# Core Humanitarian STANDARD

# Notes from the CHS TAG Meeting: 29-30 April 2014

# Summary of key agreements

On the 29th to the 30th of April 2014, 45 participants representing 41 organisations from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG)[1] gathered in Geneva to discuss the future of the Core Humanitarian Standard. The TAG reviewed the feedback gathered during the first phase of the consultation and discussed other issues related to the purpose of the standard, its links with other standards, the level of commitment required and its sustainability. Below is a summary of the main agreements reached during the two days of discussion while a more detailed account of the points discussed can be found in Annex 1 of this document.

The TAG recommended the CHS be revised by the Technical Steering Committee (TSC)[2] to incorporate the discussions and agreements and to move forward with the testing of the Standard as part of the next stage of consultation.[3]

## Purpose

During a session focusing on the purpose, participants agreed that the purpose of the standard is as follows:

> *The CHS is a verifiable framework that supports humanitarian actors to apply humanitarian principles, improve the quality of humanitarian action, and bring greater accountability to the people we aim to assist.*

Humanitarian actors defined as: organisations, collectives and individuals that implement humanitarian action or provide resources for it. In this regard "humanitarian actors" are the entities who will commit to the Standard while "people we aim to assist" relates to those entitled to the benefits outlined in the Standard.

A number of reservations were, however, raised during the sessions that followed, with a number of NGO representatives highlighting that the purpose of the CHS should better reflect the notion that accountability is an empowerment process and the shift in power and/or balancing of power relations should be better reflected in the CHS purpose. The above version puts forward the understanding that accountability is supply driven, rather than demand driven. This would put local organisations, front line staff, and communities and people affected by crisis as the principle concern of the CHS. This will be taken into consideration in the development of the second draft.

Participants at the TAG meeting agreed the main focus of the CHS will be humanitarian action but others working in assistance can profit from it if they choose.

## Structure and links with other standards

Participants agreed that the CHS needs ultimately to outline the requirements of an organisation at all levels for it to deliver quality in its response. Therefore, it was agreed that operational and

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[1] The Terms of Reference for the TAG and the TSC can be found in the document outlining the architecture of the CHS consultation process here.

[2] A group made of 13 members from the TAG forming the Technical Steering Committee met on the afternoon of the 30th of April to define and agree a way forward the minutes of this meeting can be found as an Annex to this document.

[3] More information about the different phases of the CHS consultation can be found here.

organisational standards are complementary, and that the CHS should encompass both. It was recognised that unless both organisational and operational elements are contained in one instrument, the Standard risks becoming redundant and not applicable at field level. Therefore it was agreed that both elements will be linked by a clear chain of logic in the form of cross cutting pillars to form one Standard. The operational element of the Standard will refer to the way the organisation delivers assistance while the organisational element will refer to the way the humanitarian actor organises itself. It was identified that the next version of the CHS needs to expand operational requirements and indicators already in existence under pillar 3 of version 1.5 and incorporate new ones. Participants agreed that the key challenge moving forward is to find a way of including both organisational and operational elements into the CHS to reflect the advances made by other technical standards in existence, including Sphere. It was noted that it was the intention of the boards of HAP and People In Aid that the 2010 HAP Standard and the People In Aid Code of Good Practice will be replaced by the CHS.

## Level of commitment

Participants agreed humanitarian actors will be at the heart of the CHS commitments in terms of the normative elements of the Standard. Recognising these actors have many different levels and spheres of action, along with the need for CHS to ensure accountability the people we aim to assist and front line staff, participants agreed that field staff and beneficiaries need to be at the heart of the formulation of every requirement.

Participants agreed the CHS should be a verifiable framework. The practicalities of this will form part of the discussion of the next TAG meeting in the autumn.

## A sustainable standard

Below are some ideas participants discussed to ensure the standard remains relevant and fit for purpose in the future:

- Include non-traditional actors involved in humanitarian action and ensure the CHS is useful for them
- Keep the CHS broad and less prescriptive, so it is applicable in a constantly changing environment
- Include resilience and other emerging trends
- Review the CHS every few years
- Include a statement on the shift of power to beneficiaries so we can initiate the change
- Test the CHS will all types of organisations and adapt it accordingly
- Ensure the format of the CHS is understandable and compatible with standard development in other parts of the world

## Next steps

The TSC has been tasked with amending the CHS, taking into account the agreements and discussions which took place during the TAG. The TSC agreed to produce Version 2 of the CHS by the end of May so it could be ready for testing. Participants were encouraged to participate in the different modalities of testing available and to encourage others to do so as well. T The feedback and inputs gathered during the testing of the Standard will be presented during the next TAG meeting to be held in the autumn.

