

# Core Humanitarian STANDARD

## CHS Version 2: Testing Methodology

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## Introduction

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) outlines what good humanitarian action looks like for those communities and people affected by crisis and the staff and organisations involved in responding to this. It provides a practical, verifiable framework of Eight Commitments to Quality and Accountability. Each Commitment is underpinned by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. The CHS will help women, men, girls and boys affected by crisis to hold humanitarian organisations to account. The CHS places people at the centre of humanitarian action and promotes respect for their fundamental human rights. The CHS is relevant to all actors engaged in humanitarian action. It can also be promoted and implemented by collective humanitarian mechanisms such as the cluster system, Humanitarian Country Teams, and pooled funds. Although it is primarily intended for the humanitarian sector, it can also be used to bring better quality and greater accountability to development and advocacy work.

The second draft of the CHS is now open for consultation. **This second phase includes (1) testing and (2) commenting on the text of the standard.** The testing will take place worldwide from July to September 2014 in order to gather feedback and input from communities and people affected by crisis, community-based organisations, local and national authorities, and field staff from national and international organisations and donor governments. A feedback form to comment on the text is available here: <http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>.

The process outlined in this methodology will test the Standard against the following criteria: usability, relevance, accessibility, complementarity, verifiability and sustainability. A baseline survey of the organisation's practice and community perceptions of the organisation's practice will be conducted, followed by a period in which organisations will test existing projects, policies and practices against the requirements in the Standard. This may result in changes at operational and policy level, but that will be an effect of testing rather than an expectation. The expectation is that participating organisations remain open to change and report back on the usefulness of the current version of CHS to support that thinking. Successful field-testing will be heavily dependent on a strong training component prior to testing, so that agencies have a solid understanding of the requirements in the CHS, and how the testing tools should be used. Communities will be directly involved in the testing process, and their feedback will be sought against the testing criteria. At the end of the testing process an end-line survey will be carried out to establish changes in the organisation's compliance with the requirements in the CHS and, to the extent possible, community perceptions of changes.

The methodology described in this text can be adapted to different ways of testing depending on the commitment the organisation is willing to make. It is designed to provide the option to participate in the testing process at different levels – operational and organisational – and in different settings – field and headquarters.

## Objective

The purpose of testing the CHS is to provide a real indication of how useful, relevant and appropriate it is as a tool to help humanitarian organisations improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of their programmes. Testing will facilitate the generation of concrete ideas about how to improve the Standard by exploring the critical assumptions underlying the model. All the information collected through testing will help inform the final version of the CHS.

The testing methodology is designed to be complementary to the day-to-day workflow of humanitarian action (including on-going disaster response). It will also provide an opportunity for improvement of the programme through experiencing the Commitments defined in the Standard. Testing could also be complementary to other processes including planning and strategic exercises, impact evaluations and reviews.

## Background

### 1. The CHS

All industries have standards to assure the quality of their work. As the humanitarian sector has grown in size and become increasingly professionalised, the number of standards in the sector has increased. Many standards have focused on ensuring that the needs of people and communities affected by crisis, who are vulnerable and often voiceless in humanitarian assistance, drive humanitarian response. Currently, there are an estimated 70 local, regional and global standards that are applied in humanitarian response, leaving time-pressured aid workers struggling to meet sometimes contradictory demands.

The CHS aims to gather together good practice in humanitarian standards and make the humanitarian principles easy to understand and implement on the ground, while providing a framework under which organisations' conformity can be verified, should they so wish. By creating a single core standard for the sector, aid workers will be better able to navigate the demands placed on them, and ensure that those most in need of aid have a voice in the assistance they are given.

This Standard is the result of a two-year consultation process across the humanitarian sector. It is currently in its second draft version as part of an on-going consultation process that will culminate in December 2014.

The structure of the standard is as follows:

- Overarching values and principles;
- The Eight Commitments to communities and people affected by crisis.

For each Commitment the framework describes:

- What communities and people affected by crisis should expect from those involved in humanitarian action;
- What staff engaged in humanitarian action should do to consistently deliver high quality programmes and to be accountable to those they seek to assist;
- What organisations engaged in humanitarian action need to do to ensure their staff provide good quality and accountable humanitarian assistance.

## 2. Links with other standards

The CHS draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments. These include:

- The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief
- HAP Standard and Principles
- People In Aid Code of Good Practice
- Sphere Core Standards
- The Humanitarian Charter
- The Quality Compass
- The OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance

It is the intention that the CHS will replace the HAP Standard, the People in Aid Code of Good Practice and the Core Standards Section of the Sphere Handbook. Since this Standard builds on existing good practice, numerous tools already exist to support the implementation of each of the Eight Commitments.

