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Introduction

The CHS guidance notes and indicators complement the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. They provide clarification on the key actions and organisational responsibilities, examine some practical challenges and issues that may arise when applying the standard. The document explains why each commitment is important and provides examples for different audiences and for different contexts. The guidance is not an in depth explanation of how to respond to humanitarian emergencies. A list of key resources providing more detailed guidance is included for each commitment.

Each commitment has separate guidance notes but there is necessarily some degree of overlap (for example, the importance of communication with crisis affected populations is relevant to several commitments). Users are advised to refer to the glossary and footnotes for definitions of key terms, explanations of approaches to gender equity and diversity, and other useful information.

The indicators are intended to help users measure the degree to which they are meeting the Standard and drive continuous learning and improvement. They include key performance indicators for assessing and evaluating fulfilment of each of the nine commitments and quality criteria of the CHS, as well as guiding questions for monitoring key actions and guiding questions for assessing organisational responsibilities related to each commitment. These tools are intended to promote consistent measurement of progress and to enable comparison of results across different organisations, contexts and time.

When using the indicators, users are advised to consider:

Integrity: The key performance indicators should be used as a set. They are few in number, relevant to all sectors and contexts, and reflect the need to triangulate information from different sources, including the affected communities and people. If an organisation decides not to use an indicator, it is encouraged to make the reasons for that decision explicit.

Adaptation: The indicators are intentionally generic and should be adapted to context- and organisation-specific processes. They may be complemented by other appropriate indicators and guiding questions.

Timing: The key performance indicators and guiding questions have been formulated in the present tense to encourage continuous usage and learning, but they may be used at all stages of the response, from assessment to ex-post evaluation. In general, however, the key performance indicators are more suited to retrospective or real-time evaluations of performance, while the guiding questions are better suited to implementation, ongoing monitoring and periodic re-assessment of application of the standard.

Measurement: Tools and means to measure progress toward the standard are not specified as different users have their own objectives, frameworks, resources and preferences. However, the indicators are intended to enable measurement of progress and/or comparison across time, programmes and contexts, so users are encouraged to develop the existing terms such as ‘degree to which’ into organisational and context-specific scales or levels of achievement.

The draft CHS guidance notes and indicators were developed by a working group consisting of representatives from a diverse group of humanitarian stakeholders, with contributions from members of the CHS technical advisory group (TAG)*. The development of the guidance and indicators has drawn on and harmonised existing materials and guidance from Sphere, HAP, People In Aid and Quality COMPAS among others.

As a first working draft, the guidance notes and indicators have limitations but will be improved and strengthened through a phase of consultation and field-testing in different contexts, involving a wide range of users. This is the reason why we are inviting you to test the draft guidance notes and indicators together with the CHS, in order to allow for review and production of a document that meets the expectations of its users. In particular, we want to ensure that the guidance notes and indicators have the appropriate length, structure, scope, refer to useful examples & resources and provide indicators that support verification of the CHS. Feedback will be welcomed from individuals or organisations up to 30th June 2015 The guidance notes and indicators will then be finalised by September 2015.

Please use the Survey Monkey Link (www.surveymonkey.com/s/CHSguidance) to provide feedback. General comments on the CHS can also be provided by writing to: feedback@corehumanitarianstandard.org.

* The following organisations were involved in drafting and contributing to the different parts of this document: HAP International, Sphere project, Oxfam, Save the Children, Groupe URD, OCHA, CDAC network, COAST, People in Aid, and DEC.
The Nine Commitments and Quality Criteria

1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is effective and timely.

3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.

5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.

7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.

8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.

9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.  
   **Quality Criterion:** Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.
Commitment 1

Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which people affected by the crisis consider that the response takes account of their specific needs and culture.
2. Degree to which the assistance and protection provided correspond with assessed risks, vulnerabilities and needs.
3. Degree to which response takes account of the capacities (skills, structures and knowledge) of people requiring assistance and/or protection.

Why is this commitment important?

Commitment 1 and 2 capture the primary purpose of responding to humanitarian crises, which is to alleviate distress and suffering and to uphold people’s rights to assistance and to ensure their dignity as human beings. A mechanistic, top-down, response that treats everybody and every situation in the same way may fail to meet its objectives and will not maximize the potential benefits to those in need.

The commitment stresses the need to understand the context and the needs of the different people affected and how these needs might change over time. The importance of recognising the existing capacity of different groups of people is also emphasised. At the organisational level, policies and processes should be in place to ensure the ongoing assessment of needs, to provide impartial assistance and to recognise and respond to gender and diversity.

Key actions

1.1 Conduct a systematic, objective and ongoing analysis of the context and stakeholders (see guidance notes 1 & 2)
1.2 Design and implement appropriate programmes based on an impartial assessment of needs and risks, and an understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups1 (see guidance notes 3 - 6)
1.3 Adapt programmes to changing needs2, capacities and context (see guidance note 7)

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

• Has a comprehensive needs assessment been conducted and used to inform response planning?
• Are multiple sources of information, including affected people and communities, local institutions and other stakeholders consulted when assessing needs, risks, capacities, vulnerabilities and context?
• Are assessment data and other monitoring data disaggregated by sex, age and ability?
• Are vulnerable groups identified consistently?
• Does the response include different types of assistance and/or protection for different demographic groups?
• What actions are taken to adapt the response strategy based on changing needs, capacities, risks and the context?

1 This may refer, for example to: women, men, girls, boys, youth, and older persons, as well as persons with disabilities and specific minority or ethnic groups without any such distinction.
2 “Needs” includes assistance and protection.
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Systematic, objective analysis: Assessments should engage the affected community in an ongoing discussion to identify needs and appropriate responses (see key guidance for more information on how to carry out assessments). Needs should not be assumed and efforts should be made to identify whether a need exists, for whom, and the nature of the need. Key sources of information include different groups in the affected community, the relevant state ministries, academic or research institutions, community-based organisations, local media, the corporate sector, and local and international humanitarian agencies present before the disaster. It is vital to cross-check and verify (triangulate) information but it is also recognised that assessment data will initially be imperfect and that ongoing assessment will help to clarify and reinterpret findings. Data without interpretation and analysis is of little value and discussion will help to tease out meaning. Wherever possible, assessment information (including selection criteria) should be shared with key stakeholders, including government and affected populations. Careful planning is required to ensure that the assessment is coordinated with others, covers all affected areas and is adequately supported and resourced. (See Commitment 2 for more information on suggested timeframes for the assessment).

2. Ongoing analysis of the context and stakeholders: Assessment and analysis is a process, not a single event and should be a collaborative endeavour amongst responding agencies. Initial and rapid assessments provide the basis for subsequent in-depth assessments that deepen (but do not repeat) earlier assessment findings. It will also not be possible to immediately assess all those affected and excluded areas or groups should be returned to at the earliest opportunity. A variety of people will influence or stand to gain from a humanitarian response and they can either support or hinder the commitment to ensure that aid is appropriate. An understanding of such power dynamics should also be part of the assessment. The most critical stakeholders are those the organisation seeks to assist (this will not necessarily be all the people affected by a crisis) and ongoing discussion with different groups is critical (see commitment 4). The influence of other stakeholders such as partner organisations, donors or government should also be analysed.

3. Appropriate programmes: Humanitarian aid aims to protect life, health, subsistence and physical security where these are threatened on a large scale. The response must be acceptable to the different groups it aims to assist and must be determined with their input and collaboration. It should seek to uphold their rights by responding to basic needs (such as the need for water and health care), by meeting protection concerns (such as preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and violence) and by enabling people to maintain their sense of dignity and self-respect. For example, culturally appropriate practices such as burials and religious ceremonies and practices are often an essential element of people’s identity and can contribute to their capacity to recover from disaster. However, some culturally acceptable practices violate people’s human rights or are founded on misconceptions (e.g. biased targeting of girls and boys or castes, denial of education to girls, refusal of immunisation) and should not be supported. Wherever possible, existing good practice and standards (e.g. the targeting of the under-five age group or the use of safe building techniques) should inform decisions about appropriateness in discussion with the affected community. Not all expressed needs can or should be met and discussion with the community and other stakeholders is often needed to explain how decisions and judgments are made.

4. Impartial assessment of needs: Impartiality relates to being objective and

“...The importance of understanding difference

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, all the nutrition projects submitted by UNICEF and its partner NGOs were focusing on children under 5 without collecting sex-disaggregated data. When the Health Cluster lead examined the disaggregated data, he saw that boys were consistently more malnourished than girls. Based on this, the cluster developed minimum standards for the collection of data and hired a gender consultant to analyse why boys were more malnourished than girls and how the programs could be modified to address this issue.


“A good NGO is one that works in harmony with the society, culture and values of the community. It engages the community, does projects based on community interest and needs. It discusses with the community before an intervention.”

Village Chief of Arero, Ethiopia

Impartiality and independence

In practice being impartial is challenging. Needs assessments are not always objective and, at the organisational level, will frequently be skewed by the need to formulate a response in a particular sector. The mandate of a particular organisation will often lead it to identify specific needs and its ability to respond may be constrained by insecurity, access and the availability of resources – human, financial and logistical.

The decision to respond in itself may be influenced by the availability of donor funding or the political concerns, foreign policy or cultural ties of the donor. The media may also be influential in the decision-making process raising the profile of an acute emergency (and generating more donor engagement and funding) whilst ignoring more protracted crises.

Organisations will need to explore these different challenges and will need to collaborate in finding ways to ensure impartial assistance. They will need to be transparent about how decisions are made and what should be prioritised whilst being guided by humanitarian principles.

Not discriminating based on nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, tribal allegiances or political opinion. Special efforts are needed to assess people in hard-to-reach locations, e.g. people who are not in camps, are in less accessible geographical areas or in host families. The same applies for people less easily accessed but often at risk, such as persons with disabilities, older people, housebound individuals, and children and adolescents, who may be subject to coercion, exploitation and abuse. Speaking openly may be difficult or dangerous for some people. The crisis-affected community and programme staff will need to work together to agree a set of criteria to identify people the organisation will seek to assist. Communication of these criteria is important once they have been agreed. The assessment process should manage expectations from affected communities and other stakeholders by clearly explaining how the process will work and any resource limitations.

5. Assessing vulnerability:
The assessment of both assistance and protection risks and needs is required and this will involve understanding who is vulnerable and why. This may be due to individual factors such as age (e.g. the very young and the very old) and illness (especially people living with HIV and AIDS) but individual factors alone do not automatically increase risk. Social and contextual factors also contribute to vulnerability, such as discrimination and marginalisation (e.g. low status and power of women and girls); social isolation including the lack of access to information; environmental degradation (e.g. soil erosion or deforestation); climate variability; poverty; lack of land tenure; poor governance; ethnicity; class or caste; and religious or political affiliations. An assessment of the safety and security of disaster-affected and host populations is also important to identify threats of violence and any forms of coercion and denial of subsistence or basic human rights.

6. Assessing capacity: It is the primary role and responsibility of the state to provide timely assistance and protection to those affected. Intervention by other humanitarian actors should take place only if the affected population and/or state does not have sufficient capacity or willingness to respond (particularly early in the response) or if the state or controlling authorities actively discriminate against certain groups of people and/or affected areas. Crisis-affected people also possess and acquire skills, knowledge and capacities to cope with, respond to and recover from disasters and will usually be the first to respond. Local capacities are key in building resilience to disasters and delivering a rapid and effective emergency response. Active engagement in humanitarian response is also an essential foundation of people’s right to life with dignity. Self-help and community-led initiatives contribute to psychological and social wellbeing through restoring dignity and a degree of control to disaster-affected populations. (See commitment 3)

7. Adapting to changing needs, capacities and context: Throughout the response, field workers should continually discuss with communities to find out whether the response is meeting their real needs, and whether additional or different responses are required (see commitment 4). Epidemiological and other data must also be used to direct programme decisions. The agency will have to remain flexible enough to redesign any intervention in response to changing needs and discussions may be needed to ensure that donors are in agreement with this.

“We arrive in an emergency and say ‘here, this is what you need, this is what is good for you.’ As long as we don’t accept that opening the participatory process is opening ourselves up to things that are not in our recipe book, we won’t be participatory. As long as we remain in that culture and don’t move to one of exposing ourselves to new challenges, we won’t be accountable.”

François Grünewald Executive and Scientific Director, Groupe URD
Key organisational responsibilities

1.4 Policies commit to providing impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by crisis (see guidance note 8).

1.5 Policies set out commitments that take into account the diversity of communities, including disadvantaged or marginalised people, and to collect disaggregated data (see guidance notes 8 & 9).

1.6 Processes are in place to assure an appropriate ongoing analysis of the context (see guidance note 10).

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

8. Organisational policies relating to impartial assistance and diversity:
The policies and processes of an organisation will significantly influence staff attitudes and behaviours and how interventions are assessed and implemented and are therefore critical to ensuring an appropriate response. Organisational decisions will be required on where to respond and what the priorities are, bearing in mind organisational objectives and humanitarian principles. An organisation that meets the standard needs policies and processes that articulate a commitment to humanitarian principles (and any exceptions to this) as well as respect for gender, age, ability and diversity. All staff and volunteers should be aware of and should understand what their responsibilities are in relation to these policies, and how they will be held to account for them. Key stakeholders should also be made aware of such policies.

9. Data disaggregation: Detailed disaggregation is rarely possible initially but is of critical importance to identify the different age and gender related needs of the affected population. Organisational policies should make clear the required levels of data disaggregation for assessment and reporting. This can contribute to providing evidence of impartial assistance and to show whether aid is reaching the different groups it is intended for.

