Professionalising the Sector: A Proposed Certification Model for Humanitarian Organisations

Draft for Discussion
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Introduction

How can certification of humanitarian organisations contribute to greater effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian actions? Over the past year, the Certification Review Project, sponsored by the SCHR, has been researching and consulting with stakeholders on what a successful, sustainable certification model might look like and how to achieve it. This draft proposal describes the main elements of a potential certification model for humanitarian organisations and some of the key assumptions and critical requirements to implementing it. The project team is seeking feedback and inputs on this draft model up to the end of October; the model will then be revised and updated by end of November 2013, at which stage, the project will move to a field-testing and piloting phase.

Section A outlines the background to the model. **Section B** follows with some of the critical issues that require decisions before determining if the model will be feasible. **Section C** summarises the criteria and requirements for participating in the system, while **Section D** looks at possible governance and management structure and functions for the model. **Section E** provides a preliminary assessment of the potential financing of the model. The paper ends with a series of discussion questions in **Section F** to facilitate feedback on the model for the project team.

> **Please share this document widely with colleagues and partners. Your inputs will help to determine if the proposed approach is feasible and how it might impact on your work.**

A. Background - Why certification?

This proposal builds on the findings of the Certification Review project research and consultation process so far. The first phase of the project researched different approaches to certification and consulted with stakeholders on their expectations and concerns about a potential certification system for humanitarian organisations. During this phase, the rationale for certification was explored, and several models were reviewed. The findings are available at the SCHR website (**www.schr.info**) and are summarised below.

Key points

- Certification is just one of many different, complementary approaches to promoting greater quality, effectiveness and accountability; it should not be seen as a solution to all issues facing humanitarian organisations
- Humanitarian organisations are facing increasing demands from donors, host governments and affected populations to demonstrate that they are professional, capable and accountable for achieving quality results
- A wide body of experience outside the humanitarian sector shows that certification can contribute to achieving better quality products, services and positive changes in practices
- Experiences in the sector suggest that certification leads to more consistent use of quality standards and good practice, and as a result, more effective and accountable programming
- Certification of humanitarian organisations could help reaffirm and reinforce commitments to respect and apply humanitarian principles (humanity and impartiality)

- A widely-recognised certification system could help decision-makers determine which organisations are best able to meet the needs of affected populations and meet minimum requirements of quality, effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian responses
- This could help distinguish professional and reliable organisations from others working in crises with incompatible aims and approaches
- This in turn could facilitate greater trust, credibility, and access to resources and support for certified organisations.

B. Critical Issues – What is essential for the model to succeed?

The research and consultation process has identified several critical issues that must be addressed for the success of the proposed model. Key assumptions for this proposed model are summarised here. These issues will require making some choices and decisions before moving to a definitive proposed model.

1. Focus on humanitarian principles and results for affected populations

- The view of many stakeholders consulted is that any compliance, verification or certification model needs to recognise the unique nature of humanitarian actions if it is to meet current and future needs of the sector
- The model's focus on assessing an organisation's humanitarian activities and should be limited to NGOs; however, close engagement with other stakeholders like governments and the UN system will be required for the model to function effectively
- The approach needs to expand the focus from promoting quality and accountability to include measuring and demonstrating an organisation's capacity and performance (results)
- This implies moving away from assessing policies and procedures to systematically assessing how humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality and accountability towards affected populations are integrated and applied in practices
- **There are significant implications of this approach in terms of resource requirements and a major challenge will be to find a balance between a rigorous assessment system and keeping the model flexible and affordable**

2. Scaling up and achieving wide participation

- The model aims to achieve much wider participation by humanitarian organisations than the current level of participation in existing certification initiatives
- Participation needs be open to all NGOs, regardless of size, provided they work in humanitarian response activities and commit to meet the minimum requirements set out in the model
- This includes local and national organisations, organisations that work through partners, or larger federation-like and multi-mandate organisations
- Incentives for participation need to be clear and compelling, including support for organisations working towards achieving certification
- A "critical mass" of participation in a successful certification system is vital for the model to positively influence behaviour and reinforce good practices by all stakeholders
- **Reaching a critical mass would require significant efforts to maintain momentum and scale up the successful model once it has been tested, piloted and a decision is made on moving forward with implementation.**

