Core Humanitarian
STANDARD

CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators

www.corehumanitarianstandard.org

Contents

Introduction

The CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators are a supplement to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS). This document is aimed at all humanitarian actors and organisations involved in planning, managing or implementing a humanitarian response, including staff and volunteers of local, national and international agencies. It may also be used by government agencies and local authorities and adapted for use with affected communities.

The guidance provides *clarification* on the Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities laid out in the CHS and examines some of the practical challenges that may arise when applying the CHS. It explains why each of the Nine Commitments of the CHS is important and provides some examples for different audiences and for different contexts. The guidance *does not* however provide an in-depth explanation of how to respond to humanitarian emergencies. It provides instead a list of more detailed guidance on how to meet each Commitment.

While each Commitment focuses on a discrete area of humanitarian action, there is necessarily some degree of overlap that binds the Commitments together into a coherent whole. For example, the importance of communication with crisis-affected communities and people and the supportive management of staff run through all Nine Commitments. The prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the importance of transparency are also relevant to several of the Commitments.

Gender and diversity. The CHS promotes fundamental human rights and is underpinned by the right to life with dignity, and the right to protection and security as defined in international law. The CHS recognises that the participation of crisis-affected people is the cornerstone of an effective humanitarian response. To this end, it is vital to acknowledge diversity within communities by collecting and using data disaggregated by sex, age and ability to inform programmes. This will help to ensure the different needs of various groups are met by giving them a say in the decisions that shape the response. **In this document, community is understood as a group made up of women, men, boys and girls, each with different capacities, needs and [vulner]abilities.**

The performance indicators and guiding questions are intended to promote measurement of progress towards meeting the standard and to drive continuous learning and improvement in the quality and accountability of humanitarian responses. Some organisations may wish to develop tools to enable the comparison of results across different organisations, contexts and time.

The performance indicators and guiding questions may be applied to guide:
- project and programme design;
- monitoring at project, programme, sectoral and response-wide levels;
- agency-led organisational assessments;
- capacity-building strategies;
- internal evaluations;
- peer and joint reviews and evaluations; and
- real-time monitoring by affected communities and people.

When applying the performance indicators, users are advised to consider the following:

Integrity. The 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 different groups within the affected population. If an organisation decides not to use an indicator, it is encouraged to make the reasons for that decision explicit when reporting on outcomes.

Adaptation. The performance indicators should be adapted to each context- and organisation-specific process. They may be complemented by other appropriate indicators and guiding questions.

Timing. The performance indicators and guiding questions may be used at all stages of the response, from assessment to evaluation.

Measurement. The performance indicators are intended to enable the measurement of progress and/or comparison across time, programmes and contexts. In order to be meaningful and acknowledge the diversity of needs but also satisfaction with ongoing programmes, performance indicators need to be measured in a way that is consistent across time, location, and allows at a minimum to disaggregate data based on age and gender.

A simple way to score the performance indicators is to use a 5 degree Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree).

Additional guidance. Users are advised to refer to the links below, to the guidance at the end of each section, and to the glossary and footnotes for other useful information.

Links to further guidance

ADCAP (2015) 'Minimum Standards For Age And Disability Inclusion In Humanitarian Action' (Pilot Version):

http://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/emergencies/adcap-age-and-disability-capacity-building-programme/

IASC Gender Marker 2013-14:

http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/topics/gender/page/iasc-gender-marker

HelpAge International (2014) 'Disaster resilience in an ageing world: How to make policies and programmes inclusive of older people':

http://www.helpage.org/silo/files/disaster-resilience-in-an-ageing-world-how-to-make-policies-and-programmes-inclusive-of-older-people.pdf

OCHA (2014) Methodology - Participative evaluation of accountability to affected populations (Central African Republic):

http://chsalliance.org/files/files/Resources/Tools-and-guidance/Methodology-Participative-evaluation-of-AAP.pdf

Organisations who are interested in verification against the CHS can refer to the tools available on the CHS Alliance website under http://chsalliance.org/what-we-do/verification.

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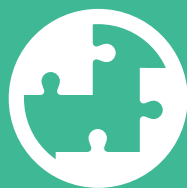
Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

Why is this Commitment important?

Commitment 1 captures the primary purpose of responding to humanitarian crises, which is to alleviate distress and suffering, uphold people's rights to assistance and ensure their dignity as human beings. A response that automatically treats everybody and every situation in the same way may fail to meet its objectives and is unlikely to maximise its potential benefit to those in need.

Commitment 1 stresses the importance of understanding the context and the needs of the different people affected and how these needs might change over time as well as the necessity to recognise the capacity of different groups of people. It also highlights the role of policies and processes to drive the *ongoing assessment* of needs, impartial assistance, and acknowledging gender and diversity in the response.

Performance indicators

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

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 and monitoring data disaggregated by sex, age and ability?
- How have vulnerable groups been identified?
- 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?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
1.1 Conduct a systematic, objective and ongoing analysis of the context and stakeholders.	**Assessment and analysis** • Assessment and analysis is a process, not a single event and, as time allows, in-depth analysis should be carried out. The needs of affected communities should not be assumed but identified through assessments that engage them in an ongoing discussion to find appropriate responses. • It is vital to cross check and verify (i.e. triangulate) information, acknowledging that assessment data will initially be imperfect. • An assessment of the safety and security of both disaster-affected and host populations is important to identify threats of violence and any forms of coercion, denial of subsistence or denial of basic human rights. An analysis of gender-related needs also helps to define a more effective and sustainable response. • Planning is required to coordinate with others and avoid burdening communities with multiple assessments. Wherever possible, joint assessments (such as the multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA)) should be carried out and information (including selection criteria) shared with interested agencies, government and affected populations.

| **1.2** Design and implement appropriate programmes based on an impartial assessment of needs[1] and risks, and an understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups.[2] | **Appropriate programmes**
• Humanitarian response must be acceptable to the different groups affected within the community and should seek to uphold rights of all community members by: meeting their basic needs (such as for clean water and healthcare); responding to their protection concerns (preventing sexual exploitation and violence, for example); and enabling people to maintain their sense of dignity and self-respect. Programmes should be designed to cater to each particular context and its conditions, based for example on whether it is rural or urban.

• Some culturally acceptable practices violate people's human rights or are founded on misconceptions (e.g. biased targeting of girls, boys or specific castes, denial of education to girls, refusal of immunisation, etc.) and should not be supported.

Impartial assessment
• Special efforts are needed to assess needs of people in hard-to-reach locations, such as people who are not in camps, are in less accessible geographical areas or staying with host families. The same applies to 'at-risk' people – such as those with disabilities, older people, housebound individuals, children and adolescents – all of whom may be subject to coercion, exploitation and abuse. Acting impartially does not mean that all people should be treated the same, because different groups will have different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities.

Vulnerability
• People may be vulnerable because of individual factors such as age (particularly the very young and the very old), disability or illness (e.g. people with mobility problems or people living with HIV and AIDS) or because they are caring for others who are vulnerable.

• Social and contextual factors also contribute to people's vulnerability. These include discrimination and marginalisation (e.g. in some contexts, the 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, caste, and religious or political affiliations.

