



# REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF CORE HUMANITARIAN COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK REPORT

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**for**

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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Overview

The core humanitarian competencies framework (CHCF) was first developed in 2011 by representatives from a cross-section of humanitarian organisations under the auspices of the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (now the Start Network) led by ActionAid and facilitated by People In Aid (now the CHS Alliance). The CHCF was the first ever-generic set of guidelines for competencies development in the humanitarian sector.

The CHS Alliance, led by consultant Uma Narayanan, undertook a review of the competencies framework between February and August 2016. The main purpose of the review was to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the relevance and practical use of the CHCF in humanitarian organisations, and recommend any suitable revisions or improvements based on these stakeholder consultations.

Consultations with stakeholders across a range of organisations were held between March and July 2016. The consultation process included various methodologies including an online survey, on-site consultations in selected countries, one-on-one interviews and a consultation and validation workshop. Desk research was conducted prior to the global stakeholder consultation process. This involved literature review of over 50 print and online publications. In addition, efforts were made to link this review process with other related initiatives such as the Humanitarian Passport Initiative (HPI).

Eighty-three respondents participated in the online survey, while 17 FGDs for staff were conducted in seven countries, along with 29 key informant interviews (KIIs), eight community consultations and one validation workshop. Nine case studies of stakeholder's experiences of the framework were created. This was followed by a consultation and validation workshop in London with 26 participants. In total, the stakeholder consultation process engaged and reached 358 respondents globally across a broad spectrum of national and international organisations in the humanitarian and development sector.

## 1.2 Findings

**Fit for purpose, relevant and of value:** The competencies framework recommended a set of core competencies that organisations could adopt to systematically build the skills of their employees, and thereby improve their efforts to assist people adversely affected by crisis throughout the world. A substantial majority of stakeholders who participated in the consultation process affirmed that CHCF is fit for purpose, adds value and is highly relevant for staff development and humanitarian efforts in general.

**Effective use of CHCF:** If primary intended users of the CHCF are Start Network members, the review indicates that the use of the framework is making a difference. Among others, the framework is actively used in entry level trainings and mid-level trainings for aid workers where it is embedded as part of these trainings. Moreover, stakeholders acknowledge the CHCF as a pioneering, generic competency framework in the humanitarian sector that serves as a useful reference point for them. They affirm that its origins as a product of inter-agency

consensus and consultation add to its practical relevance as a broad guidance tool. Further, anecdotal evidences suggest the aim of CHCF to understand behaviour that needs to be demonstrated by staff in humanitarian response and clarify expectations of staff in a consistent and objective way are being met. Evidences also indicate that the framework is creating a shared language across agencies about what is expected of staff. Several International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), academia and working groups such as Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) Competency Framework have either referred to or adopted elements of CHCF.

**Level of awareness:** The CHCF is well known and used by the majority of START Network members who were originally involved in the process of developing the framework. In Kenya and the UK levels of awareness and usage is notably high. However, there is only relatively low to moderate level of awareness of the CHCF in Australia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, the Middle East and Pakistan. This relatively low level of awareness in these countries includes members of the Start Network. The majority of this target group of respondents were equally unaware of the CHCF Guide and were seeing the Guide for the first time during this review process. Nonetheless, the review highlighted a need for further awareness raising and sensitisation.

The lack of awareness and corresponding lack of ‘know how’ of the CHCF among many humanitarian organisations and stakeholders appears to be a main challenge in the mainstreaming and effective use of the framework.

**Inadequate links to other standards:** The review indicates that there are inadequate links between the CHCF and key standards and tools such as the Sphere Minimum Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) as well as other initiatives in the Start Network Talent Development Project.

**Brochure:** An overwhelming majority of stakeholders have commented that the layout and visualisation of the CHCF brochure could be simplified and made more user-friendly.

**Reasons for ineffective use:** A recurring observation by stakeholders is the lack of buy-in from senior management to embed the CHCF in their organisations. Besides, with the emergence of many new frameworks and tools, the CHCF faces stiff “competition” as organisations are in a dilemma as to which frameworks or models to emphasise, propagate or refer to for their own application. The hard truth expressed by some stakeholders is that while the core competencies in the CHCF are desirable, they are not necessarily practical.