3. Recognition and validation by affected populations and host governments

- Host governments would need to validate the certification model and recognise it potential value in helping them work with NGOs to support their humanitarian activities.
- In the long-term the model should also aim to provide assurances to affected populations that a certified aid organisation is credible, reliable and trust-worthy, and able to effectively meet needs.
- As a result, certified organisations could benefit from greater access to affected populations and improved coordination with local authorities, contributing to more efficient and effective responses
- There is always a risk however that certification could be misused politically to impede the work of humanitarian organisations and compromise their independence and impartiality

- **The model will therefore need wide dissemination and buy-in from governments to ensure support for the aims and purposes of certification, understanding of why the system is based on humanitarian principles and how it can add value to local response efforts and improve accountability.**

4. Widely endorsed and supported by donors

- As the main funders of humanitarian organisations, donor governments have enormous influence on the shape of the sector
- This is especially the case in determining the priorities of aid funding, procedures to select partners, and requirements placed on humanitarian organisations
- Certification has the potential to show donors that an organisation is professional, reliable and capable of delivering effective and accountable aid
- Ideally, donors would reduce their administrative and reporting requirements for their certified partners
- The model should be promoted as an investment in professionalization of the sector, value for money, and a "public good", not as something to be subsidised
- This would include long-term financial support to develop and sustain the model, and provision of incentives to participating organisations, such as:
  - Access to programme funding, and / or to partner status;
  - Support for "professionalization" (helping organisations to realign processes to certification criteria and build capacities);
  - Harmonised reporting requirements aligned to certification standards and criteria
- Benefits and incentives **must** be equitably accessible to NNGOs and INGOs to ensure wide buy in
- Endorsement by emerging donors (Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, South Africa, Qatar, UAE) would provide significant support and legitimacy to the model
- **The model will need a core group of government donors to "champion" and provide long-term, predictable support for implementation and scale-up for it to be successful**

5. Accessible and affordable

- Ensuring the model is accessible and affordable is a key message emerging from all the consultations so far
- The model still needs a preliminary cost estimate (work on this will be completed by November 2013), with different scenarios to estimate the costs for NNGO and INGOs.
- The cost analysis would include not only direct costs of running a system, but also indirect costs to organisations, such as staff time, realigning processes, etc.
- Early projections from HAP on the costs of scaling up its own model suggest that cost-recovery (in other words fees for audit and certification services) is unlikely to ever completely cover the full operating costs of any new or existing certification model
- Experiences from other sectors show that many of the most advanced values-based certification models (like Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance) still require significant external financial inputs (often from governments and foundations)
- Similarly, experiences from the private sector also show that quality assurance and certification processes are considered a normal part of business costs, with worthwhile benefits
- **A key challenge will be to shift the perception that certification is a cost-burden, to understanding that the costs are a necessary investment in promoting greater quality, effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian actions**

6. Alignment and harmonisation of the content of the model

- To achieve sustainability, the model will need to promote alignment and integration of certification requirements with internal organisational processes (such as planning, monitoring, reporting, etc.)
- At the international level, the model will need to encourage harmonisation and compatibility with existing certification schemes to avoid duplication of efforts and competing demands on participating organisations
- This would mean ensuring that there is a process to negotiate mutual recognition and alignment of core criteria with existing national certification processes (such as those in place in Australia, Cambodia, Philippines, Switzerland or the USA)

- There is also an expectation that donor and host governments will need to align their policies and procedures towards a certification model
- **However, in return, a process of alignment and consolidation of current initiatives in the sector will need to occur**

7. Rationalisation of existing approaches to standards and certification

- Experiences outside the sector show that consolidation and harmonisation of different standards and certification initiatives commonly take place once a sector reaches a level of maturity
- Consolidation and harmonisation helps to rationalise approaches, reduce duplication of efforts or competition, and create conditions for more successful scale-up, recognition and use of standards and certification
- This model assumes that a global standards body (or forum) will emerge to coordinate development and dissemination of any core humanitarian standard, and harmonise existing technical standards
- Similarly, there is an assumption that existing certification initiatives undergo a process of adapting or consolidating approaches, and that a unified approach to certification will emerge
- **However, there will likely be considerable institutional resistance, which will require significant negotiation and efforts to determine an appropriate proposal for consolidation.**

C. Approach – Who would be certified and against what criteria?

What is it based on?