Existing capacity
• The state has the primary role and responsibility to provide timely assistance and protection to affected people within its borders. Intervention by other humanitarian actors should take place only if the affected population and/or the state does not have sufficient capacity or willingness to respond (particularly during the early stages of the response). Intervention may also be justified if the state or authorities actively discriminate against certain groups and/or people living in a particular affected area.

• Women and men affected by crisis (including older people and those with disabilities) already possess and can further acquire skills, knowledge and capacities to cope with, respond to and recover from disasters. They will usually be the first to respond. Actively engaging affected people in humanitarian response is an essential part of upholding their right to life with dignity. |
| **1.3** Adapt programmes to changing needs, capacities and contexts. | **Adapting programmes**
• Throughout the response, field workers should continuously consult with communities to find out how far the response is meeting their needs, and whether additional or different responses are required.

• Epidemiological and other data must be monitored regularly and used to inform ongoing decision-making and identify lifesaving priorities.

• Responders 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. |

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[1] 'Needs' includes assistance and protection.
[2] This may refer, for example, to: women, men, girls, boys, young people and old people, as well as those with disabilities and specific minority or ethnic groups.

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

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

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
1.4 Policies commit to providing impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by crisis.	**Organisational policies relating to impartial assistance and diversity** • An organisation that meets the CHS needs policies, processes and systems that articulate and support 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 understand their responsibilities in relation to these policies, and how they may be held to account. Other key stakeholders should also be made aware of these policies.
1.5 Policies set out commitments which take into account the diversity of communities, including disadvantaged or marginalised people, and to collect disaggregated data.	**Data disaggregation** • 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 can indicate if aid is reaching the groups it is intended for.
1.6 Processes are in place to ensure an appropriate ongoing analysis of the context.	**Processes for ongoing analysis** • Humanitarian agencies should provide appropriate management and supervisory support to enable aid workers to acquire the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes necessary to manage and carry out assessments. • Human resources systems should be flexible enough to recruit and deploy assessment teams rapidly. Adequate numbers of qualified staff should ensure that ongoing assessment and analysis is feasible. • Programme budgets and resources should be allocated according to need and ensure that funding allows for ongoing analysis of assistance and protection needs, and for programmes to be adapted and corrected.

Links to further guidance

ACAPS & ECB (2014) 'Humanitarian Needs Assessment: The Good Enough Guide':

http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/h-humanitarian-needs-assessment-the-good-enough-guide.pdf

ALNAP & Groupe URD (2009) 'Developing a participatory approach to involve crisis-affected people in a humanitarian response'. *The Participation Handbook* **(chapter 7):**

http://urd.org/IMG/pdf/MP_GB_CHAPITRE7.pdf

IASC (2015) 'Multi-sector initial rapid assessment guidance' (revised July 2015):

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/mira_revised_2015_en.pdf

IASC (2006) 'Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities'. *The Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action:*

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/gender-and-humanitarian-action-0/documents-public/women-girls-boys-men-different-needs-equal

Mazurana, D., Benelli, P., Gupta, H., & Walker, P. (2011) 'Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies'. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University:

http://www.alnap.org/resource/8144

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 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.

Why is this Commitment important?

Commitment 2 highlights the need for effective systems that support timely, evidence-based decision-making, together with both adequate and timely geographical coverage of both assistance and protection needs. It recognises the challenges of access, security, funding, logistics, capacity and conflicting priorities, but requires that the humanitarian community, acting together, find ways to overcome these to provide a comprehensive response to people's needs. 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. Responses must not just be timely but also adhere to minimum technical standards if they are to help protect people's lives and livelihoods.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis, including the most vulnerable groups, consider that the timing of the assistance and protection they receive is adequate.
2. Communities and people affected by crisis consider that their needs are met by the response.
3. Monitoring and evaluation reports show that the humanitarian response meets its objectives in terms of timing, quality and quantity.

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, accounting for factors such as weather, season or conflict?
- Are delays in implementing plans and activities 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?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
2.1 Design programmes that address constraints so that the proposed action is realistic and safe for communities.	**Addressing constraints and realistic programming** • Insecurity or logistical problems may limit access to populations, funding may be insufficient and local authorities may not allow humanitarians to respond. Meeting requirements of technical standards may not be feasible because of access or funding constraints. Organisations and their staff may also lack the required experience, systems or competencies to meet minimum standards. • Diplomacy, lobbying and advocacy with government, other organisations and donors may be required at a local, national or international level to overcome constraints. • Collaborative work is often required to develop strategies (e.g. advocacy, referral systems, contingency planning) to overcome challenges that prevent humanitarian response meeting this Commitment. • It is important to define time bound performance indicators that are context-specific and achievable and reviewed on a regular basis to measure progress towards meeting assistance and protection needs.

2.2 Deliver humanitarian response in a timely manner, making decisions and acting without unnecessary delay.	**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, affected people may have different needs in summer and winter and activities such as the distribution of animal fodder, seeds or tools will need to account for the agricultural calendar. • Programme plans need to include timeframes for delivery and monitoring systems proactively identify and flag delays. The IASC humanitarian programme cycle (see the links to further guidance below) 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 allows communities, authorities and agencies to be ready to intervene on time, so that affected people can protect their assets before their lives and livelihoods are at risk. **Decision-making** • A wide range of factors influence the decision to respond to a humanitarian crisis, including availability of funds, access to information, level of preparedness, expertise of an agency or the need to demonstrate impact. Donor governments will also be influenced by political considerations. Decision-making should be based on an objective analysis of needs, but in reality, in-depth information will often be absent in the early stages of an acute disaster and decisions will have to be made based on imperfect knowledge. • Decision-making needs to be flexible and respond to new information from ongoing assessments. Decision-making arrangements will vary within different organisations and for the response as a whole but the ultimate responsibility for decision-making should rest with 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).
2.3 Refer any unmet needs to those organisations with the relevant technical expertise and mandate, or advocate for those needs to be addressed.	**Unmet needs** • Some needs cannot be met without government intervention (e.g. access to land or land ownership rights) and other needs may fall outside of an organisation's expertise and experience. However, organisations have a responsibility to refer these needs to appropriate organisations, and lobby for these needs to be met.
2.4 Use relevant technical standards and good practice employed across the humanitarian sector to plan and assess programmes.	**Technical standards and good practice** • In general, agencies should be guided by national standards for all sectors – although sometimes these may only apply to longer-term situations, be outdated or not in line with accepted best practice. As time affords, it may be possible to work towards making national standards fit for future humanitarian responses. *The Sphere Handbook* and companion standards provide a framework that can guide current and future emergency responses.
2.5 Monitor the activities, outputs and outcomes of humanitarian responses in order to adapt programmes and address poor performance.	**Monitoring activities, outputs and outcomes** • Monitoring informs project revisions, verifies application of selection criteria and confirms if aid is reaching the people it is intended for. It enables decision-makers to respond to feedback from different groups (for example to redress gender imbalances) and identify emerging problems or trends. • Monitoring should measure progress against project objectives and include performance indicators, rather than only focusing on *activities* such as number of distributions or *outputs* such as the number of facilities constructed. Project outcomes relate to the desired end result of activities such as the *use* of facilities or *changes in practice*. Timeliness of results should also be monitored. • Monitoring systems should be reviewed regularly to ensure that only useful information is collected. Monitoring activities should also involve and rely on affected people and key stakeholders (see Commitment 7). **Addressing poor performance** • The findings from monitoring activities must be used to correct mistakes, address weaknesses and improve the intervention. Changes as a result of monitoring should be documented (see Commitment 7).