10. Processes for ongoing analysis:
Humanitarian agencies should provide appropriate management and supervisory support to enable aid workers to have the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes to manage and carry out assessments. Human resources systems should be flexible enough to recruit and deploy assessment teams rapidly and adequate numbers of staff with appropriate competencies should ensure that ongoing assessment and analysis is possible. Programme budgets and resources should be allocated according to need and should ensure that funding allows for ongoing analysis of assistance and protection needs and for programme adaptation and correction.

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

- Does the organisation have a clear policy commitment to needs-based, impartial and independent humanitarian action? Is it known to staff?
- Do relevant stakeholders perceive the organisation as impartial, independent and non-discriminatory?
- Do working processes include mechanisms to consistently collect sex, age and ability disaggregated data?
- Are these data regularly used to guide programme design and implementation?

“There are times that NGOs do not provide what people really need. For some NGOs, the projects come from above, top-down. They should listen to the people from the communities.”

Community members, Myanmar/Burma, the Listening Project
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<th><strong>Links to key guidance</strong></th>
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<td><strong>ACAPS and Sphere (2014) Sphere 4 Assessments</strong></td>
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<td><strong>UNHCR (2006) The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tufts University, (2011) Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies Feinstein International Center, authors: Dyan Mazurana, Prisca Benelli, Huma Gupta and Peter Walker</strong></td>
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Commitment 2

Communities and people affected by the crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which people affected by the crisis, including the most vulnerable groups, are satisfied with the timing of the assistance and protection they receive.
2. Degree to which people affected by the crisis, including the most vulnerable groups, consider needs to be met by the response.
3. Degree to which the timing of the response enables the objectives to be achieved.

Why is this commitment important?

This commitment underlines the importance of meeting objectives on time and the balance that is required to ensure both effectiveness and timeliness. A response that takes weeks or months to implement will not meet people’s immediate needs but, at the same time, a rapid response may not be appropriate, may not meet required technical standards and may therefore not have the desired impact. Timely responses help protect people’s lives and livelihoods.

Commitment 2 relates to how good an intervention is and the need for systems and structures that ensure effective systems, timely, evidence based decision-making and adequate geographical coverage of both assistance and protection needs. It recognises the challenges that are often faced in terms of access, security, funding, logistics, agency and donor priorities and capacity but requires that the humanitarian community, acting together, find ways to try to overcome these so that a comprehensive response to people’s needs, can be provided. Anticipating and preparing for crises in advance increases the speed, appropriateness and efficiency of the response and ensures that decisions are based on more reliable information.

Key actions

2.1 Design programmes that address constraints so that proposed action is realistic and safe for communities (see guidance note 1).
2.2 Deliver humanitarian response in a timely manner, making decisions and acting without unnecessary delay (see guidance notes 2 & 3).
2.3 Refer any unmet needs to those organisations with the relevant technical expertise and mandate, or advocate for those needs to be addressed (see guidance note 4).
2.4 Use relevant technical standards and good practice employed across the humanitarian sector to plan and assess programmes (see guidance note 5).
2.5 Monitor activities, outputs and outcomes of humanitarian responses in order to adapt programmes and address poor performance (see guidance notes 6 & 7).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

- Are constraints and risks regularly identified and analysed, and plans adapted accordingly?
- Does planning consider optimal times for activities?
- Are delays to implementation monitored and addressed?
- Are early warning systems and contingency plans used?
- Are globally recognised technical standards used and achieved?
- Are unmet needs identified and addressed?
- Are monitoring results used to adapt programmes?
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Addressing constraints and realistic programming: In reality there are often numerous challenges in providing an effective and timely response. Insecurity or logistical problems may limit access to populations, funding may be insufficient or the local authorities may not give their permission to respond. Meeting the suggested indicators for the minimum technical standards for affected populations and/or host communities may not be feasible because of the lack of access or funding. Organisations and their staff may also not have the required experience, systems or competencies to meet minimum standards. Collaborative working is required to develop strategies and to employ tools (e.g. advocacy, referral to other agencies, contingency planning) to overcome some of these challenges but it is also important to define indicators that are context specific and achievable within specific time frames and to review these indicators as the response progresses.

2. Timeliness: Timeliness refers not only to a rapid response that avoids delays but also to the provision of the right services at the right time. For example there may be different needs in summer and winter and activities such as the distribution of animal fodder or seeds and tools will need to take account of the agricultural calendar. Programme plans need to include timeframes for the expected results and monitoring systems (see guidance note 6) need to be able to identify delays. The IASC humanitarian programme cycle (see key guidance) provides more information on expected timelines for slow and sudden onset emergencies. Using forecasts and ‘early warning systems’ to carry out contingency planning before a crisis unfolds, allows communities, authorities and agencies to be ready to intervene on time, so that affected people can access their basic needs and reinforce their assets before their lives and livelihoods are at risk. Not consulting with communities can lead to ineffective responses that waste time and resources.

3. Decision-making: A wide range of factors influence the decision to respond to a humanitarian crisis, including the availability of funds, access to information, the level or preparedness planning, the expertise and competencies of an agency and/or the need to demonstrate impact. Donor governments will also be influenced by foreign policy and political considerations. Decision-making should be based on an objective analysis of needs but in reality in-depth information will often be insufficient or the local authorities may not give their permission to respond. Meetings and decision-making arrangements will vary within different organisations and for the response as a whole but ideally the ultimate responsibility for decision-making should rest with the national authorities. Decisions and decision-making processes should be well documented to allow for transparency and should be based on consultation and coordination with others (see commitment 6).

4. Unmet needs: Ongoing assessment and coordination is necessary to ensure that all affected areas are covered and monitoring should identify if needs (for assistance and protection) are being adequately met. Diplomacy, lobbying and advocacy with government, other organisations and donors may be required to ensure access, funding and/or security and this may be required at a local, national or international level. The special needs of e.g. people with disabilities, young children and vulnerable or disadvantaged women and men should be considered as a priority. Women and girls can be at particular risk of gender-based violence and their safety should be considered in all interventions (see commitment 3).

5. Technical standards and good practice: In general agencies should be guided by national standards for all sectors – although sometimes these

“Organisations don’t understand how we live – they schedule meetings, activities at wrong times and don’t take into consideration the seasonal calendar.”

Community members in Arero Wario, Ethiopia

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may either only apply to longer-term situations or they may be outdated and not in line with accepted best practice. As time affords it may be possible to collaborate on updating national standards and/or adapting them for future humanitarian responses. The Sphere and companion standards provide a framework that can help to inform this process. Best practice should evolve over time as interventions develop and improve and as organisations learn from experience (see commitment 7).

6. Monitoring activities, outputs and outcomes: Monitoring should measure progress against different levels of project objectives and indicators and should not just focus on activities such as distributions or only on outputs such as the numbers of facilities constructed. Project outcomes relate to the desired end result of such activities such as the use of facilities or changes in practice and the expected outcomes need to be time bound. Monitoring information guides project revisions, verifies selection criteria and confirms if aid is reaching the people intended or not. It enables decision-makers to respond to community feedback and identify emerging problems and trends. Monitoring systems should be reviewed regularly to ensure that only information that is being used is collected. Monitoring activities should also involve affected populations and key stakeholders (see commitment 7).

7. Assessing under-performance: A variety of methods may be used to assess ongoing performance including participatory impact assessments and listening exercises, quality assurance tools, feedback exercises and internal learning and reflection exercises. Performance monitoring and ‘real-time evaluations’ can be carried out during a response, leading to immediate changes in policy and practice. It should be possible to demonstrate how the findings from such assessments are used to correct mistakes, address weaknesses and improve the intervention. (See commitment 7)

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**Common challenges to effectiveness**

So humanitarian assistance did save lives – but whose lives were saved, where and when? All three operations did achieve considerable scale, serving in each case hundreds of thousands of people, and addressing many needs in a relevant and appropriate fashion. But coverage issues were very significant in two of the emergencies: in both the North Kivu and Jordan cases, the level of assistance that a displaced person received was very strongly influenced by their registration status with UNHCR and by their location.

Logistical considerations were significant in both settings, while security was a major constraint in North Kivu. But in Maban, there were significant failings in contingency planning and then in reacting quickly to new needs, which prolonged the high mortality levels.

*Taken from: MSF (2014) Where is everyone? Responding to emergencies in the most difficult places*

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**Preparedness pays off in Typhoon Hagupit response**

Established and strengthened through the response to Typhoon Haiyan in late 2013 and early 2014, Communicating with Communities/Accountability Working Groups in the Philippines were able to effectively apply this learning in preparedness for Typhoon Hagupit, which hit the Philippines in early December 2014.

As the Typhoon approached, preparedness efforts included prepositioning staff, emergency broadcast equipment and solar powered radios to where the Typhoon was likely to hit; distributing daily newsletters and public service announcements through a local humanitarian radio station, and activating local media networks in potentially affected areas.

Once the Typhoon made landfall, working group Members sprang into action, assessing community information needs, setting up feedback mechanisms and using multiple channels of communication to ensure communities had access to the information they need. PECOJON and First Response Radio collaborated to ensure 98.7 FM radio was on air as soon as possible to meet information needs of communities in Eastern Samar who were cut off from communication.

The newsletters, developed by PECOJON with Information provided by humanitarian and government agencies, proved particularly successful. Using the information in the newsletters, community members were able to call agency and government hotlines immediately to request help. This helped the agencies to better understand where assistance was required. Trust and relationships developed during the Haiyan response were crucial in effecting a well-organised, well-prepared, coordinated response before and after Typhoon Hagupit.

*Adapted from: CDAC Network: http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20150122154458-a6cnt/*
Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

8. Programme commitments and organisational capacity:
Organisational policies should reflect the importance of applying technical quality standards and developing and maintaining expertise in the agency’s chosen areas of intervention. Organisations also need to recognise the specific expertise that is required to respond to specific emergencies. However, it is also recognised that many factors that are outside of the organisation’s direct control may prevent this commitment from being met. The organisation should make clear what it can and cannot do in the given operational circumstances, explain the reasons why and outline some minimum steps that can be taken until the context improves. For example, in the case of restricted access to populations, the organisation as a minimum could consult with those most familiar with the affected population (e.g. a diaspora), which may act as a reliable “proxy” reference group. It is also important to remember that a focus on disaster preparedness and contingency planning can contribute to a more effective and timely response in subsequent crises.

9. Monitoring and evaluation processes and systems: The organisation should have a clear monitoring and evaluation policy as well as staff capacity to ensure that systems function effectively and that corrective action is taken where necessary. Evidence is defined as data on which a judgment or conclusion can be made and it can take varying forms and can offer varying degrees (strength) of validity – not necessarily scientific. There is a need to develop the documented evidence base for humanitarian action in order to improve outcomes and systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation can contribute to this process. An organisation that meets the standard should be able to show how data from monitoring and evaluation is used to adapt

Key organisational responsibilities

2.6 Ensure programme commitments are in line with organisational capacities (see guidance note 8).

2.7 Policy commitments ensure:
   a. A systematic, objective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of activities and their effect;
   b. Evidence from monitoring and evaluations is used to adapt and improve programmes; and
   c. Timely decision-making with resources allocated accordingly (see guidance notes 9 & 10)

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

- Is there a clear process in place to assess organisational capacities before making programming commitments? Are they regularly reassessed?
- Are there clear policies, processes and resources in place to support monitoring and evaluation and use the results for management and decision-making? Are they known to staff?
- Are there clear processes to define responsibilities and timelines for decision-making on resource allocations?

Reviewing systems to ensure timely response

The Horn of Africa food crisis reached its peak in 2011 and it continued well into 2012. Despite clear warning signs of an impending crisis in mid-2010 and equally unequivocal calls for assistance towards the end of that year, the humanitarian community failed to heed the call for early and adequate action.

Why was the international system so slow in responding to accurate early warnings? What are the lessons we can learn from this?

- Waiting for a situation to reach crisis point before responding is the wrong way to address chronic vulnerability and recurrent drought in places like the Horn of Africa. Instead, the international community must change how it operates to meet the challenge of responding to recurrent crises in regions such as this.
- Decision-makers are often not comfortable with uncertainty and forecasts, requiring hard data before initiating a response. Early warning systems are not always acted upon for fear of getting it wrong and responding when it is not required but we need to be prepared to take this risk.
- While many people ‘on the ground’ in the region – representatives of many agencies and institutions, and communities themselves – were aware of the impending crisis and trying to set alarm bells ringing in January and February 2011, they were not always able to get traction ‘further up the chain’ from those who needed to act to avert another crisis.

Adapted from: Oxfam and Save the Children (2012) A Dangerous Delay. The cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa Joint agency briefing paper
programmes, policies and strategies and improve preparedness and performance (see commitment 7).

10. Organisational decision-making:
Both the responsibility and processes for decision-making at different levels within organisations must be clearly defined and understood by those responding. This should include who is responsible for decision-making, who will be consulted and what information is needed to inform decision-making. Organisations and other collective decision-making bodies, such as the humanitarian country teams need to be transparent and accountable for strategic choices relating to whether and how to respond to specific crises.

Links to key guidance

**IASC (2013) Reference module for the implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle**
https://icvanetwork.org/node/6352


**ODI (2009) Evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian situations; HPN Network Paper No. 67 ODI; London; Author: David Bradt**

**ODI (2011) System failure: revisiting the problems of timely response to crises in the Horn of Africa; HPN Network Paper No. 71 ODI; London; Author: Simon Levine**


**Cyclone Sidr case study**

**OECD (2011) Evaluation insights No. 1: Haiti Earthquake Response**

**MSF (2014) Where is everyone? Responding to emergencies in the most difficult places; Authors: Sean Healy and Sandrine Tiller**

See also:
- Sphere technical standards and companion standards
- ALNAP resources in commitment 7 (learning papers and report on ‘insufficient evidence’)
Commitment 3

Commitment

Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.

