QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMPASS

2018 VERSION

IMPLEMENTING

FUNDING

EVALUATING

IMPROVING

PUTTING QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY INTO PRACTICE
Guidelines, processes and tools to help
implement the Core Humanitarian Standard in the field

Groupe URD

CONTRIBUTIONS

The COMPASS will be regularly updated to ensure it remains relevant. Suggestions or other lessons learned from field experience will be included in future versions. Please send any feedback and/or suggestions to: mcarrier@urd.org

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QUALITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY
COMPASS

Groupe URD
Urgence . Réhabilitation . Développement

Core Humanitarian Standard · Core Humanitarian Standard · Core Humanitarian Standard · Core Humanitarian Standard ·

Communities and people affected by crisis

Humanity

Impartiality

Neutrality

Independence

1 Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

2 Humanitarian response is effective and timely.

3 Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

4 Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.

5 Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

6 Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.

7 Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.

8 Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.

9 Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

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HOW CAN THE QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BE STRENGTHENED?

WHAT IS THE COMPASS AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD?

The COMPASS is a **quality and accountability management method for humanitarian and development projects.** It has been specifically designed by Groupe URD to help apply the quality and accountability commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard in the field **for any intervention zone, sector or context.**

⬦ The COMPASS – An up-dated version of the Quality COMPAS

The COMPAS was first developed by Groupe URD in 2004 and was organised around a quality reference framework, the Compass Rose, made up of 12 quality criteria. In 2014, Groupe URD joined HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project in their efforts to harmonise standards and integrate the Quality COMPAS reference framework into the **Core Humanitarian Standard** (CHS).

⬦ Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) – Nine Commitments and Quality Criteria

The COMPASS is built around the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS). This is a voluntary code that describes the essential elements of **principled, accountable and quality humanitarian action.**
The Core Humanitarian Standard sets out Nine Commitments centred on communities and people affected by crisis that organisations and individuals can use to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian or development interventions.

Pour plus d'informations, voir : https://corehumanitarianstandard.org

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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.

HOW DOES THE COMPASS RELATE TO OTHER CHS INITIATIVES?

◢ A collective effort

The COMPASS is part of a collective effort to help put the Core Humanitarian Standard into practice. An important role is played by the numerous organisations around the world who advocate in favour of using the CHS and promote it among humanitarian and development workers. For their part, the three founding bodies – the CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD – play complementary roles:

- **The CHS Alliance**[1] assists its members and the wider community to promote and implement the CHS throughout their organisations.

- **Sphere**[2] brings together a wide range of humanitarian agencies with the aim of improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. The Sphere Handbook establishes common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.
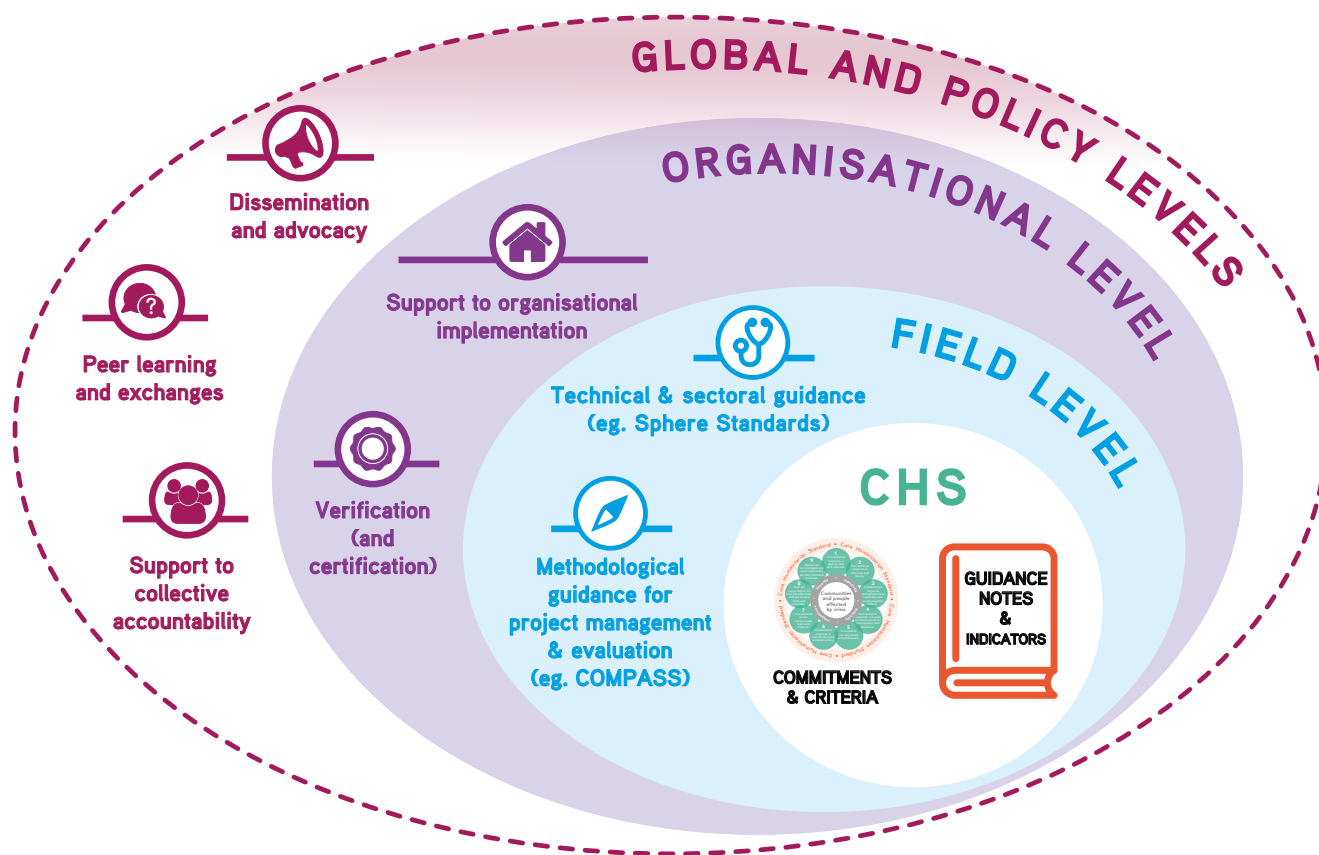
[1] https://www.chsalliance.org
[2] http://www.sphereproject.org/sphere/fr

- **Groupe URD[3]** helps organisations to improve the quality of their programmes through evaluations, research, training, and strategic and organisational support.

✦ Tools & support

The COMPASS is a methodological guide that includes recommendations and tools to implement the quality and accountability commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard in the field. It has been developed to complement existing guides and tools for implementing the Core Humanitarian Standard at field, organisational and international/policy levels.

TOOLS AND SUPPORTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD

GLOBAL AND POLICY LEVELS

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

FIELD LEVEL

Dissemination and advocacy

Peer learning and exchanges

Support to collective accountability

Support to organisational implementation

Verification (and certification)

Technical & sectoral guidance (eg. Sphere Standards)

Methodological guidance for project management & evaluation (eg. COMPASS)

CHS

COMMITMENTS & CRITERIA

GUIDANCE NOTES & INDICATORS

For more information on recommended tools and guidance to help implement the CHS: https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources

For more information on quality & accountability guidance and tools, including the detailed COMPASS guide, the COMPASS dashboard and specific quality & accountability tools: http://www.urd.org

[3] https://urd.org/?lang=en

WHY USE THE COMPASS?

The COMPASS aims to help individuals and organisations from the humanitarian and development sector to put quality and accountability into practice. It can help to:

Put the Core Humanitarian Standard into practice for field interventions

The COMPASS provides recommendations, processes and tools to help individuals and organisations put the commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard into practice in the field based on their specific needs, demands and resources.

Increase the coherence of humanitarian and development interventions

The COMPASS helps the different stakeholders involved in a response to communities and people affected by crisis (operators, donors, evaluators, etc.) to use a common language.

Increase the quality and accountability of humanitarian and development organisations

The COMPAS can help organisations to:

- **Reinforce internal synergy** – The COMPASS can mould the distinct demands of different departments into a coherent and minimal set of control mechanisms.
- **Put other cross-cutting commitments into practice** – The COMPASS can help to implement cross-cutting commitments such as localisation, gender or PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse).
- **Reinforce the links between relief, rehabilitation and development** – The COMPASS can be used in different contexts to increase the synergy between relief, rehabilitation and development operations.

HOW IS THE COMPASS ORGANISED?

The COMPASS – Four "entry points"

The COMPASS is organised around four key and complementary actions of a humanitarian or development intervention:

1. IMPLEMENTING – HOW TO USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD TO IMPLEMENT A PROJECT

This section describes how project steering mechanisms can help to respond responsibly to the needs of communities and people affected by crisis.

It is aimed primarily at **"operators"** – individuals and organisations in charge of implementing and supporting projects (particularly project teams and operating partners).

2. FUNDING – HOW TO USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD IN RELATION TO PROJECT FUNDING.

This section describes how the funding process can help to implement high quality and accountable projects.

It is aimed primarily at **"Funders"** – Individuals and organisations in charge of funding projects or an organisation (such as institutional donors and operators who include a funding component in their operational approach).

3. EVALUATING – HOW TO USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD TO EVALUATE A PROJECT.

This section describes how an evaluation can use the Core Humanitarian Standard's quality criteria to complement the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, prioritise areas of analysis and identify relevant evaluation questions.

It is primarily aimed at **"Evaluators"** – the people and organisations in charge of evaluating projects (notably those who commission evaluations and the individuals who carry them out).

4. IMPROVING – HOW TO USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD TO IMPLEMENT A PROJECT MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL) SYSTEM.

This section describes how to translate institutional demands in terms of quality and accountability into a project Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system that is adapted to the particular needs, demands and resources of an organisation, consortium or programme.

It is primarily aimed at **"Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Advisors"** – individuals and organisations who are responsible for establishing the steering framework for projects (notably MEAL focal points and operational coordinators).

Each of these entry points is explained in a specific section of the COMPASS.

A joint section – "Shared Commitments" – underlines the need for coherence, complementarity and coordination between these different entry points.

COMPASS tools and support materials

All the information presented in the following pages is compiled into a single poster: the **COMPASS Board**, which provides a coherent, structured and comprehensive overview of the proposed quality and accountability management approach for aid projects.

Other tools and support materials will be developed to facilitate the implementation of the Core humanitarian standard in the field. See at: www.urd.org

What the COMPASS does NOT cover

The COMPASS is not a project management guide. Although quality and accountability management is an important part of project management, this companion book does not cover other key aspects such as time or procurement management.

The COMPASS is not a technical guide specific to a particular sector. It offers cross-cutting methodological recommendations that must then be translated per sector of intervention. You can refer to the various complementary technical recommendations produced for each specific sector, such as the complementary SPHERE standards for water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action[4].

The COMPASS is not a tool for assessing the overall situation of an organisation. You can refer to the CHS Alliance self-assessment tool to assess an organisation from an institutional perspective[5].

[4] http://www.spherehandbook.org
[5] http://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/verification/self-assessment

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**HOW TO WORK TOGETHER TO IMPLEMENT
QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES IN THE FIELD**

This section describes the issues at stake in terms of collaboration and interoperability during the different stages of a response to a crisis. It underlines the need for coherence, coordination and complementarity between the actors in order to help implement quality and accountability principles in the field.

This section is split into two parts:

1. The introduction looks at how the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) can help to reinforce coherence, coordination and complementarity between actors involved in facilitating an intervention.

2. A practical file underlines, for each phase of the project cycle and for each quality criterion of the Core Humanitarian Standard, the good practices that each operator, funder, MEAL advisor or evaluator can implement or facilitate to contribute to a high-quality and accountable intervention.

It is aimed at any actor involved in the different stages of a crisis response (operator, donor, evaluator, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

⬆ How can the Core Humanitarian Standard help to implement quality and accountability principles in the field?

The concepts of quality and accountability[6] involve numerous issues: **strategic issues** with regard to improving people's living conditions concretely and realistically while consolidating relations of trust and complementarity with the different stakeholders; **management issues** with regard to reducing internal problems and ensuring that resources are used more effectively; and lastly **ethical issues** with regard to acting responsibly vis-à-vis crisis-affected people, funders, partners, staff and civil society.

[6] The COMPASS method is based on the definition of quality and accountability that is used in the Core Humanitarian Standard (p. 22):
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.
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.

If you implement, support, fund or evaluate projects aimed at communities and people affected by crisis, you will directly or indirectly have to deal with the challenges of putting into practice quality and accountability principles. You will therefore have to deal with the following big questions:

→ How can we monitor and analyse evolving needs?

→ How can we develop agile projects that are adapted to the context?

→ How can we implement project responsibly?

→ How can we reinforce external and internal synergy?

→ How can we put cross-cutting commitments, such as age, the environment, gender and handicap into practice?

→ How can we identify the effects and impacts of a project?

→ How can we contribute to reinforcing the resilience of populations?

→ …

… and how do we do all this in situations where there is a very heavy workload, adapting to the specific characteristics of each context, sector and operational zone, and remaining focused above all on the shared mission of improving people's living conditions?

The humanitarian and development sector does not lack tools, guides or good practices for all the quality and accountability questions that you might have. In September 2014, the participants at a workshop during Groupe URD's Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid[7] listed no fewer than 150 reference tools for humanitarian and development actors[8]. As there is a risk of feeling a little lost faced with such a profusion of tools, the Core Humanitarian Standard can represent a general framework to guide different actors (What do I really need?) and increase the coherence between these different initiatives (What complementarity exists?)[9].

◤ A shared definition of the quality and accountability of aid[10]

Due to the great diversity in the humanitarian and development sector, generic concepts such as quality and accountability have a different resonance from one actor to the next. Of course, first and foremost, they must meet people's basic needs responsibly, but each stakeholder also has numerous other preoccupations. Donors, for example, need to ensure that their implementing partners adhere to administrative and financial rules; national authorities need to make sure aid does not weaken their prerogatives, and reinforces their means of action, etc.

A humanitarian or development project, which is at the interface between all these issues, also has to take into account the point of view of the population, who are often the least able to express themselves, while also meeting the demands of the other stakeholders… Using a reference framework that reconciles the legitimate points of view of each stakeholder while focusing on the quality of the results and the impact for communities and people affected by crisis is the central challenge that the Core Humanitarian Standard attempts to meet.

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7   http://www.urd.org/Quality-in-humanitarian-actions
8   Extract from the article, "Peer review - a way for the humanitarian sector to learn and improve", HEM, Groupe URD, Julien Carlier & Hugues Maury, https://www.urd.org/Peer-review-a-way-for-the
9   See the «quality & accountability map» tool developed by Groupe URD based on the criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard to help organisations identify improvement needs and position quality and accountability initiatives that are relevant to them - www.urd.org
10 Extract from an article by Véronique de Geoffroy that appeared on Grotius in December 2014. https://grotius.fr/le-core-humanitarian-standard-chs-nouvelle-tentative-dembrigadement-du-secteur-ou-etape-innovante-et-porteuse/

The nine quality criteria which make up the structure of the reference framework describe nine different and complementary dimensions of the quality and accountability of a humanitarian or development intervention. They rework and complement the twelve criteria of the Quality COMPAS' Compass Rose[11] as well as the OECD-DAC criteria which are often used for project evaluations. And lastly, they also include the essence of the 2010 HAP Standard, the People in Aid Code of Good Practice and the Sphere Core Standards.

The Core humanitarian Standard is therefore neither revolutionary nor totally new. Experienced professionals will find it to be simply an explanation of collective knowledge. But this shared definition of quality and accountability helps to resolve the confusion that has been created due to the many different standards that have been produced in the last twenty years. It also provides a clearer and more coherent expression of the criteria and principles that define a "good" intervention with communities and people affected by crisis.

◣ 360 degrees of Quality & Accountability

People can be affected by a crisis directly or indirectly; they can be victims and beneficiaries, but above all they are actors of their own destiny. Humanitarian or development aid should not be the only response to a crisis, but whenever it is implemented, the population, civil society and the authorities should be placed at its centre.

With a growing number of humanitarian and development organisations in numerous contexts, and particularly the growing influence of "non-traditional" actors, such as the military and businesses, it is important to specify the different roles in the value chain of a response, between:

→ Operators (lead organisation and operational partners) who are in charge of implementing the response;

→ Funding agencies who establish the conditions in which the response is funded;

→ MEAL Advisors (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) who establish the steering framework and support the operators;

→ Evaluators who analyse the response and make recommendations.

! **Important** This typology of roles can be applied regardless of the status of the organisations involved (non-governmental, state, etc.) or their origin (local, national or international).

The different parties involved in the delivery of aid are jointly responsible for guaranteeing that there is optimal quality and accountability in relation to the context of the project. Each of the roles above is responsible for ensuring that there is coherence and complementarity with the other actors in order to implement a high quality and accountable response, with the population at the centre of activities and decision-making.

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[11] The first version of the Quality COMPAS was not based on the Core Humanitarian Standard, which had not yet been developed, but on a quality reference framework of 12 criteria called the Compass Rose.

Experience from the field - Albania

NATO troops based in Albania were in charge of distributing relief items to refugees fleeing the conflict and NATO bombardments in Kosovo. NATO Member States disbursed funds to provide assistance for the refugees. The UNHCR was no longer in a position to coordinate relief efforts effectively, nor to guarantee protection for refugees who had fled into the Albanian territory, and were thus the responsibility of the Albanian State. Aid agencies soon became confused about who was in charge of coordinating relief efforts and who was responsible for allocating funding for project proposals. The UNHCR, whose mandate covered these activities? The Albanian government, who theoretically had the legitimacy to do so? NATO Member States, who were effectively providing funding? Or NATO troops, who had access to accurate information?

Commitment 6 – Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance

A project can only be of good quality and improve if all the actors involved in delivering aid (MEAL Advisors, donors, operators, and evaluators) work in a coherent and complementary way. The Core Humanitarian Standard can help to give meaning to a collective intervention and find a common language. It can act as an interface between the different actors involved in the delivery of aid and thus facilitate operational interoperability.
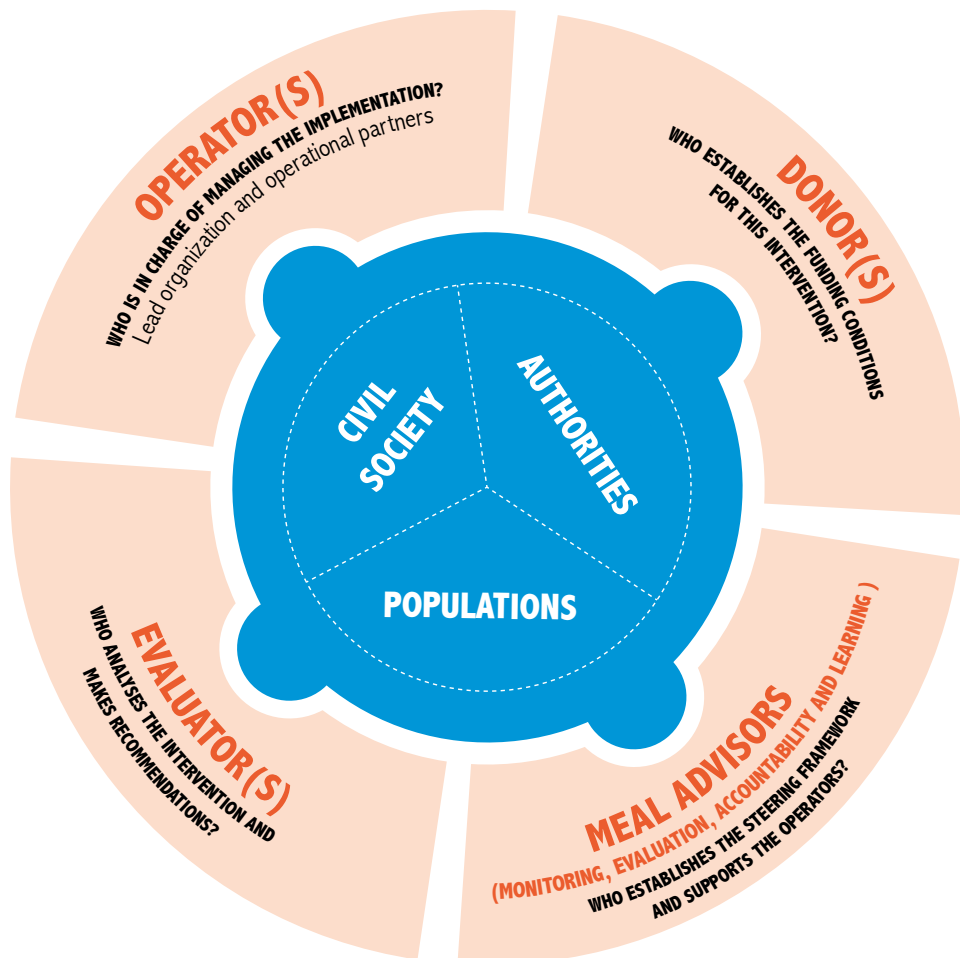
This notion of "interoperability" is absolutely crucial in order to apply the principles of quality and accountability in the field. It raises the question of coherence and sharing between different actors and different steering systems. The aim is therefore not to standardize the systems but to ensure that they are able to interact and contribute to increasing the complementarity of the actors in charge of facilitating the implementation of a project.

⮤ How to put the Core Humanitarian Standard into practice in the field

The Core Humanitarian Standard points in the right direction, but, on its own, it will not be able to improve the humanitarian and development sector in the long term, because it remains a declaration of good intentions, whereas a whole system that promotes better quality and accountability needs to be established[12].

"CHS" certification projects are currently underway, which may provide added value in certain situations, but these are not a magic bullet that will solve all the humanitarian and development sector's problems of quality and accountability. In order to simplify and increase the coherence of the sector, and avoid adding extra constraints for organisations and their staff, it is important to diversify the ways of using the Core Humanitarian Standard.

One of the main principles of the Core Humanitarian Standard is its non-prescriptive nature: each organisation or group of organisations is therefore free to refer to it and adapt it to its practices on a voluntary basis. This freedom of choice allows them to apply the principles of quality and accountability in the field via Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning activities, and for each project cycle phase.
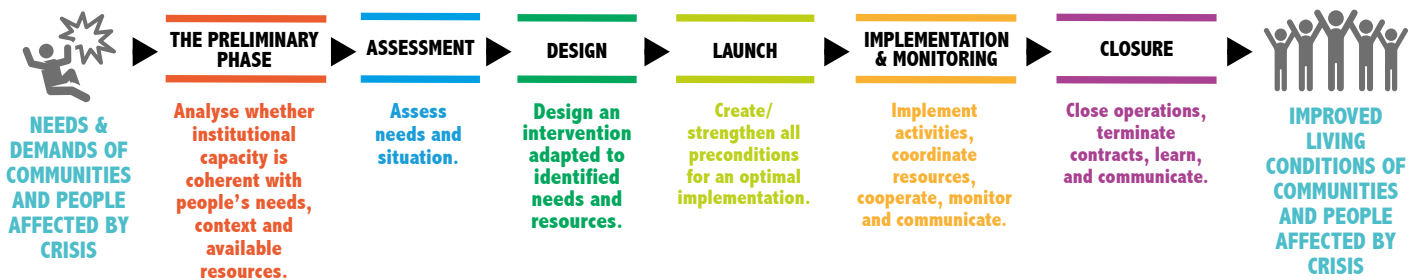
⮤ Project cycle

Operators, funders, advisors and evaluators can meet and organise their contributions around the six phases of the project cycle proposed by the COMPASS:

1. **The preliminary phase** to decide whether to commence the Initial Assessment phase or not.
2. **The Initial Assessment phase** to collect all the necessary information to a) decide whether to design a project, or not, and b) design it.
3. **The design phase** to develop a relevant project strategy.
4. **The launch phase** to create all the necessary conditions for the optimal implementation of activities.
5. **The implementation and monitoring phase** to ensure that planned activities are carried out and achieve the intended results for communities and people affected by crisis.
6. **The closure phase** to confirm the completion of activities, recognise the level of achievements, facilitate learning from field experience and allow the closure of any contractual files in accordance with national law, donor rules and internal regulations.

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[12]   Peer review - a way for the humanitarian sector to learn and improve", HEM, Groupe URD, Julien Carlier & Hugues Maury, https://www.urd.org/Peer-review-a-way-for-the

! Important

- These six phases have been developed based on Groupe URD's experience but the proposed method can be fully adapted to any other approach to project cycle management.
- Project cycle management is flexible: certain phases can be launched simultaneously to adapt the intervention to the realities of each context. For example, activities may be implemented before the launch phase is fully completed. The investment for each phase will also depend on each situation and can be consolidated later. For example, a limited Initial Assessment can be conducted, and this can be developed further during later phases.

