



Professionals in
Humanitarian Assistance
and Protection

Strategic Framework

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Introduction

Since its founding in 2010, the International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) has grown quickly, having inspired the active participation of humanitarian practitioners from all over the world.

PHAP initiated a process in October 2015 to review the role of the association within the humanitarian sector and determine how PHAP can be a more valuable resource to members and other stakeholders.

1. The **first goal** of this process was to *develop consensus on the desired strategic goals* of the association, given the needs of professionals in the humanitarian sector.
2. The **second goal** of this process was to develop a *strategic framework* to guide association activities in pursuit of these goals.

To support this process, PHAP engaged Association Laboratory. Association Laboratory specializes in research and strategic planning for trade, professional, and nonprofit membership organizations.

The association investigated four key areas of information through qualitative research and a survey gathering responses from more than 3'000 individuals:

1. **Humanitarian stakeholder landscape** – What is the nature of the humanitarian stakeholder landscape and how are different audience segments within the sector similar or different?
2. **Future humanitarian professional environment** – What is the future environment within which humanitarian stakeholders will work and how will this environment influence their needs?
3. **PHAP goals** – What are the strategic goals of PHAP given the future humanitarian environment and stakeholder needs?
4. **PHAP strategies** – What strategies should PHAP implement to achieve the identified strategic goals?

The research demonstrated that among the wide variety of actors engaged in humanitarian work there is, to a great extent, convergence regarding the main challenges and priorities.

From 26-28 February 2016, PHAP convened a meeting of its Strategic Planning Task Force, consisting of association leaders and other stakeholders in the humanitarian sector, to discuss the research and develop recommendations for PHAP's strategic framework. The resulting draft was shared with all PHAP members for review and additional inputs.

The Strategic Framework presented below is the product of this process.



Strategic Framework 2016 – Overview

*The Vision is a statement of
a desired future state*

Vision

Human life and dignity are safeguarded in the face
of humanitarian crises

*The Mission articulates the association's
role in achieving the vision*

Mission

Empower capable and informed professionals
to transform humanitarian action

Organizational Strategies
*to achieve the mission
and vision*

Develop

Goal: Professionals apply relevant knowledge
and employ effective practices

- Monitor trends and challenges
- Provide core and advanced professional education
- Identify and certify against bodies of knowledge
and competencies

Convene

Goal: New perspectives on critical issues are
inspired by inclusive and objective discussion

- Identify emerging dilemmas and debates
- Provide a neutral platform where participants can
speak in their individual professional capacity
- Contribute evidence to inform policy discussions

Support

Goal: Well-equipped humanitarian practitioners
effectively manage instability, strain, and risk

- Support member communities
- Link to information resources
- Provide career education and support

Resource Strategies
*to support organizational
strategies*

Member and stakeholder engagement

Goal: Expanded, diverse, and engaged
network of members and other stakeholders

- Diversify engagement structure to accommodate
different needs and resources

Fee-based activities and services

Goal: Widespread and sustainable access
to excellent content

- Diversify and expand fee-based offerings

Grants and donations

Goal: Sufficient and predictable funding

- Solicit core and project grants
- Develop structure to receive donations

Delivery Strategies
*to support organizational
and resource strategies*

Global online content delivery and communication

Goal: Robust technical and communication infrastructure

- Assess technical requirements
- Develop content-focused online infrastructure and methodology

Live interactions

Goal: Frequent, high-quality on-site, online, and hybrid
meetings and events

- Increase proximity to members and other stakeholders
- Further improve feedback mechanisms for live events

Framework Description

The following describes in more detail the outcomes, goals, and strategies comprising the Strategic Framework, referring to the research results and discussions of the Strategic Planning Task Force.

Strategic Outcomes

Vision Statement

Strategic planning conversations focused on assistance to and protection of people affected by crises. The Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that a successful association of professionals in the humanitarian sector would ultimately reduce the impact of conflict and environmental disruption on affected populations.

Based on the conversations of the Strategic Planning Task Force, the following Vision Statement was agreed upon.

PHAP's vision is that

Human life and dignity are safeguarded in the face of humanitarian crises

Mission Statement

The Strategic Planning Task Force discussed PHAP's role in achieving the vision. Conversations focused on the ability of PHAP to support individuals active in the humanitarian sector.

Based on these conversations and extensive consultation, the Strategic Planning Task Force agreed upon the following mission statement.

PHAP's mission is to

Empower capable and informed professionals to transform humanitarian action

Organizational Strategies

Organizational strategies are long term strategic initiatives designed to directly support the *vision* and *mission*.

The following briefly describes in more detail the specific strategic goals and strategies of PHAP.

Develop

The *lack of professional development opportunities* was the most significant professional challenge identified in a study of more than 3'000 professionals in the humanitarian sector. As a result, the Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that developing and sustaining a long term professional education strategy was critical to the achievement of the Mission and Vision.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals.

- Professionals will be knowledgeable about key concepts, principles, normative frameworks, methods, and strategies related to humanitarian action.
- Professionals will be able to apply this knowledge in challenging and complex contexts.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Professional education** – PHAP will further develop and sustain professional education activities for humanitarian practitioners.

