

Report on Technical Advisory Group Meeting in London, UK 2014 on Core Humanitarian Standards

Background:

As per the HAP invitation I joined the Technical Advisory Group Meeting in London, UK during October 29 to November 1, 2014 on behalf of our Executive Director. The meeting was organized jointly by HAPI, People In Aid and the Sphere Project. Key objectives of the program were i) to elaborate discussion of the version3 of Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), ii) to give the validation of the version3 and iii) to make ready the document for launching in Copenhagen on December 12, 2014. The standards are the results of two-year consultation process across the humanitarian sector. It drew together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments. These include:

- The Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief;
- The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management;
- 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 Compass; and
- The OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development and Humanitarian Assistance.

Participating Organizations:

Major organization participating in the meeting were COAST Bangladesh, CAFOD, HAP, People In Aid, OCHA, WFP, SDC, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision, Quality Compass, ALNAP, British Red Cross, Mercy Malaysia, The Sphere Project, Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), Pakistan.

There are nine commitments in CHS and on those the meeting was addressed a lot of discussions for giving fine tuning the standards.

The commitments after modifications are as follows:

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

Quality Criteria: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant.

Key Actions

- 1.1 Conduct a systematic, objective and continuous analysis of the context and stakeholders.
- 1.2 Design and implement appropriate programmes based on an impartial assessment of needs³ and risks, and an understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups⁴.
- 1.3 Adapt the programme to changing needs, capacities and context.

Organisational Responsibilities

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

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

Quality Criteria: Response is effective and timely.



Key Actions

- 2.1 Design programmes taking into account constraints so that proposed action is realistic and safe for communities to access.
- 2.2 Deliver assistance in a timely manner, making decisions and acting without unnecessary delay.
- 2.3 Refer any unmet needs to an organisation with the relevant technical expertise and mandate, or advocate for these needs to be addressed.
- 2.4 Use relevant sector technical standards and good practice to plan and assess programmes.
- 2.5 Monitor activities, outputs and outcomes to adapt programmes and address poor performance.

Organisational Responsibilities

- 2.6 Ensure programme commitments are in line with organisational capacities.
- 2.7 Policy commitments ensure:
 - a. a systematic, objective and on-going monitoring and evaluation of activities and their effect;
 - b. evidence from monitoring and evaluations is used to adapt and improve programmes; and,
 - c. timely decision-making with resources allocated accordingly. For instance, humanitarian access, security, logistics and funding.

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 Criteria: Humanitarian action strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.

Key Actions

- 3.1 Ensure programmes build on local capacities and work towards community resilience.
- 3.2 Use the results of any existing community hazard and risk assessments and preparedness plans to guide activities.
- 3.3 Enable the development of local leadership and organisations in their capacity as first responders, with an appropriate representation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.
- 3.4 Plan a transition or exit strategy in the early stages of the humanitarian programme to ensure longer-term positive effects, reducing the risk of dependency.
- 3.5 Design and implement programmes that benefit the local economy and promote recovery.
- 3.6 Identify and act upon potential or actual unintended negative effects in a timely and systematic manner, including in the areas of:
 - a. people's safety, security, dignity and rights;
 - b. sexual exploitation and abuse by staff;

- c. culture, gender, social and political relationships;
- d. livelihoods;
- e. the local economy; and,
- f. the environment.

Organisational Responsibilities

3.7 Policies, strategies and guidance commit to:

- a. avoiding negative effects such as staff exploiting, abusing or discriminating against people; and,
- b. strengthening local capacities.

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

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

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

Key Actions

- 4.1 Provide information to communities and people affected by crisis about the organisation, the principles it adheres to, the expected behaviours of staff, its programmes and deliverables.
- 4.2 Communicate in languages, formats and media that are easily understood and respectful and culturally appropriate for different parts of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- 4.3 Ensure inclusive representation, participation and engagement of people and communities at all stages of the work.
- 4.4 Encourage and facilitate communities and people affected by crisis to provide feedback on their level of satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of assistance, paying particular attention to the gender, age and diversity of those giving feedback.



Organisational Responsibilities

- 4.5 Policies are in place for information sharing, promoted by a culture of open communication.
- 4.6 Policies are in place for engaging communities and people affected by crisis reflecting the priorities and risks they identify in all stages of the work.
- 4.7 External communications, including those used for fundraising, are accurate, ethical and respectful, presenting communities and people affected by crisis as dignified human beings.

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

Quality Criteria: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

Key Actions

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

Organisational Responsibilities

- 5.4 The complaints handling process is documented and in place for communities affected by crisis and relates to programming, sexual exploitation and abuse of people, or other abuses of power.
- 5.5 Establish and maintain an organisational culture in which complaints are taken seriously and acted upon according to defined policy and processes.
- 5.6 Communities and people affected by crisis are made aware of the expected behaviour of staff, including commitments on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- 5.7 Refer complaints securely to a relevant party when they do not fall within the scope of the organisation.

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

Quality Criteria: Humanitarian action is coordinated and complementary.

Key Actions

- 6.1 Identify the role, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different stakeholders⁶.
- 6.2 Ensure humanitarian action complements that of national and local authorities⁷ and other actors.
- 6.3 Participate in relevant coordination bodies and collaborate with other organisations to minimise demands on communities and maximise coverage and service provision of the wider humanitarian effort.
- 6.4 Share necessary information with partners, coordination groups and other relevant local actors through appropriate communication channels.

Organisational Responsibilities

- 6.5 Policies and strategies include a clear commitment to coordination and collaboration with others, including national and local authorities, without compromising humanitarian principles.
- 6.6 Work with partners is governed by clear and consistent agreements that respect each partner's mandates, obligations and independence and recognises their respective constraints and commitments.

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

Quality Criteria: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.

Key Actions

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

Organisational Responsibilities

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

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

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

Key Actions

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

Organisational Responsibilities

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

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

Quality Criteria: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

Key Actions

- 9.1 Design programmes and implement processes that ensure the efficient use of resources, balancing quality, cost and timeliness at each phase of the response.
- 9.2 Manage and use resources to achieve their intended purpose, minimising waste.

- 9.3 Monitor and report expenditure against budget.
- 9.4 Use local and natural resources in consideration of their impact on the environment.
- 9.5 Manage risk of corruption and take appropriate action if identified.

Organisational Responsibilities

- 9.6 Policies and processes governing the use and management of resources are in place, including how the organisation:
 - a. Accepts and allocates funds and gifts-in-kind ethically and legally;
 - b. Uses its resources in an environmentally responsible way;
 - c. Prevents and addresses corruption, fraud, conflicts of interest and misuse of resources;
 - d. Conducts audits and verifies compliance and reports transparently;
 - e. Assesses, managed and mitigates risk on an on-going basis; and,
 - f. Ensure that the acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence.

My major contributions and concerns:

1. They have included in the standards the local culture along with local economy as per my views.
2. They have used easy language and short sentences as per my views.
3. How state government can be involved with the standards. It will be the challenge for the implementing NGOs.
4. Intensive orientation to the INGOs by their Head Quarters so that their partners can be familiar about the standards and able to implement.
5. It should not be used only for “community and people affected by crisis”. These standards should be used in the all activities of the NGOs and any other relevant agencies.
6. In each country a lead organization will be defined which will disseminate the standards to the other local and national NGOs.
7. What will be the actions if the staff will be exploited by the respective supervisor(s).
8. What will be the status of HAP certification which is still valid.

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