The foundation for the model is respect for and promotion of humanitarian principles; specifically, the principles of humanity and the impartiality.

- **The principle of humanity** is about the responsibility to prevent and alleviate human suffering in situations of a crisis. The principle of humanity implies that the sole objective of humanitarian actions should be focused addressing the needs of people affected by crisis, independent from achieving any other objectives.

- **The principle of impartiality** means that aid: is for the sole objective of preventing and alleviating suffering of people affected by a crisis; is based on an objective and continuous assessment of each individual's needs, and; is allocated in proportion to needs and provided without discrimination based on nationality, race, religious or political beliefs, class or gender."

> These principles are at the core of the majority of commitments and responsibilities assumed by the humanitarian sector, such as the Code of Conduct. The certification model should reaffirm, and support building evidence on how these principles are applied by humanitarian organisations and with what results.

Who is it for?

- Intended for organisations that carry out humanitarian programming in crisis situations, either directly or working through partners
- Participation open to all NGOs regardless of size or capacity, ranging from local NGOs to national and international NGOs and larger federation-type networks
- For organisations with multiple areas of activities, certification would apply only to their humanitarian operations (crisis response)
- Organisations working through partners would need to demonstrate that they have the necessary management systems in place to monitor the capacity, performance and accountability of their partners
- In long-term partner arrangements, the expectation would be that all partners would meet core requirements
- The model will require close engagement with stakeholders like governments, UN agencies and donors to ensure there is alignment with their own processes, and to build support and endorsement for the model.

What would an organisation be certified against?

- The model is based on setting and complying with minimum core criteria, indicators and benchmarks around an organisation's **capacity**, **performance** and **accountability** as they relate to the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality:

- **Capacity**: the ability to carry out quality, effective humanitarian actions.
  - Can the organisation demonstrate it has the capacity to deliver on its performance and accountability commitments?
  - Can the organisation demonstrate it has the capacity and experience to consistently and reliably deliver efficient and effective humanitarian actions?
  - Does the organisation have other resources needed (staff, volunteers, access to communities) that will enable it to carry out its humanitarian work effectively?

- **Performance:** the ability to consistently deliver reliable results for affected populations in line with quality and accountability standards:
  - Can the organisation demonstrate that it responds in a principled, effective, coordinated and appropriate way to the needs of affected populations?
  - Can the organisation demonstrate that it consistently applies best practices and technical, quality standards in its work?
  - Can the organisation demonstrate it has achieved the best possible results given the crisis context?

- **Accountability:** the ability to meet its legal and ethical commitments and responsibilities to stakeholders
  - Does the organisation meet its responsibilities and commitments (legal and ethical) to affected populations and other stakeholders?
  - Can the organisation demonstrate that it applies the core concepts of accountability in its humanitarian policies and programmes (participation, engagement, transparency, communications, learning, etc.)?

What are the core assessment criteria?

- The model expects to develop assessment criteria and indicators based on the draft "*Core Humanitarian Standard*" that is currently under development as an outcome of the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI)
- This "*Core Humanitarian Standard*" will consolidate the essential elements of many of the current humanitarian standards and commitments into a single set of verifiable benchmarks and indicators
- Because the proposed certification model's focus is on assessing capacity, performance and accountability, criteria based on the "*Core Humanitarian Standard*" may need to be supplemented by additional criteria as the sector develops a better understanding of good practice, and improved data collection tools and methodologies
- For piloting and testing purposes, the model will provisionally use criteria based on the combined outcomes of the Certification Review project and the Joint Standards Initiative so far
- These criteria include an organisation's:
  - Legal status, mission and objectives and commitments to principles
  - Governance, management and staff competencies
  - Technical competency and programming experience
  - Financial management
  - Programming quality and results
  - Accountability to affected populations and other stakeholders

Annex 1 provides an example of the kinds of criteria that could be used and benchmarked.

What is the assessment and certification process?