Quality criterion:
Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which communities and people affected by crisis, consider themselves better able to withstand future shocks and stresses as a result of humanitarian action.
2. Degree to which the response assists communities and people affected by crisis to reduce losses in future crises.
3. Degree to which the skills and knowledge of local authorities and leaders with responsibilities for responding to crises are increased through humanitarian action.
4. Degree to which communities and people affected by crisis, perceive negative effects resulting from humanitarian action.
5. Degree to which the response minimises potential negative effects for affected communities and people.

Why is this commitment important?

Responses that ignore the strengths and capacities of people affected by crisis, their governments and civil society are less effective and can undermine long-term development processes. In countries where there are recurring disasters, ensuring that individuals, communities and countries have greater control over decision-making and become more resilient can lead to a quicker recovery and a greater capacity to withstand future shocks. Humanitarian action may have unintended but harmful consequences and organisations must recognise this and do their utmost to prevent or mitigate such effects.

This commitment recognises the need to acknowledge and build on local and national capacity when responding to disasters. Badly planned and executed responses that do not properly understand the context, or work alongside local organisations or consider potential risks can cause more harm than good and both programme interventions and organisational policies must seek to mitigate the unintended negative consequences of aid. Promoting the safety and dignity of all those who are vulnerable – especially women - is an important element of this commitment.

"Skills-training is better than receiving goods. We increase our income, it helps us become more creative, we have more choices for our livelihood, and we can use the profits to buy other things we need such as rice, food and medicine."

Women at a roadside stand, Cambodia

1 CDA (2012) Time to Listen Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid; Authors: Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown & Isabella Jean
Key actions

3.1 Ensure programmes build on local capacities and work towards improving the resilience of communities and people affected by crisis (see guidance note 1).

3.2 Use the results of any existing community hazard and risk assessments and preparedness plans to guide activities (see guidance note 2).

3.3 Enable the development of local leadership and organisations in their capacity as first-responders in the event of future crises, taking steps to ensure that marginalised and disadvantaged groups are appropriately represented (see guidance note 3).

3.4 Plan a transition or exit strategy in the early stages of the humanitarian programme that ensures longer-term positive effects and reduces the risk of dependency (see guidance notes 4 & 5).

3.5 Design and implement programmers that promote early disaster recovery and benefit the local economy (see guidance note 6).

3.6 Identify and act upon potential or actual unintended negative effects in a timely and systematic manner, including in the areas of:
   a. People's safety, security, dignity and rights;
   b. Sexual exploitation and abuse by staff;
   c. Culture, gender and social and political relationships;
   d. Livelihoods;
   e. The local economy; and
   f. The environment.
   (See guidance notes 7-9)

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

• What local capacities for resilience (structures, organisations, leadership and support networks) exist and how can these be strengthened?

• Is existing information on risks, hazards, vulnerabilities and related plans considered

• Are strategies and actions to reduce risk and build resilience designed in consultation with affected people and communities?

• In what ways are local leaders (formal and informal) and/or authorities consulted to ensure strategies are in line with local and/or national priorities?

• Are there equitable opportunities for participation of all groups in the affected population?

• Does the response facilitate early recovery?

• Is a clear transition and/or exit strategy developed in consultation with affected people and other relevant stakeholders?

• What mechanisms exist for prompt detection and mitigation of unintended negative effects?

Guidance notes for key actions

1. Community resilience:
   Individuals, communities and countries have capacities for coping and recovery following a disaster. Many coping mechanisms are sustainable and helpful, while others may be negative, with potentially long-term harmful consequences, such as the sale of assets, reducing expenditure on medical care or education, consuming less food, or heavy alcohol consumption. The focus on resilience aims to protect or re-establish people's livelihoods, ensure that systems (including governance and infrastructure) are better able to withstand future shocks and that communities are organised and prepared to respond better to subsequent disasters. Access to social, financial, cultural and emotional support through extended family, religious networks and rituals, friends, schools and community organisation and activities helps to re-establish individual and community self-respect and identity and enhance a person's capacity to recover from a disaster. An integrated approach to programming that aims to address the underlying causes of vulnerability (poor health, lack of access to education, loss of productive assets) helps build community resilience. Examples include supporting and developing community networks, building earthquake- and hurricane-resistant houses, protecting wetlands that absorb storm surges and supporting policy development and community-driven initiatives in early warning and disaster preparedness (see Turnbull et al 2013 and Groupe URD 2103 for more guidance).

2. Community hazard and risk assessments: The more vulnerable an individual, community or country is, the more likely adverse effects are to occur and men, women, children and...
Supporting local capacity and avoiding negative effects

Following the 2004 tsunami that struck the coast of Tamil Nadu, poor and excluded coastal communities faced the threat of losing their customary rights to coastal lands, with many forced by the state to relocate to rehabilitation sites many kilometres away from the coast, and with inadequate housing, services and facilities. Research indicated that the government was seeking to secure evacuated coastal land for its own construction purposes. With ActionAid’s support, affected communities began a campaign to draw attention to their situation and to demand respect for their dignity and freedom of choice to live on their traditional lands. This community mobilisation initiative began with the production of a film clip entitled ‘Our Sea, Our Right’. Volunteers screened the film in over 20 village-level sensitisation meetings, followed by discussion sessions involving community members. From these consultations, the idea emerged to establish a people’s organisation and civil society network to help coastal communities retain their homestead rights, and support relocated communities in their efforts to obtain adequate housing and rehabilitation packages. This process resulted in the formation of the Coastal Community Protection Committee (CCPC) and the Forum for Securing Land and Livelihood Rights of Coastal Communities (FLLRC).

Taken from: ODI (2010) Safety with dignity: Integrating community based protection into humanitarian programming. HPN Network Paper No. 68

Different groups within society will have different levels of risk. Understanding the nature of these hazards, risks and the level of vulnerability and the capacity to cope with and adapt to events and changes in the environment forms the basis of a hazard and risk assessment (see IFRC 2006).

3. Development of local leadership and capacity: Local agencies and communities are usually the first to act and have the best knowledge of the situation. The increasing frequency of humanitarian emergencies presents a compelling case for channeling much more aid through local organisations in order to develop their capacity and to provide them with the resources to respond at scale. Recent evaluations of humanitarian response have criticised aid agencies for not working collaboratively enough with local partners such as the authorities and national NGOs. Local NGOs especially may be seen simply as a way to deliver programme goals rather than as equal partners. This requires changes in attitudes and a long-term perspective on the part of international NGOs so that local partners are given the autonomy to control the process as well as a commitment by both agencies to open dialogue and constructive criticism. Where possible programmes should employ local and national staff instead of expatriate staff.

4. Transition and exit strategy: It is the primary role and responsibility of the state to provide timely assistance and protection to those affected and, wherever possible, services should be provided to support existing systems rather than as parallel entities. In collaboration with the authorities, a plan for withdrawing responsibly from the intervention should be part of the strategic plan for each sector and agency. Sometimes only a partial exit strategy will be possible and premature exit may even result in a resumption of a conflict if resources remain inadequate to meet people’s needs. Conversely, delaying the exit may also cause harm if affected communities have come to rely on a level of service that is unsustainable. Different sectors may also withdraw at different times and/or modify their approaches to take account of the changing context and conditions. Different funding mechanisms will be required for longer-term programmes.

5. Risk of dependency: It is clear that aid can be provided in a way that undermines people’s capacities to recover or that cannot be maintained long-term and the anticipated time frames and the nature of support should be regularly discussed with affected communities.

6. Economic recovery: Actions taken at the earliest opportunity to strengthen local capacities, work with local actors and restore services, education, markets and livelihood opportunities will help to promote early economic recovery and people’s ability to manage risk after external assistance has ended. Economies continue to function during crises and people need sources of income to rebuild their lives and assistance needs to take account of market dynamics and trends to be effective (see Minimum Economic Recovery Standards 2010). Local procurement and the use of cash-based assistance are two examples of market-integrated relief.

7. Negative effects and ‘do no harm’: Valuable aid resources can increase the likelihood of exploitation and abuse and lead to competition, misuse or misappropriation of aid. NGOs that fail to systematically tackle corruption via their own anti-bribery policies and procedures and through collective action with other NGOs increase corruption risks for other actors. Aid can negatively affect

“First we lost our lives, then we lost our dignity in the way that we were treated by international humanitarian agencies — it seemed like international agencies had their own agendas. They paid no attention to our own capacities to cope with the crisis.”

Volunteer with CBO in Gaza

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the wider population and amplify unequal power relations between different groups, including men, women and children. Interventions should seek to understand the potential for increasing or creating conflict and regularly take stock of possible unintended negative effects in relation to intended programme outcomes, safety and security, environmental impact and community dynamics. This understanding should be based on ongoing discussions with affected populations (including those indirectly affected such as host communities) and by ensuring continual assessment of changes in the operating context. Staff working in the field should welcome and seek out suggestions and complaints (See Sphere Protection Principles) and should be trained on the limits of confidentiality and how to refer sensitive information such as disclosures of exploitation and abuse.

8. Environmental concerns and climate change: The effects of climate change such as the increased frequency and/or intensity of climate related hazards such as flooding and drought, have a potential impact on people’s health, assets and livelihoods, increasing the levels of vulnerability and undermining people’s ability to recover. Environmental degradation (e.g. soil erosion, deforestation, aquifer depletion, overfishing or pollution) will also increase the impact of future disasters and it is important that the humanitarian response does not unintentionally exacerbate such situations. Relief operations can either waste natural resources or help to conserve them through the use of ethical and accountable procurement policies and practices. Environmental assessments are vital to understand the impact of construction and rehabilitation activities as well as how to mitigate negative environmental impact through transportation, packaging and disposal.

Aid Dependency

According to Harvey and Lind (2005), “People depend less on relief than is often assumed. There is little evidence that relief undermines initiative, or that its delivery is reliable or transparent enough for people to depend on it. In situations where people’s lives and livelihoods are under acute threat, and local capacities to cope with crisis are overwhelmed, being able to depend on receiving assistance should be seen as a good thing. The focus should be, not how to avoid dependency, but how to provide sufficiently reliable and transparent assistance so that those who most need it understand what they are entitled to, and can rely on it as part of their own efforts to survive and recover from crisis”.


Key steps in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) include the following:

- Having a code of conduct that is contractually binding, and that is conveyed to staff and other representatives (including volunteers, partners and contractors) at their induction and through regular refresher training.
- Having a staff member or department as focal point on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, with the responsibility included in their job description and performance appraisals.
- Raising awareness of affected populations regarding the standards of behaviour they should expect from the organisation’s staff and other representatives, and giving them a channel through which they can complain about a breach of the standards.
- Ensuring that reference checks are carried out for new staff and representatives, one of which should be from the applicant’s previous direct supervisor.

Source: IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA

9. Sexual exploitation and abuse by staff: When staff or representatives of humanitarian organisations use their position to perpetrate abuse or the exploitation of affected populations, it undermines the faith and trust that communities have in them. All staff share a responsibility to maintain an environment where this does not happen e.g. by respecting social and cultural boundaries when interacting with affected communities, other staff and partners, by providing facilities and services that are safe to use and by sensitively asking about perceptions of safety and how unsafe situations can be addressed. Staff members also have a responsibility to report any abuse they suspect or witness, whether within their own organisation or outside.
Key organisational responsibilities

3.7 Policies, strategies and guidance are designed to:

a. Prevent programmes having any negative effects, such as, for example, exploitation, abuse or discrimination by staff against communities and people affected by crisis; and

b. Strengthen local capacities. (See guidance note 10)

3.8 Systems are in place to safeguard any personal information collected from communities and people affected by crisis that could put people at risk (see guidance note 11).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

- Is there a policy requiring risk assessment and risk reduction for vulnerable communities and people in the organisation’s programme areas? Is it known to staff?

- Do policies and procedures exist for assessing and mitigating the negative effects of the response? Are they known to staff?

- Are there specific policies and procedures in place to deal with situations of sexual exploitation, abuse or discrimination? Are they known to staff?

- Are contingency plans in place for responding to new or evolving crises? Are they known to staff? Do staff understand what is expected of them on issues of protection, security and risks?

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

10. Avoiding negative effects at the organisational level: Organisations are encouraged to have a clearly documented risk management policy and systems in place. As well as examining internal processes, these should also examine the context and external risks. Not only can this help to determine possible corruption risks but it can also guide the organisation on how to deal with contextual constraints that might restrict and impede the application of humanitarian values and principles, and help them to improve accountability. Policies should also reflect a commitment to the protection of vulnerable people and procedures should outline ways to prevent and investigate the abuse of power – including the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (see previous page). Careful recruitment, screening and hiring practices can help to reduce risks of staff misconduct and codes of conduct make it clear what practices are forbidden (see commitment 8). Staff should formally agree to adhere to these codes and be made aware of the sanctions that will follow from not doing so. Complaints and grievance procedures and whistleblowing policies should also be in place and staff should be aware of how to access these. Green procurement policies can help to ensure that unintended negative effects on the environment are avoided (see commitment 9).

11. Safeguarding personal information: All personal information collected from communities should be treated as confidential. This is particularly the case with regard to handling complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse (see commitment 5) where assurances of non-disclosure may be warranted to prevent further harm from occurring. The increasing use of electronic registration and distribution systems also brings with it not only the need for clearer policies on data protection but also agreements with third parties such as banks and commercial organisations to ensure that they also instigate measures to safeguard information. Clear guidance about the collection, storage and use of data is needed and this should be in line with local data protection laws. Staff and communities should be informed about the processes required and systems to mitigate the risk of the loss of data should be put in place. Those in receipt of aid should be able to access the personal information that an organisation holds on them and should be able to have concerns about the misuse of information investigated. Data should not be held longer than is required and should be destroyed as soon as possible.