Yet another challenge faced in implementing the CHCF is linked to career pathing, and how these changes in behaviours are identified and measured. Some HR practitioners are not familiar with the CHCF and competency frameworks in general. They are therefore unable to guide project managers and field staff on how to adopt the framework. There also seems to be a challenge to motivate managers to apply core competencies in addition to technical competencies. Where core competencies have been implemented, there is inadequate capacity within the organisation to address misaligned behaviour and misconduct. This causes loss of trust among staff who raise such concerns and find that no ensuing mitigation action is taken against deviations in behaviour or conduct. Besides, not many agencies have the

resources nor the ability to investigate gaps in behaviours in an effective manner.

### 1.3 Recommendations

**Communication, dissemination and training to support implementation:** The review has identified the need for greater awareness, dissemination and training as among the highest priority of initiatives that could be taken to extend the mainstreaming of the CHCF. As such it is recommended that a systematic set of initiatives and learning resources be revived and accelerated to intensify communication and training support by emphasising on ‘how to use’ the tool.

**Link CHCF to existing accountability initiatives:** It is proposed that efforts be considered to consolidate and harmonise the CHCF with users of different standards and tools to synergise implementation, and avoid duplication of already limited resources in humanitarian organisations.

**Purpose of the framework:** The review affirms that the purpose of the CHCF should remain as it was originally intended, namely to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response and strengthen capacity of aid workers.

**Target audience:** It is recommended that the proposed target audience remain as humanitarian workers in members of the Start Network and implementing partners. In addition, it is proposed that the target audience be extended to users beyond the Start Network. The academic community, which is doing a great deal of high quality research on competencies should also be encouraged to consider adopting the framework as part of their humanitarian study programmes.

**Streamline, strengthen and simplify (3S):** This review recommends retaining the core six domains and essential behaviour descriptions of the CHCF. It is also advised to undertake a streamline, strengthen and simplify (3S) approach to further refine the framework and reflect stakeholder feedback from the global consultations and the evolving humanitarian operating environment. It is further recommended to simplify the language used in the CHCF, for example through use of active verbs and singular nouns.

**Piloting:** It is also suggested that efforts be undertaken to identify agencies that are willing to pilot and test the revised CHCF. During the course of the global stakeholder consultations, a few universities have shown tentative interest in participating in possible piloting of the revised CHCF. This could be pursued. In this regard, academia, organisations or humanitarian projects that intend to use the revised CHCF could identify the baseline before use in order to gauge the impact after use.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The CHS Alliance<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with the START Network<sup>2</sup> is presently involved in two transformational projects to strengthen capacity building in the humanitarian sector. The *Talent Development* and *Transforming Surge Capacity* projects are both designed to promote decentralised approaches to capacity building and improve the quality and speed of humanitarian response in countries at risk of natural disaster or conflict-related humanitarian emergencies.

The three-year *Talent Development Programme* aims to strengthen capacities of national humanitarian workers in East Africa, Asia and the Middle East. CHS Alliance is involved in two strands of this programme scheduled to run from 2014-2017, namely the Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework (CHCF) and the coaching network.

There have been significant changes in the humanitarian sector since the CHCF was introduced in 2011 (*See Annex 1 – Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework*). The complexity, scale and intensity as well as frequency of humanitarian crises across the globe have dramatically increased. Consequently, there has never been a greater demand for high-quality and accountable humanitarian response to assist people whose lives have been severely disrupted by emergencies, disasters and conflicts. In order to continue providing top quality and accountable assistance to people affected by crisis, there is a need for organisations involved in humanitarian response to constantly strengthen the competencies of their employees. As part of continuing efforts to address the rapidly evolving context of humanitarian response and strengthen capacity of organisations, the CHS Alliance initiated a review of the CHCF in February 2016. A lead consultant was hired for this purpose, supported by part-time IT, finance and administration staff resourced by the consultant.

Deliverables of the consultancy included: (i) a final report, (ii) review of the CHCF based on global consultations with key stakeholder, and proposed revisions, if any, and (iii) case studies that showcase the practical application of the CHCF.

This final report describes the global stakeholder consultation process, and reports on the findings, and recommendations on the review of the CHCF.