	THE PRELIMINARY PHASE	ASSESSMENT	DESIGN	LAUNCH	IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING	CLOSURE	
NEEDS & DEMANDS OF COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS	Analyse whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs, context and available resources.	Assess needs and situation.	Design an intervention adapted to identified needs and resources.	Create/ strengthen all preconditions for an optimal implementation.	Implement activities, coordinate resources, cooperate, monitor and communicate.	Close operations, terminate contracts, learn, and communicate.	**IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS**

⚑ The key role of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) activities operators

The quality and accountability of a project depends, above all, on the capacity of donors, advisors and evaluators to promote and facilitate the implementation of a MEAL system that:

- Formalises quality and accountability requirements adapted to the operational context, stakeholders' expectations and existing capacities.
- Checks regularly that the project is well implemented and is adapted to needs;
- Is responsive to the views of the targeted population, including vulnerable and excluded groups.
- Drives decision-making.
- Learns from the intervention to improve future responses.

These MEAL activities can be described as follows:

Monitoring - Is the project well implemented and adapted to needs and the context?

Implementing a monitoring system implies much more than just recording activities to complete reports. It means continuously assessing both processes and results; using data to drive decision-making and planning; and being responsive to the views of communities and people affected by crisis.

Too often, teams focus on monitoring activities and inputs - which are easier to track than concrete changes for beneficiaries. This leads to poor understanding of the effectiveness of the project and poor steering of the project strategy to reach its intended results.

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Changes in the context are also rarely included in the monitoring system, which can lead to teams being insufficiently informed. If the project takes place in a complex and volatile environment, the monitoring of key contextual elements may be vital to ensure that risks are anticipated and the project is implemented in an agile manner.

The COMPASS is organised around four key areas of analysis for project monitoring:

1. **CONTEXT MONITORING –** Which external factors can influence the intervention? This is used to anticipate potential issues and build on opportunities.

2. **IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING –** Are we doing what we said we would do? This analyses "how" activities are carried out by monitoring the progress being made, inputs such as finances, compliance (with laws, rules and contractual undertakings) and stakeholders' involvement, including feedback mechanisms for beneficiaries.

3. **CHANGES MONITORING** – Is the project on course to achieve the planned results (outputs, outcomes and impact) and is it having any unintended consequences (positive or negative)? This analyses the changes that the project brings to communities and people affected by the crisis. It is usually based on project indicators and learning outcomes. It is sometimes complemented with global performance indicators to measure progress regarding the institutional strategy.

4. **TARGET GROUP MONITORING –** Who has been reached by the intervention? – This aims to understand the number and the types of people who have potentially benefitted from the project. It is at the centre of the triangle to show how it is linked to the other components - How much and what kind of assistance has been provided to communities and people affected by the crisis? By what organisations? What results have been achieved? In what operational context?

The COMPASS method considers that monitoring is carried out during the implementation of the project and designed during the previous project cycle phases. Monitoring is based on comprehensive data management and decision-making mechanisms that are progressively built during the previous project cycle phases.

- The assessment phase can provide baseline information for some of the selected project indicators.
- During the design phase, project indicators are selected and major monitoring activities are formalised, usually under a logical framework format.
- The launch phase is used to finalise the monitoring plan, mobilise the required resources, build monitoring skills, conduct or plan baseline surveys and develop relevant data collection methods and tools.

The COMPASS method also considers that monitoring is a continuous process organised around the four steps of the "Deming Cycle" or continuous quality improvement model:

1. Plan – Confirm priority information and plan data collection ("What to do" and "How to do it"). 2. Do – Collect data. 3. Check – Analyse collected data and report results. 4. Act – Take actions to adjust project and communicate about project changes.
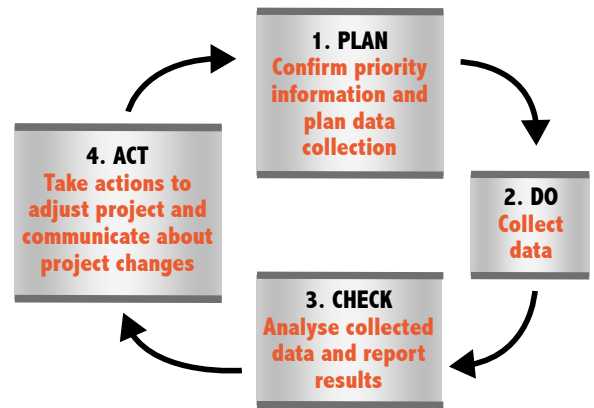
Evaluation – *Have we made a difference? Did we do so in the best way possible[13] ?*

Evaluation is "the systematic and objective examination of humanitarian action, to determine the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme, intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability"[14].

As underlined in the specific section related to evaluation, the Core Humanitarian Standard can help to prepare and conduct evaluations. It can be used to identify evaluation needs, design terms of reference or support the identification of key evaluation questions and related information to be collected. For more details, see the "Evaluation" section.

Accountability – *How do we intervene "responsibly"?*

The Core Humanitarian Standard defines "Accountability" as *"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"*[15].

Accountability primarily concerns the target population: being accountable to the target populations means providing accessible and timely information to them, actively seeking their views, developing accessible, secure and responsive complaints mechanisms, and involving them, including vulnerable and excluded groups, in project design and implementation. The other stakeholders that it concerns include project human resources, partners and co-implementers, individual, private and public donors, and other groups influenced by the intervention, including the authorities and the population living in the area of intervention.

Experience from the field - Guinea

Sierra Leonean refugees were invited to sign up to the repatriation programme but many were critical of the way that it was handled. "We are in the best position to know what conditions will convince us to return to our country. But we were not consulted about the repatriation programme. We feel like we are being shunted around, like objects."

Commitment 4 – Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

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13   Extract from: *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide* – ALNAP – p. 14
14   *The evaluation of humanitarian action* – ALNAP – p. 27.
15   *Core Humanitarian Standard*, p. 19

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Learning – *How can we learn from the project to improve future interventions?*

The Core Humanitarian Standard has a specific commitment directly related to learning. It focuses on prior experiences, learning during interventions and sharing lessons after the intervention.

◢ The growing influence of information and communication technologies: potential and challenges[16]

The use of information and communication technologies in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning activities has changed the practices of humanitarian and development organisations a great deal.

They have made it possible to increase not only the quantity, but also the diversity and quality of the data that is collected, processed and analysed, thus allowing monitoring that is more holistic and precise, and thus more informed decision-making. The time it takes to process data has been drastically reduced (via the exponential use of mobile terminals instead of manual entries) and the method for sharing them has improved a lot, allowing shared monitoring of activities and certain indicators in real time, and thus improved flexibility of projects and better communication of data within operational teams and between field offices, coordination structures and headquarters.

Emerging technologies such as business intelligence, big data and artificial intelligence are also taking their first steps in the aid sector and will no doubt continue to revolutionise our project monitoring practices. Similarly, the sharing of data between organisations (for example, between open data processes and platforms) should contribute to more efficient measuring of project impact in the years ahead (possibility of cross-referencing data, reduction of the number of similar surveys meaning that it is possible to focus on quality, etc.).

New technologies applied to quality and accountability have also begun to transform relations with beneficiaries and the field of accountability as a whole: it is easier now to share information, and there are more and more communication channels allowing more horizontal communication and allowing feedback and complaints to be passed on (SMS, instantaneous messaging, social media, call centres, etc.) and there are more and more examples of IT being used in the implementation of projects (crowdsourcing, etc.).

The growing use of information and communication technologies in operational fields nevertheless raises numerous challenges that organisations need to meet with sufficient means: the capacity to attract sufficiently qualified staff to manage these new tools and methods; the capacity to collaborate with private IT service providers who do not have the same culture; training staff in relation to this paradigm shift (the importance, for example, of developing data literacy); sufficient investment in accompanying the change in practices linked to new information technology uses and the digitalisation of processes that are often complex and not mature, etc. It is also extremely important not to fall into the traps that this type of technology could create: infobesity that inexorably slows

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[16] This sub-section was written by CartONG. For more information about this organization, which provides humanitarian and development actors with specialized support in information management, mapping, analysis and data processing: http://www.cartong.org

down decision-making, a purely extractive approach to the data (without any feedback to the communities), over-simplification of field realities via algorithmic models (automatic selection or profiling of beneficiary households, automatic location of water points, etc.) to the detriment of qualitative data.

Lastly, it is important to underline the importance of using these new technologies responsibly and integrating the principles of do no harm and the right to privacy of the communities and people targeted by projects (principles that were recently repeated in connection with the implementation of the European General Data Protection Regulation). Data protection in all its forms (security, minimisation of collection, proportionality, consent, right to rectification and deletion…) should therefore be a fundamental analysis criterion of any project including the collection or management of data.

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PRACTICAL FILES AND TOOLS

This section is divided into six sub-sections – one per phase of the project cycle as presented in the COMPASS method.

Each sub-section underlines in one page and per quality criterion of the Core Humanitarian Standard the good practices that each operator, funder, MEAL advisor or evaluator can implement or facilitate to contribute to a high-quality and accountable intervention.

THE PRELIMINARY PHASE - WE SHOULD….

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	> Ensure any decision is based on the best use of existing information about needs, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	> Make sure foreseeable constraints, such as limited access, delays, administrative issues, etc., are taken into account for intervening, including for the assessment > Make sure the proper decision-making process is in place to act and make decisions without unnecessary delays.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	> Make sure that the local response capacities (Authorities; Local NGOs etc.) are taken into account to avoid potential duplication. > Ensure any existing preparedness or contingency plans are consulted to assess whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs and capacities.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	> Assess who the first responders are (authorities, local community based organisations, NGOs, etc.), and the connections we have with them. > Ensure our organisation has legitimacy / competencies related to the expected vulnerabilities.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	> Ensure that lessons from similar contexts are taken into account regarding potential opportunities and risks.
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	> Make sure the appropriate staff at managerial and technical levels are involved in making the decision about whether or not to implement a project. > Assess staff surge capacity and constraints.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	> Make sure our organisation currently has the capacity to mobilise or obtain resources for an intervention at the right time.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT – WE SHOULD….

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	**>** Identify needs and the underlying problems that communities and people affected by crisis face. **>** Give priority to iterative assessments over in-depth assessments that use up a lot of resources and rapidly are no longer usable.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	**>** Analyse all communities' needs and not only those on which the organisation is able to intervene. **>** Identify existing and relevant technical standards and good practices applicable to the intervention. **>** Adapt the level of investment to the level of rapidity needed to intervene in a timely manner.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	**>** Analyse local capacities and vulnerability factors. **>** Analyse the risk of negative potential impacts of the intervention (notably, on the relations between actors, the crisis economy and the environment).
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	**>** Make sure that the communities affected by crisis are consulted within the assessment, and that particular attention is paid to specific issues related to gender, age, and disability. **>** Ask communities affected by crisis about their preferred means of receiving information about the project and contacting the organisation.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	**>** Assess existing feedback and complaints system(s). Identify the cultural, social and power dynamics that could be an obstacle to the functioning of complaints mechanisms (security, equity, etc.). **>** Ask communities affected by crisis how they would feel most comfortable sharing feedback and complaints with the organisation.
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	**>** Encourage joint assessments with relevant actors. **>** Make sure all internal and external existing assessments have been collected. **>** Identify appropriate coordination structures in place based on the sectors and regions of intervention. **>** Share the results of assessments with the appropriate coordination structures in place.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	**>** Ensure that lessons from previous experience of providing aid in this context inform the assessment.
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	**>** Make sure staff in charge of the assessment are familiar with the mandate and values of the organisation, and that these are communicated to the people met. **>** Make sure the appropriate staff at managerial and technical levels are involved in the assessment.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	**>** Make sure that the necessary financial, time-related and logistical resources are provided for the assessment. **>** Identify the potential impact on the environment (procurements and providers) of using local and natural resources.

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DESIGN PHASE – WE SHOULD….

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	> Develop an intervention strategy that meets immediate needs while attempting to influence some of the root causes of the underlying problems.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	> Take into account constraints when elaborating the intervention strategy (chronogram, activity planning, etc.). > Adapt the decision-making process to the level of urgency of the situation.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	> Use community-based risk analysis and community preparedness plans in the intervention strategy. > Identify the conditions necessary for withdrawal or handing over responsibility for the project. > Take into account negative effects when drawing up the intervention strategy. > Use the capacities of local businesses and service providers as much as possible.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	> Ensure that communities and people affected by crisis participate and are involved in the targeting and the design of the intervention.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	> Consult communities and people affected by crisis on the characteristics of the complaints mechanism, the submission of complaints, the processing of complaints, and potential obstacles.
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	> Use stakeholder analysis to draw up a coordinated and complementary project in line with humanitarian principles. > Encourage cross-sector interventions, inclusiveness and the participation of local actors.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	> Ensure lessons from other projects are integrated into the project design (e.g. literature review, contacts, etc.).
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	> Make sure that the intervention is coherent with the mandate and values of the organisation. > Assess existing and potential staff capacities, and anticipate delays for recruitment.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	> Try to avoid any impact on the environment when using local and natural resources. If necessary, consider mitigation measures. > Make sure costs are estimated in a way that is relevant to the context.

LAUNCH PHASE – WE SHOULD….

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	> Ensure the strategy is still relevant to respond to needs, and adapt if necessary.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	> Include technical standards in the monitoring of the project. > Plan monitoring sufficiently frequently to allow reactivity.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	> Establish a monitoring mechanism that can track: 1.the progress made towards the pre-identified conditions of withdrawal; 2. the use of local businesses and service providers; 3. the potential negative impact of the intervention on the local economy.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	> Make sure that the collection and processing of data takes into consideration age, gender, and diversity. > Inform target groups, including marginalised and vulnerable groups, about the organisation and what it intends to carry out. > Involve target groups in the design of monitoring mechanisms. > Make sure that factors that could modify the most appropriate ways to communicate will be monitored: security, migrations, literacy, socio-cultural codes, etc.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	> Consult communities and people affected by crisis about the characteristics of the complaints mechanism - submission of complaints - processing of complaints - potential obstacles. > Design a mechanism that is efficient and secure for the users, and able to fast track sensitive complaints.
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	> Ensure that the monitoring mechanism makes it possible to monitor the progress of the interventions of other stakeholders, including local/national authorities.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	> Make sure that a specific time and resources are set aside for learning and piloting innovation.
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	> Make sure that the project is coherent with the mandate and values of the organisation. > Define personal performance goals with each staff member. > Make sure that staff have the necessary competencies and are informed about training and self-training opportunities. > Make sure that the staff adhere to policies that are relevant to them (including the staff code of conduct) and understand the consequences of not adhering to them.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	> Ensure risks of corruption are taken into account when choosing aid methods and partners. > Ensure the monitoring mechanism will monitor the risk of negative impacts on the environment when using local and natural resources. > Ensure mechanisms are in place to alert, investigate and sanction cases of corruption.

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IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING – WE SHOULD...

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	> Track the evolution of: 1. the number and type of communities and people targeted by the project; 2. the implementation; 3. the context; and 4. needs.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	> Include the technical standards of the operational sectors involved. > Make decisions to adjust the project when necessary. > If need be, refer all needs not covered to relevant organisations or advocate for them to be covered.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	> Track: 1. Progress made towards the pre-identified conditions of withdrawal and/or handover; 2. Use of local businesses and service providers; 3. Potential negative impacts of the intervention; 4. Communities' and people's capacities and resilience. > Rely on local capacities.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	> Adapt communication to the context and the different population groups targeted (security, migration, age, gender, disability, literacy, socio-cultural codes etc.). > Disaggregate data per age, gender and disability. > Ensure that communities and people affected by the crisis participate and can express their opinions about the project.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	> Facilitate a feedback and complaints mechanism that is efficient, appropriate and secure for the users, and able to fast track sensitive complaints. > Identify the amount and type of feedback and complaints received to assess the use and effectiveness of the mechanism. > Inform people affected by the crisis about how to use the feedback and complaints mechanism, its scope and what they can expect from it (response time, security, the need to refer certain complaints, etc.).
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	> Monitor the evolution of the response by local/national authorities and humanitarian organisations. > Make sure that coordination helps to minimise the demands made of people affected by the crisis and optimises access to services. > Share relevant information with selected stakeholders through appropriate channels.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	> Make sure time and resources are set aside for learning and the piloting of innovations (if any). > Make sure lessons and decisions about changes are shared with people affected by the crisis and other organisations.
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	> Make sure that the intervention is coherent with the mandate and values of the organisation. > Make sure that staff respect current policies and, if need be, carry out pre-established sanctions. > Make sure that staff have the necessary competencies and are informed of training and self-training opportunities.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	> Make sure that, as the context evolves, the chosen operational strategy is still the most efficient to respond to targeted needs. > Make sure that cost estimates are updated on a regular basis to reflect the changing situation (i.e. devaluation, increased rent, etc.). > Closely monitor the use of natural resources. > Ensure mechanisms are in place to alert, investigate and sanction cases of corruption.

CLOSURE PHASE – WE SHOULD...

QUALITY CRITERIA	GOOD PRACTICES
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	> Conduct a final project review.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	> If need be, refer all needs not covered to relevant organisations or advocate for them to be covered.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	> Finalise the exit strategy that was planned to ensure long term positive effects or justify any changes. > Make sure environmental impacts have been properly managed/mitigated.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	> Make sure that all groups of stakeholders are informed about the achievements and the termination of the project.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	> Make sure all feedback and complaints have been managed before the closure of the project.
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	> Share final project information with other organisations intervening in the same area.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	> Identify and disseminate the main lessons learnt from this experience and any innovations.
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	> Anticipate the end of human resources contracts. > Organise an internal team event to promote team achievements.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	> Provide the necessary financial, time and logistical resources for the closure of the project. > Make sure that project resources (especially real estate and equipment) are used by relevant partners or stakeholders after project completion. > Share key information and lessons learnt related to corruption with the relevant partners and through the appropriate communication channels.

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HOW TO USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD TO IMPLEMENT A PROJECT

This section provides advice on integrating the Core Humanitarian Standard's quality and accountability commitments into the implementation of a project. It describes how a project's steering mechanisms can help to respond responsibly to the needs of communities and people affected by crisis.

It is split into two parts:
1. The introduction underlines how and why the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) can be used to implement a high-quality and accountable project.
2. A practical file includes, for each phase of the project cycle, a description of key processes and control points, as well as a list of reference tools and resources.

It is particularly aimed at:
- Project staff and operational partners who are directly involved in the implementation of a humanitarian or development project.
- Support staff (finance, logistics, technical, operational, etc.) involved in monitoring and accompanying the implementation of the project.

INTRODUCTION

◢ Why use the Core Humanitarian Standard to implement a project?

Implementing the best possible intervention

Projects almost always have to change in order to succeed. These changes are normal in project management as long as a flexible decision-making mechanism is established to manage them. It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to anticipate, confirm and manage these changes based on three key competencies for this type of position[17]:

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[17] Practical guide, Project planning, monitoring and evaluation: Improving the quality, learning and accountability of Humanity & Inclusion's interventions, HI (Humanity & Inclusion)

- **Taking a step back / critical (and constructive) analysis** to ensure that the intervention is still meeting the priority needs of the target population;
- **Organisation** to establish priorities, manage time and organise the work of each person effectively;
- **Communication** to interact and communicate positively with all stakeholders.

Decisions about changes are generally based on contractual commitments that define essential areas such as the scope, the budget and the duration of the intervention, but which cannot cover all the dimensions of a "good intervention". A Project Manager can therefore use the Core Humanitarian Standard in a complementary manner to produce an overall analysis of the intervention that they are facilitating[17].

Sharing a common language

Project managers, Logisticians, Administrators, Technical Advisors, Operational Coordinators, MEAL Officers, Heads of Communication, Community Liaison Officers, etc.: all these positions contribute to the implementation of high-quality, accountable projects.

The project manager plays the central role in steering the project, but at the same time, they cannot do everything. Their role as a conductor is essential to ensure that support teams contribute actively to the project steering processes. Having a shared vision of the expected quality and accountability commitments can help to establish dialogue and share a common language.

Meeting growing quality and accountability demands

All organisations have policies, guidelines or tools to promote quality and accountability, but it is often challenging for them to:

- Integrate the different – and often unrelated – accountability standards and principles;
- Implement practical "accountability" actions adapted to each specific context of intervention.

The Core Humanitarian Standard can help as it *draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments, including the Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief; The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management; The People In Aid Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel; The Sphere Handbook Core Standards and the Humanitarian Charter; The Quality COMPAS; The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Commitments on Accountability to Affected People/Populations (CAAPs); and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluating Development and Humanitarian Assistance[18].*

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) can be used as a foundation to develop a quality and accountability framework based on existing standards that underlines key actions and organisational responsibilities to connect and implement these different elements[19].

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[18]   *Core Humanitarian Standard*, p.3.
[19]   See Appendix – Operationnel quality and accountability framework

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↗ How can you use the Core Humanitarian Standard to implement a project?

Managing projects is always challenging but half the battle is won when you come prepared with a clear understanding of processes that can contribute to a successful intervention.

The COMPASS method uses a "process oriented" approach to better understand key components of project cycle management.

Project processes are interrelated activities and checks that are conducted to deliver specific outputs[20] (services, products, documentation, decisions, etc.) during the project cycle. There are usually three categories of processes[21] :
- Implementation processes – These include all processes that provide the desired outcomes of the project.
- Support processes – These include all the resources that are used to support the implementation of the project (human resources, technical, logistics, etc.).
- Steering processes – These include all the processes for measuring, analysing and improving the project.

The COMPASS method focuses on steering processes through project quality assurance and project quality control.
- Project Quality Assurance – Are we doing what we are supposed to do to check quality and accountability requirements?
- Project Quality Control – Do project deliverables meet quality and accountability acceptance criteria?

It organises quality assurance & quality control around nine "quality and accountability control points" at key stages during the project cycle. For each project deliverable produced during the nine quality and accountability control points, the COMPASS method proposes a checklist of acceptance criteria. These nine checklists translate at field level the forty-six key actions recommended by the Core Humanitarian Standard.

The COMPASS project cycle

Based on Groupe URD's experience, the COMPAS project cycle is organised around the following six phases:

Preliminary phase – This phase starts when the organisation identifies a situation where communities and people are affected by a crisis. It ends when the organisation decides whether to begin the Initial Assessment or not.

When a crisis situation is declared, the preliminary phase is the first phase in the project cycle. It involves assessing whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs, context and available resources.

! **Important** Access to information is often limited at this point.

There are no pre-identified control points at this stage.

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[20] Source : ISO 9001:2015. «A process is a set of interrelated or interacting activities that use inputs to deliver an intended result.»
[21] Adapted from : ISO/TC 176/SC 2/N 544R3

Initial Assessment - This phase starts when the organisation decides to launch a situation and needs analysis and ends when the decision to intervene (or not) has been taken.

The Initial Assessment phase involves collecting and analysing information about existing needs and capacities and potential resources. This enables agencies to make well-grounded decisions regarding potential interventions and ensure that project design meets the relevant quality criteria.

There are two proposed "control points" at this stage focused on:
   1. The data collection method
   2. The Initial Assessment report

Design - This phase starts when the organisation makes the decision to intervene. It ends when financial resources are confirmed for the proposed project.

The design phase involves: a) developing an operational strategy that will allow the agency to respond to targeted needs; and b) designing the monitoring system.

There is one proposed control point at this stage focused on:

   3. The proposed project intervention

> ### *Experience from the field - Afghanistan*
>
> *International relief agencies provided assistance to vulnerable people according to predefined categories: widows, orphans and the disabled. People who corresponded to these criteria were the first to receive a kit of building materials for their house. During the implementation phase, aid workers realised that:*
>
> *• the majority of vulnerable people were being cared for by their family;*
>
> *• not everyone was financially vulnerable;*
>
> *• not everyone was physically capable of building a house themselves.*
>
> *A large number of the kits were resold or exchanged. Houses were poorly built or construction work was never commenced.*
>
> *One of the reasons that the project failed to achieve its objectives was due to ineffective targeting that focused on 'typical' vulnerable groups without taking into account economic, social or cultural factors (e.g. solidarity within family networks).*
>
> **Commitment 1 – Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.**

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Launch - This phase starts when the proposed project is funded. It ends when the project activities are ready to be implemented and when a MEAL framework is established.

The launch phase involves: a) re-assessing project relevance and feasibility because the context may have evolved since the development of the project proposal; b) developing a detailed MEAL framework; c) mobilising resources (Human Resources, Partners, Procurement…); and d) communicating with stakeholders.

There are two proposed control points at this stage focused on:
4. The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework
5. Resource mobilisation & communication

Implementation and monitoring - This phase starts when project activities are ready to be implemented and when a MEAL framework is established. It ends when all the planned activities have been implemented

The implementation & monitoring phase mainly involves: the implementation of activities, the coordination of resources, cooperation with stakeholders, monitoring and communication.

There are two repetitive "control points" at this stage focused on:
6. Project information needs
7. Project decision-making

Critical point – The false revolution of mobile data collection[22]

Though mobile data collection has made it possible to make real and proven improvements in data collection and processing (time-saving, improved data integrity, the possibility of automatic triangulation of questions in the form, interlinked calculations, etc.), as is the case for other tools, it is also sometimes used inappropriately. Below is a list of points to consider when collecting data on a mobile phone:

1. As a survey on a mobile can be deployed in a few minutes, the digitalisation of the survey process can lead to a tendency to use them without sufficient prior reflection, thus contributing to the general "infobesity" that exists in humanitarian and development contexts.

