Aid*

1. Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (RCRC NGO Code of Conduct)	6. Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)
2. Internal standards (of own organisation/network)	7. ISO standards (various)
3. Cluster / inter-agency standards/guidelines	8. Standards of national governments
4. INEE minimum standards	9. INGO Accountability Charter
5. Good Enough Guide	10. WHO health standards (various)

A recent survey undertaken by the South Sudan NGO Forum of which codes of practice and standards are currently being utilised by NGOs operating in South Sudan (of which there are some 180 registered with the Forum) provided similar findings:

*Table 4: Use of standards in South Sudan*

Code of Conduct/Standard	No. of NGOs
Organisation's (or alliance's) own Code Of Conduct	54
Sphere	53
RC/RC/NGO Code of Conduct	50
'Do No Harm'	37
HAP	24
People In Aid	18
Not Applicable	8
Other	7
LEGS	6
INEE	5
Alliance2015	1

The following actors within the broader humanitarian sector also provided feedback on the awareness and use of standards:

**Grassroots organisations:** A number of field-based aid workers felt that the standards were harder for grass roots organisations to understand and apply, particularly in some of the more complex operating environments where aid workers were present today with Syria often mentioned as an example.

**Conflict and disaster-affected populations:** FGDs of those affected by disasters or conflicts indicated a desire for standards to be highlighted to populations at the village and sub-village level. In addition, the request was made for organisations to listen more and consult with them at earlier stages in the aid delivery process than is currently happening.

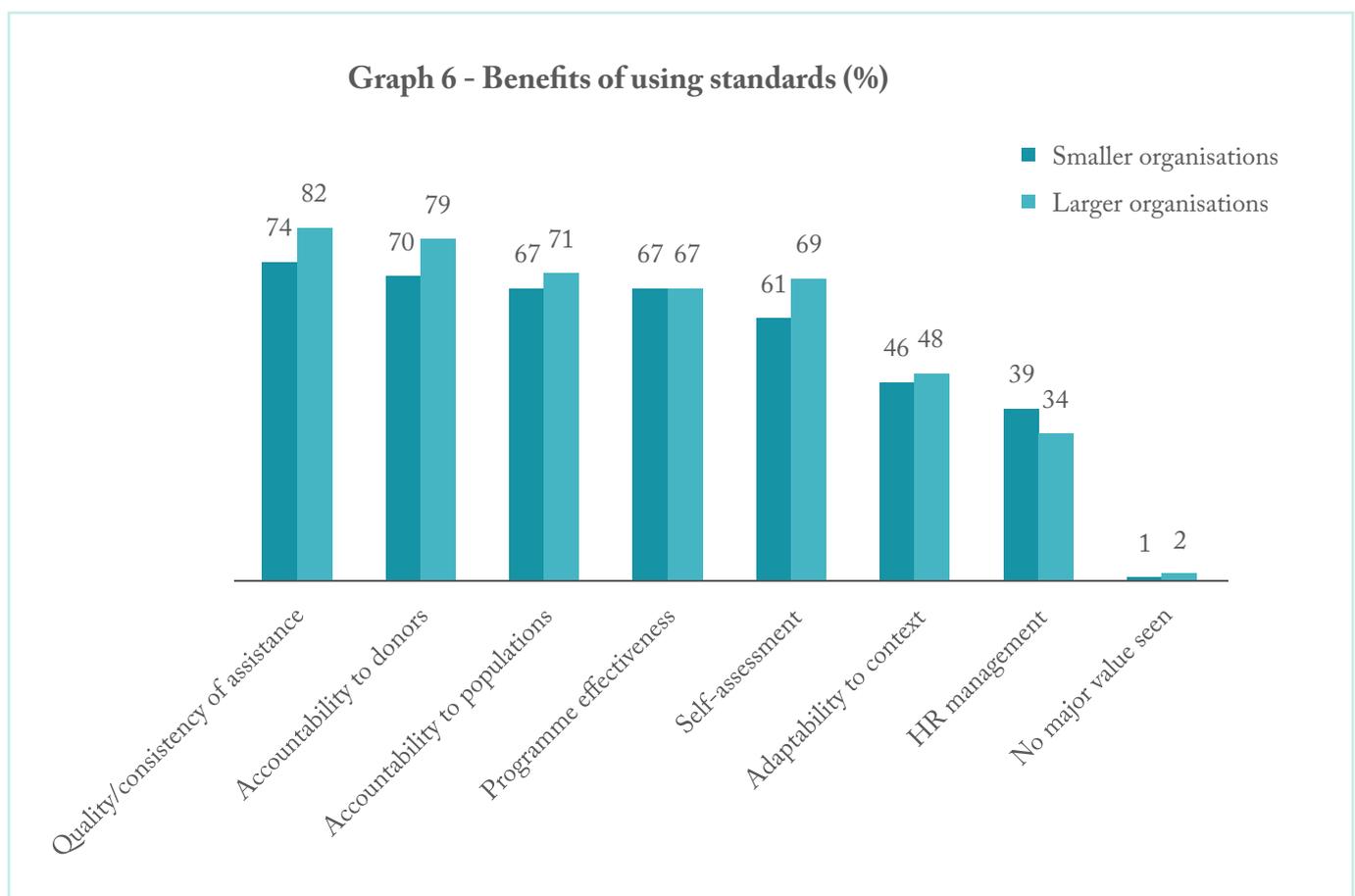
**Governments of disaster/conflict affected countries:** Feedback from national governments and those working closely with them indicated that often governments, particularly at the local level, were not aware of the standards but made reference to their own national plans and standards. Examples were cited where these standards had positively influenced government policies (i.e. INEE in national education policies and plans). Other examples cited were government-created standards which were thought to be “control” mechanisms of NGOs.

**UN agencies:** Similar to the large INGOs, the main UN agencies implicated in humanitarian work identified using their own standards and initiatives, for example UNHCR and WHO standards. In addition, some have taken a leading role in developing standards e.g. UNICEF with the child protection standards (jointly with Save the Children, *Terres des Hommes* and many other NGOs). According to UN staff interviewed, their agencies were largely implementing the technical aspects of Sphere when relevant. HAP and People In Aid were not directly used by the UN, although staff commented that agencies were endeavouring to follow some of their principle focuses, such as accountability to affected populations and professional management of human resources.

**Non-traditional actors:** The consultation had limited interaction with the “non-traditional” or “emerging” actors such as military, private companies and faith-based organisations such as Islamic organisations. Concerning the military, examples were given where they applied technical standards, sometimes conforming and sometimes not. A number of non-western actors indicated that there are different frames of reference with slightly different principles. Principles that are well known in the west and to some extent the south, such as those enshrined RC/RC NGO Code of Conduct or Sphere’s Humanitarian Charter, do not resonate with all actors, who are more familiar and comfortable with Islamic principles for example.

## Impact in terms of improving programme quality

There was significant anecdotal evidence that showed that the application of standards improves the quality of humanitarian programming, although this consultation could not find a systematic collection of evidence for such a claim. When asked what was the greatest benefit of using standards, aid workers who responded to the survey gave the highest benefit to *quality and consistency of assistance*, as seen in graph 6. The survey indicated that organisations based in North America tended to see the strongest link between standards and quality. Aid workers interviewed by the consultation were able to cite examples of improved quality: those that use HAP in their operations did feel that it allows for better engagement with beneficiaries; those who work with Sphere believe it has improved the way in which aid is delivered; and those who apply People In Aid point to improved professionalism in human resource management. It is anticipated that the work that HAP and others are currently doing on this will draw out a more substantial body of evidence<sup>35</sup>.



## Accessibility

According to persons canvassed, the technical and jargon-type terminology currently utilised in the standards is sometimes considered as a barrier to accessibility. Although significant effort has been made to translate the three standards into languages other than English (particularly Sphere), the continuing lack of their availability in local language or in forms which illiterate populations can understand is considered

<sup>35</sup> For example, Save the Children, Christian Aid and HAP have launched a piece of research to consider the contribution of accountability mechanisms to programme quality.

to hinder access to them, particularly by those that they are designed to benefit – disaster and conflict affected communities – and those first responders – often volunteers. The complexity of the three standards (and others) was seen as necessary to many given the broad fields covered. However, field staff indicated what was missing was a simplified form that extracted the key points for broader dissemination and which would allow for ease of application particularly given the pressure that field staff are frequently under during humanitarian responses.

The familiarity with Sphere by many within the sector does allow those agencies that use or know it to speak a common language. However, the lack of common terminology, text structure and design between the three standards (and others) is an obstacle in terms of accessibility. For the limited number of organisations interviewed that were substantially using People In Aid, they considered it to be easy to access as it provides free tools for growing organisations and a support network.

*“We do not know about these three standards. We only know of our national WASH plans for example.”*  
*(Government Representatives – Southern Africa)*

## 5.2. Standards implementation

*“In our efforts to professionalise the sector we have rendered it extremely bureaucratic. There are humanitarian workers here [country in conflict] who have never seen a dead body.”*  
(Aid worker – Middle East Region)

*Finding 6: Lack of knowledge and inadequate training is the main barrier to implementation of the standards.*

*Finding 7: Contextualisation of the standards in complex and fluctuating environments is difficult for aid workers whose capacity is often stretched or limited.*

*Finding 8: When working with partners<sup>36</sup>, focusing on standards is often not the priority for INGOs and the UN.*

*Finding 9: Embedding the standards into operational procedures and training of current and potential users, including identifying champions or focal points, is one step to ensuring increased implementation.*

*Finding 10: Lack of systematic presence and uniform support from Q&A initiative staff in the field is impeding increased implementation.*

*Finding 11: Dedicated financial resources would assist in standards implementation.*

### *Challenges*

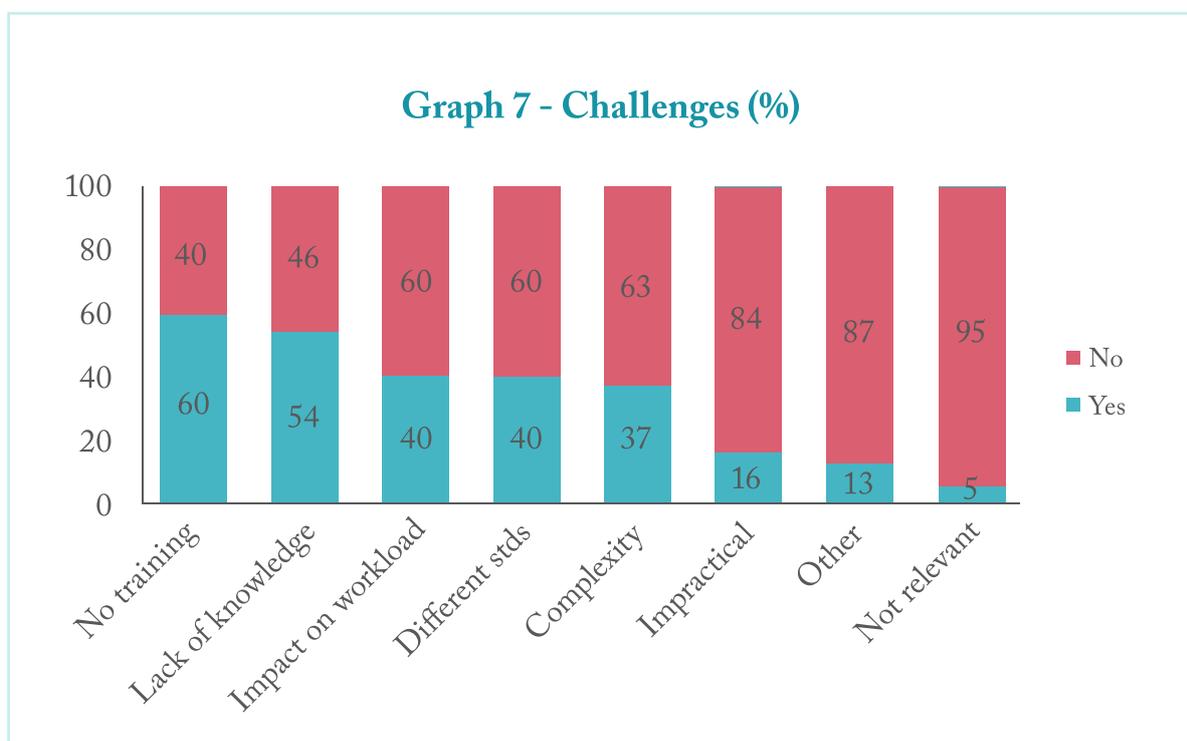
Through all research activities conducted, a number of challenges were identified, which stand in the way of the implementation and application of standards in the manner envisaged for individual aid workers and their organisations. These are listed below:

**Lack of knowledge and inadequate training** on the standards has been identified as the key challenge regarding their implementation, as seen in graph 7 of the survey results below. The lack of training was mentioned more frequently by national NGOs. The survey findings were confirmed in interviews and FGDs and according to persons canvassed, awareness was also limited amongst government representatives at different levels, disaster and conflict affected populations, private sector groups and the military<sup>37</sup>.

The **impact on workload** was cited by both national and international NGOs during the consultation process as an impediment to implementing the standards both in terms of staff capacity to fully follow the standards as well as the financial implications. A large number of those interviewed at the field level emphasised the disconnect between headquarters commitments to the standards and field level realities, where adherence to standards was difficult. The trickle down of knowledge of standards and expectations around implementation from headquarters to country offices and project teams was often poor and therefore there could be no guarantee of implementation at all levels.

<sup>36</sup> The term “partners” predominantly applies to local NGO partners but can also cover other potential partners such as government counterparts.

<sup>37</sup> There was limited contact with governments, disaster affected populations, the private sector and the military during the consultation, so this assessment is based on the contact that the research team did have as well as reports and impressions from other stakeholders.



The next most common challenges mentioned were those of **complexity** and **duplication**. The **complexity** of the standards, particularly during the height of an emergency response, was a concern, with the Sphere manual seen to be particularly challenging in terms of volume. At the same time, some felt the question of complexity was a false argument, particularly concerning the application of technical standards per profession or sector. The survey confirmed that HQ staff were significantly more concerned about duplication and complexity than their field-based colleagues. Some examples of **competing standards** were also cited. For example UNHCR standards, which do not match those of Sphere, or the duplication of points between the three standards, for example on staff competencies. Survey respondents based in Latin America/Caribbean and Oceania were significantly more likely to find standards impractical to apply than respondents based in other parts of the world.

