

Core Humanitarian STANDARD



The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability 2024 Edition

Introduction

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments to ensure that organisations support people and communities affected by crisis and vulnerability in ways that respect their rights and dignity and promote their primary role in finding solutions to the crises they face.

The CHS is a globally recognised, measurable standard that promotes equitable, inclusive and collaborative relations between people and communities and those working to support them and aims to address potential power imbalances. It is relevant and applicable for all those who individually or collectively work to support people and communities. It can be used as a framework to:

- Enable people and communities to hold those who support them to account.
- Improve the quality and accountability of organisations and their work.
- Assess and verify organisations' performance and demonstrate their learning journey.
- Promote collective efforts to ensure people-centred quality and accountability.

The CHS is founded on the internationally agreed humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. It is built on the Sphere Humanitarian Charter, which describes people's right to life with dignity, their right to receive support and assistance and their right to protection and security. Organisations working in humanitarian crisis situations are encouraged to use the CHS in conjunction with the Sphere Minimum Standards and other standards that are part of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership.

The CHS recognises the primary responsibility of states and other relevant authorities to protect and support those affected by crises.

The nine commitments describe what people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability can expect from those that support them. The commitments complement each other and are all essential elements of the CHS. Each commitment is accompanied by requirements that describe what needs to be done to ensure it is met when supporting people and communities.

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability:

1. Can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.
2. Access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.
3. Are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.
4. Access support that does not cause harm to people or the environment.
5. Can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.
6. Access coordinated and complementary support.
7. Access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.
8. Interact with staff and volunteers that are respectful, competent and well-managed.
9. Can expect that resources are managed ethically and responsibly.

Applying the CHS

To successfully meet the nine commitments and accompanying requirements, organisations must have the necessary enabling environment to support the systematic application of the CHS. This means applying and demonstrating at all levels and functions of the organisation a culture of quality and accountability in organisational values, working approaches and internal processes, and interactions with stakeholders. These working approaches and processes will vary depending on the organisation's mission and values, the context it operates in, the nature of its activities and relationships with stakeholders, including with people and communities.

The Standard

1 People and communities can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.

Requirements:

- 1.1 Ensure diversity, equity and inclusion considerations are integrated into all aspects of the organisation and its work, with attention to the most marginalised groups.
- 1.2 Regularly share relevant and timely information with people and communities, including on their rights in relation to the commitments and responsibilities of the organisation.
- 1.3 Communicate in languages and formats that are easily accessible, understandable, respectful and contextually appropriate for people and communities.
- 1.4 Ensure people's participation in decisions and actions is meaningful for them and corresponds to their preferred ways of engaging.
- 1.5 Communications representing people and communities, including those used for advocacy and fundraising, have their informed consent, are accurate, respectful, ethical and preserve their dignity.
- 1.6 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure transparent information-sharing, communication and meaningful participation of people and communities in the actions and decisions that affect them.

2 People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.

Requirements:

- 2.1 Plan and implement programmes which respect and build upon local knowledge, capacities and existing actions.
- 2.2 Use fair, impartial and transparent criteria to define programmes and the people or groups supported by the organisation.
- 2.3 Regularly monitor and adjust programmes to ensure actions are timely, accessible and address the priority needs of people and communities.
- 2.4 Apply relevant technical standards and recognised good practice in all aspects of the organisation's work.
- 2.5 Refer any unmet priority needs to relevant stakeholders with the technical expertise and capacity to address them.
- 2.6 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure support is based on an understanding of the context and culture and the diverse capacities, vulnerabilities, needs and risks faced by different groups in the community.

3 People and communities are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.

Requirements:

- 3.1 Support formal and informal community leadership and locally led efforts to reinforce the resilience of people and communities.
- 3.2 Support local capacities to anticipate and reduce risks of potential crises or disasters.

- 3.3 Plan and implement programmes that contribute to long-term positive effects on people's lives, livelihoods, the local economy and the environment.
- 3.4 Take early actions to support local ownership of resources and decision making by people and communities.
- 3.5 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure support reinforces locally led actions and decision making.

4 People and communities access support that does not cause harm to people or the environment.

Requirements:

- 4.1. Identify potential negative impacts of the organisation and its work on people and communities, and take actions to prevent, mitigate and address immediate and long-term negative effects.
- 4.2. Identify potential negative environmental impacts of the organisation and its work and take actions to prevent, mitigate and address immediate and long-term negative effects.
- 4.3. Protect and safeguard data and information that could place people, communities and the organisation at risk, in line with recognised good practice.
- 4.4. Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure it works in ways that protect and safeguard people's safety, security, rights and dignity and prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment by staff and volunteers, in line with recognised good practice.
- 4.5. Establish a coherent organisational approach to reduce the negative environmental impacts of the organisation and its work in line with recognised good practice.

5 People and communities can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.

Requirements:

- 5.1. Regularly monitor that people and communities understand how staff and volunteers are expected to act to prevent harmful behaviours, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and harassment.
- 5.2. Plan and implement safe, accessible and appropriate ways for all groups in a community to provide feedback, report concerns and complaints in line with recognised good practice.
- 5.3. Regularly monitor that people, communities and other relevant stakeholders understand how to report concerns and complaints, and how they will be addressed.
- 5.4. Manage, investigate, address and/or appropriately refer complaints in line with recognised good practice.
- 5.5. Apply appropriate victim/survivor-centred approaches to investigate and address complaints and reports of any misconduct, including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- 5.6. Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure any concerns and complaints are welcomed and acted upon in a timely and appropriate manner.