2. Mobile data collection can be used to the detriment of other non-digital collection methods (which therefore appear more difficult to use) such as focus groups or semi-structured interviews, thereby reducing the quality and diversity of the information collected (the fundamental principle of triangulation often being sacrificed unconsciously on the altar of "modernity").

3. Mobile data collection is only a tool and does not replace the essential phase of preparing the questionnaire and key steps such as testing it before it is deployed on a larger scale, the need for sufficiently trained surveyors and the translation of the questionnaire into the survey language.

4. Mobile data collection, contrary to appearances, allows less flexibility than a paper survey (if there is a design fault, redeploying corrections on a large scale is often difficult and has a significant impact on the structure of data bases) and it is therefore necessary to anticipate the data analysis plan.

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[22] This sub-section was written by CartONG. For more information about this organization, which provides humanitarian and development actors with specialized support in information management, mapping, analysis and data processing: http://www.cartong.org

5. We must not forget that using a screen transforms the relationship with the person surveyed (tendency to look at your screen more than the person, questions about the use of the data, for example) and must therefore be anticipated in the training of the surveyors.

6. The possibility of collecting a greater variety of media (photos, GPS points, etc.) is also a source of greater risk of misuse of the data collected.

Commitment 9 – Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

Closure - This phase starts when all the planned activities have been implemented. It ends when all the project components have been finalised, transferred and/or completed.

The project closure phase mainly involves the operational closure (end of activities and monitoring), the administrative closure (Finance; Logistics; HR…), learning, and internal and external communication.

There are two proposed "control points" at this stage focused on:

8. The operational closure
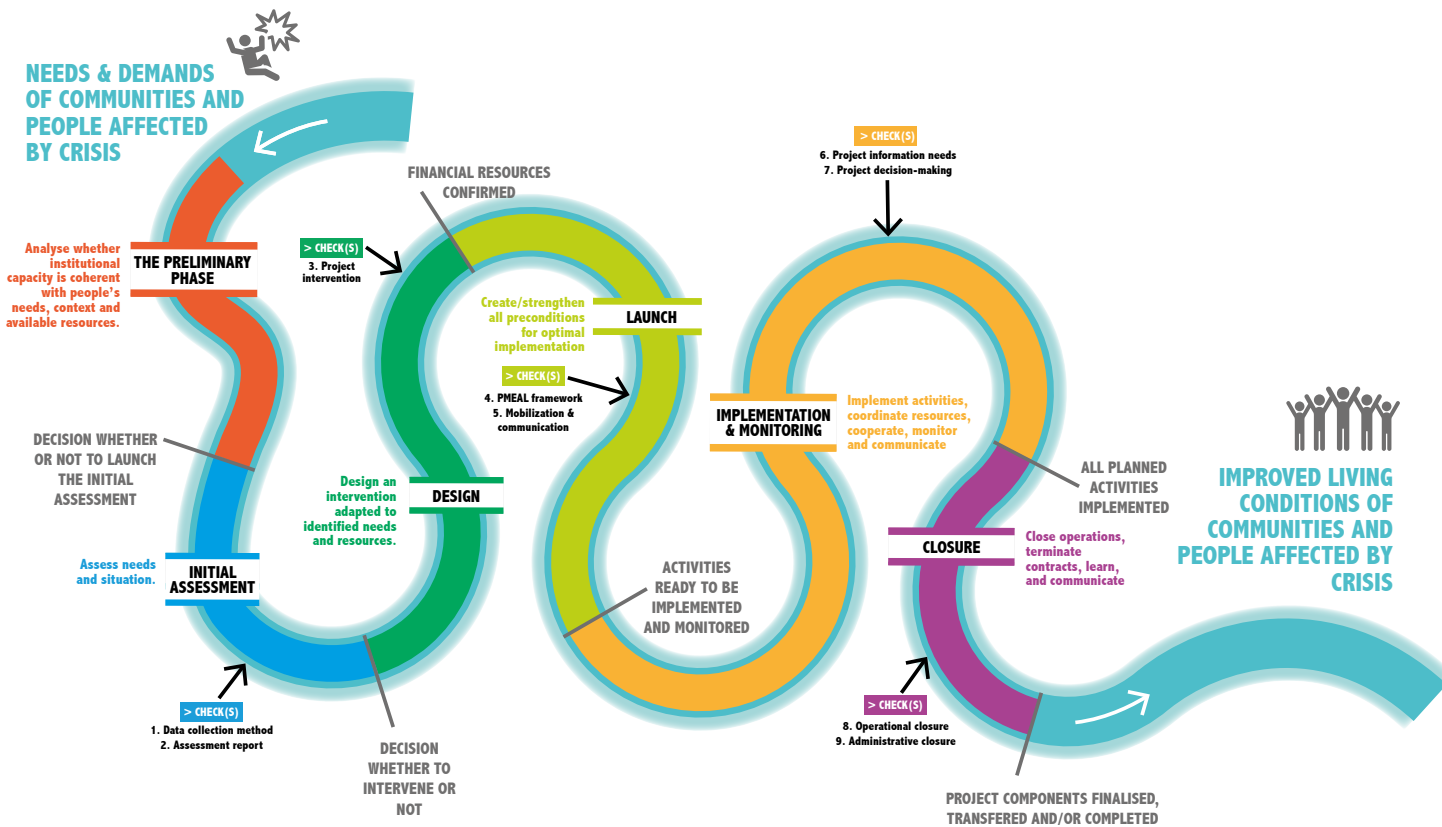
9. The administrative closure

Experience from the field - Somalia

An aid agency decided to withdraw from the field rapidly and did not leave enough time to explain the reasons for its departure, nor discuss redundancy conditions with Somalian staff. People were irate as they were under the impression that the agency was trying to sneak away. As a result, members of staff were taken hostage.

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

! Important

- These six phases have been developed based on Groupe URD's experience but the proposed method can be fully adapted to any other approach to project cycle management.

- Project cycle management is flexible: certain phases can be launched simultaneously to adapt the intervention to the realities of each context. For example, activities may be implemented before the launch phase is fully completed. The investment for each phase will also depend on each situation and can be consolidated later. For example, a limited Initial Assessment can be conducted, and this can be developed further during later phases.

NEEDS & DEMANDS OF COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS

Analyse whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs, context and available resources.

THE PRELIMINARY PHASE

> CHECK(S)
3. Project intervention

FINANCIAL RESOURCES CONFIRMED

> CHECK(S)
6. Project information needs
7. Project decision-making

Create/strengthen all preconditions for optimal implementation

LAUNCH

> CHECK(S)
4. PMEAL framework
5. Mobilization & communication

IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

Implement activities, coordinate resources, cooperate, monitor and communicate

DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO LAUNCH THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Design an intervention adapted to identified needs and resources.

DESIGN

Assess needs and situation.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

> CHECK(S)
1. Data collection method
2. Assessment report

ACTIVITIES READY TO BE IMPLEMENTED AND MONITORED

DECISION WHETHER TO INTERVENE OR NOT

ALL PLANNED ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

CLOSURE

Close operations, terminate contracts, learn, and communicate

IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS

> CHECK(S)
8. Operational closure
9. Administrative closure

PROJECT COMPONENTS FINALISED, TRANSFERED AND/OR COMPLETED

PRACTICAL SHEETS AND TOOLS

Standardised MEAL tools are usually available in organisations to guide project teams:

- Project frameworks (Logical framework, Theory of change) to summarise project plans and to measure progress;
- Monitoring plans to identify what data are to be collected, when, by whom, how and why;
- Specific data collection tools for different operational sectors that are used to monitor priority data;
- Databases for managing project data;
- Budgets to summarise project costs including M&E budget resources;
- Reporting templates detailing what needs to be reported, when and to whom;
- Etc.

The COMPASS method proposes MEAL tools for each project cycle phase to effectively help teams to improve the quality and accountability of their projects.

This section is divided into six sub-sections – one per project cycle phase.

Each sub-section is broken down into three parts:
- **Introduction –** Presentation of the key processes of the project cycle phase and identified quality and accountability control points (if any).
- **Checklist(s) –** One checklist per recommended quality and accountability control point (if any) organised around a series of quality and accountability criteria and related key questions based on CHS quality criteria. You can use these checklists (covering the overall project cycle) as quick guidelines or as formal control points to check if the

deliverables meet CHS related quality and accountability criteria. Each checklist focuses on both content (What?) and process (How?).

- **Tools and support documents –** A description of recommended MEAL tools with links to examples/models of these tools and to a list of practical documents to adapt the proposed models or develop your own tools.

RECOMMENDED TOOLS PER PROJECT CYCLE PHASE

CYCLE PHASE	MEAL TOOLS
Preliminary phase	
Assessment	> Terms of reference > Data Collection and data analysis method and tools > Assessment report template
Design	Project document, including: > Theory of change diagram and/or problem/objective tree > Logical framework > Stakeholder analysis > Work plan > Organisation Chart > Beneficiary calculations > Different ways of steering projects for different population groups > Budget Form
Launch	> Project Plan including work/activities; procurement; human resources; finance; monitoring, evaluation and learning; risks, filing/archiving; and communication plans > Operational Framework > Accountability Framework > Formal agreements (Human Resources; Partnership; Memorandum of Understanding; etc.) > Terms of Reference for a project steering committee > Project communication material(s) > Tracking tables
Implementation & monitoring	> Up-dated project plans > Internal and external reporting templates and processes > Exit/continuity plan > Scenario planning & monitoring > Sentinel Indicators > Project health check
Closure	> A project closure checklist > A lessons learned paper template > A filing list template

! Important

- This list of proposed tools is not comprehensive and can be complemented with other initiatives[23].
- These tools do not replace "informal monitoring" or "observation" from teams and co-implementers that can play a key role in reducing the complexity of a MEAL system.
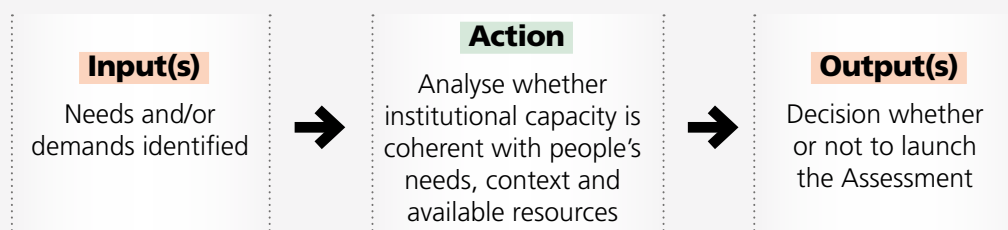- Examples/models of these tools are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD site at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

23   Do not hesitate to recommend tools at: mcarrier@urd.org

PRELIMINARY PHASE

INTRODUCTION

Why? During the preliminary phase, organisations decide whether to begin the Initial Assessment phase or not.

When? The Preliminary phase is the first phase in the project cycle. It starts when the organisation identifies a situation where communities and people are affected by a crisis. It ends when the organisation decides whether to begin the Initial Assessment or not.

Input(s)	Action	Output(s)
Needs and/or demands identified	Analyse whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs, context and available resources	Decision whether or not to launch the Assessment

What? When a crisis situation is declared, the preliminary phase is the first phase in the project cycle. It involves assessing whether institutional capacity is coherent with people's needs, context and available resources.

! Important

> Access to information at this point is often limited.
> This phase can require less investment if the organisation is already in the country and already has in-depth knowledge of institutional capacities in this specific context.

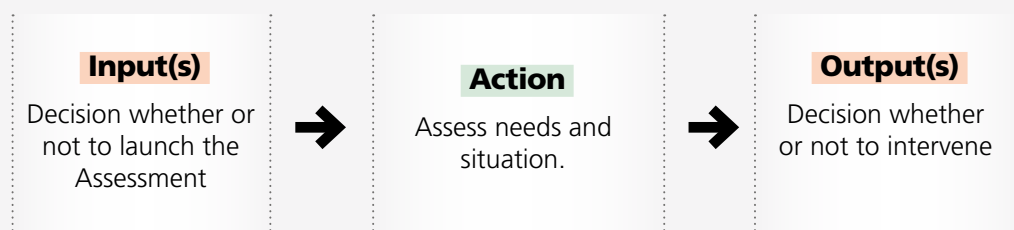|	Identification	Data collection	Analysis	Decision
DO	Identify needs and/or demands for intervention	Collect secondary data	Analyse data and formalize findings	Decide to launch the initial assessment (or not)
CHECK	*There is no specific quality and accountability control point at this stage*			

Who? During the preliminary phase,
> Top Management must be involved to decide whether or not the organisation will conduct a more detailed needs and situation analysis – the Initial Assessment.
> Communities and people affected by the crisis, operational staff and support teams can be consulted to improve understanding of the situation and the assistance that is needed.
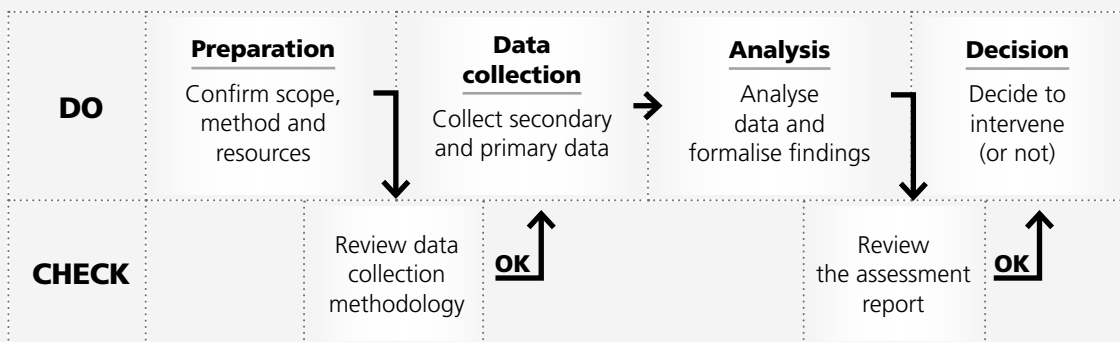
INITIAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Why? During the Initial Assessment phase, organisations collect and analyse all the necessary information to a) decide whether to design a project, or not, and b) design it.

When? The Initial Assessment is the second phase in the project cycle. It starts when the organisation decides to launch a situation and needs analysis. It ends when the decision to intervene (or not) has been taken.

Input(s)		Action		Output(s)
Decision whether or not to launch the Assessment	→	Assess needs and situation.	→	Decision whether or not to intervene

What? The Initial Assessment phase involves collecting and analysing information about existing needs and capacities and potential resources. This enables agencies to make well-grounded decisions regarding potential interventions and ensures that project design meets the relevant quality criteria.

	Preparation	Data collection	Analysis	Decision
DO	Confirm scope, method and resources	Collect secondary and primary data	Analyse data and formalise findings	Decide to intervene (or not)
CHECK		Review data collection methodology OK		Review the assessment report OK

There are two quality and accountability reviews at this stage:
1. Initial Assessment – Data collection method
2. Initial Assessment – Initial Assessment report

Who? During the Initial Assessment phase,
> Communities and people affected by crisis should participate in the analysis of the situation, capacities and resources and should be involved in confirming priorities.

> Operational staff, potential partners and other humanitarian agencies should be involved in the preparation of the Initial Assessment, data collection and analysis, and the decision to intervene (or not).

> Support services (Logistics; technical; HR….) should facilitate the implementation of the Initial Assessment (recruitment; transport…); provide secondary data; and propose an analytical framework adapted to the context.

☑ CHECKLIST 1. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

CONTENT – WHAT?

Analysing problems, identifying needs
> What are the community's needs (and not only those on which you are able to intervene)? (2.3)

> What are local capacity and vulnerability factors? (3.2)

> What is the specific situation of vulnerable and marginalised groups? (4.2)

> What are people's situations depending on gender, age, and diversity[24]? (1.2 & 4.4)

Understanding the context, analysing assumptions and risks
> What is the safety and security situation in the targeted area(s) of intervention? (1.1)

> What are the risks of potential negative impacts of the intervention? (3.6)

> What are the risks of corruption depending on different actors and different types of intervention? What mitigation measures exist? (9.5)

> According to communities and people affected by crisis, what formal or informal systems for exchanging with the population (feedback, complaints mechanisms, etc.) are already in place? (5.1)

Identifying stakeholders
> Who are the key stakeholders -including communities and people affected by crisis, representative organisations of marginalised and underprivileged groups, authorities and humanitarian organisations? (6.1)

> Are there any existing coordination bodies at national and subnational levels? (6.3)

Assessing resources and constraints
> What are the available "resources" -funds, human resources, goods, equipment, etc.- that could be used for a potential intervention? (9.1)

> What are the different constraints to take into account -access, financial, security, logistical, legal etc.? (2.1)

PROCESS – HOW?

Confirming data collection methodology
> Is the proposed methodology in line with the initial Terms of Reference? (1.2)

> Will information be cross checked and verified (i.e. triangulated)? (1.1)

> Was the possibility of a joint Initial Assessment with other organisations assessed? (1.1)

> Will data be disaggregated by gender, age, and disability? (1.2)

> Is the proposed methodology in line with relevant technical standards[25]? (2.4)

> Have you checked lessons learnt from past experience of providing aid in this context? (7.1)

Informing and involving stakeholders
> Will communities, representative organisations of marginalised and underprivileged groups, authorities and humanitarian organisations etc. be informed about the organisation, its principles, its code of conduct, and its projects? (4.1)

> How will you make sure that marginalised and vulnerable groups remain informed about the Initial Assessment results and the intervention? (4.1)

> How do you avoid creating false expectations? (4.1)

> Have you identified the languages, formats and modes of communication that are most comprehensible, respectful, and culturally adapted to crisis-affected communities and people, taking into account age, gender and diversity? (4.2)

> How do you make sure that the participation and involvement of communities and people affected by the crisis is representative and inclusive? (4.3)

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[24] "Diversity refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics". Extract from "UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy: Working with people and communities for equality and protection" By United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-HCR), June 2011.
[25] International Mine Action Standards IMAS), SPHERE Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards; etc.

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Introduction**
> What are the rationale, scope, assumptions, and methodology for this Initial Assessment? (1.1)
> What factors could make the context and needs on the ground change and affect the validity of this report? (2.3)

☐ **Situation of crisis-affected communities and people**
> What are the needs of crisis-affected communities and people? (1.2)
> What are the problems underlying people's needs? What are the root causes of these problems? What impact do these have on vulnerabilities? (1.2)
> What local capacities could a potential project build on? (3.1)
> What are the political, legal and socio-cultural factors to be considered for a potential project? (1.1)

☐ **Stakeholder and institutional context**
> Who are the key stakeholders to be taken into account? What activities are they carrying out? What position have they taken on the crisis (Authorities; Humanitarian organisations; etc.)? (6.1)
> How is local society organised and who are the opinion leaders and decision-makers? What local organisations are present in the area, and notably those who represent marginalised groups? (3.3)
> How are relief efforts coordinated in the current context? (6.3)

☐ **Risks and Constraints**
> What are the pre-identified risks (Safety and security; Operational; Ethics etc.)? (3.6)
> Which contextual constraints might constitute obstacles to the intervention? (2.1)
> What are the potential obstacles and opportunities regarding the possibility for communities and people to express their degree of satisfaction (fear for their security, cultural factors, etc.)? (4.4)
> What are the legal and tax obligations specific to the context? (9.2)

☐ **Available resources (Local and abroad)**
> What are relevant technical standards (such as national codes) and good practices applicable to the intervention? (2.4)
> What resources - local and/or international - could be mobilised for a project? (8.4 & 9.4)
> How can the intervention take into consideration the local economic fabric and of local service providers? (3.5)
> What previous experiences can the intervention draw on? (7.1)
> What is the potential impact on the environment of using local and natural resources? (9.4)

☐ **Potential interventions**
> How are the crisis, needs and capacities likely to evolve? (1.3)
> What is the level of urgency and the corresponding deadline for the intervention? (2.2)
> What resilience mechanisms and capacities could be supported in order to have a positive impact? (3.1)
> Which other actors would it be relevant to collaborate with? What form would be the most appropriate for this collaboration (language, means, frequency, etc.)? (6.3)
> Which organisations could meet uncovered needs? (2.3)

☐ **Accountability**
> What are the languages, formats and modes of communication which are most comprehensible, respectful, and culturally appropriate for the communities and people affected by the crisis? (4.2)
> What cultural, social and power dynamics could be an obstacle to the functioning of the complaints mechanism (security, equity, etc.) in all its phases? (5.3)
> What risks are there of potential negative impacts (Economic, Environmental, Social, etc.)? (3.6)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Decision-making**
> Is a clear and formal decision-making process in place to validate (or not) the intervention? (2.2)

☐ **Informing and sharing**
> Will the information from the Initial Assessment be shared with relevant stakeholders? (6.4)

IMPLEMENTING

***TOOLS & GUIDANCE* – DURING THE ASSESSMENT PHASE, WE CAN USE....**

An Initial Assessment usually produces the following deliverables that will structure how to identify priority information, how to engage stakeholders, and how to collect, analyse and use data:

1. **Terms of Reference** to define the scope, scale and objectives of the assessment.

2. **Data collection and data analysis method and tools** to determine how secondary and primary information will be collected and analysed.

3. **The Assessment report** to formalise and disseminate findings.

To develop these deliverables, you can use checklists 1 & 2 above together with the examples/models of tools and the list of practical documents that are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD website at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability
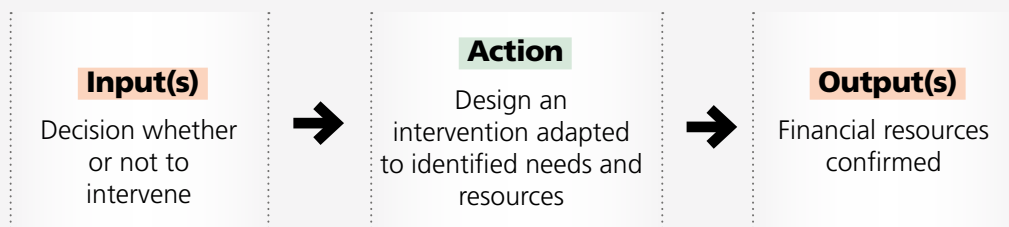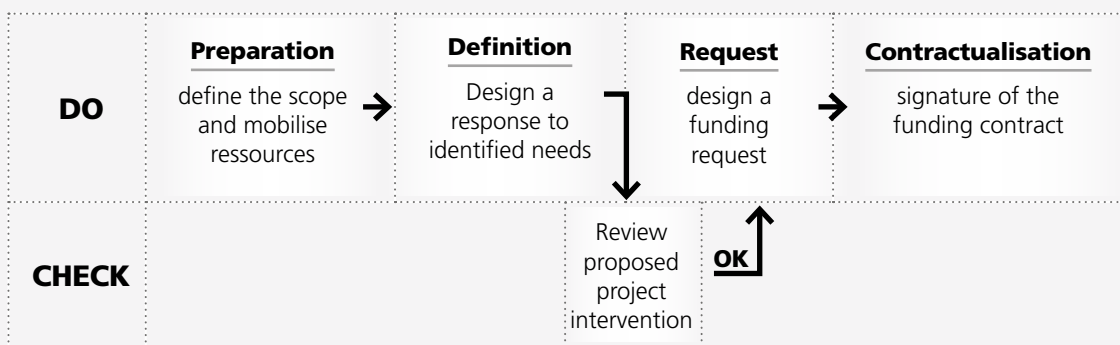
DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Why? During the design phase, a relevant project strategy is developed.
The quality of the project design largely depends on the quality of information collected during the Initial Assessment phase and, in turn, will determine the quality of activities to be implemented.

When? The design is the third phase in the project cycle. It starts when the organisation makes the decision to intervene. It ends when financial resources are confirmed for the proposed project.

Input(s)		**Action**		**Output(s)**
Decision whether or not to intervene	➡	Design an intervention adapted to identified needs and resources	➡	Financial resources confirmed

What? The design phase involves a) developing an operational strategy that will allow the agency to respond to targeted needs and b) designing the monitoring system.

	Preparation	**Definition**	**Request**	**Contractualisation**
DO	define the scope and mobilise ressources	Design a response to identified needs	design a funding request	signature of the funding contract
CHECK			Review proposed project intervention **OK**	

There is one quality and accountability review at this stage:
3. Design - The proposed project intervention

Who? During a design phase,
> Communities and people affected by crisis should be involved in the definition of project strategy.

> Operational staff and potential partners should be involved in the definition of project strategy, the confirmation of logistics, human and financial resources required to implement the project and the submission of a funding application according to available financial resources.

> Support services (logistics, technical, HR….) should be involved in order to: share examples of projects and good practices in similar contexts; define the project strategy; design an initial MEAL framework; and analyse the resources required to implement the project.

> Donors should be involved to identify potential funding mechanisms, provide guidance and select project proposals.