# Annex 1: Notes from discussions held during the TAG 29-30<sup>th</sup> April 2014

## Introduction

- Definitions
    - o Quality
    - o Organisation
- Relevant to other processes and standards?
- Mention quality
- Why self-assess? Explain that all options are not mandatory but options for use
- Divide certification and verification
- Organisaton is broad: any?
- Rules about claims
- Only to humanitarian because too much burden on small organisations if too broad
- Not clear how the standard relates to others – commitments
- Add "programmes" to affected people and communities
- Insert an index
- "open standard" use it in intro
- effectiveness is part of quality
- explain process in intro
- intro to version
- shorter, but use some of the elements in final standard
- drop changes in this version
- scope
- focus on humanitarian response not organisations
- humanitarian <u>and</u> development
- Not clear what it is for – difficult to develop a standard
- Is more than humanitarian – include human rights principles

## Pillar 1 – 1.1 and 1.2

- terminology, scope, definition and content
    - o protection
    - o humanitarian principles – define and say what it includes/means (will help us operationalise)
    - o humanitarian vs. DRR and recovery

- How to reflect reality: not always possible to apply all HPs

- need to be more specific – what does it mean in reality?

- How does 1.2 fit with 1.1 and 1 – include list of examples in guidance notes (where does SEA fit ?)

- organisation defines what Standards (tech) they will deliver on

Aspirational versus minimum standards

# Pillar one – 1.3 and 1.4

### Ideas

- pillar one should have a direct link with the certification process
- humanitarian principles repeated
- Good financial management system vs. financial standard
- 1.4.3 may be removed
- 1.4.5 (same as above?)

### Gaps

- "good financial management system" needs clear definition
- clarity on terms of technical standards versus operational standards
- "nepotism" versus conflict of interest
- terminology glossary of the words used in the CHS
- provision of resource mobilisation in compliance with humanitarian principles need to be included
- 1.3 value for money

### Issues

- small and local organisations will have constraints/limited resources to implement this pillar
- How to engage with local authorities (and civil society) when they do not comply with humanitarian principles (especially in conflict stings)
- 1.4.7 can't be applied in every organisations not working on advocacy

# Pillar 2

### Pillar 2

Replace pillar two description with using power responsibly – moving power of decision making to most affected stakeholders

- pillar needs to focus on accountability e.g. power
- 3.2 belongs here, 2.2, doesn't – move to 3
- de-emphasise "the org" so that affected populations initiative/it's from their point of view. And staff know they are responsible.
- Link to outcome (s) in the introduction and ensure effective cross-cuts
- Can the indicators be applied to different contexts? They need to be.
- Org enablers (e.g staff, learning etc.) need new pillar (org)
- 3.1.2 should go to 2.2
- define people in pillar title e.g. affected communities or individuals in communities
- ensure contextualization is clear in intro or guidance
- 2.1.6 affected populations/individuals have safe access – will dictate MOV
- mentions of staff in other pillars

### Outcomes

Relevance and appropriateness of aid (outcome of AAP)

Coherence with humanitarian principles, especially right to dignity (outcome of AAP)

Establishing the credibility and acceptance of the organisation with the people on the ground we seek to server (outcome of AAP)

Accountability would be a contributory factor towards sustainability (outcome of AAP)

### What needs to be achieved in terms of quality?

1. standards on implementation
2. standards on working with affected populations
3. standards on organisation processes

Cross cutting: values, principles, staff etc.

# Pillar 3

- What does good organisations look like? Needs to be a set of indicators (must have good to have and nice to have) and prioritizing indicators.
- Measuring 3.2.1. too many elements relating to 2 different processes (access and target). What is **really** required? Could add an example to make it more practical.
- Delete "The organisation" and start the sentence with "there is"…
- Response modality **should not** be a cut and paste programming
- Cultural appropriateness of this languages? Transparency? Usage of specific words  - to be consistent, especially when translating to local language – for example accountability is not "being observable". Who is this to be addressed by?
- What is the core purpose of the CHS and how does every requirement help us achieve that?
- Is leading just focused on the mdiv. Organization?
- What are the systems level interventions?

### Pillar 3 description:

- How do we determine recognized standards?
- Come to consensus and make sure guidance details standards
- Who recognizes them?
- Specifying risk management is confusing and unnecessary at this level
- How broad a context are we looking at? Why just crisis? (DRR, development). What does everyone refer to? Not everyone has the same definition
- Is it manageable for organisations of all sizes?
- Defining the needs to need

3.1.1

- How manageable for small organisations, not referenced under 'crisis'
- Is it possible to do good work and have a mandate that doesn't include all?
- Should recognize interplay of funding mechanisms

- What about coordination?
- The needs of AP at the core of programming – could it be divided?