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

- Are there clear processes to assess if the organisation has sufficient know how, financing and the right staff available to be deployed before making programming commitments?
- Are there clear policies, processes and resources in place to support monitoring and evaluation and to 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?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
2.6 Programme commitments are in line with organisational capacities.	**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. However, some organisations may have unique access to an area and may be forced to provide or support the provision of important services that are outside their area of expertise until other agencies can gain access. - Workforce planning can help to ensure that the different functions and expertise within an organisation work collaboratively together (see Commitment 8). 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.
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.	**Organisational policies, processes and systems** - Evidence is defined as data on which an objective judgment or conclusion can be made. It can take varying forms and can offer varying degrees of validity (not necessarily scientific). There is a need to develop the documented evidence base for humanitarian action in order to improve outcomes, with systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation contributing to this process. - An organisation that meets the CHS should be able to show how data from monitoring and evaluation is used to adapt programmes, policies and strategies and improve preparedness and performance in a timely manner (see Commitment 7). This might involve ensuring that staff can be recruited or redeployed quickly when needed or the existence of an emergency response fund. **Organisational decision-making** - Both the responsibilities and processes for decision-making within organisations must be clearly defined and understood, including who is responsible, who will be consulted and what information is needed to inform decision-making.

Links to further guidance

IASC (2015) Reference module for the implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle:

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/programme-cycle-toolbox

The Sphere Project (2011) *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response:*

http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/

ALNAP & Groupe URD (2009) 'Developing a participatory approach to involve crisis-affected people in a humanitarian response'. *The Participation Handbook* **(chapter 8):**

http://urd.org/IMG/pdf/MP_GB_CHAPITRE8.pdf

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 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.

Why is this Commitment important?

This Commitment recognises the need to acknowledge and build on local and national capacity when responding to disasters and to forge stronger links with local organisations. Ensuring that individuals, communities and countries have greater control over decision-making and become more resilient leads to a quicker recovery and a greater capacity to withstand future shocks. Humanitarian action may have unintended, harmful consequences – organisations must recognise this and collaborate with others to prevent or mitigate such effects.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis consider themselves better able to withstand future shocks and stresses as a result of humanitarian action.
2. Local authorities, leaders and organisations with responsibilities for responding to crises consider that their capacities have been increased.
3. Communities and people affected by crisis (including the most vulnerable) do not identify any negative effects resulting from humanitarian action.

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Have local capacities for resilience (i.e. structures, organisations, leadership figures and support networks) been identified and do plans exist to strengthen these capacities?
- Is existing information on risks, hazards, vulnerabilities and related plans used in programming activities?
- Are strategies and actions to reduce risk and build resilience designed in consultation with affected people and communities?
- In what ways (both formal and informal) are local leaders and/or authorities consulted to ensure response strategies are in line with local and/or national priorities?
- Are equitable opportunities promoted for participation of all groups in the affected population, especially marginalised and vulnerable people?
- Is the response designed to facilitate early recovery?
- Are globally recognised technical standards used by staff?
- Has a clear transition and/or exit strategy been developed in consultation with affected people and other relevant stakeholders?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
3.1 Ensure programmes build on local capacities and work towards improving the resilience of communities and people affected by crisis.	**Community resilience** • The capacity of the community and state includes skills, knowledge, networks, organisations and initiatives. Building capacity can include resources (such as funding, materials, etc.) and support to governance and management systems. • Resilience can also be strengthened by designing services that can reduce the impact of hazards (such as drought management and floods, hurricane- or earthquake-resistant structures).

3.2 Use the results of any existing community hazard and risk assessments and preparedness plans to guide activities.	**Community hazard and risk assessments** • The more vulnerable an individual, community or country is, the more likely it is that there will be adverse effects. • Women, men, children and different groups within society are exposed to different levels of risk. It is important to use participatory, community-based assessments to understand how local hazards affect different vulnerable groups and what their capacity may be to cope with them.
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.	**Development of local leadership and capacity** • Local agencies and communities are usually the first to act and have in-depth knowledge of the situation. Some local organisations will have a better knowledge of the needs of specific groups – such as those working with women, children, or people with disabilities. • Local NGOs in particular may be seen as a way to deliver programme goals rather than as equal partners. There is however a compelling case for channelling much more aid through local organisations (including those representing women or people with disabilities) in order to develop their capacity and to provide them with the resources needed to mount a large-scale response. This requires changes in attitudes and for international NGOs to take a longer-term view of response that gives local partners the autonomy to control the process. It also requires a commitment of international and local agencies to engage in open dialogue and constructive criticism. • Wherever possible, programmes should employ local and national staff instead of expatriates.
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.	**Transition and exit strategy** • Services should be provided to support existing state and community systems rather than as parallel entities that will not last beyond the duration of the response. • Early exit-planning, in collaboration with the authorities and affected communities encourages design of services that will continue after the programme has closed (for example, introducing cost-recovery measures, using locally available materials or strengthening local management capacity) and gives more time to prepare a transition.
3.5 Design and implement programmes that promote early disaster recovery and benefit the local economy.	**Economic recovery** • Actions that strengthen local capacities and restore services, education, markets and livelihood opportunities promote early recovery. • Actions that benefit the local economy include buying goods and services locally, and providing cash-based assistance (see 'Minimum Economic Recovery Standards 2010' in the links to further guidance below).
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;	**Negative effects and 'do no harm'** • The high value of aid resources and the powerful position of aid workers can lead to exploitation and abuse, competition, conflict, misuse or misappropriation of aid. Aid can undermine livelihoods and amplify unequal power relations between different groups and/or between men, women and children. These potential negative effects should be monitored and actions taken to prevent them. • Safe and responsive feedback and complaints mechanisms can reduce abuse and misuse (see Commitments 4 & 5) and staff should welcome and seek out suggestions and complaints. Staff should be trained in how to exercise confidentiality and refer sensitive information, such as disclosures of exploitation and abuse. **Environmental concerns and climate change** • Humanitarian response can cause environmental degradation (e.g. soil erosion, aquifer depletion, overfishing, or pollution), thus amplifying a crisis or vulnerability levels.

d. livelihoods; e. the local economy; and f. the environment.	• Measures to reduce negative effects depend on the intervention. They could include reforestation, rainwater harvesting, efficient use of resources, and ethical procurement policies and practices. Major construction activities should only be carried out following an environmental assessment. **Sexual exploitation and abuse by staff** • All staff share a responsibility to maintain an environment that is free of exploitation and abuse. Staff members have a responsibility to report any abuse they suspect or witness, whether within their own organisation or outside.

