

Core Humanitarian  
STANDARD

Core Humanitarian  
Standard on Quality  
and Accountability

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## Foreword

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a direct result of the Joint Standards Initiative (JSI) in which the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project joined forces to seek greater coherence for users of humanitarian standards. The JSI consulted more than 2,000 humanitarian workers in head offices, regions and in disaster-prone countries. The feedback highlighted the need for the harmonisation of standards, with communities and people affected by crisis at the centre and humanitarian principles as the foundation.

The CHS is the result of a 12-month, three-stage consultation, during which humanitarian workers, communities and people affected by crisis, several hundred Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and networks, governments, United Nations and donor agencies, and academics rigorously analysed the content of the CHS and tested it at headquarters and field level.

The feedback from each consultation was then considered and the revisions approved by a 65-person Technical Advisory Group representing a broad spread of constituencies and areas of technical expertise in humanitarian action and standards development.

It is the intention of the boards of HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project that the CHS will replace the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel and the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many hundreds of organisations and individuals who participated in the development of the CHS by giving feedback on the drafts of the CHS, by testing it within their organisations<sup>1</sup>, or by participating in one of the groups that oversaw the CHS consultation process. The involvement of a diverse range of communities and people affected by crisis in the consultation and testing process was particularly welcome.

In their efforts to harmonise standards, HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project were joined by Groupe URD who integrated the Quality COMPAS reference framework into the CHS. The CHS Technical Advisory Group and its sub-group, the Technical Steering Committee, were responsible for overseeing the consultation process and final approval of the CHS. The CHS Writing Group was tasked with revising the CHS incorporating the feedback received from every stage of the consultation.

To ensure that the outcomes reached were inclusive, representative and objective, the CHS consultation process was independently facilitated by the WolfGroup Consultants.

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of those organisations that tested the CHS can be found at [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org)

A full list of members of the Technical Advisory Group, the Technical Steering Group and the Writing Group can be found at [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org). Without their tireless support, the CHS consultation would not have been possible.

The Core Humanitarian Standard process was generously supported through core and project funding from the following donors: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Danida); Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany; Irish Aid; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; UK Aid from the UK Government; and The United States Government.

HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project would also like to thank the following board members for their financial contributions to the CHS process: ACT Alliance; ActionAid International; Aktion Deutschland Hilft; British Red Cross; Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD); CARE International; Christian Aid; CWS Pakistan-Afghanistan; DanChurchAid; The Lutheran World Federation; Save the Children International; Save the Children US; and World Vision International.

## Feedback

Comments on the CHS are welcome at any time, and can be sent, along with enquiries, to [info@corehumanitarianstandard.org](mailto:info@corehumanitarianstandard.org).

## Review

All comments received will be addressed in the revision of the CHS, which will be undertaken no later than December 2019. For more information about The Core Humanitarian Standard, related resources and other documents under development, please visit [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org).

## A note on translations

The Core Humanitarian Standard will be made available in Arabic, French and Spanish. If you would like to translate the CHS into an additional language, please contact [info@corehumanitarianstandard.org](mailto:info@corehumanitarianstandard.org) for guidance on translations. All translations will be free to access at [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org).

## Related materials

Guidance and tools are available to support application of the CHS and are free to access at [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org).

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# Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

## i. Introduction

Every day all over the world, countless people from all walks of life are moved to act in response to the humanitarian imperative – the desire to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it happens.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis: knowing what humanitarian organisations have committed to will enable them to hold those organisations to account.

The CHS places communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action and promotes respect for their fundamental human rights. It is underpinned by the right to life with dignity, and the right to protection and security as set forth in international law, including within the International Bill of Human Rights.<sup>2</sup>

As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action. Humanitarian organisations may use it as a voluntary code with which to align their own internal procedures. It can also be used as a basis for verification of performance, for which a specific framework and associated indicators have been developed to ensure relevance to different contexts and types of organisation.

<sup>2</sup> The International Bill of Rights includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocols.

The CHS can be promoted and implemented by individuals, organisations, coordinating bodies, consortia and other groups undertaking or contributing to humanitarian action. Although primarily intended for the humanitarian sector, the CHS can be used by any organisation to bring better quality and greater accountability to all aspects of its work with communities and people affected by crisis.

The CHS is the result of a global consultation process. It draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments. These include but are not limited to:

- The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief;
- The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management;
- The People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel;
- The Sphere Handbook Core Standards and the Humanitarian Charter;
- The Quality COMPAS;
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Commitments on Accountability to Affected People/Populations (CAAPs); and
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluating Development and Humanitarian Assistance.

# The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability





## ii. Structure of the Core Humanitarian Standard

The CHS is a set of Nine Commitments to communities and people affected by crisis stating what they can expect from organisations and individuals delivering humanitarian assistance. Each Commitment is supported by a Quality Criterion that indicates how humanitarian organisations and staff should be working in order to meet it. The CHS is structured as follows:

- the Nine Commitments;
- supporting Quality Criteria;
- Key Actions to be undertaken in order to fulfil the Commitments; and
- Organisational Responsibilities to support the consistent and systematic implementation of the Key Actions throughout the organisation.

The Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities, respectively, describe:

- what staff engaged in humanitarian action should do to deliver high-quality programmes consistently and to be accountable to those they seek to assist; and
- the policies, processes and systems organisations engaged in humanitarian action need to have in place to ensure their staff provide high-quality, accountable humanitarian assistance.

A glossary of terms used in the CHS with a specific definition is included at the end of this document.

### iii. Applying the CHS

Organisations committing to the CHS aim to fulfil all Nine Commitments. As a minimum, they are expected to work to continuously improve their systems, structures and practices in order to consistently improve the quality and accountability of their humanitarian responses. However, the organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian action are diverse. They need to act in a timely manner, and adapt their actions to the capacities and mandate of their organisations, as well as the phase and circumstance of the crisis they find themselves in.

When organisations encounter difficulties fulfilling the Nine Commitments, they should acknowledge this and consider how to address the issues preventing them from doing so. Organisations should learn from situations such as these, developing ways to overcome the constraints they come up against.

Any analysis of the application of the CHS should be based on the degree to which any given organisation is working to achieve the Nine Commitments and not simply on whether Key Actions have been implemented and/or Organisational Responsibilities discharged. The Key Actions required by the CHS, therefore, need to be adapted to the context.

The CHS applies to organisations and individuals that:

- deliver direct assistance to communities and people affected by crisis;
- provide financial, material or technical support to other organisations, but do not directly take part in providing assistance; or
- combine both these approaches.

The CHS is designed to be used in a range of ways by those involved in humanitarian action, including as a means to:

- facilitate greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis, and improve the quality of services provided to them;
- develop workplans for progressive implementation of the CHS and continuous improvement;
- monitor quality and accountability, using the CHS as a framework to support existing organisational and technical standards;
- self-assess and improve the quality of programmes;
- verify or certify conformity, and to demonstrate this conformity to others; and
- assess, where relevant, how far internal processes and support for staff meet the actions and organisational responsibilities set out within the CHS.

Organisations that decide to use the CHS should promote it both within their organisation and externally.

Organisations working in partnerships should explain their commitment to the CHS, seek understanding of how their partners<sup>3</sup> approach the Nine Commitments and do whatever they can to work with them to implement the CHS commitments.

## iv. Claims

Any individual or organisation involved in humanitarian action is encouraged to use and adopt the CHS and may state: “we are working towards application of the CHS”. Organisations may only claim that they comply with the CHS if they have undergone objective verification against it.

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<sup>3</sup> See definition in glossary.

## v. Principled Humanitarian Action

People are at the heart of humanitarian action. The primary motivation of any response to crisis is to save lives, alleviate human suffering and to support the right to life with dignity.

Humanitarian organisations recognise that the humanitarian imperative comes first and seek, therefore, to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed.

Humanitarian action is guided by four widely accepted principles<sup>4</sup>:

- **Humanity:** Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.
- **Impartiality:** Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no adverse distinction on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinion.
- **Independence:** Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
- **Neutrality:** Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.<sup>5</sup>

Humanitarian principles are at the core of all humanitarian work. They guide humanitarian action and their application is essential to distinguish humanitarian action from other forms of activities and action. In the CHS, the four principles are integrated into the Commitments, Quality Criteria, Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities.

International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law set out fundamental legal standards relating to the protection of individuals and groups, and to the nature of the assistance which may be provided to them. The Sphere Humanitarian Charter summarises the core legal principles that have most bearing on the welfare of those affected by disaster or conflict.

Those who apply the Core Humanitarian Standard recognise the primary responsibility of states and other relevant authorities to protect and assist those affected by disasters or armed conflicts within their territories. Humanitarian action should not undermine these responsibilities; indeed, whenever possible, it should complement them.

<sup>4</sup> The principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality are derived from: the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement proclaimed in Vienna in 1965 by the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent; United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 46/182, 19 December 1991; and UN General Assembly Resolution 58/114, 5 February 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Some organisations, while committed to giving impartial assistance and not taking sides in hostilities, do not consider that the principle of neutrality precludes undertaking advocacy on issues related to accountability and justice.

## vi. 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.



## vii. Commitments, Actions and Responsibilities

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

**Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

#### Key Actions

- 1.1 Conduct a systematic, objective and ongoing analysis of the context and stakeholders.
- 1.2 Design and implement appropriate programmes based on an impartial assessment of needs<sup>6</sup> and risks, and an understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.3 Adapt programmes to changing needs, capacities and context.

#### Organisational Responsibilities

- 1.4 Policies commit to providing impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by crisis.
- 1.5 Policies set out commitments which take into account the diversity of communities, including disadvantaged or marginalised people, and to collect disaggregated data.
- 1.6 Processes are in place to ensure an appropriate ongoing analysis of the context.

<sup>6</sup> "Needs" includes assistance and protection.

<sup>7</sup> 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. 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.