☑ CHECKLIST 3. THE PROPOSED PROJECT INTERVENTION

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Appropriate and relevant –** Does the proposed intervention clearly describe:
> The needs and the groups targeted by the intervention? (1.2)
> Where the intervention will take place? Why these areas instead of others? (1.1)
> What the main elements of the context are and the assumptions you have made about how the crisis will evolve. (1.1)

☐ **Effective and timely –** Does the proposed intervention:
> Propose realistic and safe objectives and activities for communities? (2.1)
> Intend to implement the right services at the right time? (2.2)
> Refer any unmet needs to relevant organisations or advocate for those needs to be addressed? (2.3)
> Use relevant technical standards and good practices? (2.4)
> Monitor activities, outputs and outcomes? (2.5)

☐ **Strengthening local capacities and avoiding negative effects –** Does the proposed intervention:
> Support resilience mechanisms and capacities in order to have a positive impact in the long run? (3.1)
> Facilitate the development of local leadership and capacity? (3.3)
> Integrate an exit strategy at the end of the project? (3.4)
> Analyse the potential negative effects, and take preventive and curative measures? (3.6)

☐ **Communication, Participation, Feed-back & Complaints –** Does the proposed intervention plan to:
> Propose effective and inclusive communication adapted to different types of population? (4.2)
> Promote the involvement and participation of targeted populations, with particular attention to groups who are excluded from power and decision-making processes? (4.3)
> Encourage and facilitate feedback from targeted populations on their level of satisfaction? (4.4)
> Propose safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints? (5.3).

☐ **Coordination, complementarity & learning –** Does the proposed intervention:
> Complement the response of national/local authorities and of other humanitarian organisations? (6.2)
> Plan to share any lessons and innovations? (7.3)

☐ **Managing staff and resources –** Does the proposed intervention:
> Plan to support staff in developing and using the necessary competencies to fulfil their roles? (8.3)
> Use the most efficient operational strategy to respond to priority needs? (9.1)
> Consider the environmental impact of using local resources? (9.4)
> Identify risks of corruption for the intervention, and how to manage them? (9.5)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Cooperation**
> Is the proposed intervention built on previous experiences? (7.1)
> Is the proposed intervention jointly developed with co-implementers (partners, etc.)? (6.1)

☐ **Compliance & coherence**
> Is the proposed request for funds compliant with requirements (donor rules; internal commitments, etc.)? (9.2)
> Is the proposed budget coherent with the proposed operational plan and the related description? (9.1)
> What operational measures are planned to be able to adapt the intervention to how the context and needs evolve? (2.1)

☐ **Validation process**
> Is the decision-making process adapted to the level of urgency of the situation? (2.2)

TOOLS & GUIDANCE – DURING THE DESIGN PHASE, WE CAN USE….

The design phase usually produces the following deliverable that defines the priority strategy of intervention, how to engage stakeholders, and how to implement and monitor the intervention:

1. **Project document** to formalise the rationale, scope, objectives and means for the proposed intervention. It will usually include: 1. the rationale for the intervention with key facts and a theory of change diagram and/or problem/objective tree. 2. A logical framework. 3. Stakeholder analysis. 4. A Work plan. 5. An Organisation Chart; 6. Beneficiary calculations; 7. Quality and accountability framework; 8. Budget Form
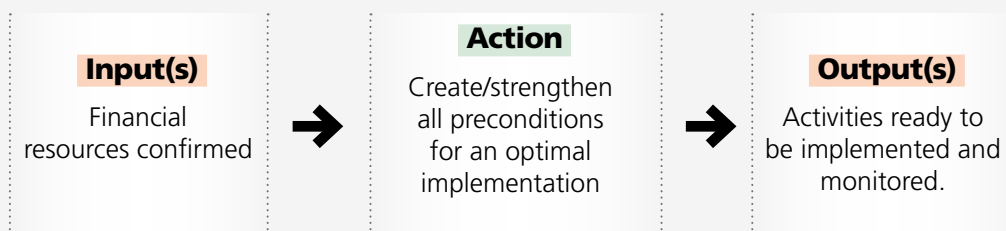
To produce this deliverable, you can refer to checklist 3 above together with the examples/models of tools and the list of practical documents that are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD website at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability
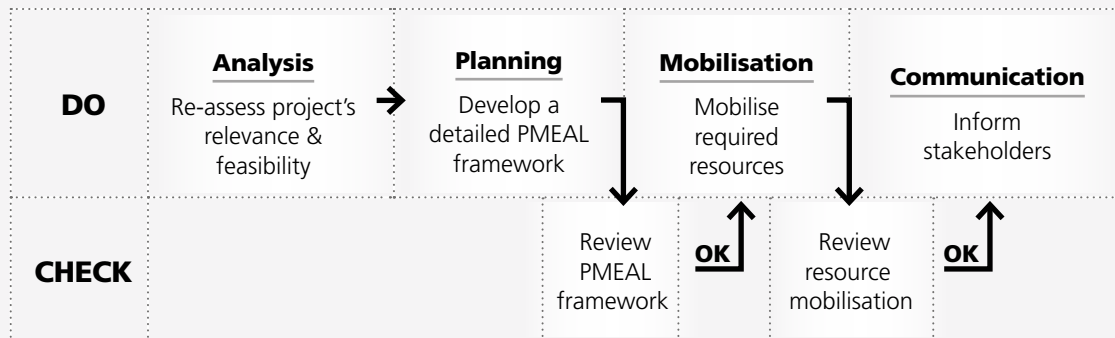
L A U N C H

INTRODUCTION

Why? The launch phase creates/strengthens all preconditions for the optimal implementation of activities.

When? The launch phase is the fourth phase in the project cycle. It starts when the proposed project is funded. It ends when the project activities are ready to be implemented and when a MEAL framework is established.

Input(s)		Action		Output(s)
Financial resources confirmed	→	Create/strengthen all preconditions for an optimal implementation	→	Activities ready to be implemented and monitored.

What? The launch phase involves: a) Re-assessing project relevance and feasibility because the context may have evolved since the development of the project proposal; b) Developing a detailed MEAL framework; c) Mobilising resources (Human Resources, Partners, Procurement…); and d) Communicating with stakeholders.

	Analysis	Planning	Mobilisation	Communication
DO	Re-assess project's relevance & feasibility	Develop a detailed PMEAL framework	Mobilise required resources	Inform stakeholders
CHECK		Review PMEAL framework	Review resource mobilisation	

There are two quality and accountability reviews at this stage:
4. Launch - The Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework
5. Launch - Resource mobilisation & communication

Who? During the launch phase,
> Communities and people affected by the crisis should be involved in the analysis of the proposed intervention and communication about the project launch.

> Operational staff and potential partners should be involved in the analysis of the proposed intervention, the development of a detailed MEAL framework, the mobilisation of resources and communication about the project launch.

> Support services (logistics, technical; HR….) should be involved in sharing examples of guidelines and tools in similar contexts; the development of a detailed MEAL system, the mobilisation of resources and communication about the project launch.

☑ CHECKLIST 4. MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING FRAMEWORK

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Feasibility**
> Is the project still realistic and safe for targeted populations? (2.1)

☐ **Planning**
> Are objectives realistic and measurable? Are activities well spread out over time? (2.2)
> Are resources clearly linked with implementation (i.e. timetable, budget, human resources, etc.)? (9.3)
> Are staff training activities planned about the organisation's current policies? (8.3)

☐ **Organising project monitoring and evaluation**
Will the monitoring and evaluation system be able to:
> Track changes in the context and regarding needs? (1.1)
> Use clear sources of information and verify data for the chosen indicators at the relevant frequency? (1.2)
> Ensure that the project can adapt to changes in terms of needs, capacities and the context?(1.3)
> Track how constraints and their impact on the intervention evolve? (2.1).
> Involve national and local stakeholders? (6.3)
> Share monitoring information with other organisations? To what extent? Using which communication channels? (6.4)
> Ensure that the project's resources will be used efficiently and transparently, and that the organisation will comply with legal and tax requirements? (9.2)
> Control the management of resources (e.g. stocks and other logistical elements) and ensure resources are used for their intended purpose (e.g. controls, post monitoring distribution surveys)? (9.2)
> Monitor budget expenditures? (9.3)
Are there indicators to monitor and evaluate:
> Project performance? (2.5)
> The impact of the intervention? (3.1)
> The reinforcement of the capacities of local leaders and organisations? (3.3)
> Potential negative effects? (3.6)
> The relevance and performance of the coordination mechanisms? (6.3)
> Are these indicators time-bound, context-specific, achievable and reviewed on a regular basis? (2.1)

☐ **Establishing accountability mechanisms**
> Will the participatory mechanisms guarantee representative and inclusive participation and involvement of communities and people affected by the crisis during implementation? (4.3)
> Will the participatory mechanisms enable and encourage communities and people affected by the crisis to express their degree of satisfaction? (4.4)
> Will the complaints mechanism be effective in terms of: - its scope? – the methods for submitting and receiving complaints? - the recording methods? - the timeframes for processing and response depending on the type of complaints? – the person(s) in charge of managing complaints (receipt, processing, etc.) -responses to complaints (measures, sanctions, referrals, modification of the intervention, etc.)? – monitoring of the complaints mechanism? (5.2/3)

☐ **Facilitating lesson-learning**
> Is there a mechanism in place to promote potential innovations and lessons learned? (7.2)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Collective**
> Was the MEAL framework established with (potential) partners and support staff? (9.2)
> Were representatives from target populations consulted? (4.3)

☐ **Ownership**
> Were staff and (potential) partners given training on the MEAL framework? (8.3)

☑ CHECKLIST 5. REVIEW RESOURCE MOBILISATION & COMMUNICATION

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Resources**
> Are clear decision-making processes established regarding expenditure? (9.1)
> Are services and goods procured using a competitive bidding process? (9.1)
> Is the potential negative impact of the intervention on the environment considered? (9.4)

☐ **Staff**
> Are objectives and performance indicators agreed collectively? (8.1)

Is there a briefing mechanism to:

> Ensure that staff respect the mandate and values of the organisation? (8.1)

> Ensure that the policies of the organisation are respected by staff? (8.2)

> Identify additional needs for staff capacity strengthening (not covered by the system in place)? (8.3)

☐ **Coordination**
> Are there clear roles and responsibilities among staff and (potential) partners? (6.2)

> Are there clear partnership agreements signed with (potential) partners and memorandums of understanding with relevant authorities? (6.2)

> Are there any coordination mechanisms the project should participate in? How does the project coordinate with other actors? (6.3)

☐ **Communication**
> Are communication mechanisms and channels planned to share information with communities and people affected by the crisis, the authorities, partners and other relevant stakeholders? (6.4)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Inclusive**
> Is information about the organisation and the intervention provided in accessible and appropriate ways to different affected groups? (4.1)

TOOLS & GUIDANCE – DURING THE LAUNCH PHASE, WE CAN USE….

The launch phase usually produces the following deliverables that structure how to plan the intervention, how to mobilise resources, and how to engage stakeholders.

5. The **Project Plan** to anticipate required actions and related resources to achieve the targeted objectives, including work/activities; procurement; human resources; financial; monitoring, evaluation and learning; risks, filing/archiving; and communication plans.

6. The **Operational Framework** to confirm and/or define appropriate type(s) of intervention according to the sector(s) of intervention, the context and existing capacities,

7. The **Accountability Framework** to confirm and/or define specific accountability actions such as complaints and feedback mechanisms based on the different targeted groups, the context and existing capacities.

8. **Formal agreements** to formalise cooperation with key stakeholders, Working/ Volunteer contracts with project staff; Partnership Agreements with operation partners; and Memorandums of Understanding with authorities and other operators.

9. The **Terms of Reference for a project steering committee** to formalise information sharing and decision-making processes between partners (if any).

10. **Project communication material(s)** to inform stakeholders about the intervention.
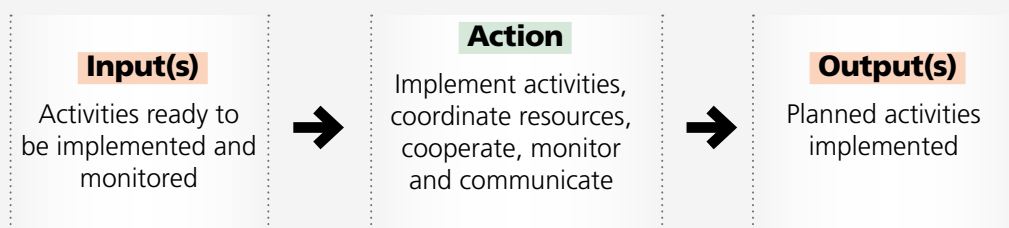
To produce these deliverables, you can refer to the checklists 4 & 5 above together with the examples/models of tools and the list of practical documents that are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD website at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

INTRODUCTION

Why? The implementation phase ensures that planned activities are carried out and achieve the intended results for communities and people affected by crisis.

When? The implementation & monitoring phase is the fifth phase in the project cycle. It starts when project activities are ready to be implemented and when a MEAL framework is established. It ends when all the planned activities have been implemented.

Input(s)		**Action**		**Output(s)**
Activities ready to be implemented and monitored	➜	Implement activities, coordinate resources, cooperate, monitor and communicate	➜	Planned activities implemented

What? The implementation and monitoring component principally involves the implementation of activities, the coordination of resources, cooperation with stakeholders, monitoring and communication.

There are two quality and accountability control points at this stage:
6. Implementation and monitoring - Project information needs
7. Implementation and monitoring - Project decision-making

The two proposed checklists for the implementation phase are focused on regularly controlling how well the monitoring system in place is: 1.meeting project information needs; and 2. supporting the project team in making informed decisions to adjust the project when necessary.

! Important

> Within the COMPASS method, monitoring is conducted during the implementation of the project.
> Monitoring is a continuous process organised around the four steps of the Deming Cycle or continuous quality improvement model:
1. Plan – Confirm priority information and plan data collection ("What to do" and "How to do it").
2. Do – Collect data.
3. Check - Analyse collected data and report results.
4. Act - Take actions to adjust project and communicate about changes.

Who? During an implementation & monitoring phase,
> Communities and people affected by the crisis should participate in the implementation of activities, express their opinion about the project and receive relevant and timely information.

> Operational staff and potential partners should be involved in the implementation and/or coordination of activities; the management of resources (finance; logistics; technical…); the steering of the project; direct cooperation with stakeholders and project communication.

> Support services (logistics, technical, HR….) should be involved in order to: provide the required support; facilitate project steering and support project communication.

☑ CHECKLIST 6. PROJECT INFORMATION NEEDS

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Priority information**
> How do you ensure that only useful information is collected? (2.5)

☐ **Resources**
> How will you track the risks of corruption? (9.5)

☐ **Local capacities**
> How will you track how local leaders' and organisations' capacities are evolving? (3.1).
> How will you track increased resilience amongst the communities and people affected by the crisis? (3.1).

☐ **Participation**
> How will you track the participation and involvement of communities and people affected by the crisis? (4.3)
> How will you track the degree of satisfaction of communities and people affected by the crisis? (4.4)
> How will you consult communities and people affected by the crisis about their confidence in and satisfaction regarding the complaints mechanism? (5.3)

☐ **Learning**
> How are you going to learn lessons from this project (e.g. self-evaluation, group feedback and discussion, external evaluation, etc.)? (7.2)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Flexibility**
> How will you adapt participation mechanisms to changes in the context? (4.3)

☐ **Involvement –** How are you making sure that:
> All crisis-affected communities and people are informed about the data collection mechanism (means, use, purpose, etc.)? (4.2)
> Marginalised and vulnerable groups are involved in data collection mechanisms? (4.3)
> Different groups are well represented in data collection mechanisms in terms of age, gender and diversity, in particular for beneficiary perception surveys? (4.3)

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Results**
> To what extent have the project activities, outputs and outcomes been achieved? (2.5)
> What are the values of the monitoring indicators on negative effects? (3.6)
> What is the degree of satisfaction of crisis-affected communities and people? (4.4)

☐ **Resources**
> Is there any mismanagement or misuse of resources? (9.2)
> What is the environmental impact of the intervention, due to the use of local and natural resources? (9.4)
> What is the situation regarding the risk of corruption? (9.5)

☐ **Contexte**
> What are the major changes in the context? (1.1)
> Have needs, risks and capacities changed? Are there new needs to target; and new risks and capacities to take into account? (1.2)
> How have constraints changed? (2.1)
> How have the conditions necessary for withdrawal and/or handover evolved? (3.4)

☐ **Participation & cooperation**
> What is the level of participation and involvement of targeted populations? (4.3)
> How complementary is the current intervention with the response of local/national authorities and other humanitarian organisations? (6.2)
> What are the values of the coordination mechanism indicators? (6.3)

☐ **Actions**
> Summary: What problems and successes are you encountering? Why? (7.2)
> Decisions: How should the intervention be adjusted (specific corrective actions; modification of project components; etc.) to address how the situation has evolved? (2.5)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Data analysis & project adjustment**
> How do you make decisions and act without unnecessary delay? (2.2)

☐ **Informations** – How will you:
> Inform communities about changes regarding your initial commitments? (4.2)
> Share key information and lessons learnt related to corruption with relevant stakeholders? (9.5)

GUIDANCE & TOOLS – DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PHASE, WE CAN USE...

The implementation and monitoring phase usually produces the following deliverables that will structure how to implement activities and coordinate resources, how to engage stakeholders, and how to adjust the project.

11. **Tracking tables** to monitor key project information such as indicators, number and types of beneficiaries, budget expenses, procurement etc.
12. **Up-dated project plans** to adapt required actions and related resources to meet the objectives, including work/activities; procurement; human resources; financial; monitoring, evaluation and learning; risks, filing/archiving; and communication plans.
13. **Internal and external reporting templates and processes** to formalise and share project results and the level of resources used, challenges and opportunities, up-dated action plans and the need for support, etc.
14. **Exit/continuity plan** to anticipate the end of the intervention and create the conditions for leaving or continuing responsibly.
15. **Scenario planning & monitoring** tool to manage projects in volatile contexts.
16. **Sentinel Indicators** to identify warning signs in terms of the evolution of the project situation[26].
17. A **Project Health Check** to allow a rapid and global analysis of the state of a project.

To produce these deliverables, you can refer to the checklists 6 & 7 above together with the examples/models of tools and the list of practical documents that are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD website at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

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[26] As there is limited guidance on these tools, scenario planning and monitoring & sentinel indicators are explained below in "Practical sheets and tools".
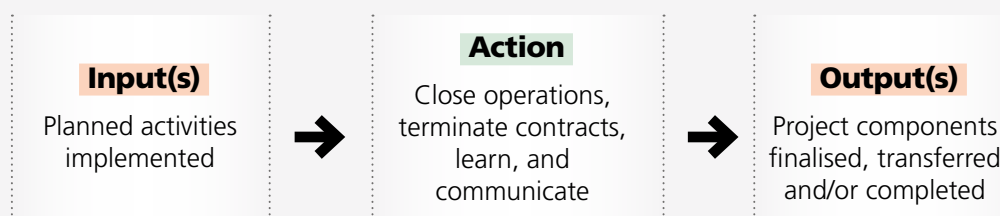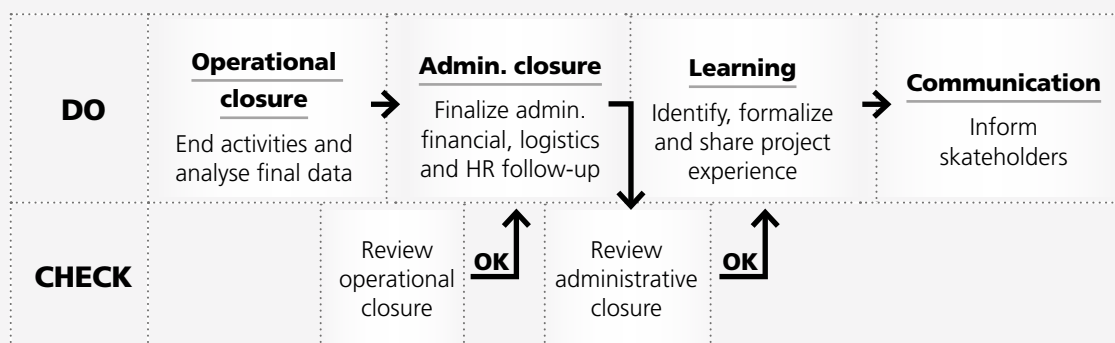
CLOSURE

INTRODUCTION

Why? The project closure phase confirms the completion of activities, recognises the level of achievement, facilitates learning from field experience and allows the closure of any contractual file in accordance with national law, donor rules and internal regulations.

During the project closure phase, organisations may decide to either: 1. Terminate project activities (because the project has achieved its objectives and/or people's needs have been satisfied); 2. Extend project activities by handing them over to another organisation, or the affected population or the local authorities take over responsibility for them; or 3. Start up a new project (because new needs have emerged or the project has not achieved its objectives).

When? The project closure phase is the sixth phase in the project cycle. It starts when all the planned activities have been implemented. It ends when all the project components have been finalised, transferred and/or completed.

Input(s)		**Action**		**Output(s)**
Planned activities implemented	→	Close operations, terminate contracts, learn, and communicate	→	Project components finalised, transferred and/or completed

What? This phase principally involves the operational closure (end of activities and monitoring); administrative closure (Finance; Logistics; HR…); learning; and internal and external communication.

	Operational closure		**Admin. closure**		**Learning**		**Communication**
DO	End activities and analyse final data	→	Finalize admin. financial, logistics and HR follow-up		Identify, formalize and share project experience	→	Inform skateholders
CHECK			Review operational closure	**OK**	Review administrative closure	**OK**	

There are two quality and accountability control points at this stage:
8. Closure - The operational closure
9. Closure - The administrative closure

Who? During a project closure phase,
> Communities and people affected by crisis should participate in the last data collection and analysis, lessons learned initiatives and final communication event.

> Operational staff and potential partners should be involved in the last data collection and analysis; a lessons learned workshop; the last project review; a final evaluation (if any); project archiving; information sharing (e.g. End of project report).

> Support services (logistics, technical, HR, etc.) should be involved to facilitate the last data collection and analysis; the lessons learned workshop; a final evaluation (if any) and the closure of any contractual files in accordance with national law, donor rules and internal regulations.

☑ CHECKLIST 8. OPERATIONAL CLOSURE

CONTENT – WHAT?

Results

> What are the final performance indicator values? How can you justify gaps? (2.5)
> What is the level of satisfaction of people and communities regarding the project? (4.4)
> What were the effects of the project on the resilience of affected communities and people? (3.1)
> What are the capacities of local leaders and organisations to respond in the event of future crises? (3.3)
> Are there any negative effects due to the project? If so, what measures (reparation, compensation) have been taken when closing the project? (3.6)
> What measures have been taken if there has been a negative impact on the environment due to the use of local and natural resources? (9.4)

Future

> Are there new needs emerging when closing the project? If so, what are they? (1.2)

> Should a new project be developed? If so, explain the main reasons? (1.3)

> Are there any up-to-date community hazard/risk assessments and preparedness plans to guide future activities? (3.2)

PROCESS – HOW?

Decision-making

> How is the decision to close the project made? What role do the communities have in the decision-making process? (4.3)

Analysis

> Are communities and people affected by the crisis involved in the final assessment of project results? (4.3)

Information

> Is information about the final results of the project provided in an accessible and appropriate way to the different affected groups? (4.1)

> Are crisis-affected people's views, including those of the most vulnerable and marginalised, sought and used to assess final project results? (4.4)

☑ CHECKLIST 9. ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE

CONTENT – WHAT?

☐ **Resources**
> Have all expenditures been monitored and reported in relation to the budget? (9.3)
> Have all assets and resources that remain been donated, sold or returned responsibly? (9.1)

☐ **Staff**
> Was a final evaluation conducted and good performance recognised? (8.1)
> Were staff supported with job-seeking procedures? (8.3)
> Was feedback from staff taken into account in the organisational learning process? (7.2)

☐ **Compliance**
> Was national employment law respected when ending contracts (human resources; rent etc.)? (8.1)

☐ **Reporting**
> Have financial reports been compiled? Are these consistent with the operational results? (9.3)
> Have you been able to demonstrate that resources have been used wisely, efficiently and to good effect? (9.2)

PROCESS – HOW?

☐ **Anticipation**
> Was the project closure anticipated with a pre-identified plan and budget? (2.2)

☐ **Information**
> Was a final team event organised to recognise the collective achievement? (8.1)

TOOLS & GUIDANCE – DURING THE CLOSURE PHASE, WE CAN USE...

The closure phase usually produces the following deliverables that will structure how to close operations, how to learn from project experience, and how to close responsibly.

18. **A project closure checklist** to identify and address all requirements for closing responsibly, including ending all contractual commitments, handing over activities to other stakeholders when relevant, filing project archives, donating equipment (if any), communicating to all stakeholders about the end of the intervention, etc.

19. **A lessons learned paper template** to formalise and share what has been learned from this project experience.

20. **A filing list template** to identify all project documents that have been filed and could be used for a project audit.