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

- Is there a policy requiring to undertake risk assessments and risk reduction exercises for vulnerable 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?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
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.	**Organisational policy** • Organisations are encouraged to have a clearly documented risk management policy and systems in place. 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. • Policies and procedures should reflect a commitment to the protection of vulnerable people and outline ways to prevent and investigate the abuse of power. • Careful recruitment, screening and hiring practices can help to reduce the risk of staff misconduct, and codes of conduct should make it clear what practices are forbidden. Staff should formally agree to adhere to these codes and be made aware of the sanctions they will face if they fail to do so (see Commitment 8). • Complaints and grievance procedures, including whistle-blowing policies, should be in place and staff aware of how to access these. • Green procurement policies can help to ensure that unintended negative environmental effects are avoided (see Commitment 9).
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.	**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 confidentiality are essential to prevent further harm from occurring. • The increasing use of electronic registration and distribution systems in humanitarian response makes the need for clear and comprehensive policies on data protection greater than ever before. Agreements obliging third parties such as banks and commercial organisations to take appropriate measures to safeguard information are essential. Clear guidance about the collection, storage, use and disposal of data aligned with international standards and local data protection laws is important. • Systems to mitigate the risk of data being lost should be put in place. Data should not be held longer than is required and should be destroyed as soon as possible. • Those receiving aid should be informed about their rights in relation to data protection, be able to access the personal information that an organisation holds about them and should expect any concerns they have about misuse of information to be investigated.

Links to further guidance

IFRC (2006) 'What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment':

http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/vca/whats-vca-en.pdf

Turnbull, M., Sterret, C. & Hilleboe, A. (2013) 'Toward resilience, a guide to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation'. Practical Action:

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ECB-toward-resilience-Disaster-risk-reduction-Climate-Change-Adaptation-guide-english.pdf

Groupe URD (2013) 'Reaching Resilience: Handbook Resilience 2.0 for aid practitioners and policymakers in Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Poverty Reduction':

http://www.reachingresilience.org/IMG/pdf/resilience-handbook.pdf

Slim, H. & Bonwick, A. (2005) 'Protection: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies':

www.alnap.org/resource/5263

SEEP Network (2010) 'Minimum Economic Recovery Standards':

http://www.seepnetwork.org/minimum-economic-recovery-standards-resources-174.php

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

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 response is based on communication, participation and feedback.

Why is this Commitment important?

This Commitment emphasises the need for the inclusive participation of crisis-affected people. This requires a willingness to allow and encourage people receiving aid to speak out and influence decisions. Information and communication are critical forms of aid, without which affected people cannot access services, make the best decisions for themselves and their communities, or hold aid agencies to account. Sharing information, listening carefully to affected communities and involving them in decision-making contributes to more effective programmes and improves the quality of services delivered. When people have the opportunity to voice their opinions, this enhances their sense of well being, helps them adapt to the challenges they face and better enables them to take an active role in their own recovery.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis (including the most vulnerable) are aware of their rights and entitlements.
2. Communities and people affected by crisis consider that they have timely access to relevant and clear information.
3. Communities and people affected by crisis are satisfied with the opportunities they have to influence the response.

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Is information about the organisation and response provided in accessible and appropriate ways to different affected groups?
- Can women, men, girls and boys (especially those who are marginalised and vulnerable) access the information provided, and do they understand it?
- 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 feel they have equitable opportunities to participate in decisions about the response that affect them?
- Are all groups within the affected community aware of how to give feedback on the response, and do they feel safe using those channels?
- Are barriers to giving feedback identified and addressed?
- Is data provided through feedback mechanisms disaggregated by age, gender and other relevant categories?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
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.	**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 help to reduce the number of formal complaints received and is a key to being transparent. • Sharing financial information with communities can also improve cost-effectiveness and help communities to highlight waste or fraud. • If an organisation does not share information appropriately with the people it aims to assist, this can contribute to misunderstandings and delays, inappropriate projects that waste resources, and negative perceptions about the organisation that can generate anger, frustration and insecurity. • Without accurate information, people cannot make informed decisions. They may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (including sexual abuse) 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 services provided.

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.	**Effective and inclusive communication** • Different groups (e.g. mothers with young children, older men or women with disabilities) will have different communication and information needs and may well have different trusted sources of communication. • Instead of using one-way communication, organisations should ensure not only that existing communication systems are used but also that people are consulted on their preferences and the degree of privacy required. • Care is needed to ensure that new communications technology is used effectively and safely.
4.3 Ensure representation is inclusive, involving the participation and engagement of communities and people affected by crisis at all stages of the work.	**Participation and engagement** • Local populations are usually the first to react in a disaster and some degree of community participation is possible even very early on in a response. Affected populations will have ideas on how to respond appropriately to the crisis and their views on programme design should be sought on an ongoing basis. Time spent consulting early can save a lot more time trying to fix inappropriate decisions later on. • Different levels of participation may be appropriate at different times. For example, in the early stages of an acute response, consultation might only be possible with limited numbers of affected people, but over time there will be more opportunities for more people and groups to become more involved in decision-making. • As a result of the context or pre-existing differences in power (e.g. based upon gender, race, class, caste, or other characteristics), participation will not usually occur spontaneously. Instead, aid organisations may have to foster a process of mutual learning and dialogue to stimulate greater participation. • Particular attention should be given to groups or individuals traditionally excluded from power and decision-making processes. **Informed consent** • Another aspect of participation is that of *informed consent*. People may express consent without fully understanding the implications. While this is not ideal, a degree of consent and participation may initially have to be assumed, based on expressed willingness to take part in project activities, observation, knowledge, or legal or other documents (e.g. contractual agreements with the community).
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.	**Feedback** • Formal feedback can be sought through specific assessments (using group discussions or interviews), post distribution monitoring or questionnaires. Informal feedback received in the course of daily interaction should also be valued and used to develop trust and improve programmes on an ongoing basis (see the links to further guidance below). • People may fear that critical feedback will lead to a loss of assistance or have negative repercussions. There may also be cultural reasons why criticism of an intervention is unacceptable. Exploring different methods of providing informal and formal feedback is important. • All field-based staff should 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 be observant of the reactions of different community members to the way services are provided. • Feedback mechanisms should be designed in coordination with other agencies. They should be seen as separate from complaints mechanisms for serious infringements of practice or behaviour (see Commitment 5) although in practice there is usually an overlap in the type of feedback and complaints received. Acknowledging and following up on the feedback received and adapting the programme if appropriate is crucial if the process is to be trusted.

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?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
4.5 Policies for information sharing are in place, and promote a culture of open communication.	**Promoting a culture of open communication** • An organisation should define and document its processes for sharing information, for example: its 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 in deciding not to share information. • Meeting this Commitment also requires that organisations state publicly (e.g. on their website or in promotional material) additional interests and commitments such as political or religious affiliations. The purpose of this declaration of additional interests is to encourage a 'no surprises' approach, giving all stakeholders an opportunity to better understand the nature of the organisation and its likely affiliations, policies, partnerships and relationships. • Organisations should strive to share information about their successes and failures more openly, to help promote a system-wide culture of openness and accountability. Organisations that are transparent and open in sharing information with their staff are more likely to be open with communities and the public.
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.	**Organisational commitment to participation and listening to communities** • Policies and strategies should outline how staff members are being developed to facilitate community engagement and decision-making, listen to affected people and manage negative feedback. Gender and diversity policies can also help to promote the values and commitments of the organisation and provide concrete examples of expected behaviour. Feedback from crisis-affected communities should also inform strategy and programme development. **Restricting information, confidentiality and non-disclosure** • Not all information can or should be shared with all stakeholders. 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.
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.	**External communications** • Due care must be exercised when making use of stories and images from affected communities 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. They can make the viewer assume that those receiving aid are all needy and helpless and may fail to highlight people's dignity and their capacity to help themselves. Policies and guidelines relating to external communications should be available to all staff and can help to ensure that these mistakes are not made.

