

CABE Network 11 June 2008

Sheryl Haw, Humanitarian Aid Work Training and Consulting spoke on "**Accountable to whom?**" (How can quality and accountable practice impact our witness and our professional leadership responsibilities.)

Sheryl is a highly experienced senior relief and development specialist with over 16 years experience around the world in both field and head office positions She has extensive cross-cultural exposure with expertise in working with a variety of team structures and dynamics. During the last 3 years Sheryl has been working for **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAPI)** where she was responsible for developing an accountability and quality management standard for the aid sector. This Standard and its complimentary certification system represent the first regulatory scheme within the industry. Sheryl currently audits aid agencies against the accountability standard as well as working with **All Nations Christian College** as their Integral Mission Co-ordinator, responsible for the extension training programme.

Sheryl is from Zimbabwe originally and has worked in Northern Iraq, Sudan amongst other challenging environments.

It is surprising and shocking to consider that until 2007 there have been no quality standards, regulation or accountability for aid agencies. Who says whether what they do is right, has the right impact, can be regulated or indeed should be regulated? How do we evaluate the products delivered and how? The aid workers seem to be the ones with the power and the vulnerable who are the primary clients are powerless. HAPI has now developed an Accountability and Quality Standard with 6 mission critical benchmarks against which more and more agencies are seeking to be assessed.

1. State your commitment – who you are, your covenant, the quality management framework
2. Level of transparency and information provision
3. Informed consent / participation – ongoing
4. Staff competence
5. Complaints handling
6. Improvements (continual), partners, developing local capacity...

Further benchmarks are being developed to be included in future upgrades of the standard incl. co-ordinating govt responsibility, building on local capacity, complementarity to avoid duplication. The agencies need to be prepared to make themselves redundant but that is a step too far at the moment!

They are all inter-linked rather than in order of priority and some cannot happen until others are in place (i.e. complaints handling relies on clarity about commitment and level of transparency)

5 aid agencies have been approved / held to account. Certification lasts 3 years including a mid term audit. Cost is £5,500 but heavy subsidies are available for smaller agencies. 7 days Head Office, 7 days on field.

Answers to the network's questions included discussions about:

- integral mission – we need to be a Christian 24/7 and not compartmentalise our lives into business, family, church etc. Salt and light all the time and bring the Christian message of dignity and respect
- social action PLUS proclamation – where genuine relationships are built and legitimacy established
- everything we do is for a purpose – we live for God, we are also part of a process and there needs to be continuity, we need to pass on things of gold not those which will be burned up

The aim is that the vulnerable are protected, others are empowered to have their rights protected and donors can make informed choices about where to give.