Urgency versus prudence

It is often argued that the need to move quickly to save lives precludes a robust or systematic approach to preventing corruption – especially in the initial phase of a disaster response or in poor security contexts. Certain simplified and more rapid procedures are indeed appropriate in such situations – but only temporarily. During recovery and rehabilitation phases or in a post-conflict situation, it’s essential to set up proper systems, staffing and controls, even if that takes a little extra time.

Taken from: Transparency International (2014) Preventing corruption in humanitarian operations
<table>
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<th><strong>Links to key guidance</strong></th>
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<td><strong>IFRC (2006) What is VCA: an introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Practical Action (2013) Toward resilience, a guide to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, Authors: Turnbull et al</strong></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=30391">http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=30391</a></td>
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<td><strong>Groupe URD (2013) Handbook Resilience 2.0 for aid practitioners and policymakers in Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Poverty Reduction, CARE Nederland, Groupe URD and Wageningen University</strong></td>
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<td><strong>CaLP (2013) Protecting beneficiary privacy: Principles and operational standards for the secure use of personal data in cash and e-transfer programmes</strong></td>
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<td><a href="http://cpwg.net/minimum-standards/">http://cpwg.net/minimum-standards/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Christian Aid (2012) Building the future of humanitarian aid: Local capacity and partnerships in emergency assistance</strong></td>
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<td><strong>HAP (2013) Change starts with us, talk to us! Beneficiary perceptions regarding the effectiveness of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian aid workers</strong></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfMKMCYFgPo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfMKMCYFgPo</a></td>
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Commitment 4

Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian action is based on communication, participation and feedback.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which people affected by crisis are aware of their rights and entitlements.
2. Degree to which people affected by crisis are satisfied that they have access to the information they need.
3. Degree to which people affected by crisis are satisfied with opportunities to influence the response.

Why is this commitment important?

Without information and communication, affected people cannot access services or make the best decisions for themselves and their communities; neither can they hold aid agencies to account. When people are given the opportunity to voice their opinions, this enhances their sense of wellbeing, helps them adapt to the challenges they face and better enables them to take an active role in their own recovery. Information and communication are critical to ensuring that crisis-affected people are at the centre of humanitarian action. Sharing information and involving affected communities in decision-making contributes to more effective programmes and improves the quality of services delivered. Effective two-way communication can also play a role in bringing hope and encouragement to communities recently affected by disaster.

This commitment is based on the premise that information and communication are critical forms of aid and underlines the need for transparency to ensure that affected populations are aware of what they are entitled to, the support that can be provided, who will provide it and when. Inclusive participation requires an understanding of the different needs and perspectives of the population and a willingness to allow and encourage people to speak out and to influence decisions. Informed consent is also important for the achievement of this commitment.

Key actions

4.1 Provide information to communities and people affected by crisis about the organisation, the principles it adheres to, how it expects its staff to behave, the programmes it is implementing and what they intend to deliver (see guidance note 2).

4.2 Communicate in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate for different parts of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups (see guidance note 3).

4.3 Ensure representation is inclusive, involving the participation and engagement of communities and people affected by crisis at all stages of the work (see guidance note 3 - 5).

4.4 Encourage and facilitate communities and people affected by crisis to provide feedback on their level of satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of assistance, paying particular attention to the gender, age and diversity of those giving feedback (see guidance note 6).

CDA (2012) Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid, Authors: Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown & Isabella Jean
Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

- Is information about the organisation and response provided in accessible and appropriate ways to affected communities and people?
- Are people, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups, accessing and understanding the information provided?
- Are crisis-affected people’s views, including those of the most vulnerable and marginalised, sought and used to guide programme design and implementation?
- Do all groups within affected communities and people feel they have equitable opportunities to participate in decisions about the response that affect them?
- Are all groups within the community aware of how to give feedback on the response, and feel safe using those channels?
- Are barriers to giving feedback identified and addressed?
- Are data provided through feedback mechanisms disaggregated by age, gender and other relevant categories?

Guidance notes for key actions

1. Entitlements: People affected by crisis have a right to protection, security and to pursue their livelihoods. Such rights are enshrined in international humanitarian law and human rights declarations, which most countries have signed up to. Understanding these rights changes the nature of the relationship between those providing aid and those receiving it and puts both on an equal footing. Unless people are aware of such entitlements, however, inequality and an imbalance of power will be more likely. The obligation to provide assistance rests with the State (or both sides in a conflict) but humanitarian agencies agree to support the efforts of the State.

2. Sharing information with communities: The sharing of accurate, timely and accessible information strengthens trust, increases understanding, deepens levels of participation and improves the impact of a project. It can also help to reduce the number of formal complaints received and is key to meeting the principle of transparency. If an organisation does not share information appropriately with the people it aims to assist, it can contribute to misunderstandings and delays, inappropriate projects, which waste resources and negative perceptions of an organisation that can contribute to anger, frustration and insecurity. Sharing financial information with communities can also improve cost-effectiveness and help communities to highlight waste or fraud. People cannot make informed decisions without accurate information and they are vulnerable to the misuse of power and to exploitation and abuse (including that of a sexual nature) if they don’t know what they are entitled to, what behaviour they can expect from aid workers and how to complain if they are not satisfied with the level of service provided (see resources for more information).

3. Effective and inclusive communication: Communication takes place when information flows backwards and forwards between people and through networks. Communication that is only one-way is incomplete and inadequate. Different groups e.g. mothers with young children or older men will have different communication and information needs and may well have different trusted sources of communication. Information shared through local networks can sometimes take time to reach its intended audience and the use of a variety of communication channels is preferable, ensuring that existing systems are used and that people are consulted on their communication preferences. The use of mobile telephony, the Internet and social media in emergencies continues to grow but care needs to be exercised to ensure these tools are used effectively and safely. The different information and communication needs of different groups should be analysed and information should be shared in different ways to make it accessible to different audiences e.g. using audio-visual methods, print, presentations or group discussions.

4. Participation and engagement: The local population is usually the first to react in a disaster and even early in a response some degree of participation is always feasible. Affected populations will have ideas and suggestions on how to respond appropriately and their views on programme design should be sought on an ongoing basis and this forms a critical aspect of any assessment (see commitment 1). Participation can be understood in terms of a process where different levels of participation may be appropriate at different times of a humanitarian response. For example in the early stages of an acute response, consultation on key areas of the response might only be possible with limited numbers of affected people but over time there will be more opportunities for greater levels of involvement in decision-making and with more people and groups. As a result of the context or pre-existing power differentials (based upon gender, race, class, caste, or other characteristics), participation will often not occur spontaneously. Instead, aid organisations may have to foster a process of mutual learning and dialogue to stimulate greater participation. Particular attention needs to be given to groups or individuals traditionally excluded from power and decision-making processes. These may include women, children, elderly persons, people with disabilities, landless or homeless

“There is only one time we saw staff of one of these international NGOs come and meet us—they came to unveil the sign about their funding here. We haven’t seen anyone that belongs to that sign since then.”

Local woman, Thailand
5. Informed consent: Another aspect of participation is that of informed consent, where an individual or a community (through representation) gives their consent to programme activities based upon an appreciation and understanding of the facts and implications of an action. Consent may take varied forms, including expressed willingness, permission or a voluntary agreement. Verifying whether informed consent is given or whether levels of participation are adequate can be complex at the best of times. In emergencies, the situation is further complicated by contextual constraints and realities. People may express consent without fully understanding the implications or without having a comprehensive grasp of the issues. A degree of consent and participation may initially have to be assumed based on observation, knowledge, or legal or other documents (e.g. contractual agreements with the community).

6. Feedback: People may fear that critical feedback will lead to a loss of assistance or have negative repercussions for them or their families. There may be cultural reasons why criticism of an intervention is unacceptable and it is important to explore different methods of obtaining feedback. It is especially important that all field based staff understand how to gain and maintain people’s trust, welcome people’s suggestions and comments, know how to respond to both positive and negative feedback and are observant of the reactions of different community members to the way services are provided. Feedback mechanisms should be designed in coordination with other agencies and agencies must refer serious issues to the appropriate organisation. Feedback mechanisms should ideally be seen as separate from complaints mechanisms for serious infringements of practice or behaviour (see commitment 5) although in practice there will probably be an overlap of the type of feedback and complaints received and decisions will need to be made on how to respond and the degree of confidentiality required. Acknowledging and following up on the feedback received and changing the programme where appropriate is crucial if the process is to be trusted (see ALNAP 2014).

“...If I know about the items that will be distributed tomorrow then I can decide if I should go to the distribution point or stay and fix my house.

Local resident (CRS communication toolbox)
Key organisational responsibilities

4.5 Policies for information sharing are in place, and promote a culture of open communication (see guidance note 7 & 9).

4.6 Policies are in place for engaging communities and people affected by crisis reflecting the priorities and risks they identify in all stages of the work (see guidance note 8 & 9).

4.7 External communications, including those used for fundraising purposes, are accurate, ethical and respectful, presenting communities and people affected by crisis as dignified human beings (see guidance note 10).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

- Do policies and programme plans include provisions for information sharing, including criteria on what information should and should not be shared? Are they known to staff?

- Do policies include provisions on how to deal with confidential or sensitive information, or information that could potentially place staff or affected people at risk? Are they known to staff?

- Is there a policy commitment and guidelines about the way in which affected people are represented in external communications or fundraising materials. Are they known to staff?

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

7. Promoting a culture of open communication: An organisation should define and document processes for sharing information, covering: commitment to accurate and timely information sharing; what information it will share with the people it seeks to assist and other stakeholders; how decisions will be made about when and how to share information; and the criteria used for deciding not to share information (see guidance notes 9). Meeting this commitment also requires that organisations state publicly (e.g. on their website or in promotional materials) additional interests and commitments such as political or religious affiliations. The purpose of the declaration of additional interests is to encourage a “no surprise” approach, giving all stakeholders an opportunity to better understand the nature of the organisation and to ensure greater predictability in, and understanding of, its relevant affiliations, policies, partnerships and relationships. Organisations should strive for greater transparency in sharing information about their successes and failures to promote a system-wide culture of openness and accountability. Organisations that share information internally are more likely to do so externally.

8. Organisational commitment to participation and listening to communities: Policies and strategies should outline the strategy for developing staff capacity in the use of participatory approaches, listening skills and managing (negative) feedback. Gender and diversity policies should outline the values and commitments of the organisation. Feedback from crisis-affected communities should also inform strategy and programme development.

9. Restricting information, confidentiality and non-disclosure: Not all information can or should be shared with all stakeholders and decisions about what information to share should be based on an assessment of risk. For example in some insecure areas publicising information about cash distributions might put people at risk of being attacked. All staff should be aware of what information is confidential and what this means e.g. health staff should not discuss personal details relating to individual patients in public, disclosures of abuse should only be shared with those who need to know and the consent of the individual concerned must be sought.

10. External communications: Due care must be exercised when making use of stories and images from affected populations as this can be seen as an invasion of their privacy and as a breach of confidentiality if their permission is not sought. Fundraising material and photographs taken out of context can often be misleading and can make the viewer assume that those receiving aid are all needy and helpless and may fail to highlight people’s dignity and capacity to help themselves. Policies and guidelines relating to external communications should be available to all staff and can help to ensure that this commitment is not breached.

The importance of communication

The response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake saw humanitarian responders begin to recognise the importance and implications of the technological communications capacity of disaster survivors. From trapped people who used mobile phones to call for help from beneath the rubble to locally run Facebook pages to reunite families, the multiple ways in which technology could create opportunities and new dynamics in an emergency response became clear to all. One of the consequences of greater access to, and the spread of, communications technology is that communities now expect – and demand – interaction.

However, face-to-face communication will continue to remain essential, and investment in trained community mobilisation teams is one of the most cost-effective investments an agency can make.

Communication, whatever the medium, is fundamentally a social activity rooted in social and cultural norms, needs and structures, and the value of a conversation lies as much in its importance for trust and relationship building as in the relaying of information in either direction.

Adapted from: BBC Media Action Policy Briefing No. 6, 2 March 2012
### Links to key guidance

#### Field Level

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#### Organisational Level

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Commitment 5

Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

Quality criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which communities and people affected by crisis, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, are aware of complaints mechanisms established for their use.
2. Degree to which communities and people affected by crisis, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, consider the complaints mechanisms effective, confidential and safe.
3. Degree to which complaints are investigated, resolved and results fed back to the complainant within the stated timeframe?

Why is this commitment important?

People have the right to complain to an agency and to receive an appropriate and timely response. Formal mechanisms for complaints and redress are an essential component of an agency’s accountability to people and help affected populations to re-establish control over their lives. A complaint contains a specific grievance and can alert an organisation to serious misconduct or failures in the response, allowing them to take timely action to improve programme quality. All organisations are susceptible to fraud, or abuse of power and a complaints system can help an organisation to recognise and respond to malpractice, manipulation and exploitation.

Complaints systems must be designed through consultation with the users and for a specific context and people must be able to trust that they will respond in a timely and appropriate manner. The prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation is an important dimension of this commitment and complaints mechanisms must not put people at further risk of harm. Agencies are jointly accountable for the response and have a responsibility to report serious infringements of codes of practice and to refer complaints that they cannot address.