Links to further guidance

ALNAP & Groupe URD (2009) 'Developing a participatory approach to involve crisis-affected people in a humanitarian response'. The Participation Handbook:

http://www.alnap.org/resource/8531

CRS (2013) 'Communication Toolbox: Practical guidance for program managers to improve communication with participants and community members':

http://www.crsprogramquality.org/storage/pubs/general/communication-toolbox.pdf

ALNAP (2014) 'Closing the Loop – Practitioner guidance on effective feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts'. ALNAP Practitioner Guidance. London: ALNAP/ODI:

http://www.alnap.org/what-we-do/engagement/feedback-loop

Infoasaid (2013) Diagnostic Tools:

http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140626100739-b0u7q

Infoasaid (2015) E-learning course:

http://www.cdacnetwork.org/learning-centre/e-learning/

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

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.

Why is this Commitment important?

People affected by crisis 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 and give affected communities some element of 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.

Performance indicators

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

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Are communities and people affected by crisis consulted about the design of complaints mechanisms?
- Are the preferences of all demographic groups taken into account, particularly those related to safety and confidentiality, in the design of complaints processes?
- Is information about how complaints mechanisms work and what kind of complaints can be made through them provided to and understood by all demographic groups?
- Are there agreed and respected timeframes to investigate and resolve complaints? Is the time between a complaint is filed and its resolution recorded?
- Are complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse investigated immediately by staff with relevant competencies and an appropriate level of authority?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
5.1 Consult with communities and people affected by crisis on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints-handling processes.	**Designing a complaints mechanism** • Affected communities and other stakeholders (including staff and groups who might be particularly vulnerable) should be consulted about: how they view complaints mechanisms; how complaints are currently dealt with; the ways in which they would like to submit complaints to the organisation(s); what might potentially prevent them from complaining; and how they wish to receive feedback about complaints. The procedures should be designed to fit the requirements for each context and the feasibility of joint complaints mechanisms with other agencies should be explored. • Staff members will need training to understand 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 incorporated into future planning.

5.2 Welcome and accept complaints, and communicate how the mechanism can be accessed and the scope of issues it can address.	**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, as well as what to do and where to go if they want to make a complaint because the agency has failed to meet these standards. They should also be assured that they can make a complaint confidentially and without fear of retaliation. • An information campaign may be useful to help raise awareness of the system and procedures, and people should be given the opportunity to ask further questions about how it 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 the control of the agency.
5.3 Manage complaints in a timely, fair and appropriate manner that prioritises the safety of the complainant and those affected at all stages.	**Managing complaints** • All complaints should be dealt with individually even though they may cover similar issues. A response should always be provided within a specified timeframe, and the complainant made aware of when he should expect a response (for example, seven days for non-sensitive complaints). • When 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. • Anonymous and malicious complaints present specific challenges because their source is unknown. They may be a warning signal to the organisation of underlying discontent and any follow-up will need to investigate if there is any previously unacknowledged cause for complaint. • Only trained staff should investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). **Documentation** • Records should be kept of how the complaints mechanism was set up (including on what basis decisions were made), all complaints made, how they were responded to and within what timeframe. Care must be taken to ensure that information on complaints is kept confidentially, in strict accordance with data protection policies, and that information is only stored for as long as is needed. **Protecting complainants** • Social and power dynamics must be assessed before deciding on the best way to interact with communities. Particular attention should always be paid to the specific needs of older people, women, children, people with disabilities and others who might be marginalised in order to ensure they have a say 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 and children reporting such abuse could face from perpetrators and their own families, it is essential to ensure that their complaint will be treated confidentially and reassure them that they will face no danger of retaliation. A whistle-blowing policy should offer assurance of protection to staff who highlight concerns about programmes or the behaviour of colleagues.

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

- Are there specific policies, budgets and procedures in place for handling complaints?
- Are all staff provided with an induction and refresher training on the organisation's policy and procedures for handling complaints?
- Does the organisation's complaints-handling policy include provisions for sexual exploitation and abuse?
- Is the organisation's policy commitment and procedures for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse shared with affected communities and people?
- Are complaints that cannot be addressed by the organisation referred in a timely manner to other relevant organisations?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
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.	**Complaints handling process** • An organisation that meets the CHS 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 (i.e. relating to corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, or gross misconduct or malpractice) and non-sensitive information (e.g. challenges to use of selection criteria). • Guidelines should state which complaints fall within the agency's own remit, and when and how to refer them to other service providers. The roles, responsibilities and timeframes agreed must be clearly indicated. The right to appeal should also be built into complaints mechanisms. • 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. **Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)** • An organisation and its senior management are responsible for ensuring that complaints mechanisms and procedures for SEA are in place, safe, transparent, accessible and confidential. Organisations should consider including specific statements about cooperating with investigations into SEA cases, where appropriate, in their partnership agreements.
5.5 An organisational culture in which complaints are taken seriously and acted upon according to defined policies and processes has been established.	**Organisational culture** • Policies relating to an organisation's duty of care to the people it aims to assist, its codes of conduct and how it will protect potentially vulnerable groups such as women, children and people with disabilities, should be well publicised to all staff. • Managers and senior staff should model and promote a culture of mutual respect between all staff, partners, volunteers and people affected by crisis. Their support for the implementation of community complaints mechanisms is vital. • Organisations should have formal investigation procedures that adhere to the principles of confidentiality, independence and respect. Investigations must be conducted in a thorough, timely and professional manner, but also meet legal standards and local labour law requirements. Designated managers should have access to specialist advice or training on investigations and handling staff misconduct. • A grievance procedure and whistle-blowing policy should also be in place to deal with staff complaints. • Organisations working with partners should agree on how they will raise and handle complaints (including against each other).

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.	**Staff behaviour and codes of conduct** • Organisations meeting this Commitment should have a staff code of conduct that is well publicised and endorsed by senior management. • A child safeguarding policy should apply to all staff and partners, and inductions and training should be provided on expected standards of behaviour. • Staff should know and understand the consequences of breaching the code (see Commitments 3 & 8).
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.	**Scope and referral** • Staff should be aware of how to handle complaints or allegations of abuse. In the case of criminal activity or where international law has been broken, liaison with the appropriate authorities will be necessary.

Links to further guidance

Danish Refugee Council (2008) 'Complaints Mechanism Handbook':

http://www.alnap.org/resource/8762

IASC Task force on PSEA (2009) 'Guidelines on Setting Up a Community Based Complaints Mechanism Regarding Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and non-UN Personnel':

www.pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/1351822689.pdf

Save the Children (2013) 'Putting Accountability into Practice':

http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/programme-accountability-guidance-pack-save-children-resource

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 6

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

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.