- Audits take place on a four-year cycle by independent, external auditors, with an interim compliance review by the certification body every two years.
- Some data would be collected through an organisation's published and internal documentation

- The bulk of information would come from field-based surveys and key informant interviews with organisation staff, partners and stakeholders, combined with direct observation of a statistically valid representative sample of field programmes
- Over time, new methods and tools to incorporate affected population feedback would be used to supplement information and expand the analysis
- Auditors would submit recommendations to the certification department of the body, which then reviews and recommends approval/non-approval and at which level to the independent Certification Committee.
- Certification Committee then "awards" certification to qualifying organisations for a four-year period, with interim verification review after two years
- Organisations must demonstrate continued compliance; failure to meet the minimum requirements, reports of non-compliance or serious complaints of wrong-doing will result in an inspection audit and a time-limited warning period to resolve issues if no reasonable justification for non-compliance can be provided
- Continued non-compliance would lead to removal of certification brand and in extreme situations of serious wrongdoing, the certification body could decide on issuing an advisory to stakeholders

What are the different levels of certification?

- Feedback from the research and consultation has consistently emphasised the need for a staged or tiered approach to certifying an organisation.
- The advantages of this approach is that it allows newer organizations to work towards meeting minimum requirements, while more experienced organisations will have a clear roadmap to work towards achieving operational excellence.

Diagram 1: Proposed Certification Levels

Level 0 Pre-certification
Validation that organisation is in process of meeting core requirements. Based on desk review and headquarters interviews.

Level 1 Basic
Validation that organisation meets core requirements and demonstrates capacity to achieve satisfactory performance against quality criteria, and adequate processes in place to meet its accountability commitments. Based on desk review, surveys and key informant interviews with staff, partners, and affected populations.

Level 2 Advanced
Validation that organisation exceeds core requirements and demonstrates capacity and experience to consistently achieve good performance against quality criteria, and good processes in place to meet its accountability commitments. Based on desk review, surveys and key informant interviews with staff, partners, and affected populations.

Level 3 Role Model
Validation that organisation exceeds core requirements and demonstrated capacity and experience to consistently achieve excellent performance against quality criteria, and outstanding processes in place to meet its accountability commitments. Based on desk review, surveys and key informant interviews with staff, partners, and affected populations.

- The proposed model includes four levels of certification:
  - **Level 0 (Pre-verification)**: This is aimed at organisations that are in the process of developing their capacities and systems, but want to show their stakeholders that they are committed to meeting core requirements within a reasonable timeframe.

- o **Level 1 (Basic)**: This is for organisations that meet the minimum certification requirements. This would apply to both organisations working at the national or international level,. This is also the level that would likely be used to initially validate organisations that participate in a recognised national level certification process with similar criteria.
- o **Level 2 (Advanced):** In addition to meeting the basic level requirements, organisations that are certified at Level 2 would demonstrate consistent good performance in all the core requirement areas. This level would ideally apply to organisations that are currently operating internationally, as the expectation is that there is a higher level of capacity and professional experience is required in order to work effectively in different cultural and crises contexts.
- o **Level 3 (Role Model):** The third level of certification would apply to those organisations that consistently demonstrate outstanding capacity, performance and accountability in the meeting the core requirements. They are likely to be recognised leaders in the sector either in a specific thematic programming area, or through their experience and expertise in a country or regional context.

D. Governance and Management - How would it function?

An independent body

- The proposed model is governed by an independent international certification body, which has overall responsibility for establishing certification criteria, rules and procedures, and promoting awareness, understanding and support for certification
- This organisation "owns" the certification brand and "licenses" and certifies organisations directly based on independent assessment
- As in other sectors, this body is independent from a standards-setting body mainly to ensure the complete operational independence and objectivity of the certification process; it is not a membership-based organisation, but focused on the functioning of the certification system.
- The international certification body will work towards alignment, harmonisation and integration of existing certification initiatives for the sector (like HAP, InterAction, Cambodia or Philippines)

Governing Board:

- A small Governing Board (8-12 members) fulfils governance and oversight functions and sets the strategic direction of the organisation; it would meet at least three times a year.
- Board members would act in their personal capacity:
- Composition would be balanced with 2-4 independent experts (i.e. not linked directly to a humanitarian organisation) a representative from humanitarian NGOS from each region, 2 members from other certification and accreditation organisations, and 2 representatives from humanitarian standards initiatives.