## Types of testing

We have designed three ways of testing the CHS to provide organisations and interested individuals with options to participate at different levels – operational and organisational – and in different settings – field and headquarters.

There are three main ways of engaging with testing:

<b>1. Guided testing</b>	Testing at project or programme level in the field (direct implementation practices) for a duration of 8 weeks through a tailored approach to the testing methodology.
<b>2. Self-assessment testing</b>	Testing at organisational level in the field or at headquarters (policies, procedures, systems, frameworks) for a duration of 4 weeks through the standard testing methodology.
<b>3. Scenario testing</b>	Provide feedback through scenarios relating to the Standard posted on an online platform. Engagement lasts only a couple of

| minutes.

Guided testing and self-assessment testing use the approach and process described in this document with modifications depending on the level of engagement the organisation can commit to. Scenario testing is inspired by the testing approach but follows a different process using an online platform. More detailed information about the different types of testing can be found in the information sheets in the section entitled 'Materials' below.

## Approach

The following section describes the testing approach: the principles, themes, adaptations and expectations for and of testers.

### 1. Guiding principles for testing

The testing process will follow the same guiding principles set down for the CHS consultation process.<sup>1</sup> Testers will be asked to consider the following questions in each section of the testing as outlined below.

- Usability: Is the Standard easy to use? Is the Standard easy to learn and share with others?
- Relevance: Does the Standard satisfy your needs as a humanitarian actor? Is the Standard relevant to your context? Is the Standard relevant to your organisation's area of work and mandate?
- Accessibility: Is the language in the Standard simple enough? Is the Standard's format intuitive and easy to use?
- Complementarity: The Standard contains core good practice identified by the sector for humanitarian action, is there something missing? How can we improve the ease of reference to other standards?
- Verifiability: Is the level of the target set by the requirements achievable? Is the intent of each requirement clear? Are the requirements verifiable – are there statements that can be proven true or false? What evidence of conformity is appropriate per requirement? If so, could a third party verify conformity with the requirements?
- Sustainability: Is the Standard relevant in relation to your organisation's vision for the future? Will the content of the standard remain applicable and relevant in five years' time? How can we enhance the sustainability of the Standard?

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<sup>1</sup> The CHS Consultation Process document can be found [here](#), the only two principles not relevant to the testing methodology contained in the consultation process are balance and transparency.

## 2. Groups for testing

For the purpose of testing we have divided the Eight Commitments of the Standard into four Groups. Note that this is only for practical reasons, and doesn't modify the way the Commitments are presented in the current version of the Standard.

Group	Corresponding commitment
A	<p><b>1. Effective, timely and appropriate humanitarian assistance</b></p> <p>Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need in order to live their lives with dignity.</p> <p><b>6. Monitoring, learning and continuous improvement</b></p> <p>The organisation will examine and adjust its programmes and performance to improve outcomes for communities and people affected by crisis.</p>
B	<p><b>3. Communication and participation</b></p> <p>Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, and are able to participate in all decisions that affect them.</p> <p><b>4. Addressing grievance</b></p> <p>Communities and people affected by crisis have access to a safe, accessible and responsive complaints mechanism.</p>
C	<p><b>2. Strengthening local capacities and avoiding negative effects</b></p> <p>Communities and people affected by crisis are more resilient, empowered and less vulnerable as a result of humanitarian action.</p> <p><b>5. Coordination, complementarity and partnerships</b></p> <p>Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance that meets their needs.</p>
D	<p><b>7. Staff capacity and support</b></p> <p>The organisation has leadership and management practices that are equitable, legally compliant and ensure staff have the support, skills and attitudes to achieve agreed standards of programme delivery.</p> <p><b>8. Good use and management of resources</b></p> <p>The organisation uses resources efficiently and effectively for their intended purpose.</p>

### 3. Adapting to the context

In order to be properly tested, the Standard needs to be adapted to the relevant context.

The degree to which the requirements can be met in practice will depend on a range of factors, including the stage of the response, access to the affected population, the level of cooperation from the relevant authorities and the level of insecurity in the local context. Limited capacity and resources combined with urgent and fast-changing needs, is likely to necessitate prioritization of some requirements above others, or a phased approach to meeting the requirements. Finally, some requirements may simply have limited relevance in the local context. There may even be important reasons why at times it is not possible, or advisable, to meet all the requirements set in the CHS.