Why is this Commitment important?

Adequate programme coverage and timely, effective humanitarian responses require collective action. Coordination mechanisms, such as the cluster system, are required to establish a clear division of labour and responsibility and to identify gaps in coverage and quality. It is important to prevent the duplication of efforts and the waste of resources. The sharing of information and knowledge between stakeholders, joint planning and integrated activities can also ensure that organisations manage risk better and improve the outcomes of a response.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis do not identify gaps and overlaps in the response.
2. Responding organisations share relevant information through formal and informal coordination mechanisms.
3. Organisations coordinate needs assessments, delivery of humanitarian aid and monitoring of its implementation.

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Is information about the organisation's competences, resources, geographical areas and sectors of work shared with others responding to the crisis in a timely way?
- Is information about the competences, resources, areas and sectors of work of other organisations, including local and national authorities, accessed and used?
- 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?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
6.1 Identify the roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different stakeholders.[3]	**Working with the private sector** • The private sector can bring commercial efficiencies, complementary expertise and resources to humanitarian agencies. Information sharing, at the very least, is required to avoid duplication and to promote humanitarian good practice. Partnerships with the private sector should ensure that there are explicit benefits for people affected by crisis, whilst recognising that private sector actors may have additional objectives of their own. **Working with the military** • The military brings particular expertise and resources, including security, logistics, transport and communication. However any association with the military should be in the service of, and led by, humanitarian agencies and according to endorsed guidelines. Some organisations will maintain a minimum dialogue to ensure operational efficiency (e.g. basic programme information sharing) while others may establish stronger links (e.g. the 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] Including local actors, humanitarian organisations, local authorities, private companies and other relevant groups.

6.2 Ensure humanitarian response complements that of national and local authorities[4] and other humanitarian organisations.	**Complementary assistance** • Humanitarian agencies have an essential role to play in supporting the state's response and coordination function. • Local organisations and civil society networks will have a significant amount of context-specific knowledge and experience but may need support in re-establishing themselves following the effects of a disaster. • 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 the links to further guidance below).
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.	**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 international agencies. The location of meetings or language can be a barrier to the participation of local actors. National and sub-national mechanisms are required and clear reporting lines will need to be established. Participation in coordination mechanisms before a disaster establishes relationships and enhances coordination during a response. • Where parallel coordination structures are necessary, there should be a clear strategy for linking with longer-term coordination bodies. The cluster system is a recognised mechanism for the coordination of emergencies, but should support national coordination mechanisms. • 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. Coordination leaders have a responsibility to ensure that meetings and information sharing are well managed, efficient and results-oriented. The coordination body needs to determine the scope of its activities and commitments, as well as the overlap with other coordination bodies and how this will be managed (e.g. in relation to accountability, gender and protection). • 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 not only to technical standards but also to the CHS, and by ensuring that the performance indicators for the CHS are adapted to the context and used to monitor and evaluate the response.
6.4 Share necessary information with partners, coordination groups and other relevant actors through appropriate communication channels.	**Sharing information** • Sharing information (including financial) between different stakeholders and different coordination mechanisms 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 communications and examine barriers to communication so that local stakeholders are enabled to participate. • Care must be taken to speak clearly and avoid jargon and colloquialisms, especially when other participants do not speak the same language. There may also be a need to provide interpreters and translators.

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[4] 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.

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

- Is there a clear commitment in organisational policies and/or strategies to work in collaboration with other actors?
- Have criteria or conditions for partner selection, collaboration and coordination been established?
- Are formal partnership arrangements in place?
- Do partnership agreements include clear definitions of roles, responsibilities and commitments of each partner, including how each partner will contribute to jointly meeting humanitarian principles?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
6.5 Policies and strategies include a clear commitment to coordination and collaboration with others, including national and local authorities, without compromising humanitarian principles.	**Commitment to coordination and collaboration** • An organisation that meets the CHS 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. Coordination responsibilities should be clearly articulated in their job descriptions.
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.	**Working with partners** • Both local and national organisations should engage or collaborate with partners. A clear and shared understanding of each other's organisational mandate, and mutual roles and responsibilities, is needed if partnerships are to be effective and accountable. • There may be different types of arrangements with partners, ranging from the purely contractual 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. However, there will always be opportunities for mutual learning and development and both parties stand to gain from the partnership.

Links to further guidance

IASC (2012) 'Reference module for cluster coordination at the country level':

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters

NRC (2008) 'Camp management toolkit':

http://www.nrc.no/camp#.VLz95ihb7ns

Christian Aid (2012) 'Building the future of humanitarian aid: Local capacity and partnerships in emergency assistance':

http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/building-the-future-of-humanitarian-aid.pdf

Knox Clarke, P. and Campbell, L. (2015) 'Exploring coordination in humanitarian clusters'. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI:

http://www.alnap.org/resource/20360

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 7

C

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.

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. Collaboration with other agencies can also enhance learning.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis identify improvements to the assistance and protection they receive over time.
2. Improvements are made to assistance and protection interventions as a result of the learning generated in the current response.
3. The assistance and protection provided reflects learning from other responses.

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Are evaluations and reviews of responses of similar crises consulted and incorporated as relevant in 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?
- Are specific systems used to share learning with relevant stakeholders, including affected people and partners?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
7.1 Draw on lessons learnt and prior experience when designing programmes.	**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, 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. • Monitoring systems should be made as simple and accessible as possible, whilst recognising that information should be representative of different groups. • People affected by crisis are the best judges of changes in their lives and the use of open-ended listening and other qualitative participatory 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.

7.2 Learn, innovate and implement changes on the basis of monitoring and evaluation, and feedback and complaints.	**Innovation** • 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. • People affected by crisis have also always been innovative in adapting to changing circumstances and support could be provided to involve them in a more systematic process of innovation and development.
7.3 Share learning and innovation internally, with communities and people affected by crisis, and with other stakeholders.	**Collaboration and sharing of lessons** • In the interest of transparency and programme effectiveness, information from monitoring should be regularly shared with affected communities. Monitoring carried out by the people themselves can further enhance transparency and quality and encourage their ownership of the information. • Collaborative learning with other agencies and academic bodies is a professional obligation and can introduce fresh perspectives and ideas, as well as maximising the use of limited resources. Collaboration also helps to reduce the burden of repeated evaluations in the same community. • 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 help to make information and knowledge more accessible.

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

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

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
7.4 Evaluation and learning policies are in place, and means are available to learn from experiences and improve practices.	**Evaluation and learning policies** • Key lessons and areas identified for improvement are not always addressed systematically and lessons cannot be considered learned unless they have brought about demonstrable changes in current or subsequent responses. • In its learning cycle, an organisation should include a review and improvement plan for its performance that is based on measurable, objective indicators. • 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.
7.5 Mechanisms exist to record knowledge and experience, and make it accessible throughout the organisation.	**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.

