



DRAFT Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)

Draft 1 for Stakeholder Consultation

05 June 2023

Introduction

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a globally recognised, open standard that describes the essential elements of principled, effective and accountable support to people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability.

The CHS is designed to protect the rights and dignity of people and communities in situation of crisis and vulnerability. It promotes equitable, inclusive and collaborative relationships between people and communities and the actors supporting and assisting them, based on respect, trust and continuous dialogue and communication.

Aims

The CHS sets out Nine Commitments that any organisations and individuals can use to improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of support and assistance they provide to people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability. It facilitates greater accountability to people and communities: knowing what organisations have committed to enables them to hold those organisations to account.

Scope

The CHS may be used by any individual, group or organisation committed to working ethically and accountably with the people and communities they directly or indirectly support. The CHS is also relevant and applicable for organisations working in partnership arrangements, consortia and coordination mechanisms and as a framework to support and improve collective accountability of different actors towards people and communities.

The CHS is a comprehensive, integrated accountability framework that can be used to:

- Enable people and communities to hold organisations accountable to them
- Build equitable and accountable relationships between organisations, people and communities and other stakeholders
- Plan, monitor implement and evaluate quality, effective programmes and activities
- Strengthen organisations' accountability and quality assurance systems and processes
- Improve effective and accountable collaboration and coordination between stakeholders
- Assess and verify the application of the CHS to support continuous learning and improvement
- Support efforts to improve collective accountability towards people and communities

Foundations

The CHS is underpinned by core rights set out in international law and humanitarian principles (Humanity, Impartiality, Independence, Neutrality), as expressed in the Humanitarian Charter and the Sphere Minimum Standards:

- the right to life with dignity,
- the right to receive support and assistance
- the right to protection and security

The foundation for the CHS is a commitment to people-centred accountability approaches which place the needs and interests of people and communities at the centre of all aspects of an organisation's work. It reaffirms that people and communities are not passive recipients of assistance but have a leading role as first responders and as active drivers, co-designers and co-implementers of actions and decisions that affect them.

For the CHS, accountability is defined as:

The process of using power responsibly by taking account of and being held accountable by different stakeholders, primarily those who are directly affected by the exercise of such power - people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability.

The CHS challenges organisations to be aware of how power is used formally and informally within the organisation and in relationships with people and communities, partners and other actors. It asks them to address imbalanced power dynamics, with attention to gender, age, race, equity, diversity and inclusion, respecting the rights and dignity of all people, without discrimination.

Users of the CHS recognise the primary roles and responsibilities of States to respond to situations of crisis and vulnerability within their own territory, and to support them when appropriate, without compromising the principles and accountability commitments set out in the CHS.

Structure

The CHS is structured around three inter-related components:

- **Nine Commitments** that describe what people and communities want and expect from organisations that engage with and support them in situations of crisis and vulnerability.
- **General System Requirements** that describe the organisational culture, governance and management systems and processes that are needed to consistently apply and meet the Nine Commitments.
- **Key Requirements** describing the actions that are needed to enable organisations to consistently meet each of the Nine Commitments across its programmes.

Nine Commitments

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

1. Know their rights and can actively participate in actions and decisions that affect them
2. Receive timely and effective support in accordance with their needs and priorities
3. Are better prepared and more resilient to future crises
4. Receive support that does not negatively affect them and their environment
5. Have access to safe, inclusive and responsive means to report misconduct and complaints
6. Are supported through coordinated and complementary action.
7. Receive support that is adapted and improved based on feedback and continuous learning.
8. Engage with competent, well managed and respectful staff and volunteers.
9. Engage with organisations that manage resources efficiently, effectively and ethically.

General System Requirements

Organisations must have the necessary enabling conditions in place to consistently and systematically meet the requirements set out in the CHS's Nine Commitments. These conditions include an organisational culture, systems and processes to ensure the CHS is embedded in and applied throughout the organisation, its work, and its relationships with stakeholders.

The organisational culture, systems and processes should correspond to the organisation's mission, values, ways of working and the contexts within which it works. At a minimum, organisations should meet the following general system requirements:

1. Leadership and management promote a culture of accountability and respect for human rights and dignity in accordance with the CHS.
2. Governance and management decision-making processes support and enable the effective application of the CHS throughout the organisation and its work.
3. A clearly defined strategy and approach set out how it will work to systematically apply and continuously improve its efforts to achieve the Nine Commitments.
4. Risk management, quality assurance and monitoring processes are in place to manage risks and improve the quality and results for people and communities they support.
5. Application of the CHS and its Nine Commitments is promoted and supported in work with partners and other stakeholders.

Commitments and Key Requirements

Commitment One:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability...

- **Know their rights and can actively participate in actions and decisions that affect them**

Key Requirements

- 1.1 Establish processes for sharing information, facilitating communication and enabling participation in actions and decision-making processes, in line with people's and communities' priorities and preferences.
- 1.2 Share clear and timely information with people and communities on the organisation's commitments, expected behaviour of staff and volunteers, and their rights with relation to the organisation.
- 1.3 Facilitate communication in languages, formats and content that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate and accessible for different members of the community.
- 1.4 Ensure representation of people and communities in decision-making processes is equitable and inclusive, involving them at all stages of work.
- 1.5 Ensure communication representing people and communities has their informed consent, and is accurate, respectful, ethical and preserves their dignity and agency.
- 1.6 Provide timely and appropriate life-saving information to people and communities, including how to access support and assistance.

Commitment Two:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Receive timely and effective support in accordance with their needs and priorities**

Key Requirements

- 2.1 Perform a systematic, comprehensive and contextual analysis, identifying risks and the diverse vulnerabilities and capacities of people, communities and other relevant stakeholders.
- 2.2 Plan and implement programmes which address people's and communities' priority needs in a timely and effective manner.
- 2.3 Ensure programmes are realistic and safe for people and communities, in line with their preferences and priorities.
- 2.4 Apply relevant quality, management and technical standards and good practices in all aspects of programmes.