To produce these deliverables, you can refer to checklists 8 & 9 together with the examples/ models of tools and the list of practical documents that are available – and regularly updated – on the Groupe URD website at the following address: https://www.urd.org/ The-Quality-and-Accountability

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FUNDING

Improving a response to communities and people affected by crisis is not just a question of increasing funding. It can also be improved if funding mechanisms contribute to reinforcing the quality and accountability of interventions.

This section provides advice on integrating the quality and accountability commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) during the funding of a project or an organisation.

This section has two parts:
1. The introduction underlines why and how the CHS can be used in connection with the funding of a project or an organisation.
2. Practical advice is provided to underline the key points that should be integrated into the funding process to reinforce the quality and accountability of the projects and organisations that are funded.

It is specifically aimed at:
- Representatives of institutional funding agencies;
- Representatives of operators whose interventions include a funding component (call for proposals, grants, etc.)
- Those in charge of financial monitoring within operators
- Representatives of organisations who establish links between sources of funding and the interventions of operational partners

INTRODUCTION

⤤ Why use the Core Humanitarian Standard in connection with funding a project?

The people and organisations in charge of funding a humanitarian or development project or an organisation expect operators to be able to show that there have been positive changes for the targeted population due to the activities that have been funded,

and there is an increasing demand for efficiency and responsibility. In theory, funding a project or an organisation can give you significant leverage to reinforce quality and accountability. Funding sometimes comes with the obligation of using specific Monitoring & Evaluation mechanisms, and/or new approaches (such as "theory of change"), and promotes concepts linked to performance ("Value for Money"). The majority of these initiatives are rational from the point of view of the person and the organisation in charge of funding, but all these initiatives together do not necessarily produce a coordinated, coherent and complementary whole. Many international initiatives have been launched by the donor community to establish a shared framework of good practices. The following initiatives are specifically aimed at interventions in fragile contexts:

→ **The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid -** *Adopted in 2007, the Consensus outlines the policy framework for the EU when acting in response to humanitarian crises. The Consensus sets out why, how and when the EU acts[27].* In a shifting humanitarian context, this declaration aims to define the priorities of humanitarian action by the European Community: promoting humanitarian principles and law, coherence and coordination between the EU's different external policies, improving the quality of aid, and reinforcing partnerships and response capacities.

→ **The Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative -** 23 principles and good practices for humanitarian action were established in 2003 by 18 donors in response to the growing feeling that better coordination and better mutual learning between donors could lead to a more effective humanitarian response. These principles have now been adopted by 41 donor countries.

→ **The Grand Bargain -** In May 2016, during the World Humanitarian Summit, 18 donor countries and 16 aid organisations signed the so-called Grand Bargain describing 51 mutual commitments on 10 thematic work streams, all of which aim to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian funding. Numerous other donors and operators have since joined the initiative and have committed themselves to applying the 51 commitments for more global efficiency.

→ **The OECD's New Deal -** Based on the Paris Declaration (2005), the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations (2007), and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), the New Deal is an agreement between fragile and conflict-affected states, development partners and civil society to improve development policy and current practices. It was ratified by more than 40 countries and organisations at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness on 30 November 2011 in Busan in Korea[28]. The New Deal was developed to help states and societies affected by fragility and conflicts to make the transition out of fragility and towards peace. In practice, this involves three main points: i) focusing on the right priorities, ii) there needs to be ownership of the transition out of fragility by the country, iii) resources need to be used effectively and need to reinforce local capacities and systems.

These initiatives all underline the following funding issues:

Transparency – Being able to share up-to-date, and sufficiently high quality data. The current format being that of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI / IITA).

Local capacity reinforcement – Reinforcing countries' and local communities' capacity to prevent crises, prepare for them, mitigate their effects and cope with them.

Efficiency – Guaranteeing that resources are used properly and reducing management

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[27] https://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection/european-consensus_fr
[28] https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/fr/le-new-deal/fr-about-new-deal/

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costs by limiting and harmonising demands in terms of reporting and monitoring.

Relevance – Distributing funding in a way that is proportional to needs and based on the evaluation of needs, and clear processes and criteria.

Results-based management – Balancing demands by reducing the pressure to conform administratively and financially in order to free some time and resources to analyse the effects of the intervention.

Participation – Asking operators to guarantee that the population is involved, and accepting that projects can change based on their feedback.

The flexibility of funding mechanisms – Being able to assign resources to specific project but also for interventions that have fewer conditions (fewer constraints).

The humanitarian – development nexus – Contributing to an approach that is more coherent between prevention, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.

Accountability – Contributing to more responsible interventions, particularly vis-à-vis different population groups.

Coherence – Working in a more coordinated, coherent and complementary way between donors.

Anticipation – Providing multi-year funding or planning mechanisms for operators in recurring, chronic or protracted crisis contexts.

Risk / Security management – Supporting operating partners in their efforts to continually improve their risk management, particularly staff security.

Critical point – Information management approaches: a poor relation of donors[29]?

The role of donors and public funding in the ecosystem of IM solutions and methodologies remains difficult to measure despite certain limited successes. We can nevertheless observe that, though there are financial lines for the innovation sector, on the one hand the sustainability of these to develop a relevant economic model is often insufficient (mostly "one shot" funding), and on the other hand, these are often directed towards fashionable or sector-based technologies (e-health, e-agriculture, etc.). Despite the high expectations in terms of the quality and quantity of data to be provided (donor accountability), funding for "basic" information management (IM staff, tools, etc.) is often difficult to obtain.

What is more, competing initiatives – that are often not interoperable – are regularly supported by different donors or UN agencies, without coordination, thus reducing the efficiency of the sector and increasing its fragmentation. It also appears that the majority of donors have not yet made the shift to IT tools and do not have the necessary competencies to analyse technological proposals by their partners (sustainability, maturity of the technologies used, respecting data protection principles such as with biometrical collection, etc.).

[29] This sub-section was written by CartONG. For more information about this organization, which provides humanitarian and development actors with specialized support in information management, mapping, analysis and data processing: http://www.cartong.org

> *Lastly, there are more and more contradictory demands from donors in terms of data management (on the one hand, encouraging or obliging actors to adopt an open data approach, and particularly to have detailed access to the individual data of beneficiaries, and on the other, obliging them to respect data protection principles).*

If we compare these initiatives to the quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard, we can underline the following points that are similar:

Table - Links between the quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard and the good practices/ principles of these donor initiatives for fragile contexts

CHS QUALITY CRITERIA	DONOR INITIATIVES IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS			
	HUMANITARIAN CONSENSUS	GOOD HUMANITARIAN DONORSHIP	GRAND BARGAIN	NEW DEAL - OECD
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	Green	Green	Green	Green
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	Green	Green	Green	Green
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	Green	Orange	Green	Grey
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	Green	Green	Green	Green
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	Green	Orange	Grey	Grey
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	Green	Orange	Grey	Grey
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	Green	Green	Green	Green

Key
- Green: Completely relevant in relation to donor initiatives.
- Orange: Partially relevant.
- Grey: No particular link/correspondence.

> ### *Critical point – Aid Continuum / Contiguum*
>
> *Recovery and reconstruction in the aftermath of a disaster is a major challenge, which requires structural and development action beyond immediate emergency aid. Thus it is important to ensure that humanitarian, development and other relevant aid instruments work better together, in particular in situations of fragility and where communities are seeking to recover from the effects of crisis. Achieving better linkage between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) requires humanitarian and development actors to coordinate from the earliest phases of a crisis response and to act in parallel with a view to ensuring a smooth transition. It necessitates mutual awareness of the different modalities, instruments and approaches on the part of all aid actors, and flexible and innovative transition strategies.*
>
> **Extract from the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, p. 25**
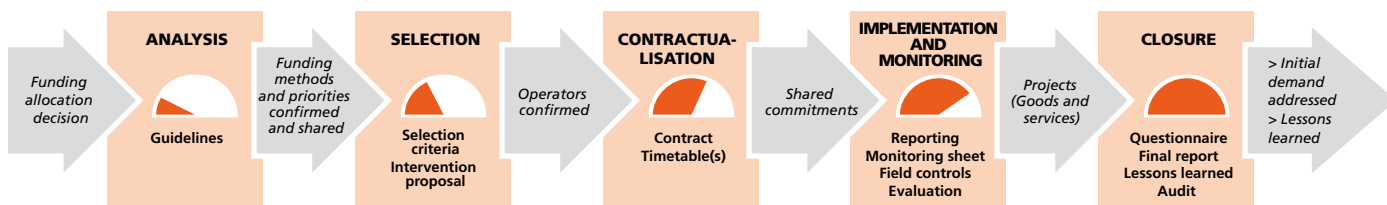
⚐ How can you use the Core Humanitarian Standard in relation to funding a project?

The Core Humanitarian Standard can help people and organisations to provide funding that is appropriate, effective, equitable and flexible. It can do this for the following two complementary funding mechanisms:

- Project funding ;
- Institutional funding

Project funding

The following funding cycle is for assigning resources to specific projects. It is organised around 5 phases: 1. Analysis; 2. Selection ; 3. Contractualisation; 4. Implementation and monitoring ; 5. Closure

	ANALYSIS		SELECTION		CONTRACTUA-LISATION		IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING		CLOSURE	
Funding allocation decision	**Guidelines**	*Funding methods and priorities confirmed and shared*	**Selection criteria Intervention proposal**	*Operators confirmed*	**Contract Timetable(s)**	*Shared commitments*	**Reporting Monitoring sheet Field controls Evaluation**	*Projects (Goods and services)*	**Questionnaire Final report Lessons learned Audit**	*> Initial demand addressed > Lessons learned*

CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD'S QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITMENTS

Analysis – This phase ends with the writing and sharing of funding guidelines. It focuses on the intervention and selection priorities and methods.

The nine quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard can be used during this phase to establish the guidelines and provide a coherent overall quality and accountability approach.

Experience from the field – El Salvador

An earthquake hits El Salvador and the scale of destruction mobilises the international community.

Apart from the obvious need for shelter, often replaced by the victims themselves in the days following the earthquake, what people want once they have access to safe shelter (even if it is temporary) is to re-establish basic living conditions : access to basic services (particularly water), economic reinsertion, and access to employment. A social audit which was subsequently carried out confirmed this needs assessment.

However, encouraged by the national authorities, the vast majority of NGOs decided to build shelters and housing and implement "mental health" projects".

Commitment 1 – Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs

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Selection – This phase involves examining requests in detail to make sure that the resources that are allocated or collected go towards the most relevant projects. First of all, the proposals are checked to see if they are in keeping with the directives. Then the requests are examined in detail before the funding allocation decisions are made.

The nine quality criteria of the CHS can be used during this phase to improve the selection criteria.

Contractualisation – This phase involves defining the level, scale and nature of the contractual commitments.

Implementation – This phase concerns the implementation and monitoring of the intervention and ends when the activities end.

Though funding is essentially monitored via reporting, the COMPASS's Project Health Check (see Annexes) can be used to analyse the state of a project during a field visit or to encourage operators to carry out an analysis of the state of a project (often mid-term) that is less restrictive than a classic evaluation.

Closure – This phase marks the end of the funding and concludes with a final report and sometimes an audit.

The 9 quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard can be used to establish the questions of a final evaluation.

◤ **Institutional funding**

The idea of responsible funding includes responsibility vis-à-vis:

- The target population, who should be at the centre of an intervention;
- The people who provide the funds (e.g. citizens, with regard to the proper use of public funds);
- The authorities and civil society in the intervention zone;
- Organisations in charge of implementation.

It is useful to be able to assign resource to specific projects, but broader interventions (at the level of an organisation) which have fewer conditions (less restrictive) can also help to meet all these different levels of responsibility.

Critical point – Aid localisation

One might think that there was a consensus about giving a central role to local actors in crisis response… Experience has shown how essential the role of local actors is in the initial hours and days after a disaster, or to gain access to difficult or contested areas in numerous conflicts, where international operators are not welcome. And yet, the debates about how to put localisation into practice have been more complex than expected.

Even the definition of which local actors are concerned by localisation is not so simple, as it cannot be limited to NGOs, and also includes governments, national and local disaster management agencies, and municipal actors. Each of these actors plays a specific role based on their mandate and their capacities. (…)

As for local civil society actors, their interaction with "international" actors (which is an inappropriate but revealing term, as they are not "international" as much as "foreign" in relation to "national" actors) are not neutral. The actions and funding of humanitarian organisations shape and transform the civil society of a given country, (…). There is a significant risk of seeing local NGOs turning into clones of NGOs from the global North, and thus losing the value of their "local" nature which allows them to understand precisely "what to do", and "how to do it". (…)

These numerous and complex issues that have emerged from the field have led to debates at the international level. Indeed, localisation is a collective process that has numerous implications for actors from the global South, but also for the aid system, funding and reporting methods, etc. (…). Aid localisation, which, above all, is a question of regulating the relations of power and respect between actors, can lead to new ways of thinking about solidarity.

Extract from Humanitarian Aid on the Move No. 19 – January 2018.
https://www.urd.org/Humanitaires-en-mouvement

Some funds are used to support operational partners structurally rather than on a project by project basis. In these circumstances, the Core Humanitarian Standard can be used as a framework for the selection, monitoring, capacity building and evaluation of these partner organisations. By providing a global and flexible framework that reflects the quality and accountability challenges of the different stakeholders of an intervention, it can help to establish more agile funding mechanisms that make it possible to monitor not only how resources are managed, but also the results and impact of a number of projects by an organisation.

This method of cooperation can be put into practice via framework agreements which help to avoid multiple controls of organisational, administrative and financial capacity each time a project is financed. These framework agreements, which are of a limited duration, can make it possible to really put into practice quality and accountability commitments that often remain superficial at the level of a project (e.g. Measuring impact). This reinforcement of the dialogue and the relationship of confidence between the organisation in charge of funding and an operator does not prevent controls at regular intervals, but it can make more time and resources available to analyse the effects of the intervention and reinforce the capacities of the different stakeholders.

PRACTICAL FILES AND TOOLS

This section is organised on the basis of the Core Humanitarian Standard's nine quality criteria, with one page per criterion. For each criterion, there is: an introduction, which looks at how the criterion can be applied to the funding of a project or an organisation, a series of proposed actions for responsible and high-quality funding at the project and institutional level, and links to good practices in fragile contexts.

1. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IS APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT

Funding a humanitarian response by ensuring that it is appropriate and appropriate is a guarantee of effectiveness. It is essential in terms of meeting the priority needs of the population while taking into account the specific characteristics of the context, and in terms of using the limited resources available as effectively as possible. This involves checking, supporting and promoting the analysis and understanding of existing needs by the organisation behind the project. The funding mechanism must also allow the project to be adapted based on how needs change. This can also involve supporting the institutional capacity of organisations.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Support and encourage context and stakeholder analyses
> Support context analysis at the level of the crisis (joint or coordinated evaluations) and also at the level of the project/programme.
> Check project documents to see if those behind the project have previous knowledge or have carried out a specific, in-depth analysis of the context and the stakeholders involved.

2. Fund projects sufficiently to cover needs and encourage tailor-made projects
> Check that there is coherence between the response strategy and the evaluation of risks, vulnerabilities and needs.
> Check that funded projects do not discriminate against specific groups.
> Question standardised projects and encourage adaptations to the specific characteristics of the context.

3. Put in place funding mechanisms that allow the intervention to adapt to the characteristics of the context and the way these evolve
> Stimulate the organisation's capacity to anticipate.
> Ensure that funding mechanisms are flexible so that the project can be adapted to the social, cultural, political, etc. characteristics of the context, and the way that these evolve.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

4. Support organisations' institutional capacity to provide appropriate and relevant aid.
> Encourage and support the adoption of policies committing organisations to providing impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by a crisis.
> Encouraging and supporting the adoption of policies that take into account the diversity of communities, such as the disadvantaged and marginalised, notably via the collection of disaggregated data.
> Supporting the implementation of processes to guarantee that there is continuous analysis of contexts (policy, tools and methods, staff training).

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 6 (relevance) and 15 (accountability)	**Principles 32 (relevance) and 88 (relevance)**	**Commitment 5 (relevance)**

2. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IS EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY

Ensuring that funding allows an effective and timely response is obviously a central aspect of donors' responsibility to make sure resources are used properly. This implies that operators and their financial partners should have a high level of reactivity if there is a crisis or that there are specific pre-established emergency funding procedures in place between donors and specialist operators. It also implies that the implementing agency has the appropriate response capacity.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY, ACCOUNTABLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Encourage and support effective and timely projects
> Encourage crisis preparedness initiatives.
> Check whether projects have taken into account constraints and risks and notably whether the activities have been adapted to local calendars (crisis duration, agricultural calendar, etc.).
> Check the factual basis of the chosen approach (use of good practice, reference to current knowledge of the sector, etc.) in the planning and evaluation of projects.

2. Allow projects to be adapted to improve performance
> Support and encourage the monitoring of project results/effects and not only the monitoring of activities.
> Include a continuous improvement mechanism to allow projects to be continuously corrected and adapted.
> Adapt funding procedures to allow the necessary changes to be made based on how the situation evolves and analysis of project performance.

3. Set up funding procedures that are adapted to how urgent a situation is
> Adapt the duration of directives and disbursement procedures depending on how urgent the situation is.
> Think about an exit strategy as early as possible and instigate the transition to longer-term funding.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

4. Accompany and support organisations to become more effective
> Propose an institutional framework for links between relief, rehabilitation and development interventions.
> Encourage the implementation of effective Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning policies.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 5 (reactivity and flexibility of funding), 11 (relevance) and 18 (emergency intervention)	Principles 33 (relevance), 36 (efficiency) and 40 (relevance)	

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3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE STRENGTHENS LOCAL CAPACITIES AND AVOIDS NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Funding can contribute to an effective intervention in an emergency situation (Saving lives) while establishing the initial response to the underlying causes of a crisis, local capacity building and improved management of the risk of negative effects. This responsibility to "do no harm" is shared by operators and financial partners and the goal of long-term, positive impacts is becoming a central issue as specified in one of the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit: "Change people's lives: from delivering aid to ending need" which implies better coordination between humanitarian and development donors.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY, ACCOUNTABLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Contribute to reinforcing local capacities and the resilience of local actors.
> Check that the local capacities for resilience (structures, organisations, leaders and support networks) have been identified and are involved in the intervention.
> Support the development of local organisations' capacities in their role as first responders in the event of future crises.
> Promote projects that include and/or facilitate capacity building activities and restore services, education, markets and livelihood opportunities.

2. Identify actual or potential negative effects of the intervention:
> Check how well risks, dangers, and vulnerabilities are understood and their integration into the project strategy and the choice of activities.
> Check that the risk of negative effects are analysed, particularly in the following areas: a. security, dignity and human rights; b. sexual exploitation and abuse by staff; c. culture, gender issues, social and political relations; d. livelihoods; e. the local economy; and f. the environment.
> Encourage monitoring of the potential negative effects of the intervention and the implementation of avoidance or mitigation strategies.

3. Contribute to reducing the risk of dependence:
> Ask for a clear transition or exit strategy to be developed in consultation with the affected population and the other stakeholders.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

4. Support the development and the implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:
> Promote resources and expertise in terms of capacity building.
> Evaluate, mitigate and manage the potential negative effects of the intervention.
> Protect personal data in keeping with international standards and local data protection laws.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 8 (local capacity building) and 9 (accountability and humanitarian/ development nexus)	**Principles 34 (relevance and local capacity building), 42 (accountability), and chapter 5 (principles 75 to 78)**	**Commitments 2 (local capacity building) and 3 (CASH projects)**

4. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IS BASED ON COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK

High-quality and responsible funding can contribute to increasing the involvement of all communities and people affected by crisis during an intervention. This includes, for example, the need to (1) facilitate access to information, (2) guarantee the engagement of the target population, and (3) facilitate feedback mechanisms. Access to information is increasingly being recognised as a fundamental need which is essential for the autonomy and the survival of the population in numerous contexts.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Facilitate access to information in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner:
> Ask that the project includes specific mechanisms to share information with communities and people affected by crisis concerning their rights, the organisation and the intervention.
> Promote the use of communication languages, formats and methods that are easily understood for the different members of the community, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups.

2. Ensure that there is participation and inclusive and representative engagement by communities and people affected by the crisis during all the phases of the intervention
> Ask for a precise description of the targeted groups, making it possible to check the quality of the interaction that has already taken place between the communities and the operator.
> Check that the points of view of people affected by the crisis, including the most vulnerable and marginalised people, are sought and used to guide the design and implementation of the project.

3. Encourage and give communities and people affected by crisis the means to express how satisfied they are with the quality and effectiveness of the intervention:
> Ensure that mechanisms are in place to collect and use feedback from all groups affected by the crisis. These mechanisms can be formal (group discussions, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) and informal (daily interaction).

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

4. Support the development and application of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:
> Share information in a clear and relevant manner with the different stakeholders.
> Encourage participation on the part of, and listening to, the communities.
> Communicate externally, including about fundraising, in a way that is factual and ethical, and respectful of the dignity of communities and people affected by the crisis.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principle 7 (participation of the population)	Principles 28 (transparency) and 95 (transparency)	Commitments 1 (transparency) and 6 (participation of the population)

5. COMPLAINTS ARE WELCOMED AND ADDRESSED

Funding implies joint responsibility for implementation methods and consequently a specific issue at stake in relation to the complaints system that is set up. Even though the major international commitments made by donors do not include any specific reference to this subject, funding methods and conditions can help to increase the effectiveness of complaints mechanisms and how well they are adapted to the specific characteristics of a context so that this commitment is not limited to ticking a box. It is also important that these mechanisms do not replace local systems for managing offences and fraudulent practices.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Encourage the implementation of appropriate and effective complaints mechanisms

> Encourage the consultation of communities and people affected by crisis regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of processes for managing complaints.

> Ask that information about the way complaints mechanisms work, and the type of complaints that they deal with is provided to, and understood by, all demographic groups.

> Check that complaints mechanisms are documented and operational.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

2. Support the development and implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:

> Guarantee that staff, and communities, are able to make complaints.

> Train staff so that they are familiar with complaints processes for sensitive cases (corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, serious and professional misconduct) and non-sensitive cases (problems related to the use of selection criteria).

> Implement a staff code of conduct.

> Make decisions, and take sanctions if necessary in a timely, equitable and appropriate manner.

> Ensure that complaints that do not fall within the remit of the organisation are referred to a competent party in accordance with current good practices.

> Provide factual and responsible external communication if there are sensitive complaints.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain

6. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IS COORDINATED AND COMPLEMENTARY

Providing coordinated and complementary assistance is a central issue in relation to funding. It is often a criterion that is imposed on donors by their own regulatory authorities and is used when donors are evaluated. Indeed, it is of paramount importance because, as a single source cannot meet all needs, funding must aim to achieve synergy through the complementarity, cooperation and coherence of interventions.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Ensure that the assistance complements that of the national and local authorities, as well as that of other organisations in charge of funding and implementation.
> Support the identification of the roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of the different stakeholders.
> Promote collaboration and, whenever possible, the sharing of resources and equipment in order to optimise the capacities of communities, host governments, donors and organisations with different mandates and expertise (joint assessments, training, evaluations, etc.).

2. Exchange the necessary information with partners, coordination groups and all other relevant actors using appropriate means of communication
> Promote the use of existing coordination bodies so that people's needs can be treated as a whole.
> Support the sharing of information regarding the organisation's skills, resources, geographic areas and sectors of activity with other stakeholders in order to reduce the risk of gaps and duplication.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

3. Support the development and implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:
> Engage with partners, host authorities and other humanitarian actors, and also, when appropriate, with non-humanitarian actors.
> Work in partnerships with clear and coherent agreements that respect the mandate, obligations and independence of each partner and recognise their different constraints and commitments.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 10 (coherence), 14 (coherence) and 19 (coherence/relations with the military)	Chapters 3.1 (principles 25 to 30) and 4 (principles 66 to 74), and principles 57 (coherence/relations with the military) and 92 (coherence)	Commitments 7 (anticipation) and 10 (humanitarian - development nexus)

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7. HUMANITARIAN ACTORS CONTINUOUSLY LEARN AND IMPROVE

Donors have contributed significantly to the emergence of an evaluation culture within the humanitarian sector since the middle of the 1990s. Funding can come with the need to conduct evaluations and cover their cost. Other approaches are available today for learning and improving interventions, and these can be promoted by funding. This criterion is linked to the question of efficiency as it should allow actors to improve the effectiveness of their interventions and make the most of limited resources.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Learn, innovate and adapt interventions
> Support the fact that monitoring, evaluation, feedback and complaints processes lead to changes and/or innovations in project design or implementation.
> Check that the project is designed taking into account lessons learned in similar interventions.
> Promote the carrying out and use of evaluations.