7.6 The organisation contributes to learning and innovation in humanitarian response amongst peers and within the sector.	**Peer and sector learning** • 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 system-wide learning. Sharing challenges as well as successes amongst peers can enable humanitarians to identify risks and avoid future mistakes. • The amount of evidence that is available across the sector is much greater than what is available to any single organisation and therefore, economies of scale can be achieved through system-wide learning activities. There is also strong indication that organisations learning and reviewing evidence together are more likely to provide the catalyst for organisational change than lessons learned within a single organisation.

Links to further guidance

The Sphere Project (2015) 'Sphere for monitoring and evaluation'. Sphere Unpacked series:

http://www.sphereproject.org/silo/files/sphere-for-monitoring-and-evaluation.pdf

Buchanan-Smith, M. & Cosgrave, J. (2013) 'Evaluation of Humanitarian Action: Pilot Guide'. ALNAP:

http://www.alnap.org/what-we-do/evaluation/eha#

Norman, B. (2013) 'Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments'. Tearfund:

http://www.alnap.org/resource/7956

Catley, A., Burns, J., Abebe, D., Suji, O. (2013) 'Participatory Impact Assessment: A Design Guide'. Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, Somerville:

http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/PIA-guide_revised-2014-3.pdf

Hallam, A. and Bonino, F. (2013) 'Using Evaluation for a Change: Insights from humanitarian practitioners'. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI:

http://www.alnap.org/resource/8980

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 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.

Why is this Commitment important?

The actions of staff are the foundation of each of the Nine 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 CHS. Staff-related costs are often the largest proportion of an organisation's costs and of most programme budgets, and investments in staff should be carefully nurtured if they are to yield the best outcomes for communities affected by crisis. Responsibilities related to staff, and the organisation's approach to its workforce as a whole, are also included in the other eight Commitments.

Performance indicators

1. Male and female staff feel supported by their organisation to do their work.
2. Staff satisfactorily meet their performance objectives.
3. Communities and people affected by crisis assess staff to be effective (i.e. in terms of their knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes).

Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Are the organisation's mandate and values communicated to new staff?
- Is staff performance managed, under-performance addressed and good performance recognised?
- Do staff sign a code of conduct or similarly binding document? If so, do they receive orientation on this and other relevant policies which allows them to understand it properly?
- Are complaints received about staff or partners' staff? How are they handled?
- Are staff aware of support available for developing the competences required by their role and are they making use of it?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
8.1 Staff work according to the mandate and values of the organisation and to agreed objectives and performance standards (see also guidance note for 8.2).	**Staff and volunteers** • Any designated representative of the organisation, including national, international, permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants, is considered to be a member of staff. 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.
8.2 Staff adhere to the policies that are relevant to them and understand the consequences of not adhering to them.	**Adhering to organisational mandates, values and policies** • Staff are expected to work within the legal scope, mission, values and vision of the organisation, which should be defined and communicated to them. 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 agreed together with their manager. • Whilst the organisation should make policies easily accessible, staff must apply the policies that are relevant to them and accept the consequences if they fail to do so. • The need for inductions and training relating to the organisational mandate, policies and codes of conduct will apply to all situations (even during a rapid scale-up).

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.	**Performance standards and development of competencies** • Staff and their employers are mutually accountable for their own skills development – including management skills. With the help of clear objectives and performance standards, they should understand what skills, competencies and knowledge (including, for example, the ability to listen well) are required to perform their current role. They should also be made aware of the opportunities for growth and development that might be available or required. 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, as a minimum, provide an induction and on-the-job training. • There are various methods that can be used to assess a staff member's skills and behaviours, including observation, reviewing work output, direct discussions with them and interviewing their colleagues. Regular documented performance appraisals should allow managers to identify areas for support and training (see the links to further guidance below).

Guiding questions for monitoring Organisational Responsibilities

• Are procedures in place for assessing human resource needs in relation to programme size and scope, in conjunction with HR?
• Does organisational planning make provision for future leadership needs and for developing new talent?
• Do staff policies and procedures comply with local employment law and follow recognised good practice in managing staff?
• Do all staff have updated job descriptions and objectives, including specific responsibilities and objectives?
• Is the rewards and benefits structure fair, transparent and consistently applied?
• Are all staff provided with an induction and updates on performance management and staff development policies and procedures?
• Are all staff (and contractors) required to sign a code of conduct (that covers the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse) and provided with an appropriate induction on the code of conduct?
• Does the organisation have a security policy and guidelines which are location specific and known to staff?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
8.4 The organisation has the management and staff capacity and capability to deliver its programmes.	**Staff capacity and capability** • People management systems will depend on each agency and context but should be informed by good practice. They need to 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. • While this does not mean that organisations must only undertake a project if they have managed to assemble all the necessary resources and expertise at the start, organisation-wide preparedness (involving operations, HR, finance and other functions) is vital to agree how the resources required will 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. • High staff turnover can undermine programme quality and continuity. It can also lead to staff avoiding to take personal responsibility and a failure to develop trust between the organisation and the communities it is working with.
8.5 Staff policies and procedures are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and compliant with local employment law.	**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 the agency may be, staff should participate in the development and review of policies where possible to ensure that their views are represented. A staff manual facilitates knowledge of and consultation on policies. • 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 contextually appropriate responses.

	• An effective response is not simply about ensuring that skilled staff are present – it will also depend on the way that individuals are managed. Research from emergency contexts shows that effective management, frameworks and procedures are as important as, if not more important than, the skills of personnel 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.
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.	**Staff guidance** • 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, and document these in a development plan.
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.	**Staff 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.
8.8 Policies are in place to support staff to improve their skills and competencies.	**Staff competencies** • 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 to contribute to talent development. 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.
8.9 Policies are in place for the security and the well-being of staff.	**Security and well-being** • Staff often work long hours in risky and stressful conditions. An agency's duty of care to its workers includes actions to promote well-being 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. Measures that can be adopted include 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 well-being. Psychosocial support should be immediately available to workers who have experienced or witnessed extremely distressing events.

Links to further guidance

CHS Alliance (2015) HR Tool:

http://chsalliance.org/files/files/Resources/Tools-and-guidance/CHS-Alliance-Handbook-for-Managing-HR-Effectiveness-Final.pdf

CBHA (2010) 'Core Humanitarian Competencies Guide: Humanitarian Capacity Building Throughout the Employee Life Cycle':

http://www.start-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Core-Humanitarian-Competencies-Guide.pdf

ECB (2007) 'Building Trust in Diverse Teams: The Toolkit for Emergency Response':

http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/building-trust-in-diverse-teams-the-toolkit-for-emergency-response-115413

People In Aid (2011) 'Debriefing: building staff capacity':

http://chsalliance.org/files/files/Resources/Case-Studies/Debriefing-building-staff-capacity.pdf

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Commitment 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.

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. Communities affected by crisis 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.

Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis are aware about community-level budgets, expenditure and results achieved.
2. Communities and people affected by crisis consider that the available resources are being used:
   a. for what they were intended; and
   b. without diversion or wastage.
3. The resources obtained for the response are used and monitored according to agreed plans, targets, budgets and timeframes.
4. Humanitarian response is delivered in a way that is cost effective.