Another challenge cited was **how to contextualise** the standards, particularly within the diverse humanitarian operating environments in which organisations are active today. Urban and non-African contexts were highlighted as the most difficult (notably by those with experience of working in these contexts). For example, Sphere was considered by a number of organisations active in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East to be too Africa-focused and based on contexts where there was a permanent or semi-permanent crisis. Organisations also faced challenges in environments which fluctuate between development, transition and emergency in their application of standards, compounded when those organisations delivered both emergency and development services. With the exception of People In Aid, the standards tend to focus on humanitarian response. Operational aid workers canvassed commented that implementation of standards was not a priority because of

*“These standards are impressive in principle but we need to see them implemented”*

*(Disaster-affected population – West Africa)*

lack of time, competing priorities and the bar being set too high. Another issue raised was the struggle that aid workers had in meeting standards in situations where they would anyway be difficult to meet in normal times. An example given was of a refugee camp situated in a place without sufficient water availability to meet the indicators specified in Sphere and whether an organisation operating in this context should risk being criticised for not meeting the indicators within the standard or attempt to move an entire camp in order to do so. A number of organisations referred to the *Good Enough Guide* as being more implementable in times of crisis. Focus groups of both national and international NGOs in South Sudan provided a good example of the difficulties faced in that context which is comparable to many others across the globe:

*“There are huge expectations around implementing the standards. In South Sudan organisations have to take into account HAP, Sphere and in some cases People In Aid. They also have to take into account UN cluster priorities, WHO standards and Ministry of Health South Sudan guidelines. All these have to be weaved together in a context of insecurity, weak governance, poor economy, increasing beneficiary expectations and corruption. There is no capacity for this.”*

The fact that not all UN agencies operating in the humanitarian sector fully embrace the three standards involved in the JSI was also considered to be a significant barrier to their implementation by some aid workers, particularly in contexts where the cluster system is in place. However, UN staff commented that they have comparable standards and guidelines in place that are largely complementary with the standards, with some exceptions cited (for example, the above UNHCR example).

A number of organisations felt that one of the challenges faced in implementing standards was that **donor governments** do not place sufficient emphasis on them with inconsistencies in approach which can be confusing for organisations receiving multiple donor funds. Although six of the *23 Principles and Good Practices of Humanitarian Donorship* focus on standards, it was commented that no mechanism exists to monitor their application by the 17 donors that have endorsed them<sup>38</sup>. The impression (confirmed by at least three donors spoken to during the consultation) was that donors are stricter with NGOs than they are with the UN regarding the implementation of the humanitarian standards. Many organisations indicated fear that if they did not meet the standards they would be perceived as not doing a sufficiently good job, regardless of contextual and other challenges that they faced. Donors themselves also identified challenges around the standards. For example, for ECHO ‘standards’ is split/‘mainstreamed’ across the organisation in its many facets as applied operationally, procedurally and in relation to partners or specific sectors/ clusters and initiatives.

Involvement of the local community, who in some scenarios are the first to respond to an emergency, was seen as an issue as they are often not aware of the standards

*The implementation of international standards allows countries to show themselves capable of managing emergencies. Therefore having agencies accompany governments in this process provides for a win-win situation. The work with local or national agencies is important to highlight as they have a better direct contact with the affected populations.*

*(Aid workers – Latin America region)*

38 See: <http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx>

and do not apply them but also because they do have an understanding of local context and needs which is frequently not taken into account.

Although many of the standards have been translated into some of the most prominently spoken languages in the globe, language barriers are considered to be one of the challenges preventing implementation of the standards. This has been noted above in section 1.

A number of challenges identified through the consultation have been raised elsewhere previously. For example, in July 2012 the East and Central Africa Inter Agency Working Group highlighted a number of the challenges, which provided recommendations for addressing them<sup>39</sup> as did a survey on the observance of quality and accountability principles in Pakistan in 2011 and the 2012 report of the Listening Project highlighted the lack of consultation with affected populations.<sup>40</sup> At a workshop attended by the chairs of the three initiatives in July 2011 a number of these challenges were also noted.<sup>41</sup>

### *Partners*

On the role of partners, (predominantly local NGO partners but also government counterparts and other partners such as private sector bodies), feedback was received from UN agencies and INGOs that work with multiple partners as well as from smaller NGOs. These smaller NGOs felt that their international partners were not always clear about the standards that they were expected to meet. The UN agencies and INGOs suggested that it was difficult to focus on too many issues at one time with NGO partners and that the focus issue was often not going to be standards. At the same time, NGO partners commented that if they were being given relatively small grants for their activities it was unlikely that accountability would be funded – (this view endorses the fact that standards are often not embedded in organisational policies and approaches from the outset at least in a way that filters through to field level). According to INGOs and UN agencies, working with partners who are autonomous and independent, including local governments, networks and community based organisations, requires a process of negotiation over time, meaning that inclusion of the standards in these discussions and relationships is rarely simple or quick.

### *Improving implementation*

The consultation process identified a number of issues which currently assist in the implementation of the standards or which could be put in place to do so, which largely are a response to the above-mentioned challenges.

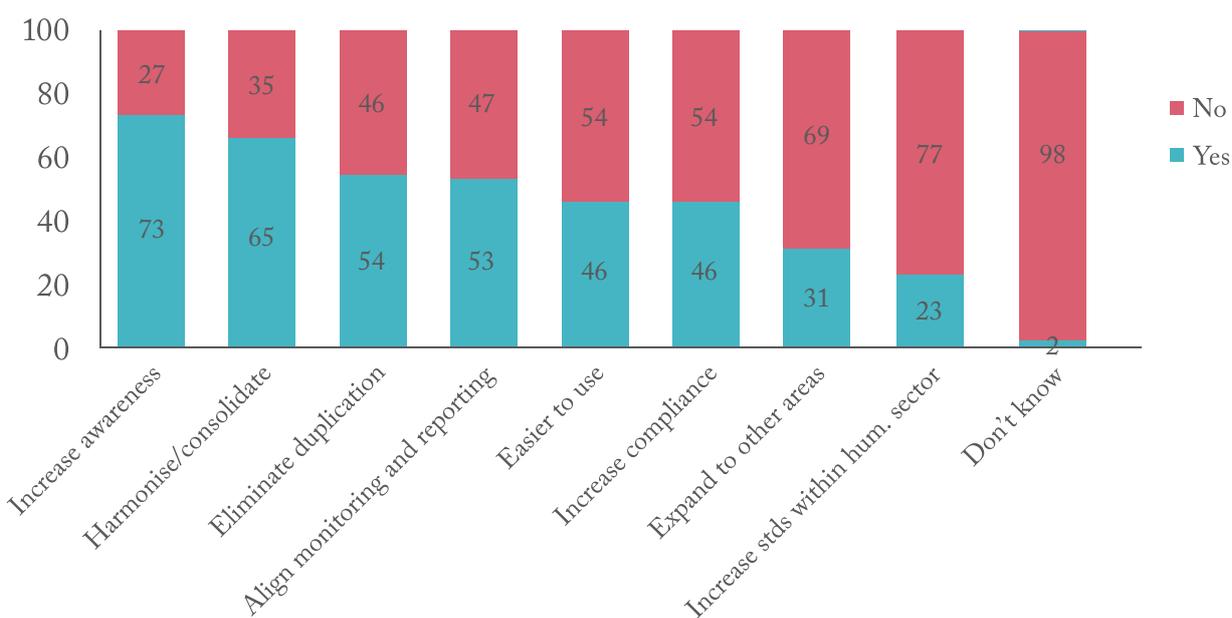
**Training and awareness raising** were seen to be critical areas, which could ensure improved implementation of the standards with a call for more joint training on the standards as well as training of all key actors such as local government bodies. Although one of the concerns was around training of aid workers in times of emergency it was felt that this could be supported through on-line training both for national and

39 IAWG Enhancing Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Action Workshop (1-6 July 2012).

40 “Research on Observance of Quality and Accountability Principles in [the] Humanitarian Sector in Pakistan” – Church World Service (April 2011); The Listening Project (2012), Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid.

41 Workshop on building more coherence in quality and accountability initiatives (Geneva, 20 July 2011).

**Graph 8 - Possible improvements to standards (% of respondents)**



international aid workers which would also help contribute at least to raised awareness of the standards. The need for greater awareness was higher in regions where the English language was not dominant, according to the survey results. Respondents in FGDs, particularly emphasised during the Copenhagen Conference, stressed the importance of adequate training that ensures field practitioners' understanding of the essential standards and their ability to build on those or adapt them according to context and culture. The need for training that does not stifle creativity and intuition was highlighted.

*“There is a principle we can aspire to – and then there is an implementable standard. The two are not the same”*

*(Aid worker – East Africa Region)*

The survey also highlighted the need for harmonisation and consolidation combined with the need for eliminating duplication across the three standards. This was also emphasised as important during the interviews and FGDs.

**Embedding the standards into operational procedures and training** (complaints handling, staff competence, providing information of programmes to the beneficiaries etc.) was also raised as a way of ensuring their increased implementation. Identifying champions or focal points as well as ensuring that this is linked to senior management or even Board members within organisations to keep the standards alive and ensure organisational commitment was considered to be an important positive step.

A practical step to improve implementation at project level which came out through FGDs and which concerns **aligning monitoring and reporting** was considered to be including the standards into every phase of projects being implemented with signposting as to what exactly needs to be done when and then incorporating this into monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks.

Linked to further integration was the lack of Q&A initiative staff providing support at the field level. The work of HAP's Roving Team, the focal points of Sphere and the network of People In Aid (including the East Africa staff member) were all commented on positively. However, what was generally requested was a more **systematic and uniform support across the globe** but particularly in disaster and conflict affected countries. In this regard, aid workers that were familiar with the three standards spoke of confusion in the different services offered (or not) between the three organisations (not taking into consideration the certification function of HAP and People In Aid). Field staff highlighted the desire for more guidance at the field level and increased presence of standards staff in the field who can advise on all three of the initiatives. Ensuring the perspective of the Global South was cited as critical in terms of providing greater opportunity for implementing standards.

*“The first barrier is money, so we implement where we can with things that don't cost us anything but then we get stuck because some practices and processes that are not directly related to beneficiaries are hard to implement without funds.”*

*(Aid Worker – Europe (HQ)/East Africa (Operations))*

With lack of resources being one of the stated barriers for implementation, those interviewed called for **dedicated financial resources** to be committed by donors (while not taking away from funds for implementation of humanitarian responses).

A number of **staff-related** proposals were put forward as a way to increase their implementation. These included discussing the standards during recruitment processes, ensuring that adherence to the standards is part of standard job descriptions and appraisals (noting that the 70 plus standards guiding humanitarian work today cannot all be covered in these ways) and reflecting at annual staff meetings to identify what challenges are being faced with regard to standards implementation.

**Standardisation of terminology** was considered to be an area that the three standards could consider in order to assist at least in access if not implementation.

Creating a **unifying online platform** to house the standards was proposed through interviews and focus groups as a key way of ensuring that the standards are more accessible.

*“Participation should be a key standard – none of the projects will work without our involvement. The refugees have to be associated with the programme from its inception – we should never be spectators”*  
*(Disaster Affected Population – West Africa Region)*

## 5.3. Verification and compliance of humanitarian standards

*“An external certification process is a way to both promote and achieve commonly agreed standards that should apply to all partners. A ‘common’ group would be appointed to conduct this validation and certification of the application and meeting standards.”*

*(Red Cross/Red Crescent Representatives – Asia Pacific Region)*

*Finding 12: No consensus was reached with regard to the best approach for verifying compliance with the standards. Internal verification was however favoured over external verification although many sought a combined approach.<sup>42</sup>*

*Finding 13: A mandatory approach was favoured over a voluntary approach although many concerns were raised about introducing a punitive approach and were cautious that discussions around mandatory versus voluntary systems should not be the priority particularly with new and emerging actors.*

*Finding 14: The role of donors is seen as fundamental in any verification system.*

*Finding 15: The majority are in favour of having a verification system combining different levels that can be aspired to.*

*Finding 16: Inclusion of affected populations in verification systems is seen as important.*

The complex issue of how best to ensure compliance with humanitarian standards has been raised by those involved in the JSI since its inception.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the three Q&A initiatives that make up the JSI have since its inception agreed on a number of critical issues<sup>44</sup> but the one issue that has not seen any agreement is that of how to ensure compliance with the standards and the most effective and appropriate means of verification.

During the consultation, discussions and questions focused on how to assure organisational compliance with the standards and what kind of monitoring approaches might be adopted to achieve this as well as on individual staff compliance. Specifically concerning verification, stakeholders were asked to provide thoughts on internal (i.e. led by the organisation) versus external (i.e. led by an outside body) and mandatory (i.e. compulsory for those who subscribe) versus voluntary processes (i.e. optional for those who subscribe) and whether different levels of verification were considered to be helpful. It is this area of the consultation which has potentially provided the most mixed responses partly because of the number of variables that are involved. The findings presented here are not necessarily conclusive but provide a picture of what current and potential users of the standards felt as appropriate and manageable in terms of compliance and verification. Ultimately it will be up to the three Q&A initiatives themselves to see how best to handle this matter in a way which responds to their members and potential future members needs and capacity, in coordination with the outcomes of the SCHR certification review currently underway.

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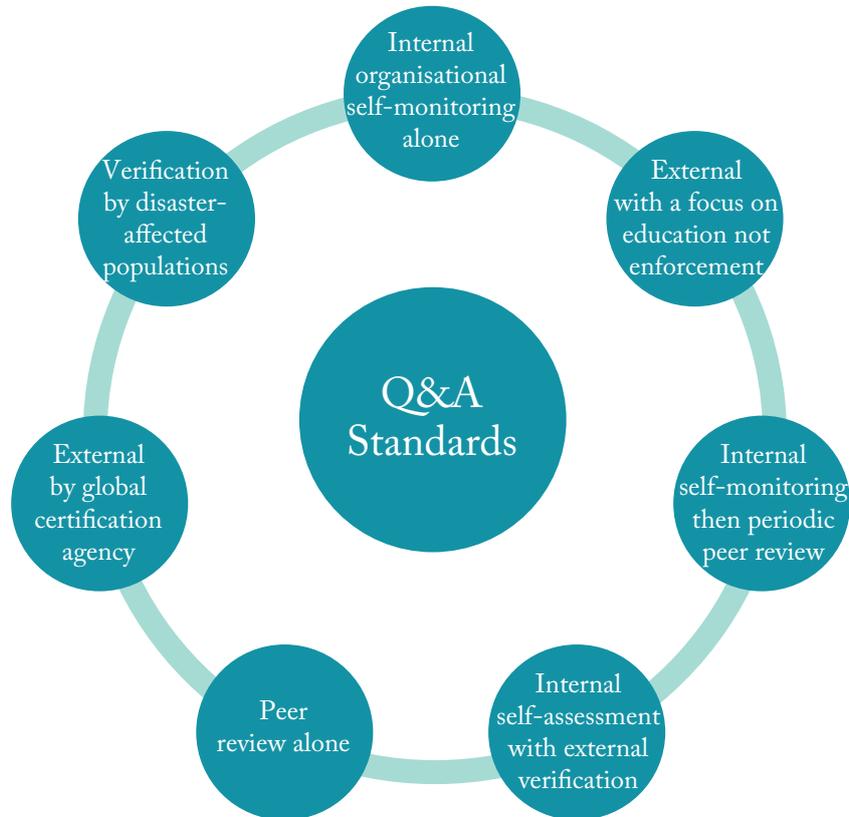
<sup>42</sup> Internal verification is considered to be verification that is carried out by the aid organisation itself. External verification would be carried out by another body.