Advisory Body

- A separate advisory body would provide a forum for institutional representation from stakeholder organisations and external experts
- Its role is to advise on trends, issues, risks and benefits of certification for the sector and ensure adequate linkages to other initiatives and
- Comprised of representatives from standards bodies, NGO umbrella organisations, governments, UN and other stakeholders and would meet annually
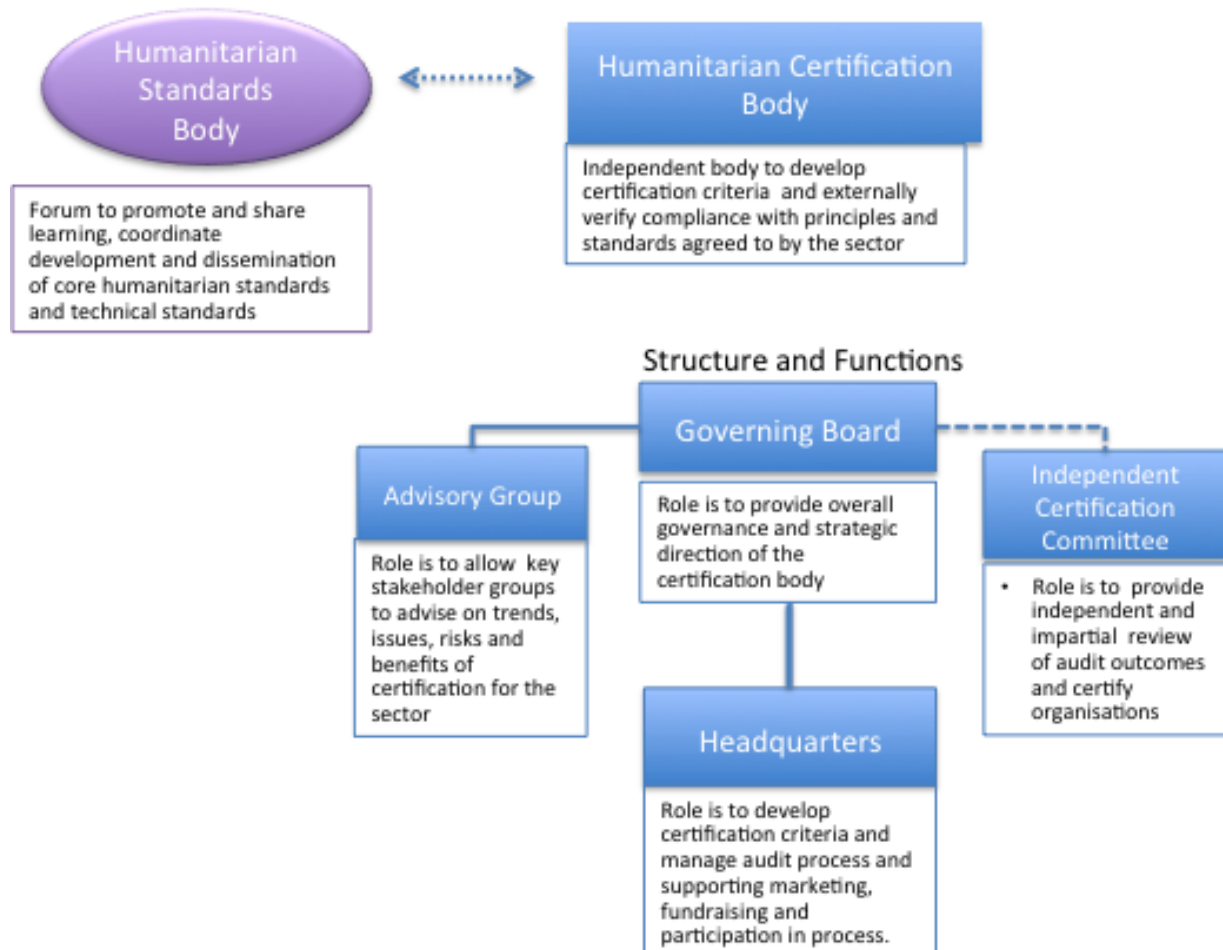
Certification Committee