2. Share lessons and innovations with communities and people affected by crisis, and with other stakeholders
> Encourage the sharing of information from monitoring and learning with the relevant stakeholders, including affected people and partners.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

3. Support the development and implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:
> Implement regular evaluation mechanisms.
> Share experience, lessons and know-how within the organisation.
> Contribute to the establishment of an organisation's continuous learning approach.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 21 (efficiency) and 22 (efficiency/regular evaluations)	**Principles 19 (accountability), 28 (transparency), 32 (pertinence) and 47 (coherence)**	

8. STAFF ARE SUPPORTED TO DO THEIR JOB EFFECTIVELY, AND ARE TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY

Though the issue of human resource management is an internal matter for operators, funding can raise questions and support an organisation, notably about issues of staff size and competencies, their ethical behaviour and their security.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Support projects that are based on effective, realistic and fair management of human resources
> Check that the right number of staff with the right qualifications are in the right place at the right time to implement the proposed intervention.
> Ask that human resource policies and procedures are equitable, transparent, non-discriminatory and in keeping with local labour law.
> Encourage the implementation of a code of conduct that, at the very least, prohibits any kind of exploitation, abuse or discrimination.
> Ensure that mechanisms are in place for staff security and wellbeing.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

2. Support the implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines that make it possible to:
> Involve all staff (and suppliers) by signing a code of conduct (that covers the question of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse) and receiving an appropriate briefing about the code of conduct.
> Support staff in terms of improved competencies and aptitudes.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 15 (accountability) and 17 (risk management/security)	**Principles 3 (security) and 51 (transparency and coherence).**	

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9. RESOURCES ARE MANAGED AND USED RESPONSIBLY FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE

The main issue at stake for funding is monitoring how resources are managed in order to know whether they have been used responsibly and as they were intended. In general, this criterion is broadly covered by funding and reporting procedures. The goal is to find the right balance between administrative and financial demands, and analysis of the effects of the intervention. Recently there have been efforts to simplify and harmonise the reporting systems of different donors.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIBLE FUNDING:

AT THE PROJECT LEVEL:

1. Manage and use the resources to meet the objective while reducing waste
> Check that spending is regularly monitored and that the financial planning and monitoring system can guarantee that project objectives will be met.
> Promote a balanced system between the monitoring of resources and the monitoring of the effects of the intervention.

2. Anticipate and manage risks
> Promote monitoring, and the implementation of corrective measures, linked to potential impacts on the environment (water, soil, air, biodiversity).
> Check that mechanisms for managing the risk of corruption have the capacity to take the necessary measures if need be.

AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

3. Support the development and implementation of policies, strategies and guidelines which make it possible to:
> Use and manage resources in a transparent and efficient manner, specifying how the organisation : a. accepts and allocates funds and in-kind donations ethically and legally ; b. uses resources responsibly vis-à-vis the environment ; c. prevents and deals with cases of corruption, fraud, conflicts of interest and financial abuse ; d. conducts audits, checks conformity with procedures and reports back in a transparent manner ; e. evaluates, manages and mitigates risk continuously; and f. ensures that the resources it accepts does not compromise its independence.
> Use and manage resources ethically, including : accepting and allocating funding ; accepting and allocating in-kind donations ; mitigating and preventing impacts on the environment ; preventing fraud, managing suspected and proven cases of corruption and of misuse of resources ; conflicts of interest ; audits, checking and reporting ; evaluation and the management of risk related to assets.

LINKS BETWEEN THIS CRITERION OF THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD AND THE FOLLOWING INITIATIVES:

Good Humanitarian Donorship	Humanitarian Consensus	Grand Bargain
Principles 12 (flexibility of funding), 13 (perspective) and 23 (transparency)	**Principles 35 (efficiency), 44 (pertinence and participation), 52 (results-based management) and 72 (transparency).**	**Commitments 4 (pertinence), 8 (efficiency) and 9 (results-based management)**

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EVALUATING

HOW DO YOU USE THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD TO EVALUATE A PROJECT?

This section describes how an evaluation can use the quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) to complement the OECD-DAC[30] quality criteria, prioritise areas of analysis and identify relevant evaluation questions[31].

It is split into two parts:

1. The introduction stresses how the Core Humanitarian Standard can help to define evaluation criteria and implement the evaluation cycle.

2. Practical guidelines are provided to support the identification of key evaluation questions and related information to be collected.

It is aimed particularly at:

• People commissioning an evaluation, to help them design the evaluation process.

• People undertaking an evaluation, to help them prepare it and carry it out.

INTRODUCTION

↗ How to use the Core Humanitarian Standard to evaluate a project?

Why evaluation matters

Evaluation can support quality, learning and accountability. In complex contexts, evaluation represents an opportunity to take stock of what has worked and what has not, and why. It is the basis for learning and improving, and a concrete way to improve performance and increase accountability towards people and communities, staff and donors.

It differs from other steering processes as it is *the systematic and objective examination of humanitarian action, to determine the worth or significance of an activity, policy*

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[30] OECD-DAC – The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
[31] For more information on evaluation theory and practice in general, we recommend the Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide (ALNAP) - http://www.alnap.org/resource/23592

or programme, intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability [32].

Evaluation criteria

The most commonly used framework for evaluations in the humanitarian and development sector is the OECD/DAC framework. Initially developed for the development sector, it is based on five criteria to which two were added specifically for humanitarian contexts:

1. **Relevance –** the extent to which an aid activity corresponds to the priorities and policies of the target group, partners or funding bodies.

2. **Effectiveness –** the extent to which an aid activity meets its objectives.

3. **Efficiency –** outputs considered - qualitatively and quantitatively - in relation to resources used/inputs.

4. **Impact –** the positive and negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended effect of an intervention.

5. **Sustainability –** whether the benefits of the activity are likely to persist once the funding body has withdrawn funding.

6. **Coverage –** the extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering were reached by humanitarian action.

7. **Coherence –** the extent to which security, developmental, trade, and military policies as well as humanitarian policies, are consistent and take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations.

Other evaluation frameworks can be used to complement the OECD-DAC criteria when appropriate or requested, such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and other normative frameworks such as International Humanitarian Law, sector-specific standards or agency guidelines.

Using the Core Humanitarian Standard for evaluation

The Core Humanitarian Standard may be used because the commissioning agency has made a formal commitment to adhere to it. This will have the following advantages:

- It will facilitate internal acceptance of the evaluation, as project teams will be familiar and understand the criteria used for the evaluation.

- If the commissioning agency has developed its MEAL framework on the basis of the CHS or is implementing the COMPASS throughout the organisation, data from the project processes, and in particular from monitoring, would be directly used as key information for the evaluation process.

- Moreover, the systematic use of the same framework for evaluations can facilitate cross-analysis and build the basis for meta-analysis.

- Finally, it could also be used for any CHS related verification process.

But the use of the CHS for evaluation can also bring added value to a single evaluation process:

- The OECD-DAC criteria are sometimes difficult to use. An advantage of the CHS quality criteria is that they are expressed in sentences. These can be easier to use than concepts, especially within a team and a group of diverse stakeholders.

- After consulting with donors, humanitarian agencies, field teams and affected

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[32] The evaluation of humanitarian action – ALNAP – p. 27.

populations, it became apparent that a number of concepts, which are very important for the quality and accountability of a project, were not addressed by the OECD-DAC criteria (participation, learning …). The Core Humanitarian Standard complements the OECD-DAC criteria with these additional important concepts.

> ### Experience from the field – Algeria
>
> *After there had been a great deal of tension between operational partners, which had slowed down the activities of a project, an evaluation was carried out. This allowed an objective analysis of the situation with a specific focus on issues of cooperation, which helped to put the project back on the rails.*
>
> **Commitment 2 – Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.**

How to link the Core Humanitarian Standard with the OECD-DAC criteria

Each OECD-DAC criterion is incorporated into one or more of the nine CHS quality criteria, making its use for evaluation in line with best practices in the sector. The following table underlines linkages between the nine CHS quality criteria and the seven OECD-DAC criteria.

CHS QUALITY CRITERIA	OECD-DAC CRITERIA						
	RELEVANCE	EFFECTIVENESS	EFFICIENCY	IMPACT	SUSTAINABILITY	COVER	COHERENCE
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	Fully					Partly	
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely		Fully				Partly	
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects				Fully	Fully		
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	Partly						Partly
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed							Partly
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	Partly		Partly		Partly	Fully	Fully
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve				Partly			Partly
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably		Partly					
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose			Fully	Partly			Partly

Key

■ (green) Fully relevant to that particular OECD-DAC criteria

■ (orange) Partly relevant.

■ (grey) No specific relevance.

◤ How can you use the Core Humanitarian Standard to evaluate a project?

The evaluation cycle includes four main steps: 1. The preliminary phase. 2. Planning and preparing the evaluation. 3. Conducting the evaluation. 4. Using / disseminating the results.

THE MAIN PHASES OF AN EVALUATION

Preliminary Phase

Conducting the evaluation
- Collecting information
- Analysis
- Oral presentation of findings, Report, etc.

Planning and preparing the evaluation
ToR • Response to ToR
• Inception Report

Using/ disseminating the results
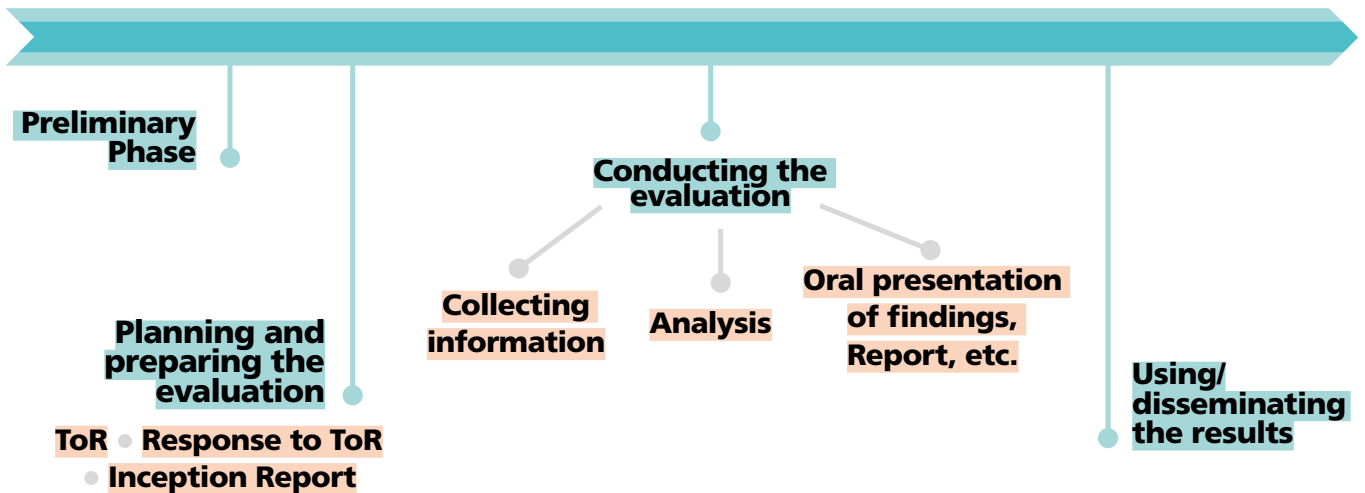
Preliminary phase - This phase leads to the decision to conduct an evaluation, or not. It consists essentially of a rapid analysis of the needs, risks and opportunities of a possible evaluation in order to arrive at a «well-founded» and well-reasoned decision.

The nine CHS quality criteria can be used at this stage to **quickly assess the situation and therefore contribute to an informed decision to launch (or not) the evaluation.**

Planning and preparing the evaluation – This phase results in the writing of the evaluation terms of reference and the designation of the team that will be responsible for conducting the evaluation. It focuses on the ways and means of the evaluation mission to be conducted (who, what, why, how).

! Important During this phase, evaluation questions are identified and evaluation criteria confirmed. Avoid starting with the criteria and then selecting questions for each one, because of resource limitations but also because an evaluation should focus on users' needs[33]. All the elements of the CHS evaluation framework can be used, although it is recommended that you use only a few criteria depending on the priorities of the evaluation and the resources available.

The nine CHS quality criteria can be used at this stage to:
- **Provide a quick overview of all the criteria and/or prioritise a few criteria for detailed analysis during the evaluation** – The proposed "Project health check" tool in the COMPASS method – See Annexes- can be used to collect the views of different stakeholders on the overall situation of the project and identify which criteria should be prioritised for more detailed analysis.

[33] ALNAP, Humanitarian evaluation guide, p. 115.

- **Confirm evaluation questions -** The proposed evaluation guidelines and recommendations in the COMPASS method can help to confirm evaluation questions and give examples of related information to be collected.

Caution – The importance of evaluating the technological components of projects[34]

Evaluations of IT projects or of the technological components of projects remain extremely rare in the sector; it would seem that this sector still benefits from a certain "immunity" in terms of accountability despite the large amounts invested in these by certain aid organisations. Similarly, there have been very few academic studies on the subject and exchanges and feedback are very informal for the time being (blogs, mailing lists, fail tests, etc.).

The evaluation of projects that include technological components should therefore be encouraged, along with the sharing of lessons learned: the classic OECD-DAC evaluation criteria have thus already been adapted to the specific characteristics of technology by certain actors and the Principles for Digital Development also provide a framework that is adapted to the needs of the sector.

Commitment 9 – Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

Conducting the evaluation – This phase concerns the implementation of the evaluation mission and results in the writing of the evaluation report. It consists of two interacting components: the collection and analysis of information on the one hand, and the synthesis and presentation of findings on the other.

The nine CHS quality criteria can be used at this stage to **help develop data collection tools (e.g. using CHS quality criteria to complement/confirm questionnaires) and structure the analysis and the presentation of findings.**

Using the evaluation - This phase concerns accountability and learning, the overall objective of the evaluation process. It consists of presenting the results, and possibly publishing, distributing and disseminating them (internally and / or externally). It is focused on planning how lessons can be taken into account and how their implementation can be monitored.

The nine CHS quality criteria can be used at this stage **to structure the evaluation and to make decisions about changes that need to be made to the project.** This can make it easier to compare evaluations within an organisation or between partners, and can make analysis easier for meta-evaluations.

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[34] This sub-section was written by CartONG. For more information about this organization, which provides humanitarian and development actors with specialized support in information management, mapping, analysis and data processing: - http://www.cartong.org

PRACTICAL SHEETS AND TOOLS

This section is divided on the basis of the nine CHS quality criteria, with one page per criterion. For each criterion, there is an introduction from an evaluation perspective, and a set of proposed evaluation questions and related information to be collected.

1. IS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT?

Assessing if the humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant means measuring the extent to which the response is tailored to respond to local needs and specificities. This includes the issue of coverage, which means evaluating the extent to which the humanitarian response met the needs of major population groups in acute needs. The relevance and appropriateness of the response are closely linked to and have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the response and the level of engagement with communities.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

5. To what extent is the humanitarian response adapted to the (cultural, political, etc.) characteristics of the context and how it evolves?
> Level of participation by the communities and people affected by the crisis in the response activities
> Level of acceptance of the humanitarian response by the main local stakeholders
> Adjustments made to adapt the response to the characteristics of the context (cultural, political, etc.)
> Adjustments made to adapt the response to potential changes in the context (and their analysis)

6. To what extent do the targeted needs correspond to actual/'real' priority needs?
> The perception of communities and people affected by the crisis regarding the inclusion of their specific needs in the response
> The extent to which the capacities of people requiring assistance and/or protection were included
> Adjustments made to adapt the response to potential changes in needs (and their analysis)

7. To what extent do the assistance and protection provided correspond to the assessed risks, vulnerabilities and needs?
> Coherence between the response strategy and the assessed risks, vulnerabilities and needs
> Existence of uncovered risks, vulnerabilities and needs

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Was a systematic, objective and on-going analysis of the context and stakeholders conducted and regularly up-dated?	*4. Are policies in place committing to providing impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by crisis?*
2. Was the response designed and implemented on the basis of an impartial assessment of needs and risks, and of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups?	*5. Are policies in place set out commitments which take into account the diversity of communities, including disadvantaged or marginalised people, and to collect disaggregated data?*
3. Was the response adapted to changing needs, capacities and contexts?	*6. Are processes in place to ensure an appropriate ongoing analysis of the context?*

2. IS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY?

Evaluating whether the humanitarian response is effective means measuring the extent to which the response achieves its purpose or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. The issue of timeliness is of particular importance in emergency situations.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

5. To what extent is the humanitarian response achieving its objectives?
> Trends of targeted needs (nutrition rates, morbidity, etc.) for the different population groups (monitoring data, public health data, etc.)
> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of how their needs have evolved and how effective the response has been
> Level of achievement of objectives and expected results (monitoring data)

6. To what extent is the assistance delivered in a timely manner?
> Level and gravity of needs not covered for timing issues
> Adaptation of the activities to local calendars (seasons, agricultural calendar, etc.)
> Delays between planned schedule and implementation (monitoring data)

7. To what extent is the response strategy (general approach and activities) appropriate to reach the expected results?
> Evidence-base of the chosen approach (use of best practices, reference to the current knowledge of the sector, etc.)
> Level of participation of communities in project activities
> Opinion of informed staff and stakeholders about the effectiveness of the strategy

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Was the response designed in order to address constraints so that proposed action is realistic and safe for communities?	*6. Are programme commitments in line with organisational capacities?*
2. Was the humanitarian response delivered in a timely manner, making decision without unnecessary delays?	*7. Are policy commitments ensuring:*
3. Were the unmet needs referred to those organisations with the relevant expertise and mandate, or was advocacy done for those needs to be addressed?	*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*
4. Were the relevant technical standards and good practice employed across the humanitarian sector used to plan and assess programmes?	*c. timely decision-making with resources allocated accordingly.*
5. Were the activities, outputs and outcomes of humanitarian responses monitored in order to adapt programmes and address poor performance?	

3. IS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE STRENGHENING LOCAL CAPACITIES AND AVOIDING NEGATIVE EFFECTS?

When evaluating this criterion, we attempt to assess the wider effects of the response on individuals, gender and age groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro and micro. In particular, we consider the extent to which activities of a short-term nature are carried out while taking into account longer-term and inter-connected problems.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent are local capacities strengthened by the response?
> Evidence about strengthened local capacities (e.g. better response to new disaster, results of organisational assessment, etc.)
> The perception of local authorities, leaders and organisations involved in crisis response regarding any increase in their capacities
> Trends of indicators related to key factors of resilience (context specific)
> Perception of targeted populations of their ability to withstand future shocks and stresses

2. Can any negative effects observed be attributed to the response? Which ones and to what degree?
> The existence, nature and gravity of negative effects on the natural environment, local capacities, socio-economic balance, etc. (monitoring data, specific studies)
> Staff and key stakeholders' perception of potential negative effects caused by the humanitarian response
> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of potential negative effects

3. To what extent does the response strategy anticipate and mitigate the risks of negative effects (do no harm approach)?
> Quality and depth of the risk analysis (environmental assessment, economic studies, etc.)
> Existence, nature and effects of preventive or curative measures

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Were the programmes built on local capacities and worked towards improving the resilience of communities and people affected by crisis?	*7. Are policies, strategies and guidance are designed to prevent programmes having any negative effects, such as, for example, exploitation, abuse or discrimination by staff against communities and people affected by crisis; and strengthen local capacities?*
2. Were the results of community hazard and risk assessments and preparedness plans used to guide activities?	
3. Was the development of local leadership and organisations in their capacity as first-responders in the event of future crises enabled, taking steps to ensure that marginalised and disadvantaged groups are appropriately represented?	
4. Was a transition or exit strategy planned in the early stages of the humanitarian programme that ensures longer-term positive effects and reduces the risk of dependency?	*8. Are systems in place to safeguard any personal information collected from communities and people affected by crisis that could put them at risk?*
5. Were programmes that promote early disaster recovery and benefit the local economy designed and implemented?	
6. Were potential or actual unintended negative effects identify and act upon in a timely and systematic manner?	

4. IS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE BASED ON COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK?

When evaluating this criterion we measure the level and quality of engagement with communities and people affected by crisis during the humanitarian response. It encompasses measuring (1) the extent to which the engagement strategy is relevant and appropriate and (2) its level of implementation and effectiveness. The perception and views of communities and people affected by crisis are of particular importance to evaluate this criterion.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent is the engagement strategy (communication, participation and feedback loops) relevant and appropriate to the context?

> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of their access to information (timeliness, relevance and clarity)

> Level of participation by communities and people affected by the crisis in the activities of the response (decision-making process, implementation of activities, monitoring and evaluation, etc.)

> Level of use of the various communication tools (appropriateness of the languages used)

2. To what extent is the engagement strategy (communication, participation and feedback loops) implemented and effective?

> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of their rights and entitlements (knowledge of their rights and entitlements, and extent to which these are respected)

> The quality of relationships between staff and the population

> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of their capacity to influence the response

> Degree of ownership of the response activities by crisis-affected people

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Was information provided 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?	*5. Are policies for information-sharing in place, and promoting a culture of open communication?*
2. Was communication provided in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate for different members of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups?	*6. Are policies in place for engaging communities and people affected by crisis, reflecting the priorities and risks they identify in all stages of the work?*
3. Was representation ensured to be inclusive, involving the participation and engagement of communities and people affected by crisis at all stages of the work?	*7. Are external communications, including those used for fundraising purposes, accurate, ethical and respectful, presenting communities and people affected by crisis as dignified human beings?*
4. Were communities and people affected by crisis encouraged and facilitated 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?	

5. ARE COMPLAINTS WELCOME AND ADDRESSED?

Evaluating whether complaints are welcome and addressed complements the analysis of the level and quality of engagement with communities and people affected by crisis. Focusing on the complaints mechanism, we measure (1) the extent to which it is relevant and appropriate and (2) its level of implementation and effectiveness.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent is the complaints mechanism relevant and appropriate to the context?
> Number of registered complaints
> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of the accessibility of the complaints mechanism
> Adjustments made to adapt the complaints mechanism to the specific characteristics of the context (language, media, etc.)

2. To what extent is the complaints mechanism implemented and effective?
> Number of complaints processed
> Communities and people affected by the crisis' level of knowledge of the scope and functioning of the complaints mechanism
> Actions undertaken as a result of a complaint

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Were communities and people affected by crisis consulted on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints-handling processes?	*5. Has an organisational culture been established in which complaints are taken seriously and acted upon according to defined policies and processes?*
2. Were complaints welcomed and accepted, and was how the mechanism can be accessed and the scope of issues it can address communicated?	*6. Are communities and people affected by crisis fully aware of the expected behaviour of humanitarian staff, including organisational commitments made on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse?*
3. Were complaints managed in a timely, fair and appropriate manner that prioritises the safety of the complainant and those affected at all stages?	
4. Is the complaints-handling process for communities and people affected by crisis documented and in place? The process should cover programming, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other abuses of power.	*7. Are complaints that do not fall within the scope of the organisation referred to a relevant party in a manner consistent with good practice?*

6. IS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE COORDINATED AND COMPLEMENTARY?

Evaluating whether humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary involves measuring the extent to which the interventions of different actors are harmonised, promote synergy, and avoid gaps, duplication and resource conflict.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent is the coordination architecture and the collaborative strategy relevant to the context?
> Quality of the (national and/or international) coordination leadership
> Level of participation from organisations in coordination bodies and activities
> Adjustments made to adapt the coordination architecture (e.g. national or international leadership) and conditions (e.g. language issues) to the context

2. To what extent is the coordination architecture and the collaborative strategy implemented and effective?
> Quantity and quality of the information shared between organisations and with the main stakeholders of the response
> Quality of relationships between humanitarian and other relevant organisations
> Type and quality of coordinated and collaborative activities (such as joint needs assessments, responses by consortia, etc.)

3. To what extent is the overall humanitarian response responding to the diversity of needs and tackling the multiple facets of the situation?
> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of gaps or overlaps in the response
> Observation of gaps or overlaps in geographic or thematic areas

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Were the roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different stakeholders identified?	*5. Do policies and strategies include a clear commitment to coordination and collaboration with others, including national and local authorities, without compromising humanitarian principles?*
2. Was humanitarian response designed to complement that of national and local authorities and other humanitarian organisations?	
3. Was participation in relevant coordination bodies and collaboration with others ensured in order to minimise demands on communities and maximise the coverage and service provision of the wider humanitarian effort?	*6. Is work with partners governed by clear and consistent agreements that respect each partner's mandate, obligations and independence, and recognises their respective constraints and commitments?*
4. Was necessary information shared with partners, coordination groups and other relevant actors through appropriate communication channels?	

7. ARE HUMANITARIAN ACTORS CONTINUOUSLY LEARNING AND IMPROVING?

When we evaluate whether humanitarian actors are continuously learning and improving, we assess their capacity to make best use of existing knowledge and to adapt to experience. This criterion is linked to efficiency as it should enable actors to improve the effectiveness of interventions and to make best use of limited resources.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent is the humanitarian response taking into account previous experience from the context as well as lessons learnt more globally?

> Evidence on which response strategy is based (references to research, articles, evaluations, etc.)

> Adjustments made to adapt the response based on previous experience from the context

2. To what extent are the monitoring and learning processes in place relevant and effective?

> Quality of the monitoring system (context, implementation and results) in place (indicators, tools and processes)

> Frequency of data collection and analysis – links with decision-making

> Level of resources allocated to learning mechanisms (review, formal evaluation, etc.)