<sup>43</sup> For example at a workshop of the three initiatives on 20 July 2011 – Minutes of “Workshop on Building More Coherence in Quality and Accountability Initiatives”.

<sup>44</sup> Noted at the 20 July 2011 Workshop on building more coherence in Q&A initiatives and again at the 25 April 2012 JSI Joint Meeting of the Boards.

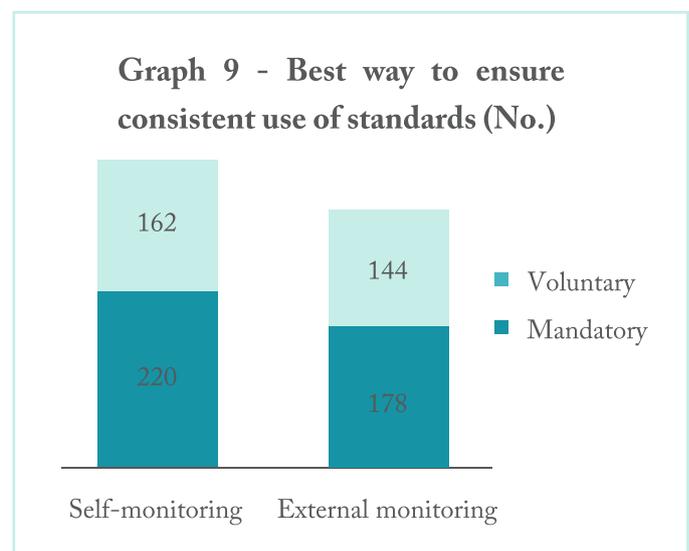
## Internal or external verification

A wide range of options were proposed for the most effective method to verify compliance with the standards ranging from internal self-monitoring through to external verification as can be seen in the diagram below.



Through all data collection methods in the consultation process it appears that there is consensus on the fact that some form of verification is required. The survey results indicate a preference for internal monitoring – and a mandatory approach – as displayed in graph 9. Smaller organisations were more in favour of an internal monitoring approach. The notion that people wanted an internal but mandatory approach was potentially contradictory as it was difficult to imagine how such an approach would work. However, this could also be due to the way in which the questions were asked in the survey (separately and not linked), leading to this finding.

Each of the methods discussed and proposed throughout the consultation has its benefits and drawbacks, the key ones of which are depicted in the table below:



*Table 5: Approaches to verification and compliance*

<b>Proposed Approach</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<i>Self-assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to undertake continuous and ongoing monitoring and assessment</li> <li>• Limited cost implications</li> <li>• More realistic that agencies will support this process</li> <li>• Allows for awareness-raising and positive internal reflection</li> <li>• Provides the opportunity to include in recruitment processes and job descriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential lack of objectivity</li> <li>• Risk of partiality</li> <li>• Potentially lowers the “entry criteria” to unacceptable level</li> <li>• Becomes too specific to allow any type of comparison</li> </ul>
<i>Self-assessment with external peer review</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External process adds value with more macro/global perspectives and an added level of accountability</li> <li>• Strengthens links between existing M&amp;E frameworks and external reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review system challenging to manage</li> <li>• Peer review risks being “influenceable”</li> </ul>
<i>Self-assessment with external verification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combines “best of both worlds”</li> <li>• Limited cost implications</li> <li>• Allows for comparison and impartial view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue of managing external verification process</li> </ul>
<i>External peer review alone</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides impartial view but with “insider” knowledge</li> <li>• Provides an external assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of always achieving an average mark as organisations will themselves be reviewed in turn</li> <li>• Risk of partiality</li> </ul>
<i>External review by global certification agency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides donors and other stakeholders with assurance of quality</li> <li>• Provides credibility</li> <li>• Allows for consistency and sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impractical – there are global agencies and thousands of actors</li> <li>• Risk of partiality</li> <li>• Lack of clarity around who this body would be accountable to</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification will create barriers to entry particularly for smaller agencies</li> <li>• Unlikely to work where standards are in conflict with national standards</li> <li>• An external body would be monolithic</li> <li>• Creating an agency which all committed aid organisations would support for verification would be costly and take time and there is no guarantee of global buy-in</li> </ul>
<i>Verification by disaster-affected populations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This group is at the centre of the process and their views are critical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time investment to ensure that populations understand what is being asked of them</li> <li>• Potential lack of objectivity</li> </ul>

Some of the key issues raised in the discussion on internal versus external verification were as follows:

**Educational rather than punitive role:** There was a strong feeling in both the individual and group discussions that if verification is carried out either through peer review processes or by an external body the focus should be on education and encouragement rather than on punitive measures for non-compliance. Discussions, particularly in Latin America, emphasised the feeling that verification processes that are perceived to be designed and imposed by the North and the West may be considered as imposed on the South when what is required are locally driven solutions.

**Responsibility for external validation:** Various opinions were expressed about who should be responsible for external validation. The role of host governments was seen to be key by some and looked towards positive developments such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent International Disaster Response Law initiative that would have some pre-conditions for organisations to work in-country. Others were cautious about the role of host governments indicating that national validation, as seen to date, is often a system of control and not focused on quality. Host governments interviewed disagreed stating that such control was necessary to limit the influx of non-professional organisations into their countries during a crisis. It was also proposed that the cluster leads should be responsible for validation of projects in accordance with the standards. However, others indicated the difficulties around this are that the cluster system does not operate in all humanitarian contexts and not all organisations (particularly the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and the non-traditional actors) would subscribe to the UN being a validation body. A number of Asian organisations

emphasised that certification by an external body is necessary to ensure compliance (as with the current HAP certification). An exception that was noted was with a key emerging actor, China, where the feeling is that external verification is unlikely to have any weight in terms of assurance of compliance.

**Steps needed before compliance is a focus:** Critical issues were identified by persons canvassed that need to be addressed before compliance becomes a focus such as defining the standards, then raising awareness of them, followed by training and implementation. It was felt that these issues need to be focused on before compliance can be a priority.

**Combination of internal/external models:** Individual interviews, particularly with headquarters and capital-based staff, proposed that different models are required for different organisation types. For larger and more established organisations external verification was seen to be the way forward whereas for younger, evolving and non-traditional actors, internal self-assessment was seen as the most appropriate approach with an eventual transition to peer review and then potentially external verification. The idea of levels within models was also linked to the discussion on mandatory verification or not as discussed below. The importance of continuing to engage in substantial and credible dialogue with emergent organisations was emphasised during the consultation process due to the fear and concern that anything coming from the “international community” in terms of accountability is often perceived to be rooted in anti-terrorism concerns and that verification and assessment is a means of exclusion of southern and non-traditional actors.

*“It’s very easy for bigger organisations which operate with large budgets to have one person dedicated to compliance with standards. We have a small budget and find ourselves looking at compliance only at times of donor reports.”*

*(Aid Worker – Middle East region)*

**Challenge of partner/network organisations:** Those organisations working with partners and partner organisations themselves felt that monitoring of compliance by partners should not be carried out by the “donating” partner. However, it was also acknowledged that there are likely to always be situations where verification of partner implementation of the standards will be difficult where for example there is limited or no access as has been seen in Somalia in recent years or in some parts of Syria currently.

#### *Mandatory or voluntary verification*

As indicated in graph 9 above, aid workers who completed the survey showed a preference for a mandatory verification process. Respondents from Asia were distinct in being stronger in their desire for a mandatory system, according to the survey results.

More nuanced and cautious views were provided from FGDs and individual interviews. Some felt that if an organisation makes a commitment then it is mandatory to stand by this commitment although suggesting that there are many practical implications around making verification processes mandatory as organisations would have to sign up to this and those that do not sign up to it will be excluded from the process entirely. Many working with non-traditional actors pointed out, given the number and range of these new actors,

that there are question marks around how realistic it would be to ask that they immediately sign up to a mandatory verification process when they may not even be familiar with the standards and their implications. The notion of exclusion also extended to those traditional humanitarian actors, for example the non-English-speaking NGO communities (French and Spanish-speaking NGOs were given as examples). The voluntary nature of Sphere was considered by some, including some of the donors spoken to, to be one of its strengths and although a number of challenges in implementing Sphere have been noted it remains the best known and most used of the standards within the JSI.

A related issue raised was what the penalties for non-compliance would be if a mandatory system was in place. Although some saw a potential role for host governments, most in favour of such a system pointed towards the responsibility of donor governments in ensuring some level of compliance linked to funding provided. This solution also has to be balanced with the desire for an educative rather than punitive process as described above.

The risk of creating a compliance-oriented culture linked to funding was raised by a number of respondents, again emphasising the positive voluntary nature of Sphere which has been so attractive to many but is equally seen as a weakness for others. Nevertheless, a constant request from aid workers was that donors take more responsibility for linking their funding to compliance with standards and humanitarian principles. This is a trend that has already been seen, for example to varying degrees with the governments of Australia, Denmark, the UK and with the European Union, and will continue to grow, according to donor representatives. There was the impression that if donors decide to more strongly link standards compliance to implementation of the standards then de facto some form of verification will become mandatory, at least for those organisations that depend upon donor funding. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the lack of consistency amongst donors on compliance and funding, notably those 17 that have signed the *Principles of Good Practice and Humanitarian Donorship* was of concern to persons canvassed. The consultation team did not have the opportunity to speak with any private donors or emerging donors from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East or Asia, so it is not possible to provide information on their approach to standards implementation and the potential link with financing.

Linked to the question of mandatory verses voluntary verification was the notion of a range of different levels to comply with. A large number of those spoken to felt that having different levels (as is the case with HAP and People In Aid) was important so that organisations can see in a step-by-step process the achievements that they are making in terms of reaching standards. In addition, having different levels of assessment and verification would be reflective of the variety of operational humanitarian organisations and limit exclusion of smaller organizations or those operating in contexts where resources are scarce. It was also felt that segmenting verification is likely to be less overwhelming, particularly for new actors with different levels allowing for incremental change such as initial awareness and understanding of standards with management commitment to them, moving on to changing internal systems to allow for implementation of standards and the next step being verification of compliance, moving from internal to external. The workshops on compliance and verification convened at the Copenhagen Conference in March 2013 endorsed the approach of creating multiple-layered levels of verification whilst ensuring that affected populations remain

at the heart of this process. Different options for including inputs from affected populations were proposed including setting up a system for populations to provide feedback through mobile phones and SMS to more traditional participatory mapping exercises. Some were however critical of having different levels, using HAP as an example where it was perceived that the majority of members have no intention of moving to the next step of certification.

Other points raised in the Copenhagen workshops on compliance and verification, which were also raised in a number of individual interviews and FGDs, were the necessity for leadership commitment within organisations that sign up to the standards. From a practical perspective, ensuring that the standards have indicators against which compliance can be measured was seen to be something that would assist in the field as well as in headquarters/capital cities in terms of monitoring implementation. Some proposed a stronger role of the UN in promoting, if not verifying, the use of standards with a connection to the Transformative Agenda, the role of UN OCHA and engagement of the cluster systems. It was also noted however that the clusters already struggle at times with competing priorities, in addition to this system not being in place in all operational contexts.

*“Professionalization and performance review processes as well as feedback loops are all part of the performance review. These issues are relevant to all the standards.”*  
*(Aid Workers – Australasia Region)*

## 5.4. Future views on humanitarian standards

*In general, the national government perspective is not considered in the standards debate – and we are the first “responder” in most cases. Aid organisations have to recognise that.”*  
*(National Government Representative – Asia Pacific Region)*

*Finding 17: Broad consensus is seen for action on greater awareness, consolidation/harmonisation, putting affected populations at the centre of standards and for humanitarian principles to be at its cornerstone.*

*Finding 18: A more detailed concept for consolidation of standards was proposed although it was not of high priority for aid workers.*

*Finding 19: The implications for the structure of the three initiatives is not a focus of feedback although a coherent approach implied greater harmonisation between the organisations and the services offered and closer proximity to humanitarian action.*

*Finding 20: Aid workers do not want the current situation to continue as it is or to face undue pressure from donors and systems that would lead to exclusion of some actors.*

*Finding 21: There is a need for a structure to oversee governance of quality and accountability with broad representation of all stakeholders.*

The consultation process sought stakeholder views on the potential evolution of the standards and opinions on what characteristics stakeholders would like to see in a suitable set of standards for guiding humanitarian work as well as the worst-case scenario in the coming years.

**The view of the three initiatives:** The three Q&A initiatives involved in the JSI have already put forward a number of views on what they believe is required today and in the future in order to ensure accountable and acceptable provision of assistance to those affected by conflict and disaster. They have also identified some of the critical challenges that will be faced whilst trying to ensure this. Through a series of workshops and meetings held between mid-2011 and today, the initiatives have identified the following challenges<sup>45</sup>:

**Table 6: JSI-identified challenges**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>What does this mean?<sup>46</sup></b>	<b>Has this been confirmed in the consultation?</b>
<i>Challenge 1 – The changing aid environment</i>	The provision of aid in crisis is no longer undertaken solely by western based NGOs, UN agencies and international organisations. Increasingly large southern NGOs, new local NGOs, small expert	Yes

<sup>45</sup> These challenges have been identified for example at the “Workshop on building more coherence in quality and accountability initiatives” 20 July 2011.

<sup>46</sup> As stated in a joint communique of 5 August 2011 emanating from the 20 July 2011 workshop.