Professionals in the humanitarian sector operate in a variety of functions within diverse organizations. To be successful, these individuals need a sophisticated understanding of key concepts, principles, normative frameworks, methods, and strategies related to humanitarian action. In addition, they need the ability to apply this knowledge in a variety of challenging and complex contexts. Moreover, they need progressively more sophisticated knowledge and knowhow as they move through their careers.

- **Monitoring challenges, trends, and PHAP member needs in the humanitarian sector** – To inform its professional education activities, PHAP will develop an ongoing monitoring function to identify humanitarian sector trends and challenges and the professional needs of PHAP members.

The PHAP Stakeholder Survey identified humanitarian sector trends and challenges as the most desired area of content. Ongoing monitoring of this area will also inform and contribute to leadership education and convening strategies.

- **Identification of bodies of knowledge and competencies** – PHAP will engage its cross-sector expert networks to define the bodies of knowledge and assessable competency indicators for effective humanitarian practitioners.

The PHAP Stakeholder Survey indicated a strong interest in recognition of knowledge and competencies in areas of cross-sector relevance. Identifying bodies of knowledge and assessable competency indicators will enable such recognition and will also inform professional education activities and partnerships.

- **Certifying knowledge, skills, and experience** – PHAP will develop methods and mechanisms for recognizing the professional knowledge, skills, and experience of humanitarian practitioners.

- **Advanced leadership education** – PHAP will develop a program designed to engage senior practitioners on advanced concepts related to humanitarian action and their application within multi-stakeholder, politicized environments.

The Strategic Planning Task Force recognized that senior humanitarian practitioners operate in a complex, dynamic environment requiring theoretical and practical knowledge on how to navigate multi-stakeholder, multi-interest, and politicized contexts. Future-focused knowledge will help these individuals be more effective leaders within their organizations and in inter-organizational dialogues.

Convene

The humanitarian sector contains a variety of organizations with different organizational mandates, perspectives, and policies. Furthermore, humanitarian action affects and is affected by other stakeholders in the same contexts. The PHAP Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that there was a need for a multidisciplinary membership organization, like PHAP, to take on a more active convening role to organize constructive dialogue on humanitarian issues.

The diversity of PHAP’s membership and larger network provides the association with a unique opportunity to act as a neutral and inclusive body for objective, informed discussions of critical humanitarian issues.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Create and sustain a neutral environment for discussion of humanitarian issues and dilemmas, in which participants can speak in their individual professional capacity.
- Support diverse, multi-actor engagement within this environment.
- Inform dialogue with objective information on humanitarian policies, practices, trends, and challenges.
- Improve opportunities for contributions by underrepresented actors.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Identification of emerging dilemmas and debates** – PHAP will develop an ongoing monitoring function to identify and prioritize humanitarian sector dilemmas and debates.

The PHAP Stakeholder Survey identified a variety of forces affecting the humanitarian sector with humanitarian sector trends and challenges as most desired area of content among practitioners. The Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that establishing an ongoing process for identifying these factors, and the dilemmas and debates that emerge from them, was necessary to contribute to an effective dialogue.

- **Creating a platform for dialogue** – PHAP will host and facilitate critical conversations within the sector on local, national, and global issues impacting humanitarian action.
- **Engagement of other stakeholders** – PHAP will facilitate engagement of other stakeholders with humanitarian actors.

Support

Professionals in the humanitarian sector look to PHAP for different kinds of support. Research showed that the most desired potential activities of the association were expert briefings on specialized topics and an online resource library, indicating a need for sustained knowledge management support.

Other important professional challenges identified in the research included:

- Employment insecurity
- Complex institutional environments
- Practical challenges of humanitarian assignments
- Maintaining personal safety and health

The PHAP Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that these challenges, if not adequately managed, may decrease practitioner effectiveness and increase the risk of competent practitioners exiting the humanitarian sector.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Humanitarian practitioners will have better access to needed information resources.
- Humanitarian practitioners will more effectively manage the instability, strain, and risk of work in the sector.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Member community development** – PHAP will develop a toolkit and provide a communication platform to support members' efforts to discuss humanitarian challenges and connect with other PHAP members.

In addition to serving as a platform for information and experience sharing, member communities can act as a support network, helping colleagues deal with professional and career challenges.

- **Online information resources** – PHAP will analyze the information needs of humanitarian practitioners in order to identify gaps and provide targeted solutions where feasible.
- **Career education** – PHAP will provide career development education, as part of a broader professional development curriculum.

By properly aligning the expectations of those working in the sector with the reality of the work environment, PHAP can directly contribute to professionals' ability to operate effectively within the different environments they may encounter throughout their career.

- **Career support** – PHAP will connect members with career resources within the humanitarian sector.

Based on the recent study of PHAP Stakeholders, more than 30% of respondents are in transition or in short term contracts. Employment insecurity was identified as a top professional challenge by nearly four out of ten respondents. The PHAP Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that PHAP should facilitate the efforts of members to seek out new opportunities.