Key actions

5.1 Consult with communities and people affected by crisis on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints-handling processes (see guidance note 1).
5.2 Welcome and accept complaints, and communicate how the mechanism can be accessed and the scope of issues it can address (see guidance note 2).
5.3 Manage complaints in a timely, fair and appropriate manner that prioritises the safety of the complainant and those affected at all stages (see guidance note 3 - 5).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

• Are communities and people affected by the crisis consulted about the design of complaints mechanisms?
• Are the preferences of all demographic groups affected by the crisis taken into account, particularly those related to safety and confidentiality, in the design of complaints processes?
• Is information provided to and understood by all demographic groups about how complaints mechanisms work and what kind of complaints can be made through them?
• Are all complaints investigated and resolved within stated timeframes (depending on the type of complaint)?
• Are complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse investigated immediately by staff with relevant competencies and an appropriate level of authority?
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Designing a complaints mechanism: When developing a complaints mechanism, the first step is to ensure that the organisation’s senior management is supportive of this and that they are willing to devote the necessary resources to it. Once this support is secured, affected communities and other stakeholders (including staff) should be consulted about how they perceive and view complaints mechanisms, how they currently deal with complaints, ways in which they would like to submit complaints to the organisation, what potential barriers might prevent them from complaining and how they wish to receive feedback. The procedures should be designed to fit the requirements for each context. Once finalised, staff will need to be trained on the rationale behind the complaints mechanism and the procedures for operating it. It is also important to consider how complaints received will be recorded and tracked, and how the learning from them will be fed back into planning of future action (see CAFOD 2010 & World Vision 2011).

2. Raising awareness about how to make a complaint: Time and resources will be needed to ensure that different groups within the affected population know what they can expect from agencies in terms of services, staff attitudes and behaviour and what to do, and where to go if they want to make a complaint because the agency has failed to meet these standards. They will need to be familiar with the procedure for making a complaint as well as what it can and can’t address. They should also be assured of confidentiality and non-retaliation if they choose to make a complaint. An information campaign may be useful to help raise awareness and people should have the opportunity to ask questions about how the system will work. Managing expectations is important, as communities may believe that the complaints process can solve all of their problems. This could generate frustration and disappointment if the changes that are expected are outside of agency control.

3. Managing complaints: All complaints should be dealt with individually even though they may cover similar issues. This should be done within a specified timeframe (e.g. 7 days for non-sensitive complaints) and the complainant made aware of when they can expect to have a response. A response should always be provided. Where the complaint falls outside the control and responsibility of the organisation this should be explained clearly to the complainant and where possible and in agreement with the complainant, referred on to the appropriate organisation. Coordination with other agencies and sectors will be required if this is to function effectively. Only trained staff should investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Anonymous, malicious complaints may be a warning signal to the organisation of underlying discontent but present specific challenges (see page 31).

4. Documentation: Records should be kept on the process of setting up the complaints mechanism (and on what decisions were made), the complaints themselves and how they were responded to and within what timeframe. Care must be taken to ensure that information on complaints is kept confidential and that data protection policies are respected and that information is only stored for as long as is necessary.

5. Protecting complainants: Social and power dynamics must be assessed in order to inform the best way to interact with communities and particular attention should always be paid to the specific needs of women and those who might be marginalised to ensure they have a voice in the design and implementation of complaints-handling systems. Care must be taken in deciding who needs to know what information within the organisation. Given the social stigma associated with sexual abuse and the very real danger that women/children reporting such abuse could face from perpetrators, and from their own families, assurances of confidentiality and non-retaliation will be essential. A whistleblowing policy should offer assurance of protection to staff that highlight concerns about programmes or the behaviour of colleagues.

“If there is a complaint, we report to the Village Focal Point. The Village Focal Point comes to verify and then he calls the toll-free line.”

Resident explaining the complaints process at a village in North Sindh, Pakistan 8

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Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

6. Complaints-handling process:
An organisation that meets this commitment should ensure that both its staff and the communities it serves have the opportunity to complain. Such complaints can be seen as an opportunity to improve the organisation and its work. Complaints can indicate the impact and appropriateness of an intervention, potential risks and vulnerabilities and the degree to which people are satisfied with the services provided. The complaints process needs to be clearly explained to communities and staff and mechanisms are needed for both sensitive (relates to corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse or gross misconduct or malpractice) and non-sensitive information (e.g. challenges to population lists). Guidelines should state which complaints fall within the agencies own remit, and when and how to refer to other service providers. The roles, responsibilities and agreed timeframes must also be clearly indicated. The right to appeal should also be built into complaints mechanisms. Organisations working with partners should agree on how they will raise and handle complaints (including against each other). The possibility of working with other agencies on complaints mechanisms in specific locations, consortia or sectors should also be considered as this may be less confusing for communities and staff.

7. Sexual exploitation and abuse:
An organisation and its senior management are responsible for ensuring that complaints mechanisms and procedures for SEA are in place and are safe, transparent, accessible and confidential. Organisations should consider including specifications on cooperation with investigations into SEA cases, where appropriate, in their partnership agreements. (see commitment 3).
8. Organisational culture:
Policies relating to an organisation’s duty of care to the people it aims to assist, codes of conduct and how the organisation will protect those who might be vulnerable such as children and people with disabilities, should be well publicised to all staff. Managers and senior staff should promote and model a culture of mutual respect between all staff, partners, volunteers and people affected by crisis. Organisations should have formal investigation procedures that adhere to the principles of confidentiality, independence and respect. Investigations must be conducted in a thorough, timely, professional manner and meet legal standards and local labour laws. Designated managers should have access to specialist advice or training on investigations and handling staff misconduct. A clear referral system should be in place for cases where national or international law has been broken. A grievance procedure and whistleblowing policy should also be in place to deal with staff complaints, and a system for dealing with problems and concerns between the organisation and its humanitarian partners should be instituted.

9. Staff behaviour and codes of conduct: Organisations meeting this commitment should have a staff code of good behaviour and practice that is well publicised and endorsed by senior management. A child safeguarding policy should apply to all staff and partners and induction and training should be provided on expected standards of behaviour. Staff should know and understand the consequences of a breach of the code (see commitment 3).

10. Onward referral of complaints: Staff should be aware of how to handle complaints or allegations of abuse and where and how to refer people. In the case of criminal activity or contraventions of international law, liaison with the appropriate authorities will be necessary.

“There is a worry that if we complain we won’t receive any more assistance. That is why we want to be anonymous. ”

Community member Leyte, Philippines

Anonymous or malicious allegations

Some allegations may not satisfy the formal requirements of ‘complaints’ as they lack crucial information. However, failing to act when there is a suspicion of breach of policy or abuse may be a violation of an organisation’s duty of care. In such circumstances an initial investigation may be required to trace an allegation back to its source. There may be a victim or witness to talk to about the possibility of bringing a complaint or blowing the whistle.

A more difficult issue is how to deal with rumours, such as allegations that are common knowledge but have not been submitted as formal complaints. In some cases, potentially malicious (nasty or untrue) or unsubstantiated complaints may be made by people who feel angry or upset by something an organisation – or people the organisation is involved with – has done or not done.

They must be investigated sensitively and a response given or it is likely that the complainant will continue to undermine the work of the organisation. Anonymous and malicious complaints or rumours can sometimes give indications to an organisation that there are other issues that people wish to raise but may be reluctant or unable to bring up openly. These can be useful warning signals to an organisation.

Adapted from: CAFOD (2010) Complaints handling mechanisms: an implementation guide
***Links to key guidance***

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Commitment 6

Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian action is coordinated and complementary.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which communities and people perceive gaps and overlaps in the response.
2. Degree to which responding organisations share relevant information through formal and informal coordination mechanisms.
3. Degree to which responding organisations coordinate needs assessments, delivery of humanitarian aid and monitoring of its implementation.

Key actions

6.1 Identify the role, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different stakeholders\(^1\) (see guidance note 1 & 2).

6.2 Ensure humanitarian response complements that of national and local authorities\(^2\) and other humanitarian organisations (see guidance note 3).

6.3 Participate in relevant coordination bodies and collaborate with others in order to minimise demands on communities and maximise the coverage and service provision of the wider humanitarian effort (see guidance note 4).

6.4 Share necessary information with partners, coordination groups and other relevant local actors through appropriate communication channels (see guidance note 5).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

- Is information about the organisation’s competences, resources, areas and sectors of work shared with others responding to the crisis?
- Is information about the competences, resources, areas and sectors of work of other organisations, including local and national authorities, accessed?
- Have existing coordination structures been identified and supported?
- Are the programmes of other organisations and authorities taken into account when designing, planning and implementing programmes?
- Are gaps in coverage identified and addressed?

\(^1\) Including local actors, humanitarian organisations, local authorities, private companies and other relevant groups.

\(^2\) Where authorities are a party to the conflict, humanitarian actors should use their judgment vis-à-vis the independence of the action, keeping the interests of communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of their decision-making.
### Guidance notes for key actions

1. **Roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of stakeholders:**
   It is important to identify local authorities, civil society actors and networks involved in the response and encourage them and other local and international humanitarian agencies to participate in national and local coordination meetings and fora. Participation in coordination mechanisms before a disaster establishes relationships and enhances coordination during a response. The media, private sector and foreign and national military are increasingly part of the relief effort and therefore affect coordination efforts. The private sector can bring commercial efficiencies, complementary expertise and resources to humanitarian agencies. Information sharing is required to avoid duplication and to promote humanitarian good practice. Private humanitarian partnerships should ensure that there are explicit benefits for crisis-affected populations, whilst recognising that other agencies may have additional objectives. Where parallel coordination structures are created, there should be a clear strategy for linking with longer term coordination bodies.

2. **Working with the military:**
   The military bring particular expertise and resources, including security, logistics, transport and communication. However, in an armed conflict or high-risk environment, using the military to undertake humanitarian action becomes complex, especially if military actors are party to the conflict. Their activities can blur the important distinction between humanitarian objectives and military or political agendas and can create future security risks. Any association with the military should be in the service of, and led by, humanitarian agencies according to endorsed guidelines. Some agencies will maintain a minimum dialogue to ensure operational efficiency (e.g. basic programme information sharing) while others may establish stronger links (e.g. use of military assets). In all cases, humanitarian agencies must remain clearly distinct from the military to avoid any real or perceived association with a political or military agenda that could compromise the agencies’ neutrality, independence, credibility, security and access to affected populations.

3. **Complementary assistance:**
   It is the primary responsibility of the affected state to protect and assist its citizens and its role to coordinate the humanitarian response of assisting organisations. Humanitarian agencies have an essential role to play by supporting the state’s coordination function. Local organisations and civil society networks will also have a significant amount to contribute but may need support in re-establishing themselves following the effects of a disaster. In some contexts state authorities are themselves responsible for abuse and violations or their assistance is not impartial and alternative structures may be needed. Collaboration and, where possible, the sharing of resources and equipment optimise the capacity of communities, host governments, donors and humanitarian agencies with different mandates and expertise. For example, joint assessments, trainings and evaluations can help to break down the barriers between organisations and ensure a more coherent approach (see Christian Aid 2012).

4. **Coordination bodies:**
   Efforts must often be made to encourage coordination, as local actors may not participate if coordination mechanisms appear to be relevant only to themselves following the effects of a disaster. In some contexts state authorities are themselves responsible for abuse and violations or their assistance is not impartial and alternative structures may be needed. Collaboration and, where possible, the sharing of resources and equipment optimise the capacity of communities, host governments, donors and humanitarian agencies with different mandates and expertise. For example, joint assessments, trainings and evaluations can help to break down the barriers between organisations and ensure a more coherent approach (see Christian Aid 2012).

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“**There were people willing to help. The problem was there wasn’t good organisation – and that’s why the help didn’t get to where it was needed.**”

Flood affected woman in Tabasco, Mexico

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13 JSI Consultation Process: Voices from the field March 2013: http://intelligentmeasurement.net/2013/03/16/the-voices-of-affected-populations-in-evaluation/
international agencies. National and sub-national mechanisms will usually be required and clear reporting lines will need to be established. Meetings that bring together different sectors can enable people’s needs to be addressed as a whole, rather than in isolation (e.g. people’s shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and psychosocial needs are interrelated). In all coordination contexts, the commitment of agencies to participate will be affected by the quality of the coordination mechanisms and coordination leaders have a responsibility to ensure that meetings and information are well managed, efficient and results-orientated. The coordination body needs to determine the scope of its activities – what coordination actually means, and what members are committing to. A key coordination function is ensuring the application and adherence to standards and guidelines and achieving impact is only possible through collaborative working and mutual accountability. This can be done by reminding agencies of the need to adhere to not only technical standards but the core humanitarian standard as well and by ensuring that the example indicators for the CHS are adapted to the context and used to monitor and evaluate the response.

5. Sharing information: Sharing information (including financial information) between different stakeholders and also different coordination mechanisms ensures integrated coordination across all programmes and makes it more likely that gaps or duplication will be identified. It is important to respect the use of the local language(s) in meetings and in other shared communications and to examine any potential barriers to communication so that local stakeholders are enabled to participate. There may be a need to provide interpretation (spoken) and/or translation (written) facility. Care must be taken to speak clearly and avoid jargon and idioms, especially when other participants do not speak the same language. The location of meetings can also be a barrier to the participation of local actors.

Key organisational responsibilities

6.5 Policies and strategies include a clear commitment to coordination and collaboration with others, including national and local authorities, without compromising humanitarian principles (see guidance note 5).

6.6 Work with partners is governed by clear and consistent agreements that respect each partner’s mandate, obligations and independence and recognises their respective constraints and commitments (see guidance note 6).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities
• Is there a clear commitment in policies and/or strategies to work in collaboration with other actors?
• Are criteria or conditions for partner selection, collaboration and coordination established?
• Do partnership agreements include a shared commitment to humanitarian principles and standards?

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

6. Commitment to coordination and collaboration: An organisation that meets the standard, needs to ensure that the commitment to coordination is included in organisational policies and resourcing strategies. The organisation should provide a statement on how it will engage with partners, host authorities and other humanitarian, and where appropriate, non-humanitarian actors. Staff representing agencies in coordination meetings should have the appropriate information, skills and authority to contribute to planning and decision-making and coordination responsibilities should be clearly articulated in their job descriptions.