	NGOs, local & municipal authorities, local and foreign military and commercial enterprises, community and religious groups and consultants are playing a role.	
<i>Challenge 2 – Expanding the association</i>	Opportunities for developing a common brand to all three initiatives in the future and seeking ways to become more strongly associated, building around a common vision and workplan.	Partially. The need for a common brand has been confirmed. Although a risk was seen for the three existing brands and that of the Sphere companion standards.
<i>Challenge 3 – Verification of competency</i>	There are calls from crisis-affected communities, governments of disaster-prone countries, donor governments and foundations as well as the general public for a fair global system to help objectively verify the impact and quality of humanitarian aid agencies against agreed principles and standards.....building a system for this is a logical extension of the work already undertaken by the three initiatives.	Partially. Stakeholders reached agreed that a system is required but different forms (not necessarily global) were proposed.

In addition, a meeting of the Boards of the three initiatives agreed on the need to engage with new stakeholders, the changing operational context, the challenges in ensuring adherence and the pressure on resources.<sup>47</sup>

The three initiatives also agreed on a series of decisive actions for immediate implementation to start to address these challenges<sup>48</sup>:

**Table 7: JSI-agreed decisions**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action required</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Confirmation of requirement by stakeholder consultation</b>
1	Joint deployment in response to the Horn of Africa (HoA) crisis to provide advice and assistance to responding agencies	Completed	Those aware of the HoA deployment were not convinced that it had worked well. Regional/country representation to provide ongoing support by the three initiatives (or whatever form they may take in the future) was seen as more appropriate through the consultation

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the JSI Joint Meeting of the Boards (25 April 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

2	Creation of a single web portal where stakeholders can access the standards, tools, case studies and knowledge base of the initiatives	Partially. The JSI has its own website which provides links to the websites of the three initiatives	Yes
3	Development of a common handbook to consolidate and streamline the material within the three standards	Not started	Yes
4	Development of a common evidence based study	Some work is underway by HAP (and other bodies) to contribute to this action point	Yes
5	Common training module for field staff to enable aid workers to effectively use and apply their standards, protocols and guidance	Not started	Yes (with field staff meaning staff of international and national NGOs as well as other stakeholders)

#### *What do stakeholders want?*

The consultation process sought to identify what stakeholders are looking for in the future with regard to standards as well as to gain an understanding of what is not desired.

Through the consultation, stakeholders identified a number of different measures that would help address the challenges outlined in the previous chapters on accessing, using and implementing the standards. These measures confirmed fully or partially the actions already proposed by the three initiatives as described above, in addition to going further. Stakeholder views ranged from large overarching ideas to small practical steps. Consensus was largely heard in the following four areas and these emerged as key priorities for the large majority of stakeholders:

1) As described in section 5.2, the need for greater **awareness, dissemination and training** was the highest priority stated throughout the consultation. This was seen as important not just with humanitarian organisations but with other critical actors including affected communities, governments, the military and increasingly the private sector. This was stressed in discussions with all groups of stakeholders consulted in this discussion. Many hoped that increased training, dissemination and translation would result in broader outreach to regions not yet considered to be well served by the standards such as Latin America and the Middle East. Practical issues proposed included those already planned

*“There should be one global reference point (an internet platform for example) to access all the different standards”*

*(Aid workers – Latin America Region)*

by the three initiatives: The creation of a single web portal for housing the standards; the development of a common handbook with common branding to consolidate the material contained within the three standards (and others); the creation of simplified graphic materials summarising the standards; the development of field-friendly training modules; and the need for evidence based data focusing on the impact of using and implementing standards.

2) Issues concerning **harmonisation and consolidation** focused on both the practical and the more long term. A minimum step that many believed is needed swiftly is the harmonisation of the texts and structures of the three standards within the JSI with consideration being given to complementarity and overlap. This harmonisation needs to focus on ensuring common language and terminology, including relevant cross-referencing within and outside of the three standards. Related to harmonisation, aid workers both in the field and in the headquarters of national and international NGOs are seeking a **succinct, concise and coherent** set of core standards which are common to HAP, People In Aid and Sphere (as well as other standards relevant for inclusion) and are suitable for broad distribution with the *Good Enough Guide* often cited as a model to follow. The core standards contained within Sphere were considered a good starting point partly due to stakeholder knowledge of these with an emphasis on simplicity and clarity.

3) A resounding response from the consultation FGDs and interviews which was echoed at the Copenhagen Conference was the essential step of ensuring that **conflict and disaster-affected populations are at the heart** of what is developed for the future – their inputs into whatever is created and continual feedback on an ongoing basis are seen as central to the future of Q&A standards from which they are ultimately meant to benefit. FGDs with affected populations highlighted the need for a more accessible way of communicating the standards as well as practical tools to address potential emergencies. This was echoed in the FGDs and interviews in all regions.

4) The desire for **humanitarian principles to be a cornerstone** of the future standards was heard consistently. A concern expressed by the traditional humanitarian actors was that the focus has moved away from these principles to an over emphasis on the technical standards. At the same time, most agreed that a common understanding needed to be found with non-traditional or emerging actors to ensure a connection with their driving interests and motivation for being involved in humanitarian responses. Establishing a common ground was emphasized by many as the necessary starting point with the standards discussion coming later. This point was also mentioned by a number of influential donors who themselves are testing approaches with these actors and have been doing so for some years. There is a risk that starting to talk about standards before a common ground is established reinforces the perception that they are western standards about the way that the West works. This point was also reinforced by host governments consulted.

*“We haven’t seen common approaches of organisations in how programmes are run that assist us – it remains more of a theory than actual application.”*

*(Disaster Affected Population – West Africa Region)*

Aside from these four areas, two areas of key interest to the JSI were: (1) a more detailed concept of overall consolidation and (2) the implications for the structure of the standards organisations. On these two issues, the majority of those canvassed had no direct feedback to provide – as aid workers they were simply too removed from the standards governance and management. Consequently, feedback received on these two issues came more from a limited group, notably board members of the initiatives and specialised Q&A INGO HQ staff as well as during the Copenhagen Conference.

The concept of a **detailed overall consolidation** came up in a number of different discussions during the consultation process and during the Copenhagen Conference. A number of different pictorial images of what this might look like have been proposed (e.g. hats, houses, triangles, trees and umbrellas). However, the basic concept was similar and as follows:

- Locate all the standards in one single text
- Place a set of humanitarian principles at the hierarchal top (taken from the Humanitarian Charter and/or the RC/RC/NGO Code of Conduct)
- Below the principles, broad cross-cutting themes including governance, quality, human resources and accountability are situated
- Below the cross-cutting themes sit a collection of technical standards, nominally separated by sector/profession.

Those canvassed did not echo a broad consensus for this solution mainly because their priorities were elsewhere, notably the need for greater awareness of what exists and a practical harmonisation that could be undertaken relatively quickly as described above.

Concerning the **future structure of three standards initiatives**, the consultation was not able to identify what stakeholders were looking for in terms of how HAP, People In Aid and Sphere should fit together as again, this was not a priority for the large majority of aid workers or other stakeholders. However, the strong desire to move towards a more harmonised and simplified structure of standards or set of standards and increased and coherent support services such as training and awareness-raising indicates that any future structure would need more harmonisation to provide support to such developments.

One feedback on structure and support that was heard in several regions was the distance between the European base of the three initiatives and the location of humanitarian action which is a point to consider for any future structural thinking. Further, some suggested that a global framework needs to be put in place to consider requests from new standards wishing to join any harmonised model in order to ensure complementarities and avoid duplication.

The question of validation, discussed in section 5.3 also raised key questions about compliance and verification in the future. As detailed in this section, there was a moderate preference for internal mandatory assessment, although many risks were highlighted with no clear consensus found.

Stakeholders drew attention to the fact that since the development of the three Q&A initiatives and their principles and standards the notion of partnership between large international NGOs and smaller local organisations has developed including through the creation of the Principles of Partnership. Today, there is

the sense that in the past this may have been a predominantly financial relationship with the advantages of having many local workers on the ground but now it's more of a relationship of two-directional knowledge flow with local partners wanting to acquire skills from INGOs but also that they offer knowledge and skills based on their understanding of the operating and local environment and adapt service delivery accordingly. From now and into the future this partnership needs to include a common understanding of the principles and standards under which both partners are operating.

**The need to coordinate and incorporate other initiatives:** In December 2011 the IASC Principals meeting endorsed five Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP)<sup>49</sup> and agreed to incorporate the CAAP into the policies and operational guidelines

of their organisations and promote them with their partners, within Humanitarian Country Teams and amongst cluster participants. Subsequently an operational framework to assist implementing agencies to find practical entry points for improving accountability to affected populations in the project cycle was developed. During the JSI stakeholder consultation a significant number of respondents, particularly those working at project and programme level, stressed the need for activity and indicator based guidance to assist in the signposting and practical implementation of the standards. The CAAP Operational Framework and Tools<sup>50</sup> were however not mentioned during FGDs with the IASC and with UN cluster leads. The Operational Framework makes clear linkages to the HAP standard (and to a lesser extent Sphere) and the tools were created with input from all three initiatives (as well as other Q&A bodies). The tools and framework were raised in a small number of individual interviews as a potential practical way forwards. However, it appears that they are not yet well known or disseminated either within the UN system or outside it.

*“To improve, the standards should work together, work on a regional level and be translated into a public comprehension. The important thing is to place the affected populations first, they are the priority.”*

*(Aid workers – Latin America region)*

From now and into the future the JSI needs to ensure linkages between itself and other significant projects and initiatives focusing on Q&A. These include (but are not limited to):

- the **Transformative Agenda** as the whole issue of accountability to affected populations is at the heart of the Transformative Agenda.<sup>51</sup>
- the **Listening Project** to provide useful insights from affected populations which may contribute to shaping the process.
- the **Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB)** which has gathered learning on accountability to affected populations and has created tools such as the Good Enough Guide and associated training materials.
- **Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA)** which has now gained commitment from the humanitarian sector to continue with a next phase of work to

49 With the exception of the ICRC and IFRC who have their own accountability mechanisms.

50 IASC CAAP Tools (4 July 2012).

51 The Transformative Agenda looks at three core issues, leadership, coordination and accountability.

transform the way the sector responds to professional development of its staff through the creation of an International Professional Development and Quality Framework.

- In terms of building the evidence base around the impact of standards, the JSI needs to link into the ongoing work of **ALNAP**, and of course HAP as this was an area that was questioned by many during the consultation process and this evidence is required if stakeholders, particularly new ones, are to feel more comfortable about ongoing adherence to and implementation of the standards.
- **URD's Quality Compass** to ensure inclusion of the French-based and Francophone speaking organisations in the process.
- Academic research around the standards from organisations such as **the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)**.

### *What don't people want?*

Although some stakeholders felt that in order for organisations to adhere to the standards greater donor pressure and consistency is required, there remains an overwhelming concern that the standards should not be imposed by donors centred on the fact that standards should be viewed as a commitment to demonstrating good practice rather than being a condition for financing. In addition, a concern that was raised during the Copenhagen Conference was that if the standards were too linked to donors there is a risk that the independence and impartiality (or at least perceived impartiality) of NGOs would be compromised.

It is clear that stakeholders do not want the status quo to continue and are concerned about duplication of effort with overlapping responsibilities (particularly noted amongst discussions with international organisations) or a universal standard that nobody likes or uses.

A number of stakeholders including donors and NGOs were concerned about a dilution of the Sphere standards and indicators but would like greater coherence between these three standards and others.

Concerns were also raised by both international and national level organisations that new sets of standards should not be created by larger organisations which are inaccessible to smaller ones. This in turn is linked to the desire that the future around standards setting should not be imposed by western NGOs with little or no consultation with the South.

*“One global standard is unlikely to be universally applicable but the principle and guidance it provides is important.”*

*(Red Cross/Red Crescent Representatives – Asia Pacific Region)*

## 6. Concluding remarks

With the participation of some 2,000 people, the JSI Global Stakeholder Consultation has gathered the opinions of a very broad range of stakeholders from across the globe. The research gathered information about their use and implementation of the three standards as well as looking into issues of compliance and verification while providing insights as to what stakeholders hope for in the future.

The consultation has served to confirm a number of the issues already raised by the JSI, as well as highlighting some new areas. Drawn from these findings, the consultation team came to six key conclusions:

### **Conclusion 1**

Today organisations have to balance many priorities including implementation of standards, an issue that was particularly felt at the field level. In this regard, although the issues of duplication and potential confusion upon which the JSI has focused to date were raised, the majority of those reached through the consultation felt that the existing standards were not sufficiently known, clear, used and supported – notably in non-English speaking regions and amongst national NGOs. Further, the consultation has served to highlight the outstanding need for greater awareness and the intelligent contextualisation of standards to avoid organisations being indicator-driven without actually meeting the needs of those they are meant to assist.

### **Conclusion 2**

Throughout all four themes covered in the consultation there is a constant call for the inclusion of affected populations, host governments, new and emerging actors and government donors in all areas of standards development as well as continued input from current users. This is not a call to abandon existing standards but this consultation believes a three-step process is required:

- Step 1 - issuing of a succinct and concise set of core standards – 10 maximum - drawn from the current body of humanitarian standards (these three and others potentially taking the Sphere core standards as a starting point) that will serve as an entrance level for current and potential standards users and as a key awareness tool
- Step 2 - a series of immediate actions to harmonise the three standards in text, terminology and structure
- Step 3 - a longer term approach to consider a more detailed consolidation of the three standards and other relevant ones with the humanitarian principles at their cornerstone.

It is recognised that incorporating the thinking of and reaching agreement with relevant stakeholders on a detailed consolidation will be a lengthy process but if real and tangible engagement with *all* stakeholders is to be achieved, as universally requested through the consultation, then the time required to do so needs to be acknowledged. If the Q&A initiatives themselves and those that support them are willing to adopt this approach then the potential is a significant positive change in terms of finding common ground amongst a large number of stakeholders.

### **Conclusion 3**

A universal message which emerged in the research was that whatever is built for the future the voice and the power dynamics of conflict and disaster-affected populations needs to change within the process and they cannot be seen purely as recipients. Their inclusion in a well thought-through and practical manner not only in the creation and adaptation of standards but also in ongoing feedback regarding the implementation and validation of standards in the future is seen as of critical importance, as viewed by this consultation.

### **Conclusion 4**

The issue of compliance and verification including how best to establish a system, which would meet the needs of all stakeholders generated a number of diverse options with no global consensus found. Where there was broad agreement was that any system would need to include a series of levels and be educative rather than punitive as well as having accountability to affected populations at its core. Examining the various options, the one most viable seen by this consultation appeared to be the combining of internal assessments with external peer reviews and audit, but this would need to be further tested with the community. Again, in order to ensure a system, which is recognised and supported by all actors, will take time and effort to ensure that dialogue and agreement is found, particularly with new and emerging actors. It is also important for donors to have a consistent approach to standards in both resource allocation and M&E. However, the lack of a comprehensive solution yet for compliance and verification shouldn't be an obstacle to moving towards a harmonisation of standards as described above. It is anticipated that these findings will be of use to the current certification review of the SCHR.