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 competitive bidding process?
- Are potential impacts on the environment (water, soil, air, biodiversity) monitored, and actions taken to mitigate them?
- Is a safe whistle-blowing procedure in place and known to staff, affected communities and other stakeholders?
- Are cost-effectiveness and social impact monitored?

Key Actions	Guidance notes
9.1 Design programmes and implement processes to ensure the efficient use of resources[5], balancing quality, cost and timeliness at each phase of the response.	**Programme issues** • 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 (e.g. the use of cash) that may offer better value for money. • In rapid onset emergencies, it may be necessary to adapt procedures to enable faster financial decision-making and to cope with challenges in the humanitarian context (e.g. a lack of available suppliers to carry out competitive tenders). However, the elevated risk of corruption in humanitarian contexts means it is important to provide training and support to staff as well as complaints mechanisms to prevent adapted systems being open to corruption (see Commitments 3 & 5). • Deploying experienced senior staff during this time can help to mitigate the risks and ensure that a balance is struck between providing a timely response and one that also maintains standards and limits waste.

[5] 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.

	• Collaboration and coordination between organisations can also contribute to a more efficient response (e.g. by conducting joint assessments or evaluations and supporting interagency registration and logistics systems).
	• At the end of the project, the assets and resources that remain will need to be donated, sold or returned responsibly.
9.2 Manage and use resources to achieve their intended purpose, minimising waste.	**Using resources for their intended 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 resources away from those who need them most. However, an intervention that is not effective because it is understaffed 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 must not be diverted to support terrorist activities and many donors impose vetting systems on potential partners to mitigate this risk.
9.3 Monitor and report expenditure against budget.	**Monitoring and reporting on expenditure** • Financial management is an important aspect of programme management and good quality financial planning and monitoring systems are required to ensure that 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 specially designated to compile financial reports. Staff should be encouraged to report any suspected fraud, corruption or misuse of resources (see Lewis, T. 2010 in the links to further guidance below).
9.4 When using local and natural resources, consider their impact on the environment.	**Environmental impact and use of natural resources** • Humanitarian responses can have negative impacts on the environment, producing large amounts of waste, degrading natural resources, 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 the URD/UNEP toolkit in the links to further guidance below).
9.5 Manage the risk of corruption and take appropriate action if it is identified.	**Managing corruption risks** • The definition and understanding of corrupt practices is not the same in 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, careful on-site monitoring but also treating community members with respect can 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 *Hees et al.* 2014 in the links to further guidance below).

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?

Organisational Responsibilities	Guidance notes
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.	**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, the receiver should politely refuse it. But if it is accepted, 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 *Hees et al.* 2014). **Environmentally responsible organisations** • Organisations should commit to environmentally sound policies and practices and make use of existing guidelines to help address environmental issues in an emergency. • Green procurement policies help reduce the impact on the environment but need to be managed in a way that does not or minimises delay in the provision of assistance. **Corruption and fraud** • Fraud includes theft, diversion of goods or property and 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 *Hees et al.* 2014). **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 if they or their family stand 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. For example, 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 of interest is key to managing them. **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 and externally audited annual accounts provide some measure of guarantee against fraud and the misuse of funds. Audited accounts and other regular financial reports should be published transparently and communicated in ways accessible to both staff and affected communities.

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 should be handled first.

Links to further guidance

Groupe URD/UNEP 'Training toolkit: Integrating the environment into humanitarian action and early recovery':

http://postconflict.unep.ch/humanitarianaction/training.html

OCHA & UNEP (2014) 'Environment and Humanitarian action' (factsheet):

https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/EHA_factsheet_final.pdf

Mango (2013) Top Tips for financial governance (webpage):

http://www.mango.org.uk/toptips/tt20gov

Lewis, T. (2010) 'Financial Management Essentials: Handbook for NGOs'. Mango:

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

Bond (2012) 'Value for money – what it means for UK NGOs (Background paper)':

https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Value_for_money_-_what_it_means_for_NGOs_Jan_2012.pdf

Hees, R., Ahlendorf, M. & Debere, S. (2014) 'Preventing corruption in humanitarian operations'. Transparency International:

http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/handbook_of_good_practices_preventing_corruption_in_humanitarian_operations

See the CHS Alliance website for more resources: http://chsalliance.org/resources

Annex 1
Terms and definitions used

For the purposes of the **CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators**, 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, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence [records, statements of fact or other information which are relevant and verifiable] and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria [set of policies, procedures or requirements] are fulfilled.

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 minimum levels of behaviour expected and any disciplinary action that could follow in cases of 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: 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: 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.

Coping mechanisms: some 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.

Corruption: "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain".[6] 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.

Disaster risk reduction: is a type of response that aims to identify and address risks caused by both climate (e.g. drought, floods and landslides) and non-climate related disasters (e.g. 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 well-being 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.

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[6] Transparency International

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 (goods or services) specified especially by law or contract. People affected by crisis have a right to protection and security and these and other rights are enshrined in international humanitarian law and human rights declarations, which most countries have signed up to.

Evaluation: usually an episodic assessment of performance, focused on results (outcomes and impacts) that can be internal or external. Evaluations can provide assessments of what works and why, and highlight 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[7] uses six criteria to judge the quality of evidence used in humanitarian action: "accuracy; representativeness; relevance; generalisability; attribution; and clarity around context and methods".

Feedback mechanism: 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 with a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action to improve some element of the response.[8] Feedback can also be provided informally.

Fraud: 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: 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 Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). Composition includes representatives from the UN, the International Organization for Migration (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 taken to prevent and prepare for them.

Impartiality: relates to giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress, being objective and not discriminating because of someone's nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, tribal allegiances or political opinion.

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

Mutual accountability: a process by which two or more 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.

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[7] Knox Clarke, P. & Darcy, J. (2014) 'Insufficient evidence? The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action'. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI. http://www.alnap.org/resource/10441.aspx.
[8] Bonino, F. *et al.* (2014) 'Closing the Loop – effective feedback in humanitarian contexts'. *ALNAP-CDA Practitioner Guidance*. London: ALNAP/ODI.

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 people to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them. It is achieved through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and worst 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 comprised of 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, ranging from acting as a supplier, donor, 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 or ethnic, social, religious or other background. It goes beyond the immediate life-saving activities that are often the focus during an emergency.

Psychological debriefing: a formal process that encourages participants to relive distressing or traumatic events. This has been found, at best, to not 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.

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. 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 also ensure 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 organisations and activities helps to re-establish individual and community self-respect and identity, and enhance a person's capacity to recover from a disaster.

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: "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: 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.

Staff competencies: 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.

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.

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

Whistle-blowing: when a member of staff reports suspected wrongdoing at work. This includes the suspicion of fraud or misuse of resources, neglect of duties or when someone's health and safety is in danger.

The **CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators** supplement the Core

Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS). Aimed at all

humanitarian actors and organisations involved in planning, managing

or implementing a humanitarian response, this document provides

clarification on the Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities laid out

in the CHS and examines some of the practical challenges that may arise

when applying the CHS. It explains why each of the Nine Commitments

of the CHS is important and provides indicators and guiding questions

to promote measurement of progress towards meeting the standard and

drive continuous learning and improvement.