7. Working with partners: Both local and national organisations will engage or collaborate with partners and a clear and shared understanding of each other’s organisational mandate, mutual roles and responsibilities is needed if partnerships are to be effective and accountable. There may be different types of arrangements with partners, from purely contractual, through to the limited provision of capacity building and support to shared decision-making and shared resources. In most situations a partner organisation will have its own mandate and vision and will want to maintain its independence but there will always be opportunities for mutual learning and development and both parties stand to gain from the partnership.

“They helped everyone except the state – all the organisations were here with their satellite telephones but nobody offered us their telephones to use.”

Fednor Zidor, delegate of the southeast region

14 Group URD Three month evaluation of Haiti earthquake
## Links to key guidance

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Commitment 7

Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which people identify improvements to the assistance and protection over time.
2. Degree to which improvements have been made to assistance and protection as a result of learning generated in the current response.
3. Degree to which the assistance and protection provided reflect learning from other responses.

Why is this commitment important?

Learning from success and failure and applying these insights to modify and adapt current and future work is a cornerstone of accountability and quality management. A culture of learning and continual improvement should lie at the heart of a professional and committed organisation and is fundamental to ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. Constant interaction with service users is necessary so that changes and adaptations can be made as soon as possible.

Continual improvement is achieved through an effective monitoring and evaluation system that ensures regular reviews of the work, impact and effectiveness of the organisation and that identifies actions for improving current and future operations. This commitment also underlines the importance of sharing learning with other stakeholders, including affected communities and of using new ideas, approaches and technologies to achieve improved outcomes.

Key actions

7.1 Draw on lessons learnt and prior experience when designing programmes (see guidance note 1).
7.2 Learn, innovate and implement changes on the basis of monitoring, evaluation and feedback and complaints (see guidance note 2)
7.3 Share learning and innovation internally, with communities and people affected by crisis, and with other stakeholders (see guidance note 3).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

- Are evaluations and reviews of responses of similar crises consulted during programme design?
- Are monitoring, evaluation, feedback and complaints-handling processes leading to changes and/or innovations in programme design and implementation?
- Is learning systematically documented?
- What kind of actions and systems are used to share learning with relevant stakeholders?

“We have some good recommendations from evaluations, but what happens is that few people read them, and those that do are often the programme managers who tend to explain away the problems and call into question the evaluation methodology – and sometimes the evaluators themselves”

Nicholas van Praag, Director, Ground Truth
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Learning from experience:
   Different approaches and methods suit different performance, learning and accountability purposes. Learning should take account of failures as well as successes and agencies can arguably learn more from the former. Effective monitoring uses qualitative and quantitative data as required, draws on a variety of methods to triangulate data and maintains consistent records. Clarity about the intended use and users of the data should determine what is collected and how it is presented. Care must be taken not to collect data that is not analysed or used and to make monitoring systems as simple and accessible as possible, whilst recognising that information should be representative of different groups. The affected people are the best judges of changes in their lives and the use of open-ended listening and other participatory qualitative approaches, as well as quantitative methods, should be encouraged. Learning should also be shared and discussed with communities. The information from feedback and complaints mechanisms should be reviewed when evaluating a programme. A realistic and agreed action plan can help to ensure that evaluation and review recommendations are followed up. (See ALNAP 2009, 2013 & Groupe URD 2009 and Sphere 2015.)

2. Innovation and change:
   In recent years there has been a greater focus on the use of innovative approaches, methods and tools for solving some of the challenges in humanitarian response. Funding streams have been made available to agencies wishing to develop new and creative ideas such as the use of new technologies for sanitation and cash-based programming or greater use of digital tools and media. Affected populations have also always been innovative in adapting to changing circumstances and support could be given to involve them in a more systematic process of innovation and development.

3. Collaboration and sharing of lessons:
   In the interests of transparency and programme effectiveness, information from monitoring should be regularly shared with the affected population. Monitoring carried out by the population itself can further enhance transparency and quality and encourages people’s ownership of the information. Collaborative learning with other agencies and academic bodies is a professional obligation and can introduce fresh perspectives and ideas and maximises the use of limited resources. Peer learning exercises have been used by a variety of organisations and can be undertaken to monitor progress in real time or as a reflective exercise post-emergency. Any information collected through monitoring and evaluation should be analysed and presented in a brief accessible format that facilitates sharing and decision-making. Short summaries, briefing papers, meetings or films can help to make information and knowledge more accessible. Care should be taken to ensure that any information that is shared does not compromise confidentiality or put people at risk.

The challenges to learning

What inhibits the sector from learning from past experience and applying lessons? Some of the key issues have already been mentioned in this report: high staff turnover, insufficient personal accountability and loss of institutional memory, the lack of feedback from crisis-affected populations, the difficulty staffing programmes with the right people in rapid onset emergencies, and also in some more demanding, long-lasting complex emergencies. Other issues are more specific. One obstacle is that because reporting is primarily donor-oriented and takes place in the midst of intense competition for humanitarian funding, aid organisations may be unwilling to admit failure or examine adverse impacts for fear of discontinued funding. Thus, mistakes are covered up or glossed over in reports, focusing instead on outputs and neglecting outcomes or impact.


“NGOs who are doing the distribution should do it differently. We have pregnant women here and the distribution methods are not appropriate for them. They have to stand in line. Also certain women, to get a ticket to access food are forced to sleep with some men who give out the tickets.”

Local resident speaking to the Groupe URD evaluation team following the Haiti earthquake in 2010

15 Taken from Groupe URD: http://vimeo.com/15198053
Key organisational responsibilities

7.4 Evaluation and learning policies are in place, and means are available to learn from experiences and improve practices (see guidance note 4).

7.5 Mechanisms exist to record and make accessible knowledge and experience throughout the organisation (see guidance note 5).

7.6 The organisation contributes to peer and sector learning and innovation in humanitarian response (see guidance note 6).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

- Do policies and resources exist for evaluation and learning? Are they known to staff?
- Does clear guidance exist on recording and dissemination of learning, including specific guidance applicable to humanitarian crises?
- Is learning identified at programme level documented and shared within the organisation and beyond?
- Is the organisation an active member of learning and innovation fora? How does the organisation contribute to such fora?

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

4. Evaluation and learning policies: Key lessons and areas identified for improvement are not always addressed systematically and lessons cannot be classed as ‘learned’ unless they bring about demonstrable changes in current or subsequent responses.

Using peer monitors for remote programme management

Working in insecure environments brings specific challenges where senior management staff cannot carry out field visits. This has implications for meeting quality and accountability standards and increases the risks and pressures on local project staff. Tearfund has been working with peer monitors. This builds on collaborative relationships between humanitarian organisations in a specific location. This involves the personnel from one organisation carrying out monitoring visits to another agency’s project to monitor whether aid is getting to the intended people.

Source: Tearfund (2013) Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments

Using the results of evaluations

If the humanitarian system is to progress, greater attention to the findings and recommendations within evaluations is needed. The industry spends considerable resources conducting evaluations to improve learning, but all too often reports end up on shelves or on websites without being translated into improved practice. This is especially true with joint evaluations, where oftentimes the diffusion of responsibility for the uptake of recommendations leads to poor follow-through. The sector needs to become better at institutionalising processes for learning lessons, and putting the plethora of findings and recommendations from evaluations into practice. These efforts are otherwise a waste of time and resources.


It is important that learning is shared effectively and appropriately and that there are clear ways in which it can be translated into improved actions. In its learning cycle, an organisation should include a review and improvement plan for its performance. All staff should understand their responsibilities in relation to monitoring the progress of their work. They also need to understand how learning can contribute to their own personal development.

5. Knowledge management and organisational learning: Knowledge management involves collecting, developing, sharing, storing and effectively using organisational knowledge and learning. Organisational learning should lead to practical changes such as improved strategies for carrying out assessments, or the reorganisation of teams to ensure a faster and more cohesive response or clearer articulation of decision-making responsibilities. Longer-term national staff are often key to preserving local knowledge and relationships. Organisations also need to learn about and improve value for money (see Bond 2012).

6. Peer and sector learning:
Some models of learning emphasise the importance of collaboration within and between organisations. The creation of networks and communities of practice (including the involvement of academia) and opportunities to learn from peer groups – both in the field and in ‘after action reviews’ or learning forums can make an important contribution to organisational practice and development and system-wide learning. The amount of evidence that is available across the sector is much greater than that which is available to any single organisation and therefore economies of scale can be achieved through system-wide learning activities. There is also good research suggesting that inter-organisational processes are more likely to catalyse organisational change than intra-organisational ones.
### Links to key guidance

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<td>Centre for creative leaderships &amp; PIA (2011)</td>
<td>How to use a coach parts 1-3</td>
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<th>Bond (2012) Value for money and what it means for NGOs Bond: London</th>
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Commitment 8

Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.

Quality criterion: Staff 16 are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree to which staff and volunteers feel supported by their organisation to do their work.
2. Degree to which staff and volunteers satisfactorily meet their performance objectives.
3. Degree to which affected communities and people perceive staff to be effective.

Why is this commitment important?

The actions of staff are the foundation of each of the 9 commitments and the basis for an effective response. An organisation’s capacity to recruit, train and manage staff and volunteers is at the heart of adherence to the core humanitarian standard. Staff related costs are often the largest proportion of an organisation’s costs and of most programme budgets and such investments should be carefully nurtured if they are to yield the best outcomes for crisis-affected populations.

This commitment recognises the primary importance of managing people well. It relates to staff support and the organisation’s duty of care towards its staff – especially in relation to security and wellbeing. The development of staff competencies, skills, attitudes and behaviour is also vital, as is the adherence to organisational policies and codes of conduct. Responsibilities related to staff are also included in the other eight commitments.

Key actions

8.1 Staff work according to the mandate and values of the organisation and to agreed objectives and performance standards (see guidance note 1 - 3).
8.2 Staff adhere to the policies that are relevant to them and understand the consequences of not adhering to them (see guidance note 2).
8.3 Staff develop and use the necessary personal, technical and management competencies to fulfill their role and understand how the organisation can support them to do this (see guidance note).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

• How are the organisation’s mandate and values communicated to new staff in the response?
• How is staff performance managed? How is under-performance addressed?
• Do staff sign a code of conduct? If so, do they receive orientation on this and other relevant policies?
• Are complaints received about staff? How are they handled?
• Are staff aware of and accessing support for developing the competences required by their role?

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16 Staff are: any designated representative of the organisation, including national, international, permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants.
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Staff and volunteers:
Staff are considered as any designated representative of the organisation, including national, international, permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants. However, different terms and conditions apply to different types and levels of staff. National employment law will often dictate the status of an individual working for the organisation and such laws must be respected. All staff members must be made aware of their legal and organisational status.

2. Adhering to organisational mandates, values and policies:
Staff are expected to work within the legal scope, mission and vision of the organisation, which should be defined and communicated to them. The values of an organisation typically define how it works and what behaviour it expects of its staff and these too, should be well communicated and reinforced. Beyond this wider understanding of the role and ways of working of the organisation, an individual should work to a set of personal objectives and the performance expectations set by their manager. Whilst the organisation should make policies easily accessible, staff members must apply the relevant policies and accept the consequences if policies are not followed. The need for inductions and training relating to the organisational mandate, policies and codes of conduct will apply also to the large scale, rapid recruitment of staff and will require that experienced staff are available to provide inductions, on the job training and support.

3. Performance standards and development of competencies:
Staff are mutually accountable for their own development. With the help of clear objectives and performance standards, they should understand what skills, competencies and knowledge are required to deliver their current role and what opportunities for growth and development might be available to them. Competencies can be improved through experience, training, mentoring or coaching. In the early phase of a disaster, opportunities for formal staff development may be limited but managers should provide a minimum induction and on the job training. There are various methods that can be used to assess people’s skills and behaviours, including observation, reviewing work output, interviewing colleagues and discussions with the staff member themselves. Regular documented performance appraisals should allow managers to identify areas for support and training (see CBHA in resources section).

Staff resilience

“The most stressful events in humanitarian work have to do with the organisational culture, management style, or operational objectives of an NGO or agency rather than external security risks or poor environmental factors. Aid workers, basically, have a pretty shrewd idea of what they are getting into when they enter this career, and dirty clothes, gun shots at night and lack of electricity do not surprise them. Inter- and intra-agency politics, inconsistent management styles, lack of team work and unclear or conflicting organisational objectives, however, combine to create a background of chronic stress and pressure that over time wears people down and can lead to burnout or even physical collapse” (John Fawcett)
The above quote is taken from a ‘People In Aid’ report that goes on to say that the published research to date supports this assertion.

Taken from: People In Aid (2011) Building Resilient Managers in Humanitarian Organisations

“Aid agencies could give more motivation to community agents and facilitators … they [aid agency] should tell all their staff that they do a good job … [community agents] should be supported in the job they do!”

Community members from rural areas around Leogane, Haiti
Key organisational responsibilities

8.4 The organisation has the management and staff capacity and capability to deliver its programmes (see guidance note 4).

8.5 Staff policies and procedures are fair, transparent and non-discriminatory and compliant with local employment law (see guidance note 5).

8.6 Job descriptions, work objectives and feedback processes are in place to ensure that staff have a clear understanding of what is required of them (see guidance note 6).

8.7 A staff code of conduct is in place that establishes, at a minimum, the obligation not to exploit or abuse people (see guidance note 7).

8.8 Policies are in place to support staff to improve their skills and competencies (see guidance note 6).

8.9 Policies are in place for the security and the wellbeing of staff (see guidance note 8).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

• Are procedures in place for assessing human resource needs in relation to programme size and scope?

• Do staff policies and procedures comply with local employment law and follow recognised good practice in managing humanitarian staff?

• Do all staff have updated job descriptions and objectives, including specific responsibilities and objectives related to the crisis?

• Are performance management and staff development policies and procedures clear?