### **Conclusion 6**

The feedback gathered from aid workers focused primarily on the standards themselves and not the organisational aspects of the three organisations which respondents found to be more difficult to assess. However, what can be extrapolated from the feedback for the organisational modelling that is foreseen is two points: the desire for harmonised standards implies that the services of the three initiatives should be harmonised, notably in communications, training, field support and policy development. On this basis it could be argued that the three initiatives and other initiatives such as the Sphere companion standards need a consistent set of support services which could potentially include training, outreach and support to ensure greater implementation of standards. Secondly, the limited awareness of standards seen in some regions, for example in Latin America and Middle East, which could be partially due to the physical absence of standards initiatives or representatives and the distance between their European headquarters and the field.

### **Conclusion 7**

Through this consultation and the JSI in general, the humanitarian community has provided a mandate to bring about change on humanitarian standards and the quality of humanitarian aid. This consultation has produced a series of proposals for the way forward to establish a more harmonised and effective set of standards. To bring these proposals to fruition, the support of the three initiatives and other Q&A bodies, the major INGOs, NGO networks, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and UN agencies and OCHA will be key. This consultation believes that further thought will be needed as to what body will oversee a more harmonised approach now and in the future.

## 7. Proposals for the way forward

On the basis of the key findings emanating from the consultation a number of proposed options for the way forward are suggested in order to help the JSI and the three Q&A initiatives progress.

Whilst a number of the proposals can start to be acted upon in the immediate future, others will take longer to put into place requiring dialogue with and inputs from a broad range of stakeholders.

Practical proposals for the way forward are provided for ensuring a more streamlined set of standards and approaches to support the dissemination of these as well as increased engagement from current users. For the issue of the best structure to support the continued and broadened application of the standards, some proposals are put forward that could serve as a basis for the upcoming JSI-planned organisational review.

*Table 8: Recommendations*

Recommendations	Supporting findings and conclusions
<b>Immediate – June – December 2013</b>	
<b>1. Awareness raising and training:</b> The three initiatives should work together to boost awareness and training, especially in non-English speaking regions and for national NGOs, facilitated through: a single web portal; a common evidence based study; and a common training module adapted to local contexts.	Findings 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 18 Conclusion 1
<b>2. Initiation of a core standard process:</b> A process should be initiated by the three initiatives with the aim of producing a simplified set of standards, with a limited number of points (maximum of ten), drawn from the existing body of standards. Sphere's six core standards could be used as a starting point for this.	Findings 2, 18, 19 Conclusion 2
<b>3. Harmonisation of three standards:</b> A study should be commissioned or carried out by staff of the three initiatives and/or their members to harmonise the three standards in terms of structure, text and terminology and adjusted accordingly. This would then lead to a common handbook as already suggested by some members of the initiatives <sup>52</sup> .	Findings 5, 18 Conclusion 2
<b>Long term – December 2013 – December 2015</b>	
<b>4. Increased implementation:</b> The three initiatives should work together to increase integration of the standards within humanitarian organisations, notably through consistent guidance and support to organisations.	Finding 9 Conclusion 5

<sup>52</sup> The suggestion was put forward at the Workshop on Building More Coherence in Quality and Accountability Initiatives held in Geneva on 20 July 2011 which was attended by initiative members.

<p><b>5. Inclusive approach:</b> The three initiatives should work on reaching out to two key groups and include them in their discussions: the affected populations and the new humanitarian actors. Further consultative processes would be required for this, which may include discussions with other actors who have been engaged in discussions of this sort for some time. At the same time, dialogue needs to continue with other key actors such as the UN, NGOs, governments and donors.</p>	<p>Findings 16, 17 Conclusion 2, 3</p>
<p><b>6. Detailed consolidation:</b> A more in-depth consolidation of the three standards and other ones needs to be studied and considered.</p>	<p>Findings 17, 19 Conclusion 2</p>
<p><b>7. Compliance and verification:</b> As the consultation did not produce findings based on a broad consensus, it is proposed that options put forward in this paper are used as a basis for discussion within the SCHR certification review.</p>	<p>Findings 12, 13, 15 Conclusion 4</p>
<p><b>8. Donor role:</b> Donors should work further on operationalisation of principles and commitments that they have made regarding the standards and have a consistent approach on the use of standards in both resource allocation (funding decisions) and evaluation and assessment, within the limits of national priorities and specificities. The availability of dedicated financial resources for partners would assist in standards implementation.</p>	<p>Findings 11, 14 Conclusion 4</p>
<p><b>9. Organisational model:</b> The organisational review should take into account the two key relevant findings of this consultation: The need for harmonisation of support services (such as training, outreach, support and guidance) and proximity to humanitarian field operations.</p>	<p>Findings 10, 20 Conclusion 5</p>
<p><b>10. Oversight model:</b> The leadership of the humanitarian community should consider how standards will be governed at the highest level including the potential need for an oversight body/framework to oversee the broad questions of where standards are needed and where duplication and cross-referencing is required.</p>	<p>Findings 21 Conclusion 6</p>

## Annex 1: Methodological outline

The consultation team adopted a variety of different qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to canvass stakeholders. Document and literature review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and an on-line survey formed the basis of data gathering with an emphasis placed on identifying key informants amongst the various stakeholder groups targeted.

### 1. Key lines of enquiry

The research was focused upon four central themes under which a number of key lines of enquiry, agreed by the JSI Advisory Group, were pursued.

Theme	Key question/s	Key lines of enquiry	Proposed stakeholder focus (listed in order of priority)	Challenges
<i>Use and accessibility of standards</i>	<p>How are the current standards used?</p> <p>How accessible are the current standards?</p>	<p>What standards do you use in your daily work? (above three and others) At what point in the project cycle (assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, review, evaluation) do you use them?</p> <p>When considering the three sets of standards (HAP, People In Aid and Sphere) do you feel that they improve the quality of programmes or not? Are you able to provide evidence or examples of how they have improved programming?</p> <p>On the whole are these three standards (HAP, People In Aid, Sphere) easy to apply or not? Where possible give examples?</p> <p>Are standards relevant to the context you work in or not?</p>	<p>Aid organisations,</p> <p>standards organisations</p>	<p>To ensure that the scope of the research goes beyond the traditional / mainstream aid agencies.</p> <p>Access to NGO/CSO community for truly representative sample</p>

		<p>What is your motivation for applying these standards?</p> <p>Have you received specific training on the implementation of the standards?</p> <p>If you want to refer to the standards how do you access them? (online, hard copy, already downloaded onto laptop) and if you want to share them with others how do you do so?</p> <p>Do you feel that standards are imposed on you or not? If so, by whom?</p>		
<i>Standards implementation</i>	<p>What is the most effective way of ensuring standards implementation and impact?</p>	<p>How can implementation of standards be improved?</p> <p>What currently makes it difficult to implement standards?</p> <p>What currently helps to make sure standards are followed?</p> <p>What could be done to make implementation of the above-mentioned three standards (and any others) easier?</p> <p>If there was support for integration, what form might a harmonised standard take?</p> <p>How would you ensure integration led to greater impact?</p> <p>Do you have any evidence where the use of standards has had an impact (positive or negative)?</p>	<p>Aid organisations, standards organisations, governments, Donors, Academic organisations</p>	<p>A diverse range of opinions and data being collected which does not lead to any obvious steer on standards integration</p>

<i>Standards compliance &amp; verification</i>	How can organisational and staff compliance and implementation of the standards be verified?	<p>How can organisational compliance with the standards be monitored and assured?</p> <p>Is there any difference in monitoring and ensuring compliance if it is a partner or for your organisation's direct operations?</p> <p>How can staff implementation of the standards be monitored and assured?</p> <p>Would internal verification processes be sufficient or would external processes be preferred?</p> <p>Should internal or external verification processes be mandatory or voluntary? Why?</p> <p>Which internal and external verification models are you aware of that have worked well and why?</p> <p>Is having more than one level of verification helpful? (if necessary to prompt, People in Aid have levels including "working toward compliance" and "fully compliant" or there can be minimum standards and best practice standards).</p>	Aid organisations, standards organisations, donors, governments, academic organisations	Obtaining objective responses
<i>Future needs</i>	Optimally, how will humanitarian Q&A standards look in ten years' time? Is there a need	<p>Imagine 10 years from now, what would be the characteristics of a suitable set of standards that could guide humanitarian work?</p> <p>What would be a positive step for you in terms of improving</p>	Aid organisations, standards organisations, donors, governments, affected-	Lack of stakeholder opinion on the future.

	for standards to evolve? And how?	<p>the quality and accountability of programming?</p> <p>What is the worst thing that could happen in terms of standards in the next 10 years?</p> <p>What would make your job even more difficult in relation to standards? What would make your job easier in terms of standards?</p> <p>How can you ensure there is continuous improvement in your programmes?</p>	populations	
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## 2. Documentation and literature review:

The team reviewed documentation from:

- Donor policies and strategies
- Aid organisation standard-related documentation
- Humanitarian Q&A initiatives
- Accountability case studies
- Academic research material
- HAP 2010 standard review material
- Sphere standard revision material

The literature review provided an objective entry point for the team, and served as a broad survey of existing data and information both directly and tangentially related to the three standards.

A second objective had been to gather any evidence of the impact of standards and to provide an annex covering this if sufficient information was gathered. Unfortunately there was insufficient documentation available to undertake this secondary objective compounded by limited time for the team to undertake any more in-depth research on this topic.

## 3. Stakeholder interviews:

Within the research timeframe it was envisaged that approximately 100 people would be accessed directly by the Consultation consultants through one-to-one interviews and an additional 50 through interviews undertaken by standards member organisations themselves, under the guidance of the Consultation consultants. A total of 174 people were approached with a request for interview. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 116 individuals against an agreed checklist of key issues and questions in line with the four themes and key lines of enquiry. The one-to-one stakeholder interviews allowed for an open line of questioning and the interview guides were designed to remain flexible in order to respond to the different

stakeholder groups. The semi-structured nature of the guides and interviews allowed for in-depth probing into various issues and a deeper exploration into the complexity of the topics being covered where required. It was ultimately not possible to rely on members of the Q&A initiatives to hold one-to-one interviews (50 envisaged) on behalf of the consultation for a number of reasons. This includes the already stretched capacity of the Advisory Group and the consultation team to facilitate this combined with the fact that a number of members were holding FGDs on behalf of the consultation.

Guidance was sought from the JSI Advisory Group as to which stakeholders it thought were key, with which organisations and individuals. In a snowballing approach key informants were also asked to identify other stakeholders that it was important to talk to and the consultation team supplemented this with their own research as to who to engage with as well as drawing on their own networks.

Discussions took place with field and headquarters staff and with those involved in administrative/support as well as programmatic issues from national and international organisations.

The one-to-one discussions reached respondents from across the globe and from different parts of the humanitarian community with the main focus being on; aid workers (HQ and field), governments, donors and other Q&A initiatives.

#### **4. Online survey**

In order to access as extensive a number of stakeholders as possible (both in terms of numbers and diversity) an on-line survey targeting field and HQ staff of the 3 initiatives members and constituents; international and local NGO field and HQ staff members; field and HQ staff of the UN and International RCRC Movement was conducted. The survey focused only on actual and potential users of the standards.

The survey aimed to reach a study population of all relevant humanitarian organisations and served to capture the attitudes and beliefs of those involved (or potentially involved) in using the standards. Questions in the survey were structured and a combination of open and closed questions were used.

The study population for this survey was all humanitarian organisations involved or potentially involved in implementing Q&A standards. For the purpose of the survey, the unit of analysis was the organisation and not the individual (i.e. the sampling considered a humanitarian organisation as the unit of analysis and not an individual staff member as a unit of analysis). Further, field offices and headquarters were considered separate units of analysis (i.e. Oxfam HQ considered as one unit, Oxfam Australia considered as another unit and Oxfam field office in Bangladesh considered as another unit).

To define the population an initial scoping exercise was done on the potential number of the study population. The ability to estimate the size of the population was limited given that no known figures exist on the number of current and potential humanitarian organisations that could use standards. According to the Union of International Associations, there were some 58,000 international organisations and NGOs in 2004<sup>53</sup>. A more accurate estimate of “active” NGOs could be based on those 3,500 NGOs that currently

53 Sources: <http://www.uia.be/sites/uia.be/files/statistics/organizations/types-2004.pdf>, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/349.pdf>, <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=17>

have consultative status with ECOSOC with 144 of these which have general status (implying that they are large well established NGOs with a broad geographic reach). The Overseas Development Institute estimated in 2003 that there were 3,000-4,000 internationally operating NGOs, although mostly in the development field and that in reality there were some 260 NGOs active, with fewer than ten being predominant and influential. In addition, there are currently some 100 international organisations that have observer status at UN General Assembly and some 100 UN entities or agencies operational. However, in all these statistics, no distinction is made of those operating in the humanitarian field and no summary information is available on humanitarian NGOs operating at the national level only (n.b. India has 3.3 million and Russia has 277,000 registered NGOs). On this basis, it is presumed that the estimated total population of interest for this survey is maximum 4,000 organisations (120 large humanitarian actors and some 3,800 medium-size actors), excluding small national NGOs whose numbers cannot be accurately estimated.