Adaptation should not be understood as an opportunity to reset the level of conformity that each Commitment requires. The wording of the Commitments and requirements should not normally be changed, however, in order to attain conformity, the requirements may need to be adapted.

For the purpose of testing, this can be done by prioritising key actions, adjusting or removing others, or adding new ones. If the target is lowered there should be a clear justification and, wherever possible, a clearly signalled intention eventually to aim for the original target, or a higher one. Where the requirements cannot be met, however, they still apply as an agreed universal benchmark, and they can be used, for example, to articulate eventual or aspirational goals for humanitarian action.

A key principle to follow when adapting to the context is to make sure that the modifications and prioritizations respect the intent of the requirement. Each requirement contains a core purpose / aim / objective and testers should try to maintain the integrity of this when adapting the requirements to their context. Testers will be asked to comment on whether the intent in each requirement is clear enough and easy to identify.

During the testing phase, the CHS should enable organisations to highlight gaps in the scope or quality of their action and the conditions required to close these gaps. Input provided by testers regarding adaptation to the context will be used to inform the development of guidance notes that will inform the next version of the CHS.

Testers are advised to use the comment field provided in each section's work plan to note how the requirements had to be modified or prioritised to adapt to the context for the purpose of training, and if the intent for each requirement is clear enough to support a smooth adaptation process.

### 4. Expectations of testers

The success of this stage of the CHS consultation process depends on the information we can collect from testers.

The testers are expected to provide communications materials throughout the testing period. Testers should ideally provide: a case study, quotes and illustrative visuals (pictures) to showcase how the testing is being carried out in their particular organisation. If that is not possible testers are expected to provide at least one of these communications materials. Full guidance is provided in the 'Communications guidance for testers' in the Materials section below.

Testers are expected to fully participate in their selected type of testing by committing the time and human resources needed to complete the process successfully as outlined in the section above.

Testers are also expected to use and take advantage of the support available through the trainings, awareness sessions, [testing help desks](#), virtual drop-in sessions and peer-to-peer support.

Testers are not expected to make immediate changes to the programmes or operational approaches during the testing period, they're just expected to apply the Standard to current programmatic practices, be open to the results and report on the process. Changes in programmes or organisation practices and policies occurring as a result of the testing would be a desirable effect, but not an expectation or a requirement.

## Process

### 1. Three stages

The testing process consists of **three** main stages:

#### 1) **Training:**

Testers attend training and awareness sessions so that agencies have a solid understanding of the requirements in the CHS and how the testing tools should be used. Training opportunities will be available in selected locations in Latin America, North America, London, Geneva, Africa, Middle East and Asia during the second half of July 2014. Up to date information can be found on [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org).

#### 2) **Testing process proper:**

A baseline survey of the organisation's practice and community perceptions of the organisation's practice is conducted. This is followed by a period in which organisations will test existing projects, policies and practices against the requirements in the Standard. At the end of the testing process an end-line survey will be carried out to establish changes in the organisation's compliance with the requirements in the CHS and, to the extent possible, community perceptions of changes. All testers will also be encouraged to comment on the actual text of the Standard by completing the online feedback form. Throughout this stage testers are expected to produce and share communications materials for dissemination.

### 3) Learning:

Participants will be invited to attend a web-based learning event to consolidate findings from the testing process.

Stage two is described in detail in the work plan explained in the following section.

## 2. Testing work plan and worksheets

In order to ensure the coherence and compatibility of the data collected through testing, testers are requested to follow the following work plan divided into four sections.

The complete testing period will be divided in four sections according to the four themes selected for testing. The duration of each section will depend on the type of testing approach selected by organisations as outlined in the section below. In the case of guided testing the duration of each section is two weeks. In the case of self-assessment the duration of each section is one week.)

For each section, testers will (a) conduct an analysis of the requirements against the testing criteria and (b) note any gaps or success identified in relation to the Commitments analysed in that section and record any actions taken to either improve or replicate. At the end of each section testers are expected to complete the relevant fields in the activity sheet and send it to the [testing help desk](#). Having completed this, testers can begin a new section.

Work plan sheets outlining the analysis and activities to be carried out per section are provided in the 'Materials' section below.

