

12<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Dear Kathrin, Ed and Joel,

**Re: JSI response to the Open Letter from ICVA, InterAction and VOICE**

You raised a number of important issues in your open letter of 30<sup>th</sup> January about the JSI process and context. We have circulated the letter around the JSI Steering Group and Advisory Group and on behalf of our initiatives, the Chairs offer this response.

Firstly, we wanted to recognize and thank the networks for the constructive contribution you have made to the JSI process and stakeholder consultation to date e.g. VOICE convening a healthy debate on standards coherence last October in Brussels and a JSI consultation event on 25<sup>th</sup> February, InterAction running a workshop at their last Forum on standards and supporting a consultation event on 11<sup>th</sup> February in Washington DC, ICVA providing details of national networks to engage in the JSI consultation and participating in Joint Meetings of the Boards and a JSI focus group discussion. This is over and above the numerous ways you have been informing your members about JSI and encouraging them to actively engage in the survey and focus group discussions, as well as yours and your member's active participation on the Boards of the 3 initiatives.

**Adequate southern voice in the consultation**

We are very conscious of the challenges these types of consultations present, when seeking to adequately represent the views of the global south. We fully recognize, as you do, that including the views of local civil society and governments in countries affected by conflict or disasters is a crucial element of the process.

We have sought to address this challenge with a number of different approaches:

- **On-line survey** has been translated into Arabic, Spanish and French and widely promoted through members, networks and Boards. We are seeking to push the survey again over the next few weeks with a particular emphasis on driving it down to the field level. To date we have had over 650 responses to the survey and anticipate at least 1,000 responses by the end of February.
- **Focus Group Discussions** are taking place across the globe with a range of actors, including field based staff, national NGO's and affected populations. We are actively encouraging our various constituencies to run events themselves with the simple guidelines that we produced in 4 key languages and have further promoted this approach through the initiatives and Boards. We would be grateful for your ongoing support in promoting the survey and focus group discussions with your members.
- **Regional consultation events** are underway, with firm dates in Dakar, Nairobi, Juba, Cairo, Bangkok, Panama and planning for events in Dubai and Ecuador.
- **Copenhagen Conference** for global leaders has invitees from across the globe – we are aware of perceptions about inadequate participation from the global south, and have therefore looked again at the invite list, sought additional input from our Advisory Group and added a number of new invitees and speakers, so that at least 30% of participants will be from the global south.
- **Key informant interviews** with around 110 people are underway and in recent days we have boosted the number of government and civil society key informants from crisis affected countries.

**Consultation timeline**

We think that whilst the overall timeline is tight it is sufficient for what we are seeking to achieve – an open enquiry across the humanitarian community, that will assist the Boards of the 3 initiatives to make meaningful decisions about how to be more coherent. We recognised at the last Joint meeting of the Boards in November that the conclusions from the consultation, discussions between the Boards and the Geneva Standards Forum would most likely require further discussions throughout the sector.

The consultation is not coming out of the blue – we deliberately (and with your support) spent 3 months warming the humanitarian community up to the JSI process, so that we could more quickly engage people once the detailed elements of the consultation were agreed. In addition, you will be aware from your engagement with the Boards, that the process has been crafted over a much longer time period, with initial discussions beginning 18 months ago and this endeavour building on dialogue and analysis about standards over the last decade.

The issues you raise have been grappled with by the Steering Group and the Advisory Group over the last few months and careful deliberations were made to balance between the need for adequate process vs a long enough timeline.

### **Integrity and openness of the process**

You have asked for the governing bodies of JSI to explain how they intend to use the outcomes of the consultations to make decisions which will affect the broader humanitarian community – it is not for JSI to decide this issue, but rather a matter for each of the individual boards and your presence either directly or through your members on these boards ensures you can have an influence on this issue.

As you have rightly pointed out, perceptions are important in any change management process and we are seeking to be alert to mis-perceptions and where possible to offer clear information and messaging to counter these and we rely on you and other networks to support us in this endeavour.

### **Humanitarian principles**

As you are aware, all three initiatives continue to actively promote humanitarian principles as part of their standards and everyday work. As JSI is purely a process to seek greater coherence for users of standards, it is not necessarily the role of JSI to actively promote and endorse these. We trust that if they are fundamental to the humanitarian community, that this view will come through loud and clear in the consultation findings.

### **Questions on Standards**

Thank you for your offer to facilitate discussions with your members on some of the underlying and over-arching issues around humanitarian standards, such as; the problem statement around coherence, links between JSI and the SCHR Certification Review and donor interests in funding JSI. We would welcome this as a contribution to the consultation, through your own Focus Group Discussions, as well as in your participation in the Copenhagen Conference.

### **Wider context**

Thank you for the reminder of the other initiatives that are seeking to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response. Some of these we are linking with already at the consultation stage and others we will seek to engage once there is a clearer picture on what coherence looks like beyond June 2013.

Thanks again for your support to the JSI process and a robust and meaningful consultation process.

Warmest regards

**Matthew Carter**  
HAP Board & JSI SG Chair

**Neil Casey**  
Chair of People In Aid Board

**Erik Johnson**  
Chair of Sphere Project Board

cc

### **JSI Steering Group**

Marian Casey-Maslen, Jonathan Potter, John Damerell, Robert Schofield

### **JSI Advisory Group**

Manisha Thomas, Zia Choudhury, Niels Scott, Kim Petersen, Philip Tamminga, Zainab Raza, Nick Guttmann, Joan Coyle, Paula Feehan, Julien Schopp, Mamadou Ndiaye