For the purpose of the survey, organisations were divided into small, medium and large which was determined on the basis of the individual’s response. The initial strata were as follows:

<b>Sampling frame for online survey of humanitarian organisations</b>			
<b>Strata (group)</b>	<b>Estimated total population (%)</b>	<b>Sample size - No. of responses needed (5% confidence level / interval)</b>	<b>No. of responses received</b>
International humanitarian organisations - HQ (NGOs, IOs & UN agencies active in humanitarian sector)	339 (120 – HQ 219 – Field)	311	566
Medium size NGOs with humanitarian focus – operating mainly nationally (all regions)	3800	349	183
Other type of organisation*	N/A	N/A	87
Did not respond to this question	N/A	N/A	165
Response – incomplete/ duplications	N/A	N/A	(508)
<b>Total</b>		<b>960</b>	<b>1001</b>

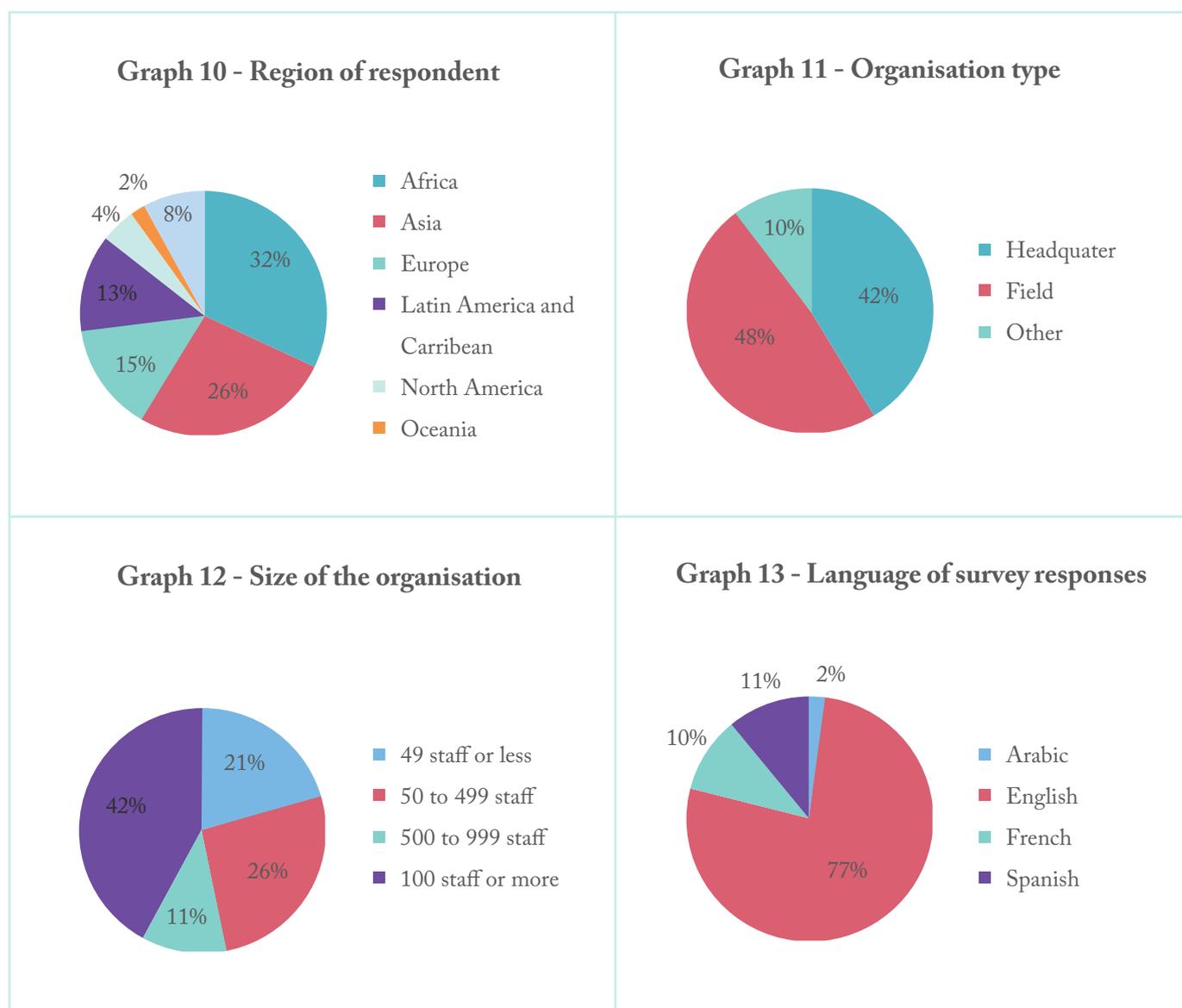
*\*comments left by respondents indicated that “other” were mainly consultants or worked with governments or education institutions.*

In total, 1509 persons commenced the survey. With a view to increase the reliability of our results, only the respondents who answered a minimum of three questions were kept. So 233 responses were eliminated which did not meet this criterion (n=1276). Out of the 1276 responses, 371 responses were further analysed as they contained duplicate IP addresses (indicating from the same organisation and location). These 371

were combined into 102 responses<sup>54</sup> to ensure that every location and organisation was counted only once (n=1007). This meant on average, each of these 102 organisations had some 3.6 responses from the same location. Out of the remaining responses, six responses were eliminated based on their comments e.g. irrelevant messages and use of special characters) (n=1001).

In analysing the survey data, statistical analyses were undertaken to determine the statistical significance of results based on region<sup>55</sup>, type of organisation, size of organisation and role (HQ or field). Where statistical significance was found, for example, that one region showed a difference in response to other regions (5-10% level of confidence) this was noted in the report.

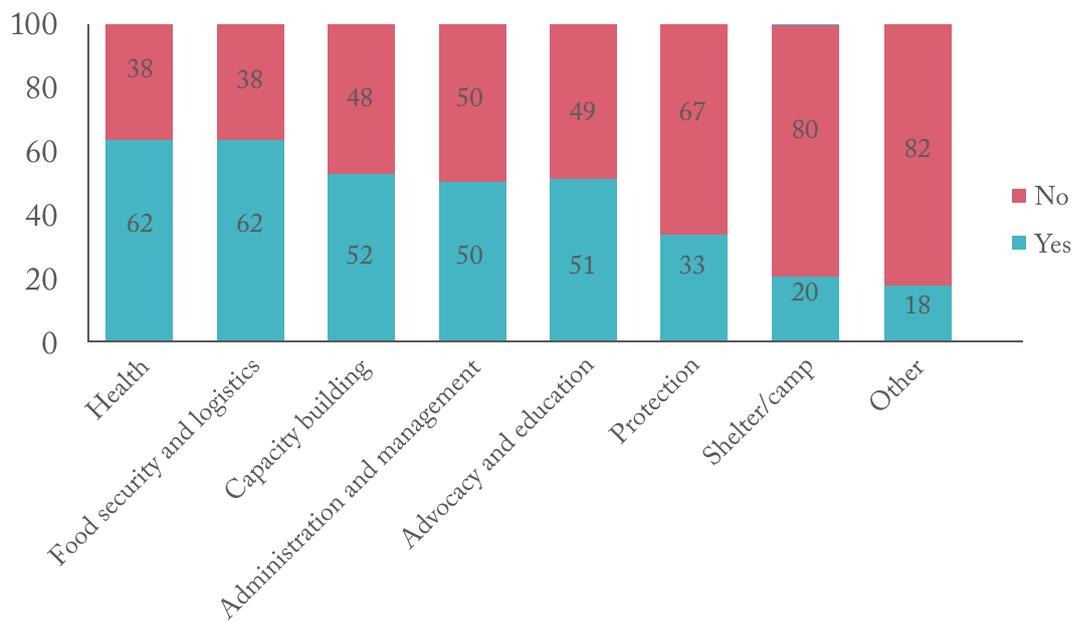
Following are several graphs illustrating the demographic make-up of survey respondents:



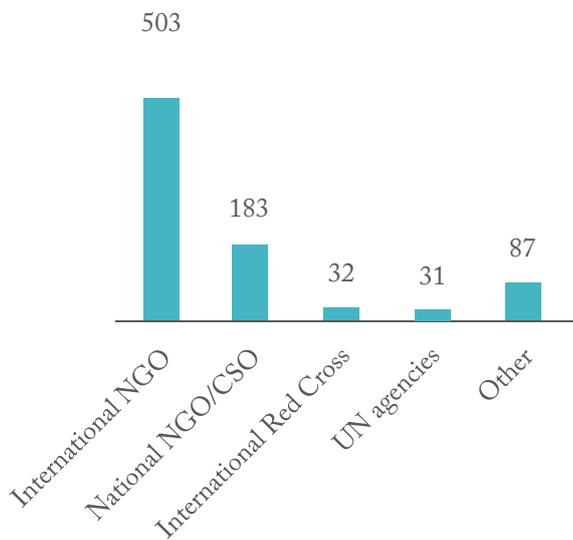
54 Responses from identical IP addresses (indicating same organisation and location) were combined by averaging out responses or keeping the most popular answers, where relevant. All written comments were analysed separately and not discarded.

55 The country field was re-coded into six regions: (North America, Latin American and the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania), based on the official UN classification: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>

**Graph 14 - Sector of the respondent's organisation (%)**



**Graph 15 - Type of organisation (no.)**



## 5. Regional events

It was envisaged that, with the support of the Advisory Group, the four JSI consultants would attend existing regional events or create events in order to:

- Provide an overview of the JSI
- Gather opinions from the group following the four key themes being followed in the semi-structured interview and on-line survey processes.
- Brief participating NGO partners on the focus group discussions (where relevant)

The regional events aimed to reach predominantly practitioners i.e. those responsible for actively using and implementing the standards.

In order to avoid incurring additional unnecessary costs a number of the regional events were annexed on to existing regional events as follows:

**Asia:** Bangkok – two workshops annexed onto the CWS P/A regional Quality and Accountability Workshop

Other regional events (attended by country level and regional level participants) were specifically organised for the JSI consultation as follows:

**Middle East:** Cairo facilitated by the Humanitarian Forum

Beirut facilitated by Caritas Lebanon

**Europe:** Copenhagen facilitated by Danida and Dan Church Aid

Geneva (x 5) facilitated by the EU Mission, the Swiss Mission, UN OCHA, and the IASC Secretariat.

Brussels (x2) facilitated by VOICE

Paris facilitated by Coordination Sud

**East Africa:** Nairobi (x2) facilitated by RedR and the East and Central IAWG on Disaster Preparedness

Juba (x2) facilitated by RedR and the South Sudan NGO Forum

**W Africa:** Dakar facilitated by OFADEC

Richard Toll (Senegal) facilitated by OFADEC

**Latin America:** Panama City facilitated by Save the Children

Tabasco (Mexico) facilitated by Save the Children

**North America:** Washington DC facilitated by InterAction

New York facilitated by the IASC Secretariat

The regional events were facilitated by consultation team members and/or by consultants sub-contracted by the team with the relevant language and facilitation skills to undertake this role. The JSI Coordinator facilitated some of the regional events and the JSI Administrator attended one event in order to assist with organisational set-up.

## 6. Country level focus group discussions on behalf of the JSI consultation<sup>56</sup>

Some 56 organisations were active in supporting the JSI consultation process by organising focus groups at country level with their staff and with affected communities. For the latter, the key lines of enquiry were not best addressed by this target group, so their input focused on accountability and feedback mechanisms for those that underwrite the standards.

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<sup>56</sup> The countries are listed in Annex 4.

Interested organisations were provided with a uniform focus group discussion guidance and reporting sheet which was available on the JSI, HAP, Sphere and People In Aid websites. The Consultation Team provided advice to those organisations that requested it throughout the process.

The purpose of the focus groups was to ensure that the views of disaster-affected populations and field staff were included in the Consultation process.

### **7. Discussions with initiatives staff**

Focus group discussions were held with the staff of the three initiatives (with HAP in Geneva, People In Aid in London and Sphere in Geneva).

## Annex 2: Key informants

	Organisation	Key Informant	Position	Country base	Date Interviewed
<b>NGOs</b>					
1.	ACT Alliance	John Nduna	General Secretary	Switzerland	28.02.2013
2.	ACT Indonesia	Arshint	Head of Division – Strategic Partnership	Indonesia	26.02.2103
3.	Action Aid	Paula Feehan	Head of Planning and IT	UK	15.02.2013
4.	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)	Najib Tajali	Deputy Director	Afghanistan	In writing
5.	Care International	Barbara Jackson	Humanitarian Director	Switzerland	06.02.2013
6.	Care International Panama	Hauke Hoops	Regional Emergency Coordinator Latin-America & Caribbean	Panama	26.02.2013
7.	CARE Yemen	Richard Hamilton	Emergency Coordinator	Yemen	26.02.2013
8.	Caritas International	Alastair Dutton	Humanitarian Director	The Vatican	16.01.2013
9.	Caritas Tabasco	Padre Saul de Jesus Rodrigo	Responsible Caritas Tabasco	Mexico	02.03.2013
10.	Caritas Tabasco	Tere Zurita		Mexico	02.03.2013
11.	Centro de Pensamiento Estrategico Internacional	Philipp Schönrock		Colombia	11.03.2013
12.	Coast Bangladesh	Reza Chowdhury	Director	Bangladesh	17.01.2013
13.	Comisión Episcopal para la Pastoral Social-Cáritas Mexicana	P. Patricio Sarlat Flores	Secretario Ejecutivo	Mexico	28.02.2013

14.	Comisión Episcopal para la Pastoral Social-Cáritas Mexicana	Jose Luis Lopez	Responsible for Emergencies	Mexico	28.02.2013
15.	Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF) Tabasco	Alicia Manzanilla Fojaco		Mexico	01.03.2013
16.	DIF Tabasco	Aura Medina Cano		Mexico	01.03.2013
17.	Habitat for Humanity International Costa Rica	Jaime Mok	Emergency Response Manager	Costa Rica	08.02.2013
18.	HelpAge	Lucy Blown	Programme Officer	UK	01.03.2013
19.	HelpAge	Martha Newman	HR Manager	UK	01.03.2013
20.	Logistica Humanitaria	Carles Gisbert	Director of Operations	Panama	26.02.2013
21.	MDM	Jean Saslawski	Head	France	07.02.2013
22.	MERCY Malaysia	Faizal Perdaus	CEO	Malaysia	11.01.2013
23.	Masyarakat Penanggulangan Bencana Indonesia (MPBI)	Iskandar Leman	Director of Programmes	Indonesia	In writing
24.	MSF International	Emmanuel Tronc	Humanitarian Advocacy & Representation Coordinator	Switzerland	24.01.2013
25.	OFADEC	Charlotte Sarr	Social Assistant	Senegal	15.03.2013
26.	OFADEC	Nfanda Lamba	Q&A Focal Point	Senegal	15.03.2013
27.	Oxfam International	Aimee Ansari	Humanitarian Policy Representative	Switzerland	10.03.2013
28.	Plan International	Roger Yates	Director of Disaster Management	UK	12.03.2013
29.	Retrak	Ann Start	Learning and Development Director	UK	28.02.2013