Here are model work plans for both guided and self-assessment testing:

Model work plan - Guided testing			
Section	Week	Requirement analysis	Output
1	1 - 2	Group A	- Baseline survey - Worksheet 1 - A communications material of choice
2	3 - 4	Group B	- Worksheet 2 - A communications material of choice
3	5 - 6	Group C	- Worksheet 3 - A communications material of choice
4	7 - 8	Group D	- Worksheet 4 - End-line survey - Feedback form

Model work plan – Self assessment testing			
Section	Week	Requirement analysis	Output
1	1	Group A	- Baseline survey - Worksheet 1 - A communications material of choice
2	2	Group B	- Worksheet 2 - A communications material of choice
3	3	Group C	- Worksheet 3 - A communications material of choice
4	4	Group D	- Worksheet 4 - End-line survey - Feedback form

Guided testers will develop a tailored work plan during the training provided. Self-assessment testers should use the work plan sheets provided in the section entitled 'Materials' below. The information sheets for both types of testing also provide a summary of the steps to follow depending each type of testing (also on the Materials section below).

### 3. Survey

Testing organisations will assess their compliance with the requirements of the CHS at the beginning and end of stage two of the testing, via a survey (PDF form).

This survey guides testers through all the requirements in the Eight Commitments of the Standard asking them to assess their compliance against four categories:

- **Compliant:** If testers can fully identify the presence of all the elements of the requirement in the programme selected for testing, or in current organisation policies and practices.
- **Somewhat compliant:** If testers can only identify the presence of some of the elements of the requirement in the programme selected for testing, or in current organisation policies and practices.
- **Not compliant:** If testers cannot identify the presence of any of the elements of the requirement in the programme selected for testing, or in current organisation policies and practices.
- **Not applicable:** Where testers think that the requirement is not relevant to the programme selected for testing, or in current organisation policies and practices.

Testers are also asked to provide information regarding the means of verification they used to assess their compliance against the different requirements.

Full instructions are provided in the body of the survey. Testers are asked to complete this survey and send it by email to the [testing help desk](#).

Information collected through the survey will help us to map the change in compliance as a result of participating in the testing.

## Requirements and set up

For both the guided and self-assessment testing, organisations will need to identify a member of staff who will be responsible for facilitating the process and producing the expected outputs. Staff facilitating guided testing need to be involved in the project selected for testing. Staff facilitating self-assessment testing ideally should have an operational background or involvement with operations in their current role. Apart from staff time (which will vary between types of testing) there shouldn't be additional expenditure incurred as a result of testing.

In order to be properly tested, the Standard needs to be shared so that all those involved in the testing can refer to it. Staff facilitating the process ideally should do this.

## Materials

1. Guided Testing Information sheet
2. Self Assessment Information Sheet
3. Baseline Survey
4. End-line Survey
5. Worksheets (Section 1, Section 2, Section 3 and Section 4)
6. Types of Testing Information sheet (in Annex to this document)
7. Communications Guidance for Testers

# Annex 1 – Testing Information Sheets

## (1) Guided Testing

<b>What is it?</b>	Through a tailored methodology, organisations will test the usability, relevance, accessibility, complementarity, verifiability and sustainability of the CHS as a tool to improve humanitarian action at project and programme level (direct implementation practices) in the field.
<b>Recommended for:</b>	Directly operational humanitarian actors of all types and sizes interested in fully participating in the testing of the CHS and gaining valuable first hand knowledge of the Standard and experience applying it at field level.
<b>Timeframe:</b>	Eight weeks engagement (28 July – 19 September)
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>Volunteering organisations will select a programme at field level to host the testing of the CHS for a period of eight weeks (28 July to 19 September 2014) and one member of staff responsible for facilitating the process.</p> <p>Testers will initially be asked to individually assess their programme’s level of conformity with the Commitments in the Standard. This will be used as a baseline for the testing. After that, and for the duration of the eight-week testing period, they will be asked to apply different sections of the Standard in their day-to-day work (with the themes changing every 15 days) and share their experiences and insights through case studies and other forms of input online. There will also be a number of opportunities to share knowledge, experiences and good practice with other testers around the world.</p> <p>At the end of the testing period, volunteers will be asked to individually assess their programme’s level of conformity with the Standard again. They will be asked to note any good practice and required improvements that have been identified throughout the process, the degree to which the CHS as a tool helped them achieve that or not, and what improvements can be made. Testers will also have an opportunity to comment on the actual text of the Standard during the testing period.</p>
<b>Support provided:</b>	<p>All necessary information on the testing methodology including work plan, timeframe, and materials will be accessible online.</p> <p>Testers will need to attend a one day training (mandatory) where they will learn more about the CHS, understand the testing methodology, exchange learning with other testers and receive support to tailor the testing methodology to the organisation’s and programme’s needs. Participants will finish the training with a full work plan and all other materials needed to start testing.</p> <p>Full support and guidance will be available remotely throughout the testing period including an email hotline and virtual drop-in sessions every 15 days to answer any questions and share experiences among testers.</p>
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Sign up with facilitator <a href="#">Paula Gil Baizan</a> .</b>