- An independent certification committee would be responsible for oversight of the auditing and certification process; a "firewall" would ensure it is independent from the Governing Board and Advisory Body
- The committee would be compromised of 4-6 members who would not be directly linked to any participating humanitarian organisation in order to ensure independence and impartiality and avoid potential bias or conflict of interest;
- Its members would meet 2-3 times per year as required to review and approve the audit process and methodology, and award certification to organisations that meet the requirements

Headquarters (management functions)

- Main roles are: developing and supervising audit (assessing the organisation) and certification (verifying and validating the results of the audit and awarding approval) process; oversight for training auditors; provision of guidance to organisations wanting to obtain certification; quality-control and assurance of the process (to ensure the objectivity, reliability and accuracy of audit processes and certification decisions), marketing and communications
- Also responsible for interactions with standards-setting bodies (post-JSI, ISO, etc.) to share information and refine and update assessment criteria, audit methodologies, etc.
- Manages institutional relationships and marketing the process in relations donors, host governments and UN agencies to ensure buy-in, incentives for organisations that participate in certification processes and to look for alignment of donor selection and reporting procedure
- Similar to the Certification Committee, a "firewall" exists between audit and certification process and other activities like marketing and communications to increase the credibility of the process.
- Auditing and assessment would be done by licensed, trained independent auditors with humanitarian experience, with support and leadership from the headquarters audit team;
- Long-term aim is to use of national auditors in crisis contexts rather than international consultants

Diagram 2: Proposed governance and management structure and functions.

Humanitarian Standards Body

Forum to promote and share learning, coordinate development and dissemination of core humanitarian standards and technical standards

Humanitarian Certification Body

Independent body to develop certification criteria and externally verify compliance with principles and standards agreed to by the sector

Structure and Functions

Governing Board

Role is to provide overall governance and strategic direction of the certification body

Advisory Group

Role is to allow key stakeholder groups to advise on trends, issues, risks and benefits of certification for the sector

Independent Certification Committee

- Role is to provide independent and impartial review of audit outcomes and certify organisations

Headquarters

Role is to develop certification criteria and manage audit process and supporting marketing, fundraising and participation in process.

E. Costs - How is the model financed?

- Achieving widespread participation while keeping the model cost-effective and affordable is a major challenge
- In the long term, certification services costs would be largely covered through fees from participating organisations; however, development costs, marketing, institutional relations, etc. would need to come from other funding sources
- A sliding scale fee schedule based on a percentage of an organisation's humanitarian budget helps ensure smaller organisations have access to the system
- Donors would also need to provide core funding to the model in recognition of the added value to their work; for example, a percentage (less than what is currently dedicated to monitoring and evaluation) could be dedicated to preparing an organisation for certification, audits, etc.
- Dedicated funding to certified organisations (or those in process) from donors and UN agencies, and potentially pooled funds could be an incentive for organisations to participate
- Some donors including UN and INGOs could potentially provide funding to support professionalization of local and national organisations to meet certification requirements, similar to existing funding for innovation, leadership development, etc.

F. Discussion Questions – Will this work?

The project team is seeking feedback on this draft proposal to ensure that the model is feasible, achievable and would meet the requirements of the sector. The inputs received from different stakeholder groups will be incorporated into a revised draft model, which will then be tested and piloted before moving to a final proposal for discussion and decision. In particular, the views and perspectives from different functions within an organisation (such as programmes and operations, finance, fundraising, legal and governance) will help ensure the model design is appropriate and can be successfully integrated into organisational processes.

Key Questions

Please consider providing feedback on the draft model from an organisational/institutional perspective rather than from a personal perspective.

1. Core requirements and assessment criteria
The model aims to assess an organisation's capacity, performance and accountability, with a focus on results and practices at the field level.
- Are the proposed assessment criteria and benchmarks useful and relevant? How could they be improved?
- How close would your organisation be to achieving the minimum core requirements (based on the examples in Annex 1 of the model proposal)?

2. Assessment process
The model emphasises gathering and verifying information from stakeholders at the field level, based on a representative sample of an organisation's programmes. This has time and resources implications for participating organisations.
- How difficult do you think the process would be for your field staff and partners or affected populations?
- How challenging would the process be for your organisation?
- Are there more cost-effective and simpler approaches or methodologies that could be used to ensure field perspectives are integrated into the assessment process?