30.	Save the Children	Anthony Caswell	International Affairs and Advocacy Mexico	Mexico	03.03.2013
31.	Save the Children Panama	Elisa Barbado	Regional Humanitarian Manager, Latin America and the Caribbean Region	Panama	27.02.2013
32.	Save the Children Panama	Beat Rohr	Director	Panama	26.02.2013
33.	Seeds Asia	Manu Gupta	Director	India	14.02.2013
34.	Seeds India	Antony Varghese	Senior Manager – Human Resources and Administration	India	13.02.2013
35.	Seeds India	Anshu Sharma		India	13.02.2013
36.	WaterAid	Girish Menon	Director for International Programmes	UK	27.02.2013
37.	World Vision Cambodia	Carla Bentham	Community Accountability Specialist	Cambodia	15.02.2013
38.	WVI	Beris Gwynne	Director, Global Accountability	Switzerland	16.01.2013
<b>United Nations</b>					
39.	FAO	Barb Wigley	Accountability	Italy	09.02.2013
40.	FAO	Patrick David	Food Security Advisor	Senegal	13.03.2013
41.	OCHA	Simon Springett	UN Resident Coordinator	Mauritius	15.02.2013
42.	OCHA Romena	Samir Hawar	Deputy Head of Office	Egypt	14.02.2013
43.	UNDP	Niel Buhne	Director Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Geneva Liaison Office	Switzerland	05.03.2013

44.	UNHCR	Paul Spiegel	Deputy Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management	Switzerland	29.01.2013
45.	UNHCR	Laura Lo Castro	Senior Desk Officer	Switzerland	06.02.2013
<b>International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement</b>					
46.	British Red Cross	Robert Sweatman	Head of Performance and Accountability	UK	23.01.2013
47.	Bulgarian Red Cross	Jassen Slivensky	Head of Disaster Management Department	Bulgaria	05.02.2013
48.	Canadian Red Cross	Christine Bloch	Beneficiary Accountability Advisor – International Operations	Canada	26.02.2013
49.	ICRC	Pierre Kraenbuhl	Director of Operations	Switzerland	05.02.2013
<b>Donors</b>					
50.	AusAid	Jo-Hannah Lavey	Manager, Policy and Protection	Australia	26.02.2013
51.	BPRM	Bryan Schaaf	Policy Officer for M&E, Health	USA	29.01.2013
52.	CIDA	Hong Won Yu	Manager, Strategic Analysis and Planning Unit	Canada	27.02.2013
53.	USAID	Nancy Lindborg	Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance	USA	06.02.2013
54.	DfID	Kate Hart	Humanitarian Advisor	UK	07.02.2013

55.	DfID	Abi Perry	Humanitarian Advisor	UK	07.02.2013
56.	ECHO	Reka Dobri	Legal Officer	Belgium	06.02.2013
57.	ECHO	Julia Stewart-David	Deputy Head of Unit A3 Policy Implementation Frameworks DG for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection	Belgium	In writing
58.	ECHO	Jan Eijkenaar	Humanitarian Advisor	Senegal	12.02.2013
59.	German MFA	Anke Reiffenstuel	Deputy Head of Division for Humanitarian Aid	Germany	06.03.2013
60.	OFDA	Mia Beers	IO/NGO Donor Coordinator	USA	29.01.2013
61.	OFDA	Asa Piyaka	Senior Program Operations Specialist	USA	29.01.2013
62.	SDC	Anne de Riedmatten	Programme Officer	Switzerland	06.03.2013
63.	SIDA	Katarina Kotoglou	Programme Officer	Sweden	23.02.2013
64.	SIDA	Maria Thorin	Humanitarian Desk Officer	Sweden	23.02.2013
65.	UNDP Tabasco	Ana Luisa Quezadas	Barahona and Regional consultant in risk management	Mexico	01.03.2013
66.	UNDP Tabasco	Esmeralda Vidal Fernandez	Barahona and Regional consultant in risk management	Mexico	01.03.2013

Standards Bodies					
67.	Accountability Charter Company	Karenina Schroeder	Project Director	Germany	22.02.2013
68.	ALNAP	John Mitchell	Director	UK	25.01.2013
69.	Bioforce	Rory Downham	Humanitarian Programme Manager	France	08.02.2013
70.	CAFOD (HAP Board)	Matthew Carter	Humanitarian Director	UK	25.02.2013
71.	CDAC	Rachel Houghton	Global Coordinator	UK	05.02.2013
72.	Dan Church Aid (Sphere Board)	Erik Johnson	Humanitarian Director	Denmark	28.01.2013
73.	ECB	Linda Poteat	Director	USA	31.01.2013
74.	HAP International	Marian Casey- Maslen	Executive Director	Switzerland	01.03.2013
75.	International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	Lori Heninger	Director	USA	07.02.2013
76.	INEE	Tzvetomira Laub	Coordinator for Minimum Standards and Network Tools	USA	07.02.2013
77.	Keeping Children Safe Coalition	Corinne Davey	Director	UK	25.01.2013
78.	Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)	Cathy Watson	Coordinator	Ethiopia	21.01.2013
79.	People In Aid	Teresa Kamara		Kenya	02.02.2013
80.	People In Aid	Neil Casey	Board	UK	11.02.2013
81.	People In Aid	Jonathan Potter	Executive Director	UK	24.01.2013
82.	RedR	Martin McCann	Director	UK	24.01.2013
83.	Save the Children International (People In Aid Board)	Joan Coyle	HR Director	UK	24.01.2013
84.	Sphere	Martin Villarroel Garcia	Focal Point Latin America	Bolivia	19.03.2013
85.	Sphere	John Damerell	Project Manager	Switzerland	01.03.2013

<b>Independents</b>					
86.	Independent Consultant	Sean Ng		Malaysia	26.12.2013
87.	Independent Consultant	Steve Darvill		USA	22.01.2013
88.	Humanitarian Outcomes	Abby Stoddard		USA	28.01.2013
89.	Independent Consultant	John Borton		UK	26.02.2013
90.		Sylvie Roberts	Trainer		04.02.2013
91.	Independent Consultant	Tony Vaux		UK	16.01.2013
92.	Education in Emergencies (EiE) Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) & Climate Change Adaptation (CCA)	Aldo J. Pontecorvo		Mexico	28.02.2013
93.	Independent Consultant	Alberto Pérez Nuila		Mexico	02.03.2013
<b>Academia</b>					
94.	Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco	Omar Bautista Campos		Mexico	01.03.2013
95.	University of Minnesota	Denis Kennedy		USA	16.02.2013
<b>Government Representatives</b>					
96.	Mexican Mission Geneva	Victoria Romero	First Secretary and UNCTAD Coordinator	Switzerland	26.03.2013
97.	Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations Office in Geneva	Jorge F. Corrales Hidalgo	Counsellor	Switzerland	26.03.2013
98.	Government of the Philippines	Jesus "Gary" Domingo	Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Philippines	12.03.2013
99.	Government of Senegal	Colonel Edouard Mbengue	Refugees and IDP Service	Senegal	13.3.2013

100.	Government of Senegal	Colonel Thomas Thione	Refugees and IDP Service	Senegal	13.3.2013
101.	Government of Senegal	Captain Theodore Ngom	Refugees and IDP Service	Senegal	13.3.2013
102.	South Sudan Relief Commission	Gatwech Peter Gulang	Director	South Sudan	22.03.2013
103.	South Sudan Relief Commission	Kormac Chuol Bedong	Deputy Director	South Sudan	22.03.2013
<b>Networks</b>					
104.	Disasters Emergency Committee	Annie Devonport	Head of Programmes and Accountability	UK	23.01.2013
105.	ICVA	Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop	Executive Director	Switzerland	28.01.2013
106.	InterAction	Julien Schopp	Director of Humanitarian Practice	USA	15.02.2013
107.	Rendir Cuentas	Anabel Cruz	Coordinator	Uruguay	In writing
108.	SCHR	Charles-Antoine Hofmann	(outgoing) Executive Secretary	Switzerland	11.01.2013
109.	South Sudan NGO Forum	Ivor Morgan	Policy Coordinator	South Sudan	04.02.2013
110.	The Humanitarian Forum	James Shaw-Hamilton	Director	UK	28.01.2013
111.	VOICE	Mags Bird	Programme Coordinator	Belgium	27.02.2013
<b>JSI Advisory Group</b>					
112.	CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan	Zainab Raza	Director of OD	Pakistan	13.02.2013
113.	JSI	Robert Schofield	Coordinator	UK	04.02.2013
114.	OFADEC	Mamadou Ndiaye	Executive Director	Senegal	13.03.2013
115.	Independant Consultant	Manisha Thomas	Co-Chair, JSI AG	Switzerland	15.03.2013
116.	Independant Consultant	Zia Choudhury	Co-Chair, JSI AG	UK	06.02.2013

## Annex 3: Countries consulted

	Country	Survey	Interview	Focus Group Discussion
1.	Afghanistan	X	X	X
2.	Albania	X		
3.	Algeria	X		
4.	Angola	X		
5.	Argentina	X		
6.	Australia	X	X	X
7.	Bangladesh	X	X	X
8.	Belarus	X		
9.	Belgium	X	X	X
10.	Benin	X		
11.	Bolivia	X		
12.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	X		
13.	Brazil	X		
14.	Burkina Faso	X		
15.	Bulgaria		X	
16.	Burundi	X		
17.	Cambodia	X	X	
18.	Cameroon	X		
19.	Canada	X	X	X
20.	Central African Republic	X		
21.	Chad	X		
22.	Chile	X		
23.	China	X		
24.	Colombia	X	X	
25.	Congo, Democratic Republic	X		
26.	Costa Rica	X	X	
27.	Cyprus	X		
28.	Denmark	X	X	
29.	Dominican Republic	X		
30.	Ecuador	X		
31.	Egypt	X	X	X
32.	El Salvador	X		X
33.	Ethiopia	X	X	
34.	France	X	X	X
35.	Fiji	X		
36.	Georgia	X		
37.	Germany	X	X	

38.	Ghana	X		
39.	Greece	X		
40.	Guatemala	X		
41.	Haiti	X		
42.	Honduras	X		
43.	Hungary	X		
44.	India	X	X	X
45.	Indonesia	X	X	X
46.	Iraq	X		
47.	Ireland	X		
48.	Italy	X	X	X
49.	Ivory Coast	X		
50.	Japan	X		
51.	Jordan	X		
52.	Kenya	X	X	X
53.	Kuwait	X		
54.	Kyrgyzstan	X		
55.	Laos	X		
56.	Lebanon	X		X
57.	Liberia	X		
58.	Luxembourg	X		
59.	Madagascar	X		
60.	Malaysia		X	X
61.	Malawi	X		
62.	Mali	X		
63.	Mauritius		X	
64.	Mexico	X	X	X
65.	Moldova	X		
66.	Mongolia	X		
67.	Morocco	X		
68.	Mozambique	X		
69.	Myanmar	X		
70.	Namibia	X		
71.	Nepal	X		X
72.	Netherlands	X		
73.	New Zealand	X		
74.	Nicaragua	X		
75.	Niger	X		
76.	Nigeria	X		
77.	Norway	X		
78.	Occupied territories of Palestine	X		X
79.	Pakistan	X	X	X

80.	Panama	X	X	
81.	Papua New Guinea	X		X
82.	Paraguay	X		
83.	Peru	X		X
84.	Philippines	X	X	
85.	Romania	X		
86.	Rwanda	X		
87.	Senegal	X	X	X
88.	Sierra Leone	X		
89.	Singapore	X		
90.	Somalia	X		
91.	Somaliland	X		
92.	South Sudan	X	X	X
93.	Spain	X		
94.	Sri Lanka	X		
95.	Sweden	X	X	
96.	Switzerland	X	X	X
97.	Syria	X		
98.	Tajikistan	X		
99.	Tanzania	X		X
100.	Thailand	X		X
101.	The Gambia	X		
102.	Timor-Leste	X		
103.	Togo	X		
104.	Tunisia	X		
105.	Turkey	X		
106.	Uganda	X		
107.	United Kingdom	X	X	X
108.	United States	X	X	X
109.	Uruguay			X
110.	Vatican City State	X	X	
111.	Venezuela	X		
112.	Vietnam	X		X
113.	Yemen		X	
114.	Zimbabwe	X		X

## Annex 4: Focus group discussions overview

Focus group discussions were held by the organisations listed in this table in the locations specified.

	Location	Organisation Hosting	Number of Participants
<b>FGDs with affected communities</b>			
1.	Bulawayo, Zimbabwe	Trocaire & ZIMCO	9
2.	Bulawayo, Zimbabwe	Trocaire	7
3.	Garang, Union Council SumElahimang, District Mansehra, KPK, Pakistan	Saibaan Development Organisation	27
4.	Harare, Zimbabwe	Trocaire & Oxfam	8
5.	Harare, Zimbabwe	Trocaire & Caritas	12
6.	Mansehra, KPK, Pakistan	Sabaan Development Organisation	17
<b>Total</b>			<b>80</b>
<b>Government FGDS</b>			
1.	Masvingo, Zimbabwe	Trocaire & Provincial Water & Sanitation Department	15
<b>FGDs with agency staff</b>			
1	Arusha, Tanzania	World Vision and People In Aid	11
2	Besham, Pakistan	CWS P/A	12
3	Calgary, Canada	Samaritan's Purse	9
4	Canada	World Vision & PAGER	4
5	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Coast Trust	14
6	Geneva, Switzerland	ACT Alliance secretariat	5
7	Hanoi, Vietnam <sup>57</sup>	UNDP Vietnam	
8	Harare, Zimbabwe	Trocaire & OCHA	6
9	Islamabad, Pakistan	CARE International	10
10	Islamabad, Pakistan	CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan	12
11	Jakarta, Indonesia	CARE	6
12	Juba, South Sudan	ACT Alliance	9
13	Juba, South Sudan	World Vision South Sudan	10
14	Kabul, Afghanistan	Institute of Sustainable Development and Technology	9
15	Kathmandu, Nepal	DPNET-Nepal & Ministry of Home Affairs and Association of International Non- Government Organization, Nepal	38
16	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	IFRC Asia	4

<sup>57</sup> Number of FGD participants was not included in the FGD report.