> Sharing of experiences and learning (through formal or informal communication) to communities, peers and the wider sector

3. To what extent has the response improved over time?

> Communities' and people's perception of improvements

> Observed/documented improvements made to the response as a result of learning processes

> Feedback from staff and partners about opportunities for learning and improvements

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Were lessons learnt and prior experience drawn on when designing programmes?	*4. Are evaluation and learning policies in place, and means are available to learn from experiences and improve practices?*
2. Were learning, innovation and implementation of changes done on the basis of monitoring and evaluation, and feedback and complaints?	*5. Does mechanisms exist to record knowledge and experience, and make it accessible throughout the organisation?*
3. Were learning and innovation shared internally, with communities and people affected by crisis, and with other stakeholders?	*6. Does the organisation contribute to learning and innovation in humanitarian response amongst peers and within the sector?*

8. ARE STAFF SUPPORTED TO DO THEIR JOB EFFECTIVELY, AND ARE THEY TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY?

In order to evaluate whether staff are supported to do their job effectively, and treated fairly and equitably, we assess the relevance and effectiveness of the human resources management system in place. This process criterion is closely linked to effectiveness and efficiency as it concerns whether the organisation makes best use of its limited resources.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent are staff expertise and competencies adequate to implement the humanitarian response?

> Communities and people affected by the crisis' perception of staff effectiveness (i.e. in terms of knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes)

> The quality of relationships between the staff and the communities and people affected by the crisis

> Level of attainment of staff performance objectives

> Resources (incl. time) dedicated to skills development for staff

2. To what extent is the management of human resources and support to staff appropriate, fair and equitable?

> Level of knowledge of staff about key policy and institutional documents

> Staff turnover rate and trends

> Feedback from staff about management and support received from their organisation to do their job

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Did staff work according to the mandate and values of the organisation and to agreed objectives and performance standards?	*4. Does the organisation have the management and staff capacity and capability to deliver its programmes?*
	5. Are staff policies and procedures fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and compliant with local employment law?
2. Did staff adhere to the policies that are relevant to them and understand the consequences of not adhering to them?	*6. Are job descriptions, work objectives and feedback processes in place so that staff have a clear understanding of what is required of them?*
	7. Is a code of conduct in place that establishes, at a minimum, the obligation of staff not to exploit, abuse or otherwise discriminate against people?
3. Did 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?	*8. Are policies in place to support staff to improve their skills and competencies?*
	9. Are policies in place for the security and the wellbeing of staff?

9. ARE RESOURCES MANAGED AND USED RESPONSIBLY FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE?

Evaluating whether resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose encompasses two different dimensions: (1) measuring the cost-effectiveness of the response which means comparing the outputs (qualitative and quantitative) achieved in relation to inputs and (2) assessing the effectiveness of the management system in terms of transparent and responsible use of resources.

KEY EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND RELATED INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:

1. To what extent is the response cost-effective? Would other strategies achieve better results for the same costs?
> Ratio between achieved results and cost of the project activities
> Existence of other strategies that could increase the impact for the same cost
> Feedback from staff, partners or communities about potential diversions or wastage

2. To what extent is the resource management system effective and transparent?
> Level of awareness among communities and people affected by the crisis about community-level budgets, expenditure and the results achieved
> Gaps between agreed and implemented plans, targets, budget and timeframes
> Discrepancies between management requirements and implementation
> Accessibility of financial documentation

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key actions	Organisational responsibilities
1. Were programmes designed and processes implemented to ensure the efficient use of resources, balancing quality, cost and timeliness at each phase of the response?	*6. Are policies and processes governing the use and management of resources in place? including how the organisation:*
2. Were resources managed and used to achieve their intended purpose, so minimising waste?	*a. accepts and allocates funds and gifts-in-kind ethically and legally;*
3. Were expenditure monitored and reported against budget.	*b. uses its resources in an environmentally responsible way;*
4. When using local and natural resources, was their impact on the environment considered?	*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*
5. Was the risk of corruption managed and appropriate action taken if it is identified?	*f. ensures that the acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence.*

IMPROVING

HOW CAN THE CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARD BE USED TO IMPLEMENT A MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING SYSTEM?

This section describes practices and tools that can help to translate the quality and accountability demands of the Core Humanitarian Standard into a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system that is adapted to the specific needs, demands and resources of an organisation, consortium or programme.

This section is split into two parts:
1. The introduction underlines why and how the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) can be used in a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning system.
2. Practical files and tools are provided to help implement a project Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system based on the quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard.

It is particularly aimed at those who are responsible for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning within organisations, consortia or programmes.

INTRODUCTION

⬈ Why use the Core Humanitarian Standard to implement a project Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system?

MEAL challenges

Many organisations encounter the same difficulties in relation to the way monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning mechanisms are implemented.
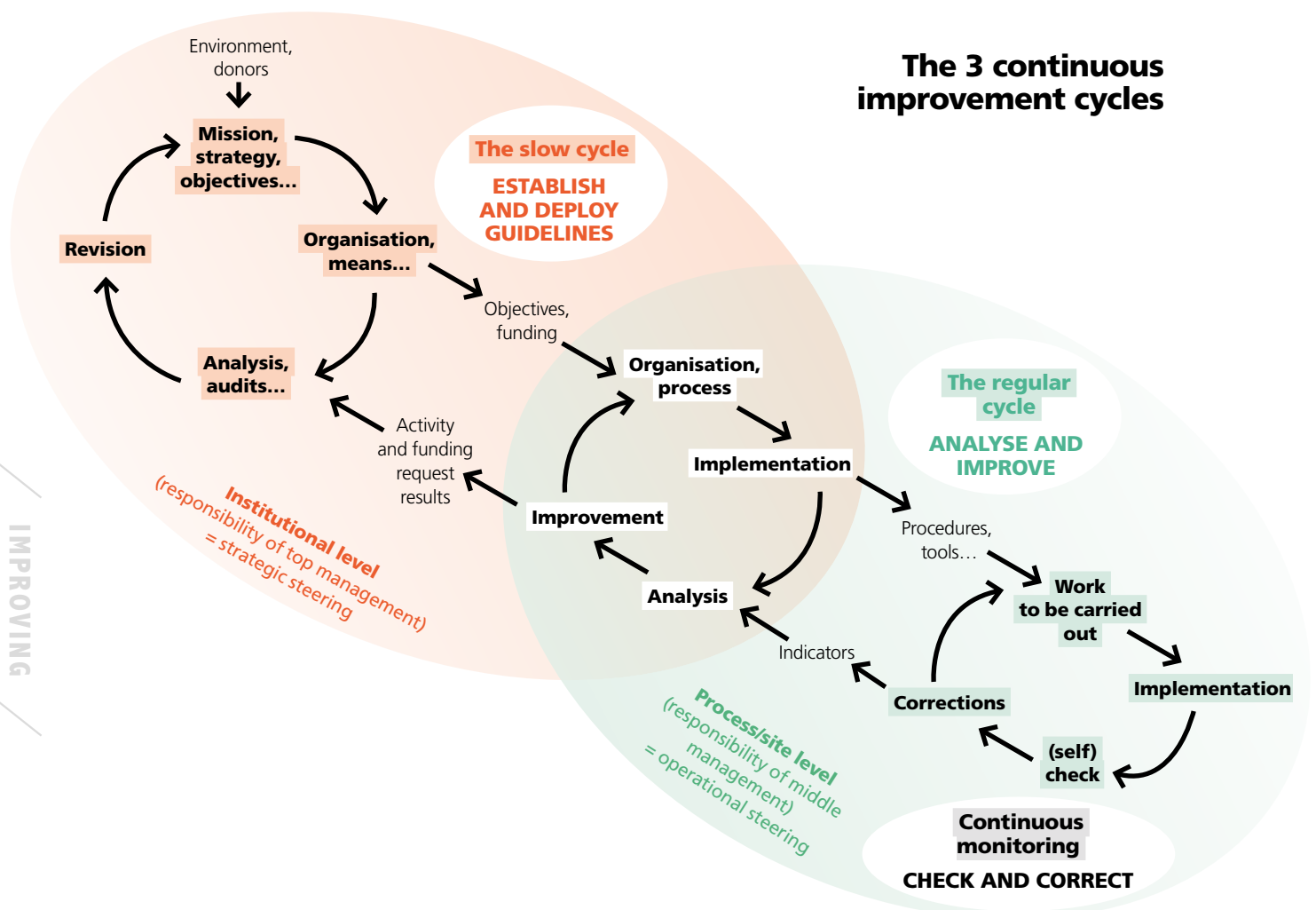
These problems include:
- A lack of understanding of what Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) activities involve and of how they can increase the quality and accountability of the assistance delivered to communities and people affected by a crisis;

- A shortage of staff and volunteers who are sufficiently qualified and trained to support projects effectively;
- Compartmentalised monitoring (in silos) between sector-based operations;
- The lack of overall strategy and planning in terms of quality and accountability;
- The need to "reinvent the wheel" for every new project in terms of practices related to quality and accountability;
- The fact that institutional policy is not clearly translated into operational terms;
- The lack of general information about performance and accountability;
- Etc.

Establishing a project MEAL system based on the commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard can help to make the steering process more meaningful. A framework of this kind can help to improve the annual planning of projects, the monitoring of results and issues of accountability towards the beneficiaries. It can also harmonise practices between projects and support services more efficiently. Lastly, it can encourage learning and continuous improvement processes while reinforcing general information about performance and the way projects are implemented.

The 3 continuous improvement cycles

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Institutional quality and accountability management system

An institutional quality and accountability management system can be applied at three different levels:

- The strategic level - to improve the implementation of an organisation's mission and strategy.
- The operational level – to improve the implementation of a portfolio of projects.
- The field level – to improve the implementation of one intervention.

Though the Core Humanitarian Standard can influence these three levels, the COMPASS can have a direct impact on the operational and project levels (green) by helping to implement a **project MEAL system.**

External expectations

The Core Humanitarian Standard can be used because the organisation has made a commitment to respect it. Establishing a MEAL system based on the CHS quality criteria should make it possible to guarantee and prove that these quality and accountability commitments have been respected.

Using the CHS to establish a MEAL system should also allow an organisation to position itself in relation to:

1. the humanitarian and development aid sector's quality and accountability initiatives;
2. the expectations of the general public who are looking for direct involvement and concrete results;
3. the increasingly strong demands of donors in terms of "accountability" and "performance" ("Value for Money").

⌁ How can you use the Core Humanitarian Standard to implement a project Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system?

A MEAL framework can be organised around a set of minimum commitments for all projects, and expected good practice for each stage of the project cycle.

Taking the CHS as the starting point, these minimum commitments should be practical, operational and tailored to the context and capacities of the organisation. They should also be integrated into a continuous process of improvement with a clear baseline, action plan and periodic reviews.

Key steps for establishing a MEAL framework within one organisation

In order to ensure that the commitments are appropriately tailored to the needs and capacities of the organisation, and that there is good understanding and ownership of the initiative amongst members of the organisation, the following steps can be taken[35].

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[35] The proposed steps are inspired from the guide "Madac - Modèle d'autodiagnostic et d'amélioration continue" developed by the F3E as a translation of the EFQM model of excellence for the humanitarian and development sector.
See. https://f3e.asso.fr/wp-content/uploads/plaquette_madac_web.pdf

Step 1. Decision – This is the starting point. During this step, the rationale and objectives for establishing an institutional MEAL framework are developed and communicated.

- Why do we intend to develop an institutional MEAL framework?
- What is the scope of this institutional MEAL framework? (projects; sectors; context; locations…)
- Who should be involved?
- What links should there be with external and/or internal quality and accountability standards?

At the end of this phase, a communication statement can be produced to inform the members of the organisation.

Step 2. Preparation – This step focuses on "how" the implementation can be conducted.

- Who will be facilitating the adoption process?
- What are the planned steps? When will these take place? What are the key milestones? How will they be validated?
- What will be covered? What will NOT be covered?
- Who will participate? What will be the deliverables?

At the end of this stage, terms of reference can be developed, including: Goal; Expected results and deliverables; Scope; Action plan; Roles; Governance; Communication.

! **Important** A MEAL unit can lead the process of setting up a MEAL framework, but everyone involved in the implementation, support and steering of projects should be invited to take part in this process.

Step 3. Assessment – This step analyses current practices, gaps and expectations.

- What are the current strong MEAL practices?
- What should be strengthened?
- What are the specific expectations from the different stakeholders?
- What are the specific opportunities and constraints from the context and existing capacities?

This step can be conducted through a desk review, key informant interviews, field visits, a remote survey etc.

! **Important** This is a key moment for involving people and underlining their roles in a MEAL framework. It is also a good opportunity to introduce the CHS and other international quality and accountability standards.

At the end of this step, an inception report and an initial list of potential MEAL commitments can be drafted.

Step 4. Identification – This step involves confirming what the priority MEAL commitments are and how they should be implemented.

- What are the confirmed MEAL commitments?
- Which MEAL commitments should be implemented first?
- How will they be implemented?
- Who will be involved?

This step can be organised through a participatory workshop to promote collective buy-in.

The following sources can be used when identifying/confirming specific MEAL commitments:

- **Stakeholders' expectations:** The main purpose of project quality and accountability management is to ensure that the project will meet stakeholder's needs and expectations: what are the key criteria of success for beneficiaries, the authorities, partners, the project team, donors and other key stakeholders for the project?

- **Existing global quality and accountability standards:** Does the organisation have any internal quality and accountability commitments that the project should respect? How should the CHS be integrated into existing commitments?

- **Existing sectoral standards:** Are there any sectoral standards that need to be adhered to and can be applied to all projects? (.e.g. SPHERE standards for water, sanitation, health, food security, nutrition, shelter and settlement; IMAS standards for mine action; Etc.)

- **Legal requirements:** Are there any specific requirements from authorities? From donors? Etc.

> ### *Experience from the field - Colombia*
> *The Colombian State has one of the most protective legal corpuses for populations displaced internally by conflict. These national texts include almost all of the United Nations' recommendations (Deng principles) to make up for the lack of international texts to protect displaced persons (as opposed to refugees). The different texts that guarantee the rights of displaced persons in Colombia should therefore be known by all humanitarian actors working with these populations.*
>
> **4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.**

At the end of this step, a final list of MEAL commitments, a baseline and an action plan can be drafted.
The MEAL commitments represent recommended actions that are agreed among a project team or an organisation as minimum quality and accountability practices when delivering assistance to communities and people affected by crisis. They usually take the form of key action points and related tools.

Step 5. Leading change – This step involves implementing a leading change project that will be continuously reviewed and improved.

- How can we progressively implement new practices?
- Who should be informed, trained, and/or involved?
- How can we continuously improve MEAL practices?
- How can we demonstrate improved quality and accountability?

This step is based on the continuous improvement cycle. This is a repetitive cycle that includes four steps that occur at every level, and within every activity[36] : 1. Plan: Set the objectives of the system and processes ("What to do" and "How to do it"). 2. Do: Implement and control what was planned. 3. Check: Monitor, measure and report processes and results against objectives. 4. Act: Take actions to improve the performance of processes.

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[36] ISO – The process approach - ISO/TC 176/SC 2/N1289 - www.iso.org/tc176/sc02/public

At the end of every continuous improvement cycle, a report and an up-dated action plan can be drafted.

> **! Important** During this process, it can be useful to identify four different roles between stakeholders:
>
> **Target:** Who are the individuals or groups affected by the change? Usually, this will be the project team and any operational partners.
>
> - **Facilitators:** Who is involved in facilitating the change? MEAL support team, project teams and operational partners will usually be involved in this role.
> - **Decision-makers:** Who can validate and legitimise the change?
> - **Sponsors:** Who has no direct power but is interested in the change and can indirectly support the process? Support teams (Logistics; Finance; etc.) or donors can be interested in supporting changes.

Conclusion - A MEAL system inspired by the Core Humanitarian Standard should be...

PRACTICAL – A MEAL system does not add an extra layer of controls, but rather supports field teams in summarising quality and accountability requirements through a coherent set of guidelines, recommendations and tools.

TAILORED – A MEAL system does not provide ready-made answers for all. Because every humanitarian intervention is different, a MEAL system must be interpreted and applied locally by each organisation in order to be meaningful.

COLLECTIVE – Because everybody contributes to quality and accountability, a MEAL system aims to facilitate the involvement of all to encourage a sense of collective ownership.

COMPLEMENTARY – A MEAL system complements other initiatives to increase the quality and accountability of humanitarian response.

INCLUSIVE – No quality framework can succeed in addressing stakeholder requirements unless it reflects the different circumstances, requirements and needs of different groups.

CONTINUOUS – Acknowledging that quality and accountability is a never-ending process, a MEAL system aims to continuously identify strong points to be consolidated, prioritise issues to be addressed, plan key actions and analyse changes.

The challenges of managing information in a MEAL system[37]

Though the Core Humanitarian Standard can help to prioritise what type of information should be collected and used in connection with a project MEAL system, the following points should be considered carefully to determine how information and communication technology can be used to collect it:

Deploying an IMS: perhaps not such a good idea? - In the case of regular projects, at the level of a mission or an organisation, it is logical at given point to deploy an Information Management System (IMS) that helps to centralise data,

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[37] This sub-section was written by CartONG. For more information about this organization, which provides humanitarian and development actors with specialized support in information management, mapping, analysis and data processing: http://www.cartong.org/

manage data flows and workflows, manage user rights, and aggregate several bricks (such as data visualisation, EDM*, CRM*...).

There are numerous solutions available on the market that can be configured to different degrees, some of which are dedicated to the humanitarian and development aid sector, others adapted from the private sector and it is therefore not difficult to find a solution that meets your needs.

However, experience shows that the deployment of this type of solution too often leads to failure, which can be due to a number of factors. The first of these is an inaccurate and often rushed needs analysis (or even no needs analysis) and consequently a solution that is selected without being sufficiently informed (based on the recommendations of other organisations or the commercial arguments of service providers). When needs analyses are carried out, they often do not represent the different actors who will use the IMS (focusing on the needs of the decision-makers to the detriment of the needs and constraints of the final users at the bottom of the hierarchy) and they do not prioritise needs properly, if at all (indeed, it is impossible in practice to find a solution that covers all needs, and part of the exercise involves holding workshops to prioritising them, and accepting that some processes will not be managed by the system). Lastly, needs analyses often underestimate the importance of having previously formalised business processes or of providing substantial support for their formalisation before they are digitised: the deployment of IMSs often fail because the processes that are digitised are insufficiently mature (e.g. they are applied in very different ways by different actors or in different geographical zones, or they are interpreted in different ways) or their complexity is underestimated (making it very expensive and time-consuming to digitise them).

Before deploying an IMS, it is therefore important to carry out a very detailed needs analysis, to move forward step-by-step to test concepts and methods of collaboration (e.g. consider sharing simple spreadsheets before acquiring a more complex solution) and most of all, provide sufficient support during the deployment. It is estimated that the deployment of an IMS requires several months of needs analysis and the deployment should take place over at least a year and is therefore only efficient for projects or processes that last more than 3 years. In any case, there is no magic tool that can be deployed rapidly over a short period. It is better to consider several "small" solutions with limited functional perimeters but which allow a very rapid increase in effectiveness.

« *One size fits all* » or the pipe dream of having a single mobile data collection tool - Logically, organisations are trying to harmonise and standardise the data collection tools that they use for their operations. However, the different tools dedicated to the humanitarian and development aid sector do not yet allow all the needs that exist in the field to be covered. Thus, among tools that appear similar, some are more suited to one-off studies, others to monitoring beneficiaries, and others to monitoring infrastructures. Some have high-level functionalities for controlling the quality of data, while others give priority to rapid deployment. Some are free but provide little security whereas others have a more restricted economic model but give greater control over the management of user rights, etc. The diversity of mobile solutions that are available on the market reflects different functionalities, different sectors to which they are better adapted (population tracking, longitudinal analysis, monitoring of water points, or cash and voucher distributions, etc.) and the different contexts at which they are aimed (for example, if you want data to be shared via SMS without acquiring a data plan or via basic non-smart terminals). Unfortunately, the magic tool that covers every need does not exist yet!

It is therefore important before choosing a tool to analyse your needs and accept, at the organisational level, that certain projects might need to have added functionalities that a standard solution will not be able to cover. Similarly, as the IT market is evolving extremely rapidly, organisations need to be flexible and reactive in their choice of solution (as a technology that is used can quickly become obsolete).

NB : the points below apply to all kinds of technology, mobile data collection tools being only one example of the challenges met.

Managing information in a consortium or the Information Management Officer's nightmare - The implementation of projects via consortiums of partners/operators is increasingly common in the humanitarian and development aid sector. This method of implementation raises very important questions in terms of data management which are often eluded when consortiums are established: should the data of all the partners be centralised, and if so, how? If the members work with the same beneficiary communities, how should individual data be synchronised or cross-referenced? How can double counting be avoided? How can the principles of data protection be respected when a large number of people from different organisations need to have access to the same data? What data sharing agreements should be established between partners? Should data collection tools be harmonised between organisations? Should a data centralisation tool be deployed?

For the time being, it is still difficult to answer these questions appropriately: consortiums' practices and lessons learned in terms of information management are in their infancy, the majority of existing tools having problems of interoperability and there are almost no data centralisation platforms at the individual or household level.

It is nevertheless important when a consortium is formed to keep in mind a few key points: the investment in information management should be proportionate to the goals of the consortium (funding a dedicated IM team and technical solutions) but also to its duration (it is inefficient for a single one-year project implemented by a consortium to deploy a data centralisation solution). As in all technological project, the key to success does not necessarily lie in the choice of tools, but: (i) above all in anticipating the issue via a detailed analysis of the consortium's IM needs and existing practices/constraints/limits among its members; (ii) in the quality and relevance of the processes and (legal) mechanisms for data sharing which need to be as precise as possible. Lastly, the actors involved need to show flexibility in order to overcome any technological bias or ideology that may sometimes exist in certain organisations. Contrary to what is often assumed, organising consortiums does not necessarily concern only the "upper" level of IM (analysis and centralisation), it also concerns the initial level of "data collection" which predetermines the upper levels which, without standardisation, or at least harmonisation, can be a major obstacle to the subsequent willingness to share or synchronise data.

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PRACTICAL FILES AND TOOLS

This section presents different tools that can help to establish a MEAL system based on the Core Humanitarian Standard's quality criteria:

- MEAL Practices Analysis Framework
- Quality & Accountability operational framework
- CHS project management guide

These tools and other support materials are available at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

MEAL Practices Analysis Framework

What is a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework?

This analysis framework provides a series of criteria based on the Core Humanitarian Standard which can be used to analyse the state of a MEAL system.

Why use a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework?

This analysis framework aims to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning system. It also can be used to compare current MEAL practices with the 9 quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard. This tool can be a useful starting point to identify the most appropriate project MEAL system for each organisation, consortium or programme.

Who usually uses a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework?

It is generally used by MEAL reference points. It can also be used as part of an evaluation to analyse existing practices, and in connection with funding to establish quality and accountability requirements.

When should a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework be used?

It can be used prior to, during and after an intervention. It can also be used as a starting point when aiming to change MEAL practices within an organisation, a consortium or a programme.

How is a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework used?

This tool is made up of a series of statements that are evaluated. For each statement, it is necessary to provide evidence for the answers.

How can you get an example of a MEAL Practices Analysis Framework?

An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

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Quality and Accountability Operational Framework

What is a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework?

A Quality and Accountability Operational Framework is made up of a series of definitions, procedures and tools that explain how an organisation, consortium or programme will ensure that a project is of high quality and is accountable to the different stakeholders involved.

Why use a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework?

A Quality and Accountability Operational Framework translates the principles of quality and accountability into practical actions that are adapted to a specific operational context.

Who usually uses a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework?

A Quality and Accountability Operational Framework is generally adapted to a specific operational context at the country or project level by the people who are responsible for setting up a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning system.

When should a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework be set up?

A Quality and Accountability Operational Framework can be established, or communicated if it already exists, during the project launch phase.

How is a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework established?

A Quality and Accountability Operational Framework is established taking into account the different points of view of the project stakeholders: communities and people affected by the crisis, human resources, partners, donors, civil society (including the authorities).

How can I get an example of a Quality and Accountability Operational Framework?

An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

CHS Project Management Guide

What is a CHS Project Management Guide?

A CHS Project Management Guide is a common framework for implementing and monitoring the projects of a consortium or a programme. It describes the main stages of the project cycle, and for each of these it specifies the objectives, the main requirements, key points, roles and tools. It focuses on the project level and, consequently, does not deal with aspects related to mission/programme management.

Why use a CHS Project Management Guide?

A CHS Project Management Guide helps to translate the commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard into project implementation and monitoring practices. It can reinforce collaborative work by specifying the roles of the different actors, between those who "do", those who "approve", those who provide support based on identified needs, and those who are informed at each sub-phase of the project cycle.

Who usually uses a CHS Project Management Guide?

A CHS Project Management Guide is specifically aimed at Heads of Project and operational, technical, and support staff who are involved in implementing projects (field and HQ).