6 People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.

Requirements:

- 6.1. Ensure the work of the organisation is coordinated with and complementary to locally led and community-based actions, and those of relevant stakeholders.
- 6.2. Support partners to apply commitments to quality and accountability to people and communities in all stages of work.

- 6.3. Regularly assess the quality and effectiveness of the relationship between partners and take corrective action when needed.
- 6.4. Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure collaboration and partnerships are based on a commitment to equitable decision making and resource sharing and respect the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of each partner.

7 People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.

Requirements:

- 7.1 Regularly listen and respond to feedback and inputs from people and communities on the organisation and its work.
- 7.2 Collect disaggregated data for decision making that reflects the diversity of people and communities and in ways that minimise demands on them.
- 7.3 Use data from monitoring, feedback, complaints and learning to guide decision making, and to improve programmes and the organisation's ways of working.
- 7.4 Share the analysis and learning from feedback and monitoring and any related changes with people and communities supported by the organisation and with relevant stakeholders.
- 7.5 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure continuous learning and improvement of actions and ways of working to better meet commitments to quality and accountability.

8 People and communities interact with staff and volunteers that are respectful, competent and well-managed.

Requirements:

- 8.1 Leadership, staff and volunteers promote and demonstrate an organisational culture of quality and accountability.
- 8.2 Maintain a safe and inclusive working environment, taking measures to protect the safety, security and well-being and dignity of all staff and volunteers.
- 8.3 Ensure all staff and volunteers have the necessary support, skills and competencies to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively and accountably.
- 8.4 Ensure all staff and volunteers understand and adhere to a code of conduct, which, at a minimum, prohibits any form of exploitation, abuse, harassment or discrimination against people or any misuse of resources.
- 8.5 Ensure there are safe, confidential and accessible ways for all staff and volunteers, partners and other stakeholders to raise concerns and report misconduct, with appropriate protection for those reporting.
- 8.6 Take timely, appropriate actions to address misconduct of all staff and volunteers in line with recognised good practice.
- 8.7 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure that human resources are managed effectively in a fair, non-discriminatory and transparent manner, in line with recognised good practice.

9 People and communities can expect that resources are managed ethically and responsibly.

Requirements:

- 9.1 Ensure adequate capacity and resources to meet the organisation's commitments.

- 9.2 Manage financial resources responsibly in line with recognised good practices.
- 9.3 Ensure fundraising, resource mobilisation and fund allocations are ethical and do not compromise the organisation's commitments and values.
- 9.4 Manage and use resources, to achieve their intended purpose, minimising waste and the impact on the environment.
- 9.5 Identify, prevent and manage risks at all levels of the organisation, including corruption, fraud, misuse of resources and conflicts of interest, and take appropriate action if these are identified.
- 9.6 Establish a coherent organisational approach to ensure that resources are managed efficiently, effectively and ethically.

Claims regarding use of the CHS

Any individual or organisation assisting people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability is encouraged to use and adopt the CHS and may state: "We are working towards application of the CHS." Other claims regarding conformity or compliance with the Standard may only be made in line with a recognised, objective verification process.

Glossary

For the CHS, the following definitions apply:

Accountability: the process of using power responsibly, and taking account of and being held accountable by different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power. Accountability means putting people and communities at the centre of decisions on issues that affect them, as described in the nine commitments of the CHS.

Diversity: the presence of a variety of differences among people in terms of their identities, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and characteristics. These differences can include, but are not limited to, factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds.

Ensure: implies that there is some degree of internal review, oversight and control by the organisation to make sure commitments are happening.

Equity: a situation where individuals or groups are treated fairly according to their specific needs.

Established coherent organisational approach: a structured and systematic method adopted within an organisation to address goals, comprising well-defined systems adhered to consistently throughout the organisation based on best practices and tailored to its needs.

Inclusion: the deliberate and proactive effort to create environments and practice that respect, value and support the full participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different identities.

Organisation: an entity or individual with the resources and commitment to apply the CHS. This includes, but is not limited to, any community-based structure, civil society organisation, charitable or non-profit organisation, private sector company, or public authority, international organisations, consortia or other bodies working at the local, national or international level.

Participation: the processes and activities that allow people and communities to play an active role in all decision-making processes that affect them. Meaningful participation involves all groups, including the most vulnerable and marginalised and is organised in accordance with people's specific needs and preferences. Participation is voluntary.

People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability: the totality of women, men, girls and boys with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are affected by disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises and challenges.

Process: actions, tools and resources needed to accomplish a specific task or goal in a consistent and efficient way. These can be more or less formal, depending on context and factors like the size and capacity of an organisation.

Quality: a set of characteristics that ensures that the support provided to people and communities meets their implied or stated needs and expectations and respects the dignity of people.

Resources: what the organisation needs to deliver its mission, including but not limited to: funds, staff, goods, equipment, time, land area, soil, water, air, natural products and the environment in general.

Rights: people's right to life with dignity, their right to receive support and assistance and their right to protection and security, as described in the Humanitarian Charter.

Staff and volunteers: any designated representative of an organisation, including governance and leadership, permanent or short-term employees and consultants.