### Key Actions

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

### Organisational Responsibilities

- 2.6 Programme commitments are in line with organisational capacities.
- 2.7 Policy commitments ensure:
  - a. systematic, objective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of activities and their effects;
  - b. evidence from monitoring and evaluations is used to adapt and improve programmes; and
  - c. timely decision-making with resources allocated accordingly.



### 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.

#### Key Actions

- 3.1 Ensure programmes build on local capacities and work towards improving the resilience of communities and people affected by crisis.
- 3.2 Use the results of any existing community hazard and risk assessments and preparedness plans to guide activities.
- 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.
- 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.
- 3.5 Design and implement programmes that promote early disaster recovery and benefit the local economy.
- 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.

#### 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.
- 3.8 Systems are in place to safeguard any personal information collected from communities and people affected by crisis that could put them at risk.





## 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.

### 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.
- 4.2 Communicate in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate for different members of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- 4.3 Ensure representation is inclusive, involving the participation and engagement of communities and people affected by crisis at all stages of the work.
- 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 the assistance received, paying particular attention to the gender, age and diversity of those giving feedback.

### Organisational Responsibilities

- 4.5 Policies for information-sharing are in place, and promote a culture of open communication.
- 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.
- 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.



## 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 Actions

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

### Organisational Responsibilities

- 5.4 The complaints-handling process for communities and people affected by crisis is documented and in place. The process should cover programming, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other abuses of power.
- 5.5 An organisational culture in which complaints are taken seriously and acted upon according to defined policies and processes has been established.
- 5.6 Communities and people affected by crisis are fully aware of the expected behaviour of humanitarian staff, including organisational commitments made on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- 5.7 Complaints that do not fall within the scope of the organisation are referred to a relevant party in a manner consistent with good practice.



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

**Quality Criterion:** Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.

### Key Actions

- 6.1 Identify the roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different stakeholders.<sup>9</sup>
- 6.2 Ensure humanitarian response complements that of national and local authorities<sup>10</sup> and other humanitarian organisations.
- 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.
- 6.4 Share necessary information with partners, coordination groups and other relevant actors through appropriate communication channels.

### 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.
- 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.

<sup>9</sup> Including local actors, humanitarian organisations, local authorities, private companies and other relevant groups.

<sup>10</sup> 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.



## 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 Actions**

- 7.1** Draw on lessons learnt and prior experience when designing programmes.
- 7.2** Learn, innovate and implement changes on the basis of monitoring and evaluation, and feedback and complaints.
- 7.3** Share learning and innovation internally, with communities and people affected by crisis, and with other stakeholders.

### **Organisational Responsibilities**

- 7.4** Evaluation and learning policies are in place, and means are available to learn from experiences and improve practices.
- 7.5** Mechanisms exist to record knowledge and experience, and make it accessible throughout the organisation.
- 7.6** The organisation contributes to learning and innovation in humanitarian response amongst peers and within the sector.



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

**Quality Criterion:** Staff <sup>11</sup> are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.

### Key Actions

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

### Organisational Responsibilities

- 8.4** The organisation has the management and staff capacity and capability to deliver its programmes.
- 8.5** Staff policies and procedures are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and compliant with local employment law.
- 8.6** Job descriptions, work objectives and feedback processes are in place so that staff have a clear understanding of what is required of them.
- 8.7** A code of conduct is in place that establishes, at a minimum, the obligation of staff not to exploit, abuse or otherwise discriminate against people.
- 8.8** Policies are in place to support staff to improve their skills and competencies.
- 8.9** Policies are in place for the security and the wellbeing of staff.

<sup>11</sup> Staff are: any designated representative of the organisation, including national, international, permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants.



## 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.

### Key Actions

- 9.1 Design programmes and implement processes to ensure the efficient use of resources<sup>12</sup>, balancing quality, cost and timeliness at each phase of the response.
- 9.2 Manage and use resources to achieve their intended purpose, minimising waste.
- 9.3 Monitor and report expenditure against budget.
- 9.4 When using local and natural resources, consider their impact on the environment.
- 9.5 Manage the risk of corruption and take appropriate action if it is identified.

### Organisational Responsibilities

- 9.6 Policies and processes 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;
  - b. uses its resources in an environmentally responsible way;
  - c. prevents and addresses corruption, fraud, conflicts of interest and misuse of resources;
  - d. conducts audits, verifies compliance and reports transparently;
  - e. assesses, manages and mitigates risk on an ongoing basis; and
  - f. ensures that the acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence.

<sup>12</sup> The term “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.

## viii. Glossary

For the purposes of the CHS, 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.

**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.

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

**Effectiveness:** the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.

**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.

**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.<sup>13</sup>

**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.

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

**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.

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

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<sup>13</sup> As defined in the ALNAP Evaluation Humanitarian Action Pilot Guide, 2013, p.14.

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As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action. Humanitarian organisations may use it as a voluntary code with which to align their own internal procedures. It can also be used as a basis for verification of performance.

The CHS is the result of a 12-month, three-stage consultation facilitated by HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project, during which many hundreds of individuals and organisations rigorously analysed the content of the CHS and tested it at headquarters and field level.



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