3.1.3

- General comments apply, detail should be in the guidance – more universal applicability
- How is evidence institutionalized? Do frontline staff have access? Is it at programme level?

3.1.4

- Why is this just for decision-making?
- Linked to good practice

3.1.5

- Can local issues be in one requirement more horizontally?
- Why has good practice been specified above all the others?

3.1.7

- Why targeting singled out? Doesn't mention involvement of communities

3.2

- Repetitive
- Management support is a huge area alone
- Cut this here and do it well in pillar 2

## From perspective of end users:

- Nothing about mortality and morbidity – saving lives!
- Opportunity to influence systemic thinking and collective action
- Can customers read it and know what they can expect from us and hold us to account
- Lack of clarity on what this is for, who it is for? What is the problem it is addressing
- What is donor place?
- Needs to be clearer and more simple
- Shopping list based on lobbying – put them all together and they don't make a cake
- Diluting core issues
- Where is the evidence that these are all the top issues

# Moving forward

## Structure:

- Overall framework recognises that the CHS needs to talk to both operations and organisations
- Organisation: the way the organisations organises itself. Operation: the way the organisation delivers
- For the following version, we need to include new material here. Not two products but two elements of the standard
- Pillars 1 and 2 are more about the organisation, pillar 3 is focused more on quality and is more cross-cutting

- **"Unless both organisational and operational are linked in one instrument, they will become redundant or not applicable at the field"**
- **"The problem is not overlapping of standards but how much agencies are willing to comply to standards"**
- Would be good to know why standards are not being adopted to solve the problem
- How do we move forward with the two elements without damaging the content – if we figure this out, then we can move forward and maybe even think of one holding body for the standard
- Who will take ownership of this?

## Links with other standards:
- Needs to be relevant at field level
- Needs to have commitment from management to be applied
- Needs to strengthen the operational side, otherwise the project is not relevant at field level – ensuring guidance reflects Sphere and other technical standards
- **HAP and People In Aid standards need to be replaced by CHS** – important to ensure we don't lose parts of the content, added value, when we sell the CHS
- **"What does an organisation need to do at all levels to achieve a quality response?"** – organisational and operational standards are complementary, no need to split them

## Who will commit?
- Organisations, collectives – need broader requirements, but is it ever possible to verify the commitment of collectives
- If they have already committed and they join, do they need to recommit?
- How do we include governments and other actors in the definition?
- **Empowerment of frontline staff, shift the power to beneficiaries** – this needs to be at the heart of the standard
- **"It is not about increasing accountability but to empower beneficiaries to demand improvements in quality"**
- **"The right question to ask, but this is not the tool to address it, we risk losing the support of some actors"**
- **"The sector is not ready"**
- **"Being accountable is not controversial but shifting power can be problematic"** – it might undermine the universality of the CHS
- **Let's pilot this approach – we agree it's not the right moment but we'll try to pilot to understand how to include it**

## Where do we set the bar?
- "Pillar should be the target (high) and the minimum the required will be the indicator"
- Aiming high equals improvement and learning
- Let's aim high and see what is the minimum – who sets the minimum? Us? Beneficiaries?
- How do we deal with liability of not complying with minimum? Redress?

- **Agreement to what is currently in the CHS**

## Future proofing:

- Look at non-traditional actors – humanitarian is not their primary role, make it useful for them
- Keep it simple (broad and less prescriptive), so it is applicable in a constantly changing environment
- Include resilience and other emerging trends
- Review it every few years
- Include a statement on the shift of power to beneficiaries – the sector might not be ready but we need to start the change somewhere
- Test it will all types of organisations and adapt it (big and small, and from every part of the world)
- Put standards in a format that is understandable in relation to standard development in other parts of the world – reach out to those organisations to see what they think through piloting

