Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance

We Intend Good therefore We are Good

Niels Dabelstein, ICFO Annual General Meeting, 16 May 2008
Transparency is key!

- Most ICFO members not transparent:
  - Websites promotional
  - Limited financial info
  - No accessible evaluation results
"The performance of NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance was mixed. A number behaved professionally and compassionately and delivered high-quality care and services. But other NGOs performed in an unprofessional and irresponsible manner that resulted not only in duplication and wasted resources but, in a few cases, in unnecessary loss of life."

Joint Evaluation to the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda
“Some international organisations managed well; many did not.”

“...these include supply-driven, unsolicited and inappropriate aid, and inappropriate housing designs and livelihood solutions. Such aid has led to inequities, gender- and conflict-insensitive programmes, indignities, cultural offence and waste.”
Why so little change?

- Reluctance to admit shortcomings
- Fear of declining funding
- Reluctance to learn
- High staff turn-over
Why Evaluate?

- Contribute to informed debate
- Debate influence policy
- Educate the public
- Secrecy fosters suspicion
Evaluation Culture

- Self-criticism
- Openness to debate
- Demonstrate usefulness
- Lesson learning

Require:
- Management champion
Benefits of Joint Evaluation

- Broader Scope: answer questions which cannot be addressed by one actor such as coordination and coherence
- Objectivity and Legitimacy: Increased weight of the evaluation if undertaken with partners
- Rationalisation, harmonisation and reduced transaction costs for all partners (except lead)
- Builds credible evidence for advocacy and fund raising purposes
Quality & Accountability Initiatives

- People in Aid: Code of Best Practice (1996)
- The Sphere Project (1997)
- ALNAP (1997)
- The Ombudsman Project (1997-1999)
- The Humanitarian Accountability Project/Partnership (2000)
- SGS Benchmarking (2006)
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We Intend Good
therefore
We Want to be Better