<b>requested from participating organisations:</b>	<p>Selection of a suitable programme to participate in the testing at field level.</p> <p>One member of staff (ideally at Programme Management level) to follow up on the testing process in the field.</p> <p>Attend one day training.</p> <p>Participate in virtual drop in sessions every 15 days (45 – 60 mins).</p> <p>Complete baseline and impact checklist.</p> <p>Produce requested outputs every 15 days (full guidance and schedule will be provided).</p> <p>Complete feedback form at the end of the testing period.</p> <p>Participate in a Learning Event.</p>
<b>Added value of getting involved:</b>	<p>Participating in guided testing is an invaluable opportunity for programmes in the field to improve the quality of their operations and gain knowledge of the CHS, which encompasses the sector's best practice. The testing methodology is designed to be complementary with the day-to-day workflow of humanitarian action. It will also provide an opportunity for improvement of the programme through experiencing the Commitments defined in the Standard. Testing could be complementary to other processes including planning and strategic exercises, impact evaluations and reviews.</p>

## (2) Self-assessment testing

<b>What is it?</b>	Through a standard methodology, organisations will carry out a self-assessment on the usability, relevance, accessibility, complementarity, verifiability and sustainability of the CHS as a tool to improve humanitarian action at organisational level (policies, practices, procedures) in the field or at headquarters.
<b>Who is it recommended for?</b>	Directly operational humanitarian actors or those working through partners of all types and sizes interested in participating in the testing of the CHS and gaining valuable first hand knowledge of the Standard.
<b>Timeframe:</b>	Four weeks engagement (any time between 28 July – 12 September)
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>Organisations will be required to select a member of staff responsible for facilitating the testing process for four weeks.</p> <p>Testers will initially be asked to individually assess their organisation’s level of compliance with the commitments in the Standard. This will be used as a baseline for the testing. After that, and for the duration of the four-week testing period, they will be asked to apply different sections of the Standard in their day-to-day work (with the themes changing every week).</p> <p>At the end of the testing period, volunteers will be asked to individually assess their organisation’s level of conformity with the Standard again. They will be asked to note any good practice and required improvements that have been identified throughout the process, the degree to which the CHS as a tool helped them achieve that or not, and what improvements can be made. Testers will also have an opportunity to comment on the actual text of the Standard during the testing period.</p>
<b>Support provided:</b>	<p>All necessary information on the testing methodology including work plan, timeframe, and materials will be accessible online.</p> <p>Testers will be invited to attend a half day testing awareness session (optional) where they will learn more about the CHS, understand the testing methodology and exchange learning with other testers.</p> <p>Support and guidance will be available remotely throughout the testing period through an email hotline.</p>
<b>Commitment requested from participating organisations:</b>	<p><b>Register interest in testing with facilitator <a href="#">Paula Gil Baizan</a>.</b></p> <p>One member of staff (ideally with an operational background or operational responsibilities) to facilitate the testing process.</p> <p>Attend half-day testing awareness session (optional).</p> <p>Complete baseline and impact checklist.</p> <p>Complete feedback form at the end of the testing period.</p>

Participate in a Learning Event.

### (3) Remote scenario testing

<b>What is it?</b>	Interested individuals and other stakeholders can test the usability and relevance of the CHS as a tool to improve humanitarian action via a number of scenarios on an online platform
<b>Who is it recommended for?</b>	Individuals interested in participating in the testing of the CHS, and other stakeholders interested in influencing the development of the standard.
<b>Timeframe:</b>	User driven engagement (any time between 30 June – 12 September)
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>Scenarios inspired by the Commitments of the CHS will be made available through an online platform where users will be able to provide input and feedback on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>Testers will also have the opportunity to comment on the actual text of the Standard through a feedback form.</p>
<b>Support provided:</b>	All necessary information on the testing methodology will be available online.
<b>Commitment requested from participating organisations:</b>	It only takes a couple of minutes to go through different testing scenarios and the individual tester can decide how much time he/she spends on the online platform.
<b>Added value of getting involved:</b>	Participating in scenario testing is the most economical way of engaging with the testing of the CHS. It is an opportunity to provide input and feedback in an informal manner and gain knowledge of the CHS, which encompasses the sector's good practice.