Resource Strategies

Resource strategies are designed to generate financial and other resources to enable the *organizational strategies*.

Based on existing activity and insights from the 2016 PHAP Stakeholder Survey, the following represent key strategies to create and sustain sufficient resources to enable successful implementation of the Strategic Framework.

Member and Stakeholder Engagement

PHAP has enjoyed robust membership growth. Membership, though, is not the only means of engaging with the association. Using information from the 2016 PHAP Stakeholder Survey to evaluate current and anticipated programs, services, and initiatives, the Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that continued membership growth has the potential to supplement other resource strategies.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Identify and develop future PHAP leaders.
- Strengthen relationships with potential contributors in PHAP's practitioner network.
- Generate sufficient revenue, as a supplement to grant funding, to ensure continued independence.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Diversified engagement structure** – PHAP currently offers one type of membership, with identical dues and benefits for all members. Recent developments in best practices for how associations serve the needs of their members call for further investigation into whether a more diversified and/or expanded engagement model might be more beneficial.

A more diverse engagement structure would enable PHAP to more effectively reach categories currently excluded from membership – including young professionals, students, and professionals in complementary areas. PHAP would also then be better able to fulfill its convening role.

- **Member engagement pathways** – PHAP will develop a variety of opportunities for members to engage in its activities, to maximize the value members receive from and are able to contribute to the association.

Different members are interested in engaging with the association in different ways. Identifying multiple pathways for building and sustaining this engagement supports member satisfaction and strengthens relationships with contributors and leaders.

Fee-based Activities and Services

Based on an analysis of the stakeholder audience, there is demand for PHAP activities and services at a variety of fee levels. The Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that it was important to diversify paths for fee-based engagement with PHAP.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Ensure the availability of affordable options for all professionals in the sector to access content, activities, and services.
- Underwrite the cost of content development and distribution.
- Maintain reputation for excellence in content, activities, and services.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Diversification and expansion of fee-based offerings** – PHAP will further develop its fee-based offerings to individuals and organizations in the areas of online and onsite education products, as well as products and services based on the value of the PHAP network.

Grants and Donations

In 2015, 37% of PHAP revenue came from core funding and 23% from project grants. This success indicates that PHAP is well perceived by donors and is recognized for its value to the humanitarian sector.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Secure sufficient support to finance core operations, programs, and services.
- Raise project funding for additional programs and services central to the realization of the PHAP strategy.
- Improve multi-year predictability of funding.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Core grants** – PHAP will approach additional donors and increase fundraising efforts, including with a new business plan identifying financial resources needed to support the operational structure required for the achievement of the identified organizational, resource, and delivery strategies.
- **Project grants** – PHAP will develop proposals and secure project funding for additional programs and services directly contributing to the realization of the PHAP strategy.
- **Donations** – PHAP will put the administrative structures in place in order to be able to receive donations.

Delivery Strategies

Delivery strategies define more specifically how resource and organizational strategies will be implemented or delivered to stakeholders.

The following briefly describes in more detail the specific strategic goals and recommendations of the PHAP Strategic Planning Task Force in this area.

Global Online Content Delivery and Communication

To serve a global audience, and with strategies that prioritize integrated online delivery and digital content, a robust technical infrastructure is essential for long term, sustainable success.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goals:

- Ensure global access to relevant content.
- Streamline user experiences across platforms.
- Effectively collect, analyze, and use data for decision-making.

In order to achieve these goals, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Technical and human resource assessment** – PHAP will assess requirements for the strategic framework and identify the infrastructure and human resources necessary to support these requirements. The resources required for this infrastructure will be incorporated into the estimate of needs for core and project support.

Without a sufficient technical and communication architecture, it will be challenging for PHAP to achieve its goals. The PHAP Strategic Planning Task Force concluded that assessing the future technological and communication needs based on the strategic framework was a priority and that, based on this assessment, the necessary steps for financing and implementation could be determined.

- **Content-focused online infrastructure and methodology** – PHAP will further develop its content-focused online infrastructure and communication channels.

Live Interactions

Meetings and events can be organized face-to-face, online, or as a hybrid of the two. Leading organizations are using a variety of formats to engage their communities and support professional networking and development.

PHAP is interested in achieving the following goal:

- Further increase the quantity and quality of live interactions among its stakeholders

In order to achieve this goal, PHAP will develop and sustain the following.

- **Increase proximity to members and other stakeholders** – PHAP will build mutually trusting and accountable relationships with members, partners, and other stakeholders who can lead meetings and events.
- **Feedback mechanisms for live events** – PHAP will improve feedback mechanisms to customize content and formats to the needs of distinct audiences and evaluate if objectives are met.

Continuous Monitoring and Improvement

The growth of a successful global association is a continuous process of research, reflection, and improvement.

Staff, volunteer leadership, and other stakeholders of the International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) must continually monitor trends and challenges that affect humanitarian work, consider the association's role within this environment, and adapt the association's strategy to ensure a vibrant, successful organization.

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