3. Levels of certification
The model proposes four different levels of certification for organisations.
- How useful are the proposed levels to motivate organisations to participate in the model?
- Do the proposed levels help external stakeholders distinguish between different levels of organisational capacity, performance and accountability?
- Which elements of your organisation would have to be engaged at what points in the process?

4. Recognition by donors and governments

 A key assumption behind the model is that host governments and donors will recognise the value of certification and provide support and incentives for organisations to participate in the model.

- Would donors and host governments endorse and support the model?
- What would be needed to achieve this?
- Would any part of this certification process have a negative impact on your relations with partners?

5. Costing the model

Keeping the model cost-effective and affordable is a major challenge, yet the model will require a long-term investment of resources if it is to be successful.

- Does your organisation have any internal processes into which elements of the certification process could be integrated? cost-efficiencies
- Are there any reasons why certification would be seen as a cost-burden rather than an investment in quality and accountability, for your organisation?
- What would it take to get donors to recognise the value of dedicating a proportion of funding towards supporting participation in certification?

6. General questions

- What benefits would this model bring to your organisation?
- Would you see a clear value in being certified? Why?
- What doesn't work in this model for your organisation? Why not?

Annex 1: Example of criteria and benchmarks that could be used to assess organisations

Core Criteria	Draft Benchmarks and Rating Level
Mission, Legal Foundation and Commitment to Humanitarian Principles	Level 0 (Validation) • The organisation has or is in the process of achieving legal status as a non-profit organisation that includes humanitarian issues as part of its stated activities. Level 1 (Basic) • The organisation is legally constituted and it mission and objectives humanitarian actions and respect for humanitarian principles (humanity and impartiality) (or using equivalent terms) are referenced to as part of its mission and objectives, and has a policy statements that affirm its commitment to humanitarian principles. Level 2 (Advanced) • The organisation is legally constituted and humanitarian actions and respect for humanitarian principles (humanity and impartiality) (or using equivalent terms) are part of its core mission and objectives. • It has a clear policy statement that affirms its commitment to humanitarian principles, core quality and accountability standards of good practice. Level 3 (Role Model)

	- The organisation is legally constituted and humanitarian actions and respect for humanitarian principles (humanity and impartiality) (or using equivalent terms) are part of its core mission and objectives. - It has a clear policy statement that affirms its commitment to humanitarian principles, core quality and accountability standards of good practice - This is publically communicated and actively promoted with key stakeholders, including affected communities and partners. - Multi-mandate organisations with different programming areas (such as advocacy, development, et.) have systems and processes in place to minimise potential risks to the independence and impartiality in their humanitarian programmes.
Governance, Management and Staff	Level 0 (Validation) - The organisation has a governing body and management team in place, and has or is in the process of developing a human resource strategy- Level 1 (Basic) - The organisation has a governance and management structure in place, and a human resource strategy. - Governance and management have clearly-defined roles and responsibilities, including monitoring and ensuring respect for and application of humanitarian principles and commitments. - Staff have the necessary training, competencies and support to ensure the organisation can carry out its programmes. Level 2 (Advanced) - In addition to Level 1 requirements, governance, management, staff and volunteers can demonstrate that they understand and apply humanitarian principles, accountability commitments in their work. Level 3 (Role Model) - In addition to meeting Level 1 and 2 requirements, the organisation's leadership at all levels (HQ, field, etc.) demonstrate their commitments to principled, effective and accountable humanitarian action. - This is reflected in their relationships with stakeholders and in internal and external communications.

| Technical Competency | Level 0 (Validation)

• The organisation demonstrates that it is working towards building its internal capacity (systems, processes, etc.) to apply good practices and technical standards in its work.

Level 1 (Basic)

• The organisation meets minimum requirements to apply quality standards and good practices in its programmes.

• The organisation has demonstrated technical capacity, experience and resources to manage or implement through partners humanitarian programmes.

Level 2 (Advanced)

• The organisation consistently meets minimum requirements to apply quality standards and good practices in its programmes.

• The organisation has demonstrated technical capacity, experience and resources to manage or implement through partners humanitarian programmes.

• Processes are in place to promote continuous learning and build sustainable capacity to ensure emerging good practices are regularly incorporated into programming.

Level 3 (Role Model)

• The organisation consistently exceeds minimum requirements to apply quality standards and good practices in its programmes

• The organisation has demonstrated technical capacity, experience and resources to manage or implement through partners humanitarian programmes in different crisis contexts.