• Are all staff provided with an induction and updates on performance management and staff development policies and procedures?

• Does a code of conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse exist? Are all staff and contractors required to sign it?

• Are all staff and contractors provided with an appropriate induction on the code of conduct for prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse?

• Does the organisation have a security policy and guidelines? Do they include provisions for context-specific guidelines in all locations of operation? Are they known to staff?

Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

4. Management and staff capacity:
People management systems will depend on each agency and context but should be considered and planned at a strategic level with the support of senior management. Organisation and project plans must take into account staff capacity to ensure that the right numbers of staff, with the right skills are in the right place at the right time to deliver short- and long-term organisational objectives. This does not mean to suggest that organisations must only undertake a project if they have managed to assemble all the necessary resources and expertise at the start but it does underline the importance of organisation-wide preparedness (involving operations, HR, finance and other functions) to agree how the resources are to be mobilised. Organisations also need to plan in advance how they will address peaks in demand for qualified staff. Country level roles and responsibilities will also need to be clarified, as will internal decision-making responsibilities and communication.

5. Staff policies and procedures:
The style and complexity of staff policies and procedures will depend on the size and context of each agency. However simple or complex they may be, staff should participate in the development and review of policies where possible to ensure that their views are represented. Local labour laws must be understood and respected and organisational policy and practice should promote the role of national staff at management and leadership level to ensure continuity, institutional memory, and more context appropriate responses. An effective response is not simply about ensuring skilled staff and will also depend

17 Jean, I. with Bonino, F. (2014) ‘We are here’: IFRC’s experiences of communication with and feedback to affected populations in Haiti. ALNAP/CDA case study. London: ODI/ALNAP.
on the way that individuals are managed. Research from emergency contexts shows that effective management, frameworks and procedures are as important as, or more important than, personal skills in ensuring an effective response. Staff must be trained in how to apply standard operating procedures as this allows for higher levels of delegation and faster responses.

6. Managing and developing staff:
Job descriptions should make clear what is expected of each member of staff and should be kept up to date. In addition, each staff member should identify individual objectives that cover their work aspirations and the competencies they hope to develop or improve. Staff competencies are the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that individuals develop in the course of their working life. Staff capacity considers how these individual competencies work together to achieve organisational objectives. Focusing on competency and capacity development can motivate staff and lead to greater effectiveness. The organisation should have mechanisms for reviewing staff performance and assessing capacity gaps as well as a strategy for developing competencies and capacity. Performance review schedules must be flexible enough to cover staff who only work short-term as well as those who are on open-ended contracts. The organisation should agree with its partners on the competencies required for staff to meet the agreed commitments.

7. Developing codes of conduct:
It is paramount that the organisation’s code of conduct is understood, signed, and upheld, making it clear to all representatives of the organisation (including staff, volunteers, partners and contractors) what standards of behaviour are expected from them and what the consequences will be if they breach the code. The code of conduct should also include prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse (see commitment 3) and sexual harassment of staff.

Global organisations
For organisations working in more than one country, it is important to have a global philosophy for human resource management and consistency in the application of policies. It is vital to ensure that policies take into account the local legal and cultural context; the ideal approach is “think globally, act locally”. In this way local staff are empowered to develop and implement policies that remain consistent with the rest of the organisation.

Adapted from: People In Aid (2003) Code of Good Practice

Good practice suggestions for staff wellbeing
- Security procedures and evacuation plans should be regularly reviewed.
- Records of work-related injuries, sickness, accidents and fatalities, should be maintained and monitored to help assess and reduce future risk.
- Work plans should not require more hours work than are set out in individual contracts but where unavoidable, provision should be made for adequate rest and recuperation.
- Time off and leave periods should be based on written policies that are clear and made known to all staff.
- All staff should have the opportunity to discuss their deployment (what they have achieved and any problems they have encountered).

“I’ve seen so many people burn out because they can’t balance work and life, and they can’t balance their emotions about this work.”

Field staff member

8. Staff security and wellbeing: Aid workers often work long hours in risky and stressful conditions. An agency’s duty of care to its workers includes actions to promote wellbeing and avoid long-term exhaustion, burnout, injury or illness. Managers must make aid workers aware of the risks and protect them from exposure to unnecessary threats to their physical and emotional health through, for example, effective security management, preventative health advice, active support to work reasonable hours and access to psychological support when required. Managers can promote a duty of care through modelling good practice and personally complying with policy. Aid workers also need to take personal responsibility for managing their wellbeing. Psychosocial support should be immediately available to workers who have experienced or witnessed extremely distressing events.
### Links to key guidance

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<tr>
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<td><strong>People In Aid &amp; Interhealth (2009) Approaches to staff care in international NGOs</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/staffcareinternationalngos">www.peopleinaid.org/resources/staffcareinternationalngos</a></td>
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<td><strong>Debriefing: building staff capacity</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/debriefingstaffcapacity">http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/debriefingstaffcapacity</a></td>
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**A charge is made for the following resources**

- **HR manual**
  - http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/hrmanualdownload

- **Staff engagement survey**
  - http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/employeesurvey

- **HR audit**
  - http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/hraudittoolkit
Commitment 9

Organisations use resources efficiently and effectively for their intended purpose.

Quality criterion: Resources are managed and used responsibly.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Degree of awareness in affected communities and people about community-level budgets, expenditure and results achieved.
2. Degree of satisfaction by the community and affected people that resources are being used:
   • For what they were intended
   • Without diversion or wastage
3. Degree to which resources obtained for the response are used and monitored according to agreed plans, budgets and timeframes.
4. Degree to which ‘value for money’ is achieved.

Key actions

9.1 Design programmes and implement processes that ensure the efficient use of resources\(^{18}\), balancing quality, cost and timeliness at each phase of the response (see guidance note 1).
9.2 Manage and use resources to achieve the intended purpose, minimising waste (see guidance note 2).
9.3 Monitor and report expenditure against budget (see guidance note 3).
9.4 When using local and natural resources, consider their impact on the environment (see guidance note 4).
9.5 Manage the risk of corruption and take appropriate action if it is identified (see guidance note 5).

Guiding questions for monitoring key actions

• Are staff following organisational protocols for decisions regarding expenditure?
• Is expenditure monitored regularly and the reports shared across programme management?
• Are services and goods procured using a rapid competitive bidding process?
• Are potential impacts on the environment monitored, and actions taken to mitigate them?
• Is a safe whistleblowing procedure in place and is known to staff, communities, people and other stakeholders?
• Are cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness monitored?

Why is this commitment important?

Resources are finite and need to be used with care. Being accountable is intrinsically linked with being responsible for the effective and efficient use of resources donated to and managed by the organisation. Crisis-affected populations bear the true costs of mismanagement, negligence or corruption so it is vital that organisations use resources wisely and honestly in order to ensure maximum impact.

This commitment relates to the responsible and transparent management of financial, material, human and environmental resources. It emphasises the importance of using such resources in the most cost-effective ways possible, reducing, reusing and recycling waste and being mindful of the future sustainability of environmental resources and the implications this can have for crisis-affected populations. Preventing fraud and corruption are also important dimensions.
Guidance notes for key actions

1. Efficient use of resources:
   In high profile, acute emergencies, there is often the pressure to spend large amounts of money quickly and to demonstrate that agencies are doing something to address the situation. This can lead to poor project planning and insufficient emphasis on exploring different potential programme and financial options that may offer better value for money. In rapid onset emergencies it may be necessary to adapt the organisation’s controls and procedures to enable faster financial decision-making and to cope with challenges in the humanitarian context, e.g. the lack of available suppliers to carry out competitive tenders. However, the higher risks of corruption in humanitarian contexts mean it is important to provide training and support to staff as well as complaint mechanisms to prevent adapted systems being open to corruption. Deploying experienced senior staff during this time can help to mitigate the risks and ensure that the balance is struck between providing a timely response that also maintains standards and limits waste. Collaboration and coordination between organisations can also contribute to a more efficient response e.g. by conducting joint assessments or evaluations and supporting inter-agency registration and logistics systems. At the end of the project, the assets and resources that remain will need to be donated, sold or returned and this will need to be thought through carefully to ensure that this is not done irresponsibly.

2. Using resources for their intended purpose:
   Aid organisations aim to support communities affected by crisis by protecting their health, restoring their livelihoods and keeping them safe. They act on behalf of their donors and supporters and are therefore responsible for the money and resources that are provided to them for this purpose. All humanitarian actors are accountable to both donors and affected communities and should be able to demonstrate that resources have been used wisely, efficiently and to good effect. Fraud, corruption and waste, divert such resources away from those who need them most. However, an intervention that is not effective because it is under-staffed or under-resourced cannot be said to be accountable, and economical does not always equal value for money. A balance will often need to be struck between economy, effectiveness and efficiency. Aid should also not be diverted to support terrorist activities and many donors impose vetting systems to mitigate this risk.

3. Monitoring and reporting on expenditure:
   Financial management is an important aspect of programme management and good quality financial planning and monitoring systems are crucial to ensuring that aid was somehow misused or redirected, or that outsiders were not responsible and trustworthy.”

Listening Project Report, Cambodia

Responsible use of environmental resources

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan, which began in 2004, is closely linked with deforestation and desertification. Deforestation is mainly caused in places where firewood is used as fuel for cooking stoves and kilns (ovens used for brick production). The humanitarian crisis has exacerbated this problem due to an exponential increase in construction needs. Brick manufacturing also uses a significant amount of soil and water, adding to the destruction of agricultural land and limiting water supplies further. When these negative effects were identified, humanitarian actors looked for alternative ways to produce bricks. Many projects now use stabilized soil blocks made by mixing compacted earth with a stabilizer such as cement or lime, which makes them about 30 per cent cheaper to produce. And because they are dried in the sun, there is no need to use firewood as fuel. Other environmentally conscious initiatives include using fuel-efficient stoves, using alternative construction materials for latrines, such as concrete slabs instead of wood, and including tree planting in early recovery projects.

Adapted from: UNEP/OCHA (2014) Environment and Humanitarian Action Factsheet

Villagers consistently expressed disappointment with outsiders for taking their time to ask questions and even make promises, only to never return or provide the promised aid. This contributed to speculations that aid was somehow misused or redirected, or that outsiders were not responsible and trustworthy.”

Listening Project Report, Cambodia

19 "Resources" should be understood in its broader sense, encompassing 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.

18 CDA (2012) Time to Listen Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid authors: Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown & Isabella Jean
programme objectives are met. Systems and procedures should be in place to mitigate key financial management risks and to track all financial transactions. Key risks that require specific skills and systems to mitigate are procurement, cash-transfer programming and stock management. Accounting records should satisfy accepted national and/or international standards and should be applied systematically within the organisation. All staff members have some responsibility for ensuring that finances are well managed but it is important to have people who are especially designated with the task of compiling financial reports. Staff should be encouraged to report any suspected fraud, corruption or misuse of resources (see Mango 2010).

4. Environmental impact and use of natural resources: Humanitarian responses can have negative impacts on the environment, producing large amounts of waste, degrading natural resources and contributing to the depletion or contamination of the water table, deforestation and other environmental hazards. A rapid environmental impact assessment (REA) can help to determine the risks and makes it more likely that mitigation measures are put in place. Involving affected communities and their concerns in this process is key and support for the local management of natural resources should be integrated into programming (see URD/UNEP toolkit).

5. Managing corruption risks: Corruption can be defined as ‘the abuse of entrusted power for private gain’. This includes financial corruption such as fraud (see below), bribery, extortion and receiving kickbacks (illicit payments in return for facilitating transactions or contacts with influential people). Exchanging relief goods in return for sexual favours, preferential treatment of friends or relatives when recruiting or providing assistance and the manipulation of distribution lists and diversion of resources are also forms of corruption. Not all of these may be understood as corrupt practices by all cultures and a clear definition of the behaviour that is expected of staff (including volunteers) and partners is fundamental in addressing this risk (see commitment 8). Being more open and transparent with project information, encouraging stakeholders to report abuses of power and careful on-site monitoring can also help to reduce corruption risks.

Whilst it is important to have robust systems in place to counter corruption, in the early stages of an acute emergency, it may be necessary to have more flexible controls in place for a limited amount of time (see Transparency International 2014).

Key organisational responsibilities
9.6 Policies and procedures governing the use and management of resources are in place, including how the organisation:

a. Accepts and allocates funds and gifts in kind ethically and legally (see guidance note 6);
b. Uses its resources in an environmentally responsible way (see guidance note 7);
c. Prevents and addresses corruption, fraud, conflict of interests and misuse of resources (see guidance notes 8 & 9);
d. Conducts audits verifies compliance and reports transparently (see guidance note 10);
e. Assesses, manages and mitigates risk on an ongoing basis (see guidance note 11); and
f. Ensures that the acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence (see guidance note 6).

Guiding questions for monitoring organisational responsibilities

• Do policies and procedures exist for ethical procurement, use and management of resources?

• Do these include provisions for:
  • Acceptance and allocation of funds
  • Acceptance and allocation of gifts in kind
  • Mitigation and prevention of environmental impacts
  • Fraud prevention, handling of suspected and proven corruption, and misuse of resources
  • Conflicts of interest
  • Auditing, verification and reporting
  • Asset risk assessment and management

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20 Transparency International
21 Climate outreach and information network (2013) Moving stories; The voices of people who move in the context of environmental change
Guidance notes for key organisational responsibilities

6. Funding and gifts in kind: Funding criteria and sources of funding should be documented and open to public scrutiny. The use of some funding sources could compromise the operational independence and impartiality of an organisation and efforts should be made to mitigate such risks by producing guidance for staff and encouraging transparency. Gifts in kind may also create ethical dilemmas. Giving gifts in many cultures is seen as an important social norm and refusing a gift would appear rude. If receiving the gift causes a sense of indebtedness then the receiver should politely refuse it but if it is accepted then it is wise to declare this and discuss with a manager if concerns remain. Staff should be made aware of such policies and possible dilemmas (see Transparency International 2014).