When can a CHS Project Management Guide be used?

A CHS Project Management Guide can be established, or communicated if it already exists, during the project launch phase.

How is a CHS Project Management Guide developed?

An outline of a CHS Project Management Guide can exist within an organisation, but it needs to be able to be adapted to the context, resources and specific issues at stake in each operational area.

How can I get an example of a CHS Project Management Guide?

An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

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This section includes descriptions of tools that can be used for the different entry points to the COMPASS, and links to download them.

Sentinel Indicators – Sentinel indicators can be used to rapidly monitor potential incidents and react if necessary before the situation deteriorates.

Project Health Check – A Project Health Check helps to take a step back and rapidly identify what is going well and also what areas need to be improved.

Scenario Planning and Monitoring – Projects need to be agile when they are implemented in sensitive areas were many things can happen and affect the implementation. Scenario Planning and Monitoring can help projects to continually adapt to changes in the context.

SENTINEL INDICATORS

What are "sentinel indicators"? – Sentinel indicators are a set of predetermined incidents which could take place while the project is running and which could have repercussions for the results of the project. Sentinel indicators are a type of proxy indicator used to measure complex aspects of a project and its context. In contrast to performance indicators used to measure intended results, sentinel indicators are used to identify warning signs in the system in which a project operates, alerting managers of the need for follow-up investigation and analysis.

Why use "sentinel indicators"? - Sentinel indicators can be used to quickly monitor potential incidents and react if necessary before the situation deteriorates. It creates a culture that values learning, asking questions (in practical terms, having space for assessment and analysis) and fostering the understanding that you are working within a system. They are very good at detecting broad changes.

Who usually monitors "sentinel indicators"? – Sentinel indicators are usually monitored by the project team as they are updated through observation of the context and the broader project environment. Decision-makers should have access to the results of this type of monitoring as these help to improve decision-making (i.e., provide relevant data).

When should you monitor "sentinel indicators"? – Monitoring "sentinel indicators" is a continuous process throughout project implementation.

How are "sentinel indicators" used? – Sentinel indicators can be integrated into a general project follow-up tool or a specific risk management tool. Coloured flags can be attributed to each sentinel indicator, in order to indicate the occurrence and the gravity of each indicator in a visual manner. This can facilitate the use of the tool by decision-makers. The following is a possible flagging scale:

▷ **Not identified/ nothing special to declare**

▷ **Slightly identified but low level**

▶ **Identified**

▶ **Strongly identified**

How can I get an example of Sentinel Indicators? – An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

QUALITY CRITERIA	WARNING SIGNS - SENTINEL INDICATORS	FLAG
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	**>** Affected communities & people show a general lack of interest in the project (i.e. large proportion of beneficiaries withdraw from the project, low attendance rates in project activities and meetings, etc.). **>** Affected communities & people repeatedly ask for help regarding other needs. **>** Affected communities & people find alternative uses for project equipment or services (i.e. goods are sold, disposed of, exchanged, etc.).	
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	**>** Target needs persist or even intensify despite the implementation of project activities. **>** Affected communities & people are frustrated (i.e. results are only partially attained, conditions have not noticeably improved, etc.). **>** Project teams are discouraged (i.e. staff are exhausted, project has not made any progress towards achieving objectives, etc.). **>** Repeated delays affect the activities timetable.	
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	**>** Communities, people, service providers and/or authorities affected by crisis do not feel that they will be able to cope better in case of future shocks and stresses. **>** Complaints are made or staff express their concern about negative effects of the project on security, environment, social and economic context or people's coping mechanisms. **>** Security incidents are affecting staff, partners, project infrastructure or resources.	
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	**>** Problems, incidents or accidents have arisen from a poor relationship between the project team and the population (i.e. inappropriate and/or disrespectful behaviour). **>** The project team's behaviour or project activities reveal a certain degree of misunderstanding or a lack of respect vis-à-vis the population.	
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	**>** No or very few complaints are registered. **>** Rumours are circulating about inappropriate staff behaviour.	
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	**>** Other projects, local initiatives, private enterprise or interventions carried out by local authorities have been affected by the project (e.g. project objectives, modus operandi, resources, etc.). **>** There are frictions, problems, misunderstanding between project stakeholders and other actors present in the context. **>** Competition exists between actors. **>** Retention of information is registered.	
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	**>** Repeat of mistakes made in other projects or typical mistakes of the sector are registered. **>** Project team, partners and/or population display signs of dissatisfaction (weariness, despondency) or distrust as a result of failure to rectify mistakes or of mistakes continually being repeated. **>** Repeated losses in energy, time and money to rectify mistakes are registered several times.	
8. Staff are supported to do their jobs effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	**>** Problems arise because people involved in the project do not have the necessary expertise or skills (complaints about staff's technical or social skills, etc.). **>** Staff turnover is high. **>** There are problems within the team (conflict, frictions, discontent, complaints, numerous resignations, etc.).	
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	**>** Phenomenon of aid being spread too thinly is identified. **>** Project resources are overly concentrated on certain needs or certain population groups. **>** Cash flow problems are recurring. **>** Project fails to respect commitments made to suppliers, partners or staff. **>** Problems arise about the management of project infrastructure (availability, maintenance), equipment (vehicles, building materials, medical equipment, IT equipment, etc.), stock (stock shortage, loss of stock, out of date or inappropriate products, etc.) and supplies. **>** Irregularities or difficulties in complying with administrative and legal obligations (customs, visas, staff registration, insurance, etc.) are identified.	

PROJECT HEALTH CHECK

What is a Project Health Check? – A Project Health Check is not an objective and detailed evaluation but rather a quick review which compares the situation of a project in relation to the quality criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard.

Why use a Project Health Check? - A Project Health Check helps to identify positive aspects and the main measures that need to be implemented to improve the quality and accountability of a project.

Who usually carries out a Project Health Check? - A Project Health Check is usually carried out by the project team in the form of self-assessment. It can also be carried out by external persons (MEAL reference points, donors, etc.) who can provide a balanced view of the current state of the project.

When can a Project Health Check be used? – A Project Health Check can be used in three ways[38] :

> When a project is in difficulty to identify what needs to be fixed;

> As part of a project steering system to identify potential problems before they become critical;

> When the project is handed over from one Head of Project to another.

All of these options can be useful, and the choice of when to use it therefore depends on the needs and capacities of the project team and the organisation.

How is a Project Health Check used? – The following points should be considered when implementing a Project Health Check:

- **One by one** – The CHS quality criteria must be assessed one by one to better understand where the project is strong and where it needs to improve.
- **Justification & examples** – When assessing practices based on the proposed questions, the answer should be justified with concrete information. It is not enough to say that we do it. We also need to explain how we do it.
- **Collective** – When possible, a Project Health Check should be conducted collectively (e.g. by the project team) to compare and discuss different perspectives.
- **Context** – The context of intervention should be indicated as it can have an important impact on quality and accountability practices (e.g. the active involvement of communities and people affected by the crisis will be more difficult for a remote project than when the project team has direct access to the target population).
- **Improvement** – A Project Health Check should lead to a realistic list of priorities for improvement.

How can I get an example of a Project Health Check? – An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

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[38] Source : https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/what-are-project-health-checks.php par Michael L. Young

SCENARIO PLANNING & MONITORING – MANAGING PROJECTS IN A VOLATILE CONTEXT[39]

What is Scenario Monitoring? – Scenario Monitoring is specifically focused on the intervention context. It comes from the multi-scenario planning approach and may involve aspects of systemic thinking, specifically the recognition that many factors may combine in complex ways to create unexpected results, due to non-linear causal links. It differs from contingency planning - a «What if» tool that only takes into account one uncertainty.

Why use Scenario Monitoring? – Projects must be agile when they are implemented in sensitive areas where many things can happen that affect their implementation. **Scenario Monitoring can help projects to adapt continuously to changes in the context.**

Who usually implements Scenario Monitoring? – Scenario Monitoring is usually conducted by the project team. It can also be used by country or HQ management teams to anticipate potential issues and identify opportunities for a portfolio of projects being implemented in the same context.

When should you use Scenario Monitoring? – Scenario Monitoring is a continuous process that can be used throughout project implementation. It can be based on the scenario planning developed during the design phase to decide about the intervention strategy.

How is Scenario Monitoring carried out? – Scenario monitoring involves the following steps:

1. **Identifying the various contextual factors/key drivers** (political, economic, social, environmental…) that could affect the intervention, starting from the global level and gradually descending to the regional, national and local levels of the area of intervention.
2. **Identifying large families of scenarios,** ranging from the worst to the most optimistic, without introducing any notion of probability at this stage.
3. **Analysing the potential operational consequences** of these scenarios, both in terms of impact on access to the area of intervention and on the content of activities.
4. **Identifying potential adaptations (geographical, sectoral, strategic, etc.)** according to different possible scenarios, from the worst case scenario, with no or limited activities, to the best case scenario, with all planned activities implemented.
5. **Continuously monitoring and adjusting** the project.

How can I get an example of Scenario Planning and Monitoring? – An example can be downloaded at the following address: https://www.urd.org/The-Quality-and-Accountability

[39] The proposed guidance has been developed from two field experiences in Chad and Niger. See "multi-scenario planning" at www.urd.org for more information.

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https://www.alnap.org/help-library/evaluating-humanitarian-innovation-hif-alnap-working-paper

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https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/monitoring-of-humanitarian-action-scoping-paper-%5Bweb%5D.pdf

ANNEXES

INTRODUTION

SHARED COMMITMENTS

IMPLEMENTING

FUNDING

EVALUATING

IMPROVING

ANNEXES

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This guide on the evaluation of humanitarian assistance supports evaluation specialists and non-specialists in every stage of an evaluation, from initial decision to planning, analysis, final dissemination and impact, etc.

It describes the different types of evaluations and methods. There are many examples of good practice throughout the guide. ALNAP has gathered feedback from more than 40 organisations participating in the pilot process who tested its content on the ground. They have now incorporated all the feedback into this final EHA Guide.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/23592

The CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators, CHS Alliance, The Sphere Project, Groupe URD, 2015.

The CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators supplement the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS). 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 Standard. It also 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.

https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/chs-guidance-notes-and-indicators

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), CHS Alliance, Group URD and the Sphere Project, 2014, 24 p.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) places communities and people affected by crises at the centre of humanitarian action. It sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. Each principle is associated with a quality criterion, as well as key actions completed by the corresponding organizational elements to help implement these characteristics. As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian aid. It is a voluntary and measurable standard. The CHS is the result of a global consultation process. It draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments including those of HAP, People in Aid, Groupe URD and Sphere.

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

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The Feinstein International Center has been developing and adapting participatory approaches to measure the impact of livelihoods-based interventions since the early nineties. Originally released in 2009, this updated version of their PIA guide takes account of the continuing need to include local people in defining and measuring impact, while also using a systematic approach to gathering evidence. The guide has been expanded to cover both humanitarian and development projects, and to take account of the growing interest in "participatory numbers".

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The Participation Handbook for humanitarian field workers contains detailed practical advice on the participation of affected people in humanitarian action. It has three sections: Developing a participatory approach; Implementing your participatory approach at every stage of the project cycle; A list of tools and additional resources.

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Accountability to affected people: A review of approaches and practices in the Swiss solidarity funded response to the Nepal earthquake, Sarah Toutley, Subindra Bogati, Swiss Solidarity, 2018.

Information and communication are important forms of aid as they allow people to gain access to assistance, to participate in decision–making to improve its relevance, and to hold organisations to account for the quality of the assistance they provide. This review analyses the approaches used by the 10 Swiss NGOs currently implementing projects in Nepal post-earthquake with Swiss Solidarity funds to enhance accountability to affected people (AAP) in their programmes. It seeks to gain the perceptions of affected people and their preferences for information dissemination and communication. The review focused on the key commitments to information sharing, ensuring engagement in decision making, listening to communities and complaints handling.

https://www.alnap.org/help-library/accountability-to-affected-people-a-review-of-approaches-and-practices-in-the-swiss

Making operational decisions in humanitarian response: A literature review, Leah Campbell, Paul Knox Clarke, ALNAP Study, ALNAP, ODI, avril 2018, 75 p.

During a crisis, humanitarian leaders must make a range of decisions including whether, when and how to intervene; how to address technical, logistical, political and security constraints. Many of these decisions are made in urgent circumstances, have life-saving implications, and take place in a context of uncertainty. This literature review considers the context in which humanitarian leaders are asked to make decisions, explores the range of decision-making approaches which exist, and considers how effective these approaches might be in humanitarian environments. The paper draws from existing humanitarian literature and evaluations, and also from the wealth of experience which exists from the world of emergency management decision-making. In doing so, it gathers existing knowledge, identifies gaps in understanding and proposes areas for future research.

https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/ALNAP%20DM%20LR%20Final%20Int_1.pdf

What is the point… If nothing changes? Current Practices and Future Opportunities to Improve Remote Monitoring and Evaluation in Syria, Building Markets, Orange Door Research, 2018, 32 p.

The Syrian crisis has been marked by a fluctuating political environment with various groups competing for rule on the ground, creating a high-risk operating environment. As such, aid delivery has become increasingly dependent on emerging Syrian organizations, who can more easily access

besieged and restricted areas. International organizations, because they receive the bulk of the funding for the humanitarian response, are partnering or sub-contracting work to these local groups. However, given lack of access, communication, and information, INGOs are concerned their funds may fall into the wrong hands, and have relied on monitoring mechanisms to confirm that aid is delivered. Monitoring, however, does not show INGOs the impact or efficiency of aid. Those studies, known as Evaluation, have largely been ignored in this context.

https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/practices_and_opportunities_to_improve_remote_me_in_syria_2018.pdf

Placing accountability at the heart of humanitarian assistance; Lessons from the Listen Learn Act project, Andy Featherstone, DanChurchAid, Save the Children Danemark, Ground Truth Solutions, 2017.
All too often, humanitarian actors fail to adequately consult with affected populations who are given too few opportunities to offer their perspectives on the assistance they receive or the agencies that provide it. Delivered through a partnership between DanChurchAid (DCA), Save the Children Denmark and Ground Truth Solutions, and using the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) – the accountability component of the Sphere handbook - as a foundation, the Listen Learn Act (LLA) project has been piloting an innovative method of regular and systematic information gathering and analysis to provide a 'heartbeat' or vital sign for agencies to know how they are meeting people's basic expectations. Linked to a process of engaging communities on the issues they raise and a commitment to feeding back on corrective actions, this initiative offers an important benchmark for 'closing the loop'. This report provides an overview and analysis of findings from the project and offers critical reflections from practitioners piloting the initiative in Ethiopia, Lebanon, Mali and Nepal.

https://www.alnap.org/help-library/placer-la-redevabilit%C3%A9-au-c%C5%93ur-de-l%E2%80%99assistance-humanitaire-enseignements-tir%C3%A9s-du

Collective Resolution to Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Emergencies. Étude de cas sur l'intégrité de la réponse à Ébola en Guinée, François Grünewald, Anne Burlat, Groupe URD, Transparency International, 2017, 52 p.
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http://www.alnap.org/resource/24671

Analysis, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Contributions to Social Change: Meaningfully measuring international solidarity and decentralized cooperation, E. Aberlen, F. Bedecarrats, C. Boisteau, Études de l'AFD N° 2, AFD, F3E, 2016.
There are many actors in the field of international solidarity and decentralized development cooperation who seek to orient or contribute to "social change" . While they agree that social change cannot be dictated, planned, or controlled, they do not all share the same outlook on the type of social change desired. Social change is a recurrent theme in discussions. How can it be defined in practical terms by the actors who help guide it? How can evaluation capture the changes that exogenous development interventions support? Methodology is an important issue, if evaluation is to meet the varied expectations of the different aid actors. The second joint F3E-AFD seminar attempted to answer these questions. Both French and international actors came together for three round-table debates. Together they discussed about the significance and issues of social change, the status of methods that help assess contributions to change, and evaluation, as a vehicle of organizational and social change. These seminar proceedings present their contributions.
https://www.afd.fr/sites/afd/files/imported-files/02-VA-etudes-afd.pdf

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http://www.alnap.org/resource/23125.aspx

Review of the Humanitarian Response in Nepal: A Focus on Inclusion and Accountability, S. Ferretti, M. de Clarens, B. Gibbons, U. Simkhada, Humanitarian Coalition, 2016, 33 p.
This review analyses several projects led by members of the Humanitarian Coalition in Canada in response to the April and May 2015 earthquakes in Nepal. The objective is to report on results and draw lessons, particularly with regard to accountability and participation, and thus use them for future responses. The analyses were conducted using the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) as the framework.
http://humanitariancoalition.ca/sites/default/files/publication/nepal-earthquake-report-final.pdf

Managing crises together: towards coherence and complementarity in recurrent and protracted crises, Samuel Carpenter, Christina Bennett, HPG, ODI, 2015.
This article calls for a more collective approach to crisis management. The authors examine the prolonged impact of humanitarian crises on development factors. They also stress the fact that the two sectors (humanitarian and development) still have different objectives that they try to achieve through a two-branch architecture. The financing of the aid and the cultural and structural differences between the two sectors are what constitute major obstacles in their view. To reduce the gap between the two sectors, the authors recommend, inter alia, ensuring coherence between the various post-2015 global policy agendas; a flexible, multi-year funding system; minimizing conceptual divisions; and creating positive incentives for coherence and risk-based approaches.
http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9736.pdf

On the road to Istanbul – providing concrete solutions to issues of humanitarian effectiveness at the World Humanitarian Summit, CHS Alliance, 2015.

Bringing together 13 leading humanitarian thinkers to discuss challenges to greater humanitarian effectiveness, *On the road to Istanbul*, the 2015 edition of the Humanitarian Accountability Report, offers concrete solutions to many of the issues raised during the regional consultations for the World Humanitarian Summit. Written with the support of more than 30 peer reviewers, the report suggests that in order to improve effectiveness, the humanitarian sector should build upon and reinforce five key areas:

- principled humanitarian response, which builds trust and facilitates access;
- standards, which have shown to support appropriate, effective and timely aid;
- national capacity, the strengthening of which is essential for effective and sustainable humanitarian response;
- collective accountability, which requires inclusiveness, transparency and a common language;
- good people management practices, which are paramount for effective aid.

http://chsalliance.org/resources/publications/har

Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback in Humanitarian Contexts, Practitioner Guidance, Francesca Bonino, Isabella Jean, Paul Knox Clarke, ALNAP, mars 2014.

This guidance is intended for people designing /or implementing feedback mechanisms in a humanitarian program, and in particular in cases where such mechanisms are established to:

- Operate at the level of the individual programme or project
- Operate in the context of ongoing humanitarian operations or humanitarian programming (but not necessarily in the immediate phases of relief and response after a sudden-onset crisis)
- Provide usable information for adjusting and improving some elements of the actions carried out and services delivered
- Deal with a broad caseload of non-sensitive issues (feedback) in addition to sensitive ones (complaints). Mechanisms designed exclusively to address sexual exploitation and abuse allegations were excluded from this study and related guidance, on the assumption that they may require special design 'features' (such as mechanisms to allow for the collection of evidence that could be used in legal processes) and might address issues of acknowledgement of feedback, validation and anonymity/confidentiality in very specific ways.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/10676.aspx

Humanitarian feedback mechanisms: research, evidence and guidance, ALNAP, CDA, 2014.

In 2012 ALNAP and CDA started collaborating on action research looking at feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts, to establish what makes them work effectively and to focus on bringing different stakeholders' perspectives – particularly those of crisis-affected people – into the conversation.

https://www.alnap.org/help-library/humanitarian-feedback-mechanisms-research-evidence-and-guidance

Insufficient Evidence ? The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action, P.K. Clarke, J. Darcy, ALNAP, février 2014, 92 P.

The lack of evidence makes humanitarian action less effective, less ethical and less accountable. Yet the debate about evidence in the humanitarian sector is just beginning. What is evidence and why do we need it? What is the quality of the data we currently have? How can we improve the quality and use of data? Is evidence used by decision-makers? In "Insufficient evidence?" ALNAP has addressed these issues and identified six criteria for judging the quality of data that are generated and used in humanitarian action.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/10441.aspx

Imagining more effective humanitarian aid: A donor perspective, Rachel Scott, OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, Working Paper 18, 2014.

On face value, the humanitarian system contains all the necessary assets for delivering an effective response, but it is not yet producing consistent, optimal results. This paper is intended to provoke debate, and stimulate further thinking and study, about humanitarian effectiveness, and what this will mean for donors and other stakeholders, in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. The eleven donors interviewed for this study are broadly aligned on what factors are important for humanitarian effectiveness, and on what needs to be done to improve quality. The main recommendation of this study is to seize the opportunity of the 2016 Summit to establish a common framework for humanitarian effectiveness.

http://www.oecd.org/dac/Imagining%20More%20Effective%20Humanitarian%20Aid_October%202014.pdf

Missed again: Making space for partnership in the Typhoon Haiyan response, A Featherstone, Actionaid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund, 2014.

The importance of working together in humanitarian action is now recognized and promoted in every manual and guide in the sector. Putting this into practice is much more difficult. This study returns to the vexed question of humanitarian partnership, focusing on the example of the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. After presenting the context of the humanitarian response (the role of the government, of civil society, NGOs and humanitarian networks), the report analyses the effectiveness of partnerships and the role of national actors in the coordination and financing of the response. In conclusion, the report reasserts the central importance of partnership, past failings and challenges for the future.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/12912

Quality in Humanitarian Actions : Thinking Ahead, Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid Key messages, 15-17 September 2014, Groupe URD, ALNAP, 2014.

The ninth edition of Groupe URD's Autumn School on Humanitarian Aid provided an opportunity to explore Quality and Accountability issues in the sector, review current initiatives, and discuss their potential and limits. This document presents a summary of the review of current initiatives and the key points from the debates. It provides an assessment of the different facets of the issue of quality in the sector.

https://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/Key_messages.pdf

Improving impact: Do accountability mechanism deliver results?, HAP, Christian Aid, Save the Children, June 2013.

This paper discusses the lack of evidence on accountability mechanisms in the humanitarian and development sectors. In recent years, NGO accountability to crisis-affected populations has been significantly strengthened. However, good practices are not systematic and there is a lack of tangible evidence of the real influence of accountability mechanisms on project quality. Jointly commissioned by Christian Aid, Save the Children UK and HAP, this report is the first to provide evidence of the influence of accountability mechanisms on improving the quality and impact of relief projects. It thus demonstrates the interest of integrating them into such projects.

https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-03/improving-impact-report-jun-2013.pdf

Time to listen: Hearing people on the receiving end of international aid, Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown, Isabella Jean, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, November 2012, 172 P.

This book captures the experiences and voices of over 6,000 people who have received international assistance, observed the effects of aid efforts, or been involved in providing aid. Over time, across very different contexts and continents, people's experiences with international aid efforts have been remarkably consistent. While there was a wide range of opinions on specifics, the authors were struck by the similarity in people's descriptions of their interactions with the international aid

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system. Their stories are powerful and full of lessons for those who care enough to listen and to hear the ways that people on the receiving side of aid suggest it can become more effective and accountable.

http://cdacollaborative.org/media/60478/Time-to-Listen-Book.pdf

Periodical literature

«Humanitarian accountability», *Humanitarian Exchange magazine* N° 52, Humanitarian Practice Network, Octobre 2011, 48 P.

This edition is dedicated to accountability in humanitarian action. In their overview article, authors reflect on the underlying rationales – both moral and practical –used to justify commitments to improving accountability, and whether understanding of accountability has changed in the decade since the 'accountability revolution' last featured in Humanitarian Exchange. Case examples from Haiti and Sudan are presented.

http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-52

Working papers

Monitoring Humanitarian Innovation, Alexandra T. Warner, Alice Obrecht, HIF/ ALNAP Working Paper, ODI, ALNAP, January 2017, 24 p.

This paper looks at monitoring of humanitarian innovation. It proposes a new framework that can aid innovation managers and teams in the monitoring of their innovation's progress, enabling them to adapt and make the right decisions.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/24265

Accountability to the Affected Populations in early recovery: Examples of Good Practice, Technical Working Group on AAP, Global Cluster for Early Recovery, March 2016, 23 p.

This document is an attempt to illustrate more concretely what accountability to affected population means in terms of Early Recovery assistance and coordination. It also provides Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) inspired examples of good practices on accountability to the affected populations in Early Recovery response. These are illustrated by case studies in Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Burma and Nepal.

http://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/AAP_ER-TWG-Good-Practice-Collection-2016.pdf

Evaluating protection in humanitarian action: Issues and challenges, Francesca Bonino, ALNAP Working Paper, ALNAP, ODI, December 2014, 60 P.

This paper attempts to identify the issues and challenges relating to the evaluation of protection work carried out by humanitarian actors, including those both with and without a specific protection mandate.

After defining protection in humanitarian action, the authors demonstrate how to measure the results of a programme in terms of protection. Issues regarding data collection and analysis within contexts where information is often sensitive, and cause-and-effect issues in the humanitarian field of protection are also examined.

http://www.alnap.org/resource/19237.aspx

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