• Processes are in place to promote continuous learning and build sustainable capacity to ensure emerging good practices are regularly incorporated into programming.

• The organisation is a recognised expert in its programming areas, actively contributes to developing innovation in standards and good practices, and shares and promotes learning and continuous improvement in the sector.

For multi-mandate organisations, the organisation limits its work to areas / programmes where it has sufficient competency and capacity to meet quality standards, (or can demonstrate it has the ability to scale-up capacity and competencies to work in new areas). |
|---|---|
| **Financial Management** | Level 0:

• The organisation has or is in the process of establishing systems to ensure |

	adequate use of financial resources. Level 1 (Basic) • The organisation has systems to ensure adequate use of financial resources. Level 2 (Advanced) • The organisation can demonstrate it has sufficient financial resources and demonstrated experience to manage and current or proposed humanitarian programmes. • Internationally recognised standards and best practices in financial management, reporting, and auditing • The organisation has clear and transparent criteria in place for determining funding sources and resource allocations are in line with humanitarian principles. Level 3 (Role Model) • In addition to the requirements in Level 1 and 2, the organisation is a recognised leader in communicating transparently about its finances to key stakeholders and the public, including to affected populations.
Performance and Results	Level 0: • The organisation has or is in the process of establishing systems to ensure it can adequately manage its programmes and meet technical quality standards. Level 1 (Basic) • The organisation has systems to manage its performance and results and can demonstrate it works towards achieving the core certification criteria. • In order to ensure impartiality, programme planning uses a recognised objective methodology to assess and monitor needs to guide programme planning • Programme activities and results are monitored regularly to ensure core requirements and technical quality standards are met. • Systems are in place to ensure participation of affected populations and other stakeholders in programming planning. Level 2 (Advanced) • In addition to the requirements of Level 1, the organisation regularly monitors and assesses it programming and can demonstrate that it can take corrective actions when needs change or when issues of are identified.

	• Regular evaluations of organisation's programme results consistently demonstrate that humanitarian principles and core requirements are met and that the needs and priorities of affected populations are addressed.
	• The organisation has procedures to facilitate collaboration and coordination with civil society, local authorities (when appropriate) and other humanitarian actors and stakeholders.
	• The organisation can demonstrate that it has mechanisms to continually and consistently evaluate its performance and promote continuous learning from experience to address weakness and improve its performance.
	Level 3 (Role Model)
	• In addition to the requirements in Level 1 and 2, the organisation is a recognised leader in achieving results in a variety of crisis contexts.
	• It has clear, consistently applied procedures for engaging with affected communities and other stakeholders to ensure programmes effectively meet their needs.
	• It promotes learning and improvements in its own practices, and encourages and supports learning in the sector.
Accountability to Affected Populations and other stakeholders	Level 0:
	• The organisation has or is in the process of establishing systems to establish its accountability commitments to different stakeholders, particularly affected populations.
	Level 1 (Basic)
	• The organisation has appropriate mechanisms to facilitate affected populations' engagement and participation in programme design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluations.
	• The organisation has appropriate feedback mechanisms with the populations it works with and its stakeholders to inform decision-making, and takes action to address concerns, complaints or other issues.
	Level 2 (Advanced)
	• In addition to meeting Level 1 requirements, the organisation can demonstrate its programmes are designed and implemented in ways that minimise risks to affected populations, provide them protection and assistance, and facilitates their involvement in identifying and minimising risks and protect their rights and dignity.
	• The organisation can demonstrate that it has appropriate mechanisms for staff, crisis-affected populations and other stakeholders to express their views, opinions and concerns about programmes, and mechanisms and

	procedures to respond to and resolve any concerns.
	Level 3 (Role Model)
	• In addition to the requirements in Level 1 and 2, the organisation is a recognised leader in developing and applying its accountability commitments.
	• The organisation takes necessary and appropriate (context-specific) measures to ensure the protection, security and wellbeing of staff, communities and crisis-affected populations.
	• The organisation can demonstrate that it has mechanisms in place to transparently communicate with affected populations, partners and other stakeholders about its objective, activities, budgets and results, generate feedback from stakeholders and respond appropriately to concerns and complaints received