Commitment Three

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Are better prepared and more resilient to future crises**

Key Requirements

- 3.1 Support and complement formal and informal community leadership and locally led efforts aimed at increasing people and community's capacities and resilience.
- 3.2 Use existing community knowledge and risk assessments, preparedness plans and similar initiatives at the local and national levels to guide planning and implementation of activities.
- 3.3 Plan and implement programmes in ways that contribute to long-term positive effects for people 's and communities' lives, livelihoods, the local economy, and their environment.
- 3.4 Take measures to increase local and national leadership and management of programmes and resources over time.

Commitment Four:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Receive support that does not negatively affect them and their environment**

Key Requirements

- 4.1 Identify, prevent and mitigate risks that could potentially cause harm and have negative effects for people and communities, their livelihoods, the local economy, culture and environment.
- 4.2 Plan and implement programmes in ways that protect and safeguard people's safety, security, rights and dignity, and that prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- 4.3 Ensure processes are in place to safeguard any personal information collected from people and communities and other information that may place them or the organisation at risk.
- 4.4 Take timely and appropriate action to address any negative social and environmental impacts caused by the organisation and its work.

Commitment Five:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Have access to safe, inclusive and responsive means to report misconduct and complaints**

Key Requirements

- 5.1 Ensure people, communities and relevant stakeholders are aware of how the organisation and its staff, volunteers and partners are expected to act and protect them from inappropriate actions or behaviours, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- 5.2 Implement safe and effective mechanisms for people and communities to report wrongdoing, concerns and complaints, in line with their preferences, good practice and relevant legal mechanisms and processes.
- 5.3 Acknowledge and manage complaints in a safe, fair, timely and appropriate manner.
- 5.4 Establish appropriate victim-survivor centred approaches to investigate and respond to complaints and reports of any form of misconduct and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse.
- 5.5 Refer any complaints, reports of wrongdoing or other issues that do not fall within the responsibilities of the organisation to a relevant party in a manner consistent with good practice.

Commitment Six:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Are supported through coordinated and complementary action.**

Key Requirements

- 6.1 Plan and implement programmes that are coordinated with, inclusive of, and complementary to, existing actions or initiatives by communities, local actors, and local and national authorities and other stakeholders.
- 6.2 Develop collaboration and partnership arrangements based on clear roles and responsibilities and a commitment to fair, equitable and accountable relationships between stakeholders.
- 6.3 Participate in relevant coordination mechanisms, including at the local and national levels, and to maximise the quality, coverage, coherence and effectiveness of programmes.
- 6.4 Refer any unmet needs to organisations with the relevant technical expertise and mandate, or advocate for those needs to be addressed.
- 6.5 Regularly monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of collaboration, partnership and coordination arrangements and take corrective action when needed.

Commitment Seven:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Receive support that is adapted and improved based on feedback and continuous learning.**

Key Requirements

- 7.1 Plan and implement programmes based on existing assessments, evaluations and learning, including the knowledge and experience of people and communities.
- 7.2 Implement processes to collect and analyse monitoring and feedback data from people and communities on their priorities and their satisfaction with the quality of the organisation's work.
- 7.3 Collect the necessary disaggregated data for assessments, planning and monitoring and learning, reflecting the diversity of people and communities and minimising demands on them.
- 7.4 Share and validate results of monitoring and feedback with people and communities and use those to inform decision-making processes.
- 7.5 Adapt programmes to address poor performance, constraints or changes in the context and needs, based on monitoring data, feedback and complaints.
- 7.6 Share and disseminate experiences, knowledge and learning throughout the organisation and with communities and other stakeholders to support continuous learning and improvement.

Commitment Eight

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Engage with competent, well-managed, respectful staff and volunteers**

Key Requirements

- 8.1 Create conditions and establish appropriate measures for the safety, security and wellbeing of staff.
- 8.2 Ensure staff and volunteers work according to the mission, values and commitments of the organisation and understand the consequences of not adhering to them.
- 8.3 Support staff and volunteers to develop and use the necessary personal, technical and management competencies to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively and accountably.
- 8.4 Establish fair, transparent and non-discriminatory human resource management processes, that are compliant with relevant legal requirements and good management practices.
- 8.5 Ensure that staff, volunteers, partners and contractors understand and adhere to a code of conduct, which at a minimum prohibits any form of exploitation, abuse, harassment, discrimination against people and misuse of resources.

- 8.6 Establish safe, confidential and accessible means for staff, volunteers, contractors and partners to raise concerns and report misconduct, with appropriate protection and support for those reporting.
- 8.7 Take timely, appropriate corrective actions to address staff and volunteer misconduct, illegal, unethical or inappropriate actions and behaviours.

Commitment Nine:

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability....

- **Engage with organisations that manage resources efficiently, effectively and ethically.**

Key Requirements

- 9.1 Ensure there are adequate governance, management, staff and technical capacity and resources to effectively deliver programme commitments.
- 9.2 Ensure fundraising, resource mobilisation and fund allocations are ethical and legal and do not compromise the organisation's mission and values.
- 9.3 Ensure efficient use of resources, balancing quality, cost and timeliness of programmes and organisational processes.
- 9.4 Identify, prevent and manage risks of corruption, fraud and conflicts of interest and take appropriate action if these are identified.
- 9.5 Take action to protect the environment and conserve nature.
- 9.6 Conduct regular programme and organisational reviews, including financial and management audits, to ensure organisational accountability and learning, and share the outcomes transparently.
- 9.7 Transparently communicate resource allocations and decision-making criteria with people, communities and relevant stakeholders.