# Annex 2: Minutes of the 1st meeting of the CHS Technical Steering Group meeting, Geneva on 30 April 2014

**Present:**

Rezaul Chowdhury, COAST Trust

Mille Døllner, Danida

Jacquie Heany, Board member of People In Aid

Hak Kunthy, CCC Cambodia

Naseer Memon, SPO

Zuraidah Mian, Mercy Malaysia

Zeynep (Zeinep) M. Turkmen Sanduvac, Mavi Kalem Association

Barb Wigley, WFP

Marian Casey-Maslen, HAP

Paula Gil Biazan, CHS Facilitator

Pierre Hauselmann, HAP

Jonathan Potter, People In Aid

Raj Rana, CHS Facilitator

Murray Garrard, HAP - minutes

**Apologies:**

Véronique De Geoffroy, Quality COMPAS

Kate Halff, SCHR

Carol Morgan, Concern Worldwide

Mamadou Ndiaye, OFADEC

Hannah Reichardt, Save the Children

Welcome

## 1. Clarifying the purpose of the CHS Technical Steering Group

It was agreed that the purpose as stated in the Terms of Reference sufficiently defined the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Steering Group (TSG), and was agreed that a chair of the meeting was not needed, given its size and the frequency with which it met. It was agreed that the TSG had been mandated by the TAG to make decisions.

## 2. Agreeing to one standard covering both organizational and operational standards

It was agreed by all that the CHS would cover both organizational and operational elements in one standard – as agreed in the TAG. The CHS should be viewed as a "wardrobe rail" from which technical standards can hang.

## 3. Concern over the timeframe of the testing period

The three-month period for testing was endorsed and the CHS facilitators agreed to provide a timeline for engaging with organisations in due course.

Testing should ideally be:

• In different continents and with different sorts of agency (e.g. national and international)

- Undertaken during a crisis

**Action:** CHS facilitators to write and circulate among the TAG an invitation to organisations to test the second draft of the Standard detailing some of the ways in which this can happen and the timeframefor the process

## 4. Second draft of the Core Humanitarian Standard
It was agreed that HAP and People In Aid would consolidate the feedback from the TAG and redraft the CHS with TAG members who had generously offered support. It was agreed that the TSG would approve the second version of the Standard on behalf of the TAG. The following timetable was agreed:

**May 5:** TSG call to agree on the way in which the CHS is structured
**May 14:** The CHS will be redrafted and shared with the TSC for comments
**May 21:** Deadline for comments on the redrafted Standard from the TSG
**May 23:** The revised CHS will be shared among the TSG for final approval
**May 28:** The second version of the CHS is released for the second consultation round, which includes testing.

It was agreed that silence meant consent in all future email exchanges among the TSG.

**Action:** Murray to set up a GoToMeeting for the TSC call on Monday May 5.

## 5. Communications toolkit
It was agreed that a communications toolkit would be made available to all members of the TAG, which they use to help disseminate key information and talking points among their organisations, partners and networks. Rezaul Chowdhury and Zeinep Turkmen nominated themselves as ad-hoc communications focal points to help facilitate this.

**Action:** Murray and Fiona to draft a brief communications toolkit for the TAG to be sent to TAG members on May 8

## 6. Lifespan of the CHS
It was explained that the lifespan of the first edition of a Standard is habitually three years, after which it is revised to address feedback that has been received.

## 7. Communication with the TAG
There was agreement that there needed to be regular communication from the TSG to the TAG to limit any disconnect between the two. Marian and Jonathan were nominated as the focal people for discourse between the TSG and the TAG.

**Action:** Marian and Jonathan to email the TAG on May 8 with the following documents: brief TAG meeting summary notes, the communications toolkit and the minutes from the first TSG meeting.

## 8. Date of the next TAG/TSC meeting

In light of the fact the final CHS is due to be launched during the first two weeks of December, and that the final document would need to be revised, designed and printed for this after the next TAG meeting, it was agreed that the date of the next TAG meeting would be as follows:

**October 29, 9am-12pm:** TSG meeting
**October 29 1pm-October 30 5pm:** TAG meeting
**October 31, 9am-12pm:** TSG meeting

London was decided as the venue. (Since the meeting, CAFOD has agreed to host this).

### 9. Meeting concluded, many thanks

| Key upcoming dates for the CHS | |
|---|---|
| **May 2** | **CHS website goes live** |
| **May 5** | **TSG call, 11am Geneva time** |
| **May 8** | **Email to TAG with brief summary notes from the meeting, TSG minutes, and communications toolkit** |
| **May 14** | **CHS redraft to be shared with the TSG** |
| **May 21** | **Deadline for comments from the TSG on the revised CHS** |
| **May 23** | **Final version of revised CHS shared with TSG for approval** |
| **May 28** | **CHS version 2 is made available for testing** |
| **June 1** | **CHS testing phase begins** |
| **Mid-Sept** | **CHS testing phase concludes** |
| **October 29-30** | **TAG meeting to discuss revisions to the CHS made in accordance with feedback from the testing phase  (TSG meeting on the morning of October 31)** |
| **Early December** | **CHS launched** |