17	Lima, Peru	Care Peru	7
18	London, UK	CAFOD	6
19	London, UK	CARE UK	6
20	London, UK	Plan International	6
21	London, UK	Christian Aid	4
22	London, UK	Care International	7
23	London, UK	Care International	6
24	Manshera, Pakistan	Khwendo Kor	15
25	Manshera, Pakistan	Saibaan Development Organisation	12
26	Melbourne, Australia	Caritas Australia	11
27	Mississauga, Canada	World Vision Canada	3
28	Nairobi, Kenya	World Vision East Africa	12
29	New Delhi, India	Sphere India	35
30	Occupied Palestinian Territories	ACT Palestine Forum	10
31	Papua New Guinea	CARE	7
32	Red Cross National Societies Asia	IFRC Asia	4
33	Rome, Italy	AGIRE	16
34.	San Salvador, El Salvador <sup>58</sup>	CARE San Salvador	
<b>Total</b>			<b>326</b>
<b>JSI FGDs with agencies</b>			
1.	Bangkok, Thailand	CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan	12
2.	Bangkok, Thailand	CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan	16
3.	Beirut, Lebanon	Caritas Liban	11
4.	Brussels, Belgium	VOICE	8
5.	Brussels, Belgium	VOICE	7
6.	Cairo, Egypt	The Humanitarian Forum	11
7.	Dakar, Senegal	OFADEC	9
8.	Geneva, Switzerland	ICVA	11
9.	Geneva, Switzerland	UN IASC	24
10.	Geneva, Switzerland	Global Cluster Coordinators	12
11.	Juba, South Sudan	RedR & South Sudan NGO Forum	6
12.	Juba, South Sudan	RedR & South Sudan NGO Forum	10
13.	Nairobi, Kenya	RedR & IAWG & World Vision	10
14.	Nairobi, Kenya	RedR & IAWG & World Vision	12
15.	Nairobi, Kenya	RedR & IAWG & World Vision	15
16.	Nairobi, Kenya	RedR & IAWG & World Vision	10
17.	New York, USA	UN OCHA/IASC	11
18.	Paris, France	Coordination Sud	12
19.	Panama City, Panama	Save the Children	11
20.	Tabasco, Mexico	Save the Children	4

58 Number of FGD participants was not included in the FGD report.

21.	Washington DC, USA	InterAction	12
<b>Total</b>			<b>234</b>
<b>JSI FGDs with affected populations</b>			
1.	Dakar, Senegal	OFADEC	11
2.	Richard Toll, Senegal	OFADEC	10
3.	Tabasco, Mexico	Save the Children	8
4.	Tabasco, Mexico	Save the Children	10
<b>Total</b>			<b>39</b>
<b>Staff of JSI Initiatives</b>			
1.	HAP	Geneva	12
2.	People In Aid	London	6
3.	Sphere	Geneva	4
<b>Total</b>			<b>22</b>
<b>Donors</b>			
1	Geneva	European Union	12
2	Geneva	Switzerland	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>
<b>State Consultations</b>			
1	Geneva	Switzerland	5
<b>Total</b>			<b>5</b>

#### Agencies responsible for hosting facilitating and/or mobilising the FGDs

1. ACT Alliance secretariat
2. ACT Palestinian Forum
3. ACT South Sudan
4. AGIRE – Italian Agency for Emergency Response
5. Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Humanitarian Reference Group (HRG)
6. CAFOD
7. CARE Indonesia
8. CARE International Pakistan
9. Care International UK
10. CARE Papua New Guinea
11. CARE UK
12. CARE Panama
13. CARE San Salvador
14. CARE Peru
15. Caritas Australia
16. Caritas Harare
17. COAST Bangladesh
18. Coordination Sud
19. CWS P/A

20. Danish Church Aid South Sudan
21. Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal (DPNet-Nepal)
22. Disaster Resilience Scientific Solution Institute Zimbabwe
23. IASC Secretariat Geneva
24. IASC Secretariat New York
25. IAWG on Disaster Preparedness for East and Central Africa
26. ICVA
27. IFRC Asia
28. Institute of Sustainable Development and Technology (ISDT) for Higher Education, Afghanistan
29. Khwendo Kor Pakistan
30. Ministry of Home Affairs and Association of International Non- Government Organization, Nepal
31. OFADEC
32. Oxfam Zimbabwe
33. Plan International
34. Policy and Action Group for Emergency Response (PAGER), Canada
35. RedR Australia
36. RedR Juba
37. RedR Kenya
38. Saibaan Development Organization
39. Samaritan's Purse Canada
40. Save the Children Mexico
41. Save the Children Panama
42. South Sudan NGO Forum
43. Sphere India
44. The European Union, Geneva
45. The Humanitarian Forum
46. Trocaire Zimbabwe
47. UNDP Vietnam
48. UN OCHA Geneva
49. UN OCHA Zimbabwe
50. UN OCHA
51. VOICE
52. World Vision Canada
53. World Vision East Africa
54. World Vision International
55. World Vision South Sudan
56. Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZIMPRO)

## Annex 5: Survey questions

### Feedback survey – humanitarian standards

In recent years the humanitarian sector has seen significant growth and an increase in professionalism. This has included the development of a number of standards, which aim to ensure that aid agencies provide high quality humanitarian assistance that is accountable to disaster and conflict-affected populations. Three of the largest quality and accountability initiatives, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), People In Aid and the Sphere Project, are currently working towards greater coherence amongst their standards through a process called the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI).

As part of this initiative, a consultative process is underway to seek the views and experiences of people working in the aid sector on the use, utility and relevance of standards. While the main focus is on the three above initiatives, we are also interested in any other standards you may be familiar with or use in your work. As part of this consultation, we would appreciate your feedback by completing a short survey. This survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. All information provided will be treated confidentially.

**Note:** For the purposes of this survey, we define standards as “any set of agreed practices, procedures and processes that are aimed at ensuring consistency and reliability of an organisation’s activities.”

*Thank you in advance,*

*Joint Standards Initiative*

#### 1. Are you aware of any standards being used by your organisation?

- Yes, my organisation is using standards
- No, my organisation is not using standards
- I don't know

→ *Those that answer “No” and “I don't know” go to question 10.*

#### 2. Please indicate which type of standards are being used by your organisation? (select all that apply):

- Quality control
- Auditing/accounting
- Fundraising
- Programming
- Human resources management
- Communications
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. Is your organisation using any of the following standards? (select all that apply):

- Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response
- 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management

People In Aid Code of Good Practice

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Can you estimate how frequently the following standards are used in your organisation?

*Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know	Never:	Rarely:	Sometimes:	Very often:	Always:
	<i>we don't use this</i>	<i>we use this infrequently</i>	<i>we use this for some projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for most projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for all projects/ programmes</i>

*2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know	Never:	Rarely:	Sometimes:	Very often:	Always:
	<i>we don't use this</i>	<i>we use this infrequently</i>	<i>we use this for some projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for most projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for all projects/ programmes</i>

*People In Aid Code of Good Practice*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know	Never:	Rarely:	Sometimes:	Very often:	Always:
	<i>we don't use this</i>	<i>we use this infrequently</i>	<i>we use this for some projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for most projects/ programmes</i>	<i>we use this for all projects/ programmes</i>

#### 5. When do you use standards in your organisation? (select all that apply):

- Planning and assessment
- Programme/project/activity design
- Programme/project/activity implementation
- Programme/project/activity monitoring
- Programme/project evaluation
- Human resources management
- Communications
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 6. What has been the greatest value of using standards in your organisation? (select all that apply):

- Accountability to affected populations
- Quality and consistency of assistance provided
- Programme effectiveness
- Accountability to donors
- Ability to adapt programmes according to contexts
- Better human resources management

- Provides a framework to measure our work against
- No major value seen
- Other, please specify:\_\_\_\_\_

**7. What challenges have you seen in using standards in your organisation? (select all that apply):**

- Not relevant to our work
- Impractical to apply
- Lack of knowledge around standards
- Training on standards
- Existence of different standards
- Complexity of standards
- Impact on workload as a result of using standards
- Other, please specify:\_\_\_\_\_

**8. How do you believe standards could be improved? (select all that apply):**

- Increase standards within the humanitarian sector
- Harmonise / consolidate existing standards
- Increase awareness of existing standards
- Expand to other areas of programming not covered by existing standards
- Increase compliance with standards
- Easier to use/more accessible standards
- Eliminate duplication of standards
- Align monitoring and reporting to standards
- I don't know
- Other, please specify:\_\_\_\_\_

**9. What do you believe is the best way to ensure a more consistent use and application of standards?**

- A voluntary system of self-monitoring
- A mandatory system of self-monitoring
- A voluntary system of external monitoring
- A mandatory system of external monitoring
- I don't know
- Other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Please rank the following in terms of importance for your organisation:**

- Accountability to affected populations
- Quality and consistency of assistance provided
- Programme effectiveness
- Accountability to donors
- Ability to adapt programmes according to contexts
- Better human resources management

**11. Do you have any comments or suggestions on how to improve the use, relevance and utility of standards by humanitarian organisations?:**

**12. In which country are you currently working?**

**13. In which of the following areas are you working: (select all that apply):**

- Food security (including livelihoods, assistance, relief, agriculture)
- Camp coordination /management
- Early recovery
- Education
- Emergency shelter
- Emergency technology
- Health
- Logistics
- Nutrition
- Protection
- Water, sanitation, hygiene
- Capacity building, development
- Advocacy, policy, communications
- Administration, logistics, finance
- Administration – human resources
- Legal
- Management
- Other, please specify : \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Which of the following best describes the part of your organisation where you work?**

- International NGO – HQ
- International NGO – field
- National NGO – HQ
- National NGO – field
- Community-based organisation – HQ
- Community-based organisation - field
- UN agency/body – HQ
- UN agency/body - field
- ICRC– HQ
- ICRC - field
- IFRC Secretariat
- IFRC - field
- Red Cross/Crescent National Society - headquarters
- Red Cross/Crescent National Society – field
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Please provide the name of your organisation (please note, this is to assist us in data analysis and not to identify individual responses):**

**16. In terms of size, which of following best describes your organisation?**

- Small (less than 50 staff globally)
- Medium (from 50 to 500 staff globally)
- Medium-Large (500 to 1000 staff globally)
- Large (more than 1000 staff globally)

*Thank you for your participation; your feedback is very valuable to us and forms part of the overall JSI stakeholder consultation which runs to the end of March 2013. One to one interviews and regional workshops are also being held until early March and a final report summarising the research will be produced by May 2013.*

## Annex 6: Bibliography

Below is a list of the key documents referred to during the consultation.

1	ALNAP: State of the Humanitarian System (2012)
2	Background paper entitled “Building more coherence in quality and accountability initiatives” for July meeting of HAP, Sphere, People In Aid, ALNAP and Sphere. (June 2011)
3	Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan: Research on Observance of Quality and Accountability in [the] Humanitarian Sector in Pakistan (April 2011)
4	Comparing HAP, People In Aid and Sphere (November 2011)
5	Cosgrave. J: “Humanitarian standards – too much of a good thing?” (2013)
6	Cragg. L: “Quality& Accountability Mapping Exercise” on behalf of JSI (December 2012)
7	East and Central Africa IAWG on Disaster Preparedness: Report on Enhancing Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Action Workshop (July 2012)
8	HAP: The 2011 Humanitarian Accountability Report
9	IASC: “Operational Framework How to Ensure Accountability to Affected Populations in Humanitarian Emergencies” (June 2012)
10	JSI: “Introductory materials for the JSI Consultation” (December 2012)
11	JSI: Communique entitled “Quality and Accountability Initiatives Strengthen Collaboration” (5 August 2012)
12	Satterthwaite. M: “Indicators of relief: Indicators to measure rights-based humanitarian assistance” (2013)
13	SCHR: “Introduction to the SCHR Certification Project” (31 October 2012)
14	SCHR: “Moving Forward on Quality and Accountable Humanitarian Action” (December 2010)
15	The Listening Project (2012): “Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid.”

# TERMS OF REFERENCE for Consultant(s) to support JSI Stakeholder Consultation

## Introduction

Three of the largest quality and accountability initiatives in humanitarian assistance (HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project) are actively collaborating to review existing humanitarian standards and determine how they can be improved. The aim is to help aid workers and agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action for the people we assist.

This collaborative process is called the Joint Standards Initiative. The Stakeholder Consultation is a key element of the process, which will generate robust evidence from a wide range of actors across the humanitarian sector, which in turn will shape how the process develops and inform the decisions made by the Boards of the three initiatives on the future of the Joint Standards Initiative.

Consultancy support is required for the consultation, particularly in the areas of; designing the research process, supporting consultation events, data analysis and writing up and presenting the consultation findings. The attached Stakeholder Consultation Concept Note provides full background information and should be read in conjunction with the JSI funding proposal. The consultant(s) will work closely with the JSI Coordinator and a technical Working Group which will provide advice and guidance on the consultation process.

## Consultancy - Key Outputs

It is anticipated that the Consultancy will be undertaken over a 4 month period, from Nov 2012 to Feb 2013, with an estimated 60 working days of external consultancy input. Key outputs will be in the following areas:

### **1. Design a robust research process**

This may include; defining the main stakeholders, defining key research questions tailored to the different stakeholders and proposing a variety of tools to ensure maximum as well as representative engagement across the stakeholders. The JSI Working Group will be involved in signing off the detailed research process.

### **2. Support to Consultation Activities and Events**

Support the JSI Coordinator and the Directors/Chairs from the 3 initiatives to undertake aspects of the Consultation, such as; organizing, facilitating and implementing face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, regional consultation events, etc.

### **3. Data Analysis**

Synthesise the consultation data and provide clear analysis and interpretation of the findings.

#### 4. Report writing and presentation

Write a final, comprehensive report, which fully analyses and synthesises the data from all the various sources, in an accessible and engaging format, with a maximum 20 pages, plus annexes, by end Feb 2013.

#### Consultant profile - essential

- Understanding of humanitarian & development issues and quality & accountability issues
- Previous experience in designing and implementing major consultation processes with multiple stakeholders
- Track record in participatory research tools, data analysis and presenting findings.
- Strong writing skills

#### Other

The Consultant will be line managed by the JSI Coordinator and will report periodically to the JSI Working Group, who are acting as 'guardians' of the Consultation process.

CAFOD is hosting JSI and therefore Consultants contracts will be directly with CAFOD on behalf of JSI.

JSI anticipates the Consultancy could be undertaken by more than one Consultant

Consultants will need to declare any 'conflicts of interest', particularly in relation to representing organisations that have a stake in the quality and accountability system.

#### Next steps

Selection of a suitable Consultant will be through an open process, managed by the JSI Coordinator. The selection panel will include the JSI Coordinator and 2 x JSI Working Group members.

In order to be considered for this consultancy, please submit a CV (including recent references) and a maximum 3 page outline of how you would approach the Consultancy, including an estimate of your fees, by midday on Thu 25th October 2012 to [pkarbassi@jointstandards.org](mailto:pkarbassi@jointstandards.org)

Interviews will take place week commencing 29th October with a view to starting the Consultancy ideally at the beginning of November 2012.

Robert Schofield, JSI Coordinator, Oct 2012