7. Environmentally responsible organisations: Organisations should commit to environmentally sound policies and practices and should make use of the existing guidelines to help address environmental issues in an emergency. Green procurement policies can help to reduce the impact on the environment. The process of selecting a greener product or service should be managed in a way that does not delay the provision of assistance but that is still mindful of the environment.

8. Corruption and fraud: Fraud includes the theft or diversion of goods or property or the falsification of records such as expense claims. Every organisation must keep an accurate record of financial transactions that take place to show how funds have been used. Systems and procedures need to be set up to ensure internal control of financial resources and to prevent fraud and corruption. Recognised good practice in financial management and reporting should be supported by the organisation. Organisational policies should also ensure that procurement systems are transparent and robust and incorporate counter-terrorism measures (see Transparency International 2014).

9. Conflicts of interest: Staff must ensure that there is no conflict between the aims of the organisation and their own personal or financial interests. For example they must not award contracts to suppliers, organisations or individuals where they or their family stands to gain financially. There are various forms of conflict of interest and people do not always recognise that they are contravening organisational codes and policies. Using the organisation’s resources without permission or taking gifts from a supplier might be construed as a conflict of interest. Creating a culture where people feel that they can openly discuss and declare any potential or actual conflicts is key to managing them (see CCIC 2008).

Example challenges and dilemmas in preventing corruption

Some humanitarian organisations are reluctant to discuss corruption openly for fear of damage to their organisational reputation and fundraising ability, particularly among the general public. They think (mistakenly) that ‘zero tolerance’ of corruption must mean ‘zero discussion’ of it. Similarly, corruption is often not transparently reported owing to fear of donor sanctions. Yet acknowledging publicly the corruption risks often inevitable in the challenging environments of humanitarian operations does not mean condoning corruption. Instead it lays the basis for proactive strategies to prevent it. A transparent, proactive approach to reporting and discussing corruption leads to more robust anti-corruption strategies, which strengthen organisational credibility, pre-empt media scandals and reassure individual and institutional donors.

While maximum transparency by humanitarian agencies is to be encouraged, the highly volatile environments in which aid is often delivered means it’s important to recognise that public information about the value of programme resources and their transport may sometimes jeopardise staff and beneficiary security, particularly in conflict contexts. In such cases, security takes priority.

Taken from: Transparency International (2014) Handbook of good practices: Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Organisations

Risk Management in responding to drought

The most dangerous risks are those with high impact and high probability; these are the risks that should be prioritised for action, and require the closest attention.

It would have been clear from around January 2011 that the high probability of poor March–May rains in the Horn of Africa, magnified by the failure of the previous rains in late 2010, would constitute a critical risk that needed to be addressed immediately.

The Government of Kenya has explicitly recognised that response is reactive and dominated by crisis management, rather than anticipatory and focused on preventive risk management. The principles of risk reduction and management are well accepted in other fields, such as insurance (where paying money upfront is regarded as a responsible approach to prevent high losses in the event of a crisis) and public vaccination campaigns (to prevent epidemics and reduce medical costs). These principles must be embedded in short-term emergency response, longer-term development work and government investment programmes.

10. Auditing and transparency:
Audits can take several forms – internal audits check that procedures are being followed; external audits verify whether the organisation’s financial statements are true and fair. An investigative audit is carried out when an organisation suspects a specific problem - usually fraud. Independently audited accounts carried out by external auditors every year provide some measure of guarantee against fraud and the misuse of funds. Audited accounts and other regular financial reports should be published transparently and be communicated in accessible ways to both staff and communities.

11. Risk management: This entails identifying, assessing and prioritising risks, and then identifying strategies to reduce, monitor, and control them. The risks that incur the greatest loss and the greatest probability of happening are handled first.

Links to key guidance

**URD/UNEP Environment training toolkit**
http://postconflict.unep.ch/humanitarianaction/training.html

**FRAME toolkit**
http://www.unhcr.org/4a97d1039.html

**OCHA & UNEP (2014) Environment and Humanitarian action factsheet**

**Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit (2014) Environment and humanitarian action; Increasing Effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability**
http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/topics/environment

**Mango (2013) Top Tips for financial governance**
http://www.mango.org.uk/toptips/tt20gov

http://www.mango.org.uk/guide/coursehandbook

**Mango also has a searchable online guide covering all aspects of financial management for NGOs**
http://www.mango.org.uk/guide

**Bond (2012) Value for money and what it means for NGOs Bond: London**
http://www.bond.org.uk/effectiveness/value-for-money

**CCIC (2008) Practical Introduction to Managing Conflict of Interest Situations**
http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/staffmanagingconflict

**Transparency International (2014) Preventing corruption in humanitarian operations authors: Roslyn Hees, Marie-Luise Ahlendorf and Stephanie Debere**
http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/handbook_of_good_practices_preventing_corruption_in_humanitarian_operations

**URD/ALNAP (2014) Quality in Humanitarian Actions: Thinking Ahead Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid Key messages**
http://www.alnap.org/resource/19181
Annex 1

Terms and definitions used

For the purposes of the CHS guidance notes, the following definitions apply:

**Accountability**: the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power.

**Audit**: a systematic examination of data, statements, records, or systems with the aim of identifying weaknesses or areas for improvement. A financial audit is usually an independent examination of an organisation’s accounts.

**Civil society**: citizens who are linked by common interests and collective activity but excluding for-profit private sector organisations. Civil society can be informal, or organised into NGOs or other associations.

**Climate change adaptation**: climate change pushes at-risk people beyond their capacity to cope and makes more people vulnerable to the effects of disasters. Climate change adaptation relates to interventions that seek to identify, reduce and manage risks associated with more frequent, severe and unpredictable weather events.

**Code of conduct**: a statement of principles and values that establishes a set of expectations and standards for how an organisation, government body, or partner will behave, including minimal levels of behaviour expected and any disciplinary action that could follow non-compliance.

**Communities and people affected by crisis**: the totality of women, men, girls and boys with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are affected by disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises at a specific location.

**Competencies**: are the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that staff need in order to be effective in their roles, and that ultimately determine an organisation’s success.

**Complaint**: is a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by an organisation’s action or who believes that an organisation has failed to meet a stated commitment.

**Corruption**: is ‘the abuse of entrusted power for private gain’. It involves dishonest or fraudulent behaviour that exploits a position of power to enrich an individual or group.

**Crisis-affected people**: are all those affected by or prone to disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises at a specific location. An organisation might not aim to assist all people affected by a crisis, as explained above.

**Disaster risk reduction**: aims to identify and address risks caused by both climate (e.g. drought, floods and landslides) and non-climate related disasters (earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis).

**Document**: any form of record of discussions, agreements, decisions and/or actions that is reproducible.

**Duty of care**: a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety of others. It entails meeting recognised minimum standards for the wellbeing of crisis-affected people, and paying proper attention to their safety and the safety of staff.

**Effectiveness**: the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. The effectiveness of humanitarian response is a responsibility that is shared between responders and outcomes should be assessed in conjunction with crisis-affected communities.

**Efficiency**: the extent to which the outputs of humanitarian programmes, both qualitative and quantitative, are achieved as a result of inputs.

**Engagement**: the processes by which organisations communicate, consult and/or provide for the participation of interested and/or affected stakeholders, ensuring that their concerns, desires, expectations, needs, rights and opportunities are considered in the establishment, implementation and review of the programmes assisting them.

**Entitlement**: refers to a right to benefits (good or services) specified especially by law or contract.

**Evaluation**: is usually an episodic assessment of performance, focused on results (outcomes and impacts) and may be internal or external. Evaluation can provide assessments of what works and why, highlights intended and unintended results for accountability and learning purposes.

**Evidence**: information on which a judgment or conclusion can be based. In humanitarian work many different sorts of evidence are used including subjective and qualitative information. Qualitative information is not necessarily information of a lower quality than quantitative information. ALNAP (2013) use six criteria to judge the quality of evidence used in humanitarian action: “accuracy; representativeness; relevance; quantitative information. ALNAP (2013) use six criteria to judge the quality of evidence used in humanitarian action: “accuracy; representativeness; relevance; generalisability; attribution; and clarity around context and methods”

**Feedback**: A formal system established and used to allow recipients of humanitarian action (and in some cases other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience of a humanitarian agency or of the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action in improving some element of the response.24

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22 Transparency International
Fraud: is the act of intentionally deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political or otherwise). This is usually considered as a violation of civil law.

 Gifts in kind: covers any goods and services (rather than money) received by an organisation as a donation. The purpose of gifts in kind is to assist an organisation in carrying out the purpose for which it was organised.

 Hazard (and risk): something that has the potential to cause adverse effects such as an earthquake or an epidemic. A risk is the likelihood of harm occurring from that hazard and the potential losses to lives, livelihoods, assets and services.

 Humanitarian Country Team (HCT): a strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum established and led by the HC. Composition includes representatives from the UN, IOM, international NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Agencies that are also designated Cluster leads should represent the Clusters as well as their respective organisations. The HCT is responsible for agreeing on common strategic issues related to humanitarian action.

 Humanitarian action: action taken with the objective of saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and after human-induced crises and natural disasters, as well as action to prevent and prepare for them.

 Informed consent: agreeing to an action based on a clear understanding of the facts, implications and consequences of the action.

 Integrity: involves behaviours and actions consistent with a set of moral or ethical principles and standards.

 Monitoring: Monitoring is an ongoing process of data collection, focused on inputs and outputs and it is usually internal.

 Mutual accountability: is a process by which two (or multiple) partners agree to be held responsible for the commitments that they have voluntarily made to each other.

 Organisation: an entity that has the management structure and power to apply the CHS.

 Partners: organisations working jointly within a formal arrangement to achieve a specific goal, with clear and agreed roles and responsibilities.

 Participation: involves enabling crisis-affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence.

 Policy: a documented statement of intent and rules for decision-making.

 Practice: refers to established actions or ways of proceeding and is often guided by policies and procedures.

 Private sector: primarily comprises for-profit institutions i.e. businesses, but includes social enterprises where the primary aim is not profit and where profits might be reinvested in social causes. Private sector engagement refers to all types of involvement from acting as a supplier, donor or advisor or innovator to businesses carrying out humanitarian response.

 Protection: all activities aimed at ensuring the full and equal respect for the rights of all individuals, regardless of age, gender, ethnic, social, religious or other background. It goes beyond the immediate life-saving activities that are often the focus during an emergency.

 Quality: the totality of features and characteristics of humanitarian assistance that support its ability to, in time, satisfy stated or implied needs and expectations, and respect the dignity of the people it aims to assist.

 Resilience: the ability of a community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner.

 Sexual exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. (UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) (ST/SGB/2003/13))

 Sexual abuse: means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. (UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) (ST/SGB/2003/13))

 Sexual harassment: refers to unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace that can include indecent remarks or sexual demands.

 Staff: any designated representative of an organisation, including national, international, and permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants.

 Stakeholder: anybody who can affect or is affected by an organisation, strategy or project.

 Surge capacity: relates to the ability of an agency to scale-up quickly and to respond to large-scale crises.

 Psychological debriefing: a formal debriefing process that encourages participants to relive distressing or traumatic events. This has been found at best not to work and at worst to cause more harm. This should not be confused with psychological first aid or counselling that aim to listen to people’s concerns and allow them to talk through issues if they want to.

 Transparency: refers to openness, honesty and communication. An activity, project or organisation is transparent if information about it is open and freely available to the public.

 Vulnerability: some people may be disproportionately affected by the disruption of their physical environment and social support mechanisms following disaster or conflict and may be more at risk of exploitation, illness or death. Vulnerability is specific to each person and each situation.

 Whistleblowing: when a member of staff reports suspected wrongdoing at work. This may cover the suspicion of fraud or misuse of resources, neglect of duties or when someone’s health and safety is in danger.

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### Annex 2

**Areas of convergence of issues covered in the guidance notes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Key Dimensions</th>
<th>Convergence</th>
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</table>
| C1          | Assessment, gender and diversity, impartiality, disaggregated data | C3 Assessing local capacity  
C4 Participation, sharing information |
| C2          | Timeliness, coverage, sector specific best practice, decision-making | C3 Safety and vulnerability  
C4 Participation  
C6 Coordination & collaboration, decision-making  
C7 Assessing performance, monitoring & evaluation processes |
| C3          | Strengthening local and national capacity to respond to disasters, preparedness, resilience, protection, do no harm, capacity building, safeguarding personal information | C4 Safeguarding information  
C5 Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse  
C6 Coordination with government & local partners  
C7 Learning and capacity  
C8 Codes of conduct  
Capacity building  
C9 Managing risk  
Environmental responsibility  
Preventing fraud |
| C4          | Ethical and effective communications and information sharing, participation, community feedback mechanisms, | All |
| C5          | Complaints response mechanisms, codes of conduct, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse | C3 Sexual exploitation and abuse  
C4 Communication & feedback  
C8 Staff behaviour and codes of conduct  
C9 Whistleblowing policies |
| C6          | Coordination, collaboration, complementarity and partnership | C2 Coverage, collaboration  
C3 Collaboration and complementarity |
| C7          | Innovation, evaluation and learning, knowledge management, peer and sector learning | C2 Assessing effectiveness and monitoring  
C3 Capacity building  
C4 Managing information |
| C8          | People management, staff support and duty of care, security and wellbeing, competency frameworks, codes of conduct | All |
| C9          | Management of financial, material and natural resources, minimising waste, environmental responsibility, managing risk | C3 Do no harm  
C5 Complaints mechanisms  
C8 Whistleblowing and codes of conduct |