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OFADEC ACHIEVES 'HUMANITARIAN QUALITY' STANDARD

The Senegal-based West African aid agency, OFADEC, is to be 'certified' for complying with the new HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, following a formal inspection last month. OFADEC will receive the HAP Certificate at an event in Geneva on 26 April 2007.

Certification offers an assurance to OFADEC's beneficiaries and donors that the agency meets an agreed standard of professionalism and accountability in delivering relief services to people in need. It demonstrates that OFADEC has translated its own principles into practice.

To meet the HAP Standard, OFADEC demonstrated good practice in the following areas: implementing a humanitarian quality management system; transparency; seeking informed consent through participation; staff competency; safe and accessible complaints handling; and a process for continual improvement. The audit covered all internal and external accountability commitments made by OFADEC to beneficiaries and other specified stakeholders.

"Becoming certified has been a challenging yet worthwhile process that stretched OFADEC to improve its quality and accountability," said Mamadou Ndiaye, Executive Director of OFADEC. "It involved a certain amount of work and training for the agency as a whole. By the end of the process, we found it was definitely worth the effort to help us translate our own principles, standards and commitments into practice. And the process itself helped to build up trust."

"Improving our complaints handling system was a particular challenge, especially ensuring that beneficiaries had confidence in it," added Mr Ndiaye. "But thanks to their participation, we understood the requirements and addressed weaknesses. We also looked again at information sharing, so that staff and beneficiary representatives will receive the right information."

OFADEC began the process in March 2007, when the agency applied to be certified against the new HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management. Within weeks, independent registered auditors completed a formal audit of OFADEC, at the Dakar head office and a field office in Podor, situated on the Mauritania border.

First, the auditors reviewed relevant documents in support of OFADEC's application. Second, they verified good practice through on-site observation

and interviews with staff and beneficiaries (both representatives and individuals).

OFADEC will remain certified for three years. According to HAP rules, OFADEC will require a mid-term surveillance audit to ensure the agency continues working towards further improvement in quality and accountability to beneficiaries.

The agency has appointed an Accountability Focal Point to work closely with the Executive Director. Their job will be to make sure that humanitarian principles and the HAP Standard are integrated in OFADEC's programmes.

OFADEC also believes the HAP Standard "offers a useful way to distinguish good practice from good rhetoric in the humanitarian sector". OFADEC is committed to maintaining and reinforcing accountability and quality in its services to beneficiaries.

About OFADEC

OFADEC (Office Africain pour le Developpement et la Coopération) is a non-profit NGO founded in 1976 in Senegal . OFADEC began humanitarian work in Senegal in 1989 with refugees. The agency's focus remains on protecting refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs through advocacy and programmes. It delivers assistance to vulnerable refugee and asylum seeker to ensure their social protection.

OFADEC provides support to a population of concern of 23.000 in Senegal . It provides income generating projects in agriculture and credit for refugee (men and women) in the north region of Senegal . It provides assistance projects in education, vocational training, health, and income generating projects to refugees in an urban setting in Dakar .

OFADEC is active with partners in West Africa in promoting refugee, asylum seekers, and IDP rights. It conducts similar activities at the international level.

The agency is also active in the promotion and recognition of Southern NGO work.

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