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<sup>1</sup> The CHS Alliance was formed in 2015 by the merger of HAP International and People in Aid. A global network of organisations involved in the humanitarian sector, the CHS Alliance has a membership of more than 240 organisations located in 55 capitals and operating in more than 160 countries.

<sup>2</sup> Start Network is a transformational humanitarian network of leading NGOs with 39 members. Formerly known as the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA), it was founded in 2010 in response to a proposal by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) to form a consortium to address some of the challenges facing the humanitarian systems, especially around speed, coordination and efficiency. It comprised of 15 leading UK-based humanitarian agencies.

## 2.2 Consultancy: purpose, scope and use

The main purpose of the consultancy was to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the relevance and practical use of the CHCF in humanitarian organisations, and recommend any suitable revisions or improvements based on the stakeholder consultations. The consultant undertook a global consultation with stakeholders, including both current users and potential users of the CHCF, to ensure that the aid sector has a fit-for-purpose competency framework that will remain relevant and of value throughout the next two years of the project, and beyond.

The global stakeholder consultation process was premised on the fundamental need for continuous learning and adoption of good practices. It engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders globally and utilised a combination of methods namely online surveys, one on one interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), community consultations as well as case studies.

It is notable that this is the first major consultation process involving stakeholders across the world that has been undertaken since the implementation of the CHCF in 2011. It represents part of a broader effort to strengthen talent development in the humanitarian sector. The specific objectives of the stakeholder consultation process were to obtain feedback on the CHCF in the following aspects:

- **Level of awareness** of the CHCF and competency frameworks in general.
- **Extent of implementation** of the CHCF in organisations.
- **Challenges and opportunities** that can be leveraged for effective realisation of the CHCF.
- **What has worked well** and **what can be improved** in mainstreaming the CHCF.
- **Case studies** as good practices for continuous learning in championing the CHCF.
- **Suggested recommendations arising from the stakeholder consultation, and revisions, if any, to the CHCF.**

## 2.3 Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework (CHCF)

In 2010, the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA), supported by People in Aid (now the CHS Alliance), worked with 15 agencies to identify core competencies of aid workers and managers deemed critical to enhance capacity, and improve effectiveness of humanitarian work and assistance to people affected by humanitarian crisis. The effort, which was led by ActionAid and facilitated by People in Aid, took place between June and July 2010, and resulted in the development of a common set of core competencies that could be used as a standard guide by organisations in the humanitarian sector to strengthen capacity among their staff: the CHCF.

The CHCF reflects a collaborative, inter-agency approach towards developing a set of core or generic competencies that could be used as a handy reference and resource by aid workers. In devising the competencies, the CHCF adopted the definition of competency to mean, 'the behaviours that employees must have, or must acquire, in order to achieve high levels of

performance in their role<sup>3</sup>.’ Six areas of core competencies were then identified as the ‘essential behaviours required by all staff, influenced by their skills, and knowledge’<sup>4</sup>.

Made available in two languages, English and French, the CHCF was rolled out along with communications and user resource materials. A *Guide* was produced to accompany the CHCF and assist users in interpreting and applying the competency framework in all aspects of the employee life cycle and human resource (HR) practice, including planning, recruitment, selection, performance management and learning and development. Like the CHCF, the *Guide* was created following collaborations with CBHA agencies. It also contained examples and case studies on competency framework from various agencies.

## 3 Process and Methodology

### 3.1 Process

As part of the initial planning phase of the stakeholder consultation process, rigorous and extensive **desk research** was conducted on the historical evolution of competency as a HR and organisational tool in business and non-profit sectors, and subsequent adoption in the humanitarian sector. Research was also carried out on current application of competency models by organisations in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian sectors including for-profit, development sector and academia. Desk research was then followed by development of stakeholder consultation tools: **online survey** questionnaires, **one on one interview** questions, as well as **focus group discussion (FGD)** and **community consultation** questions.

The planning phase was then followed by the **data collection and analysis** phase. Data collected and collated from a globally representative sample of stakeholders formed the bedrock of the feedback on the CHCF and the formulation of **case studies**. A **consultation and validation workshop** was subsequently organised with stakeholders including members of the CHS Alliance to obtain further guidance and validation of the consultancy findings and recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework (CHCF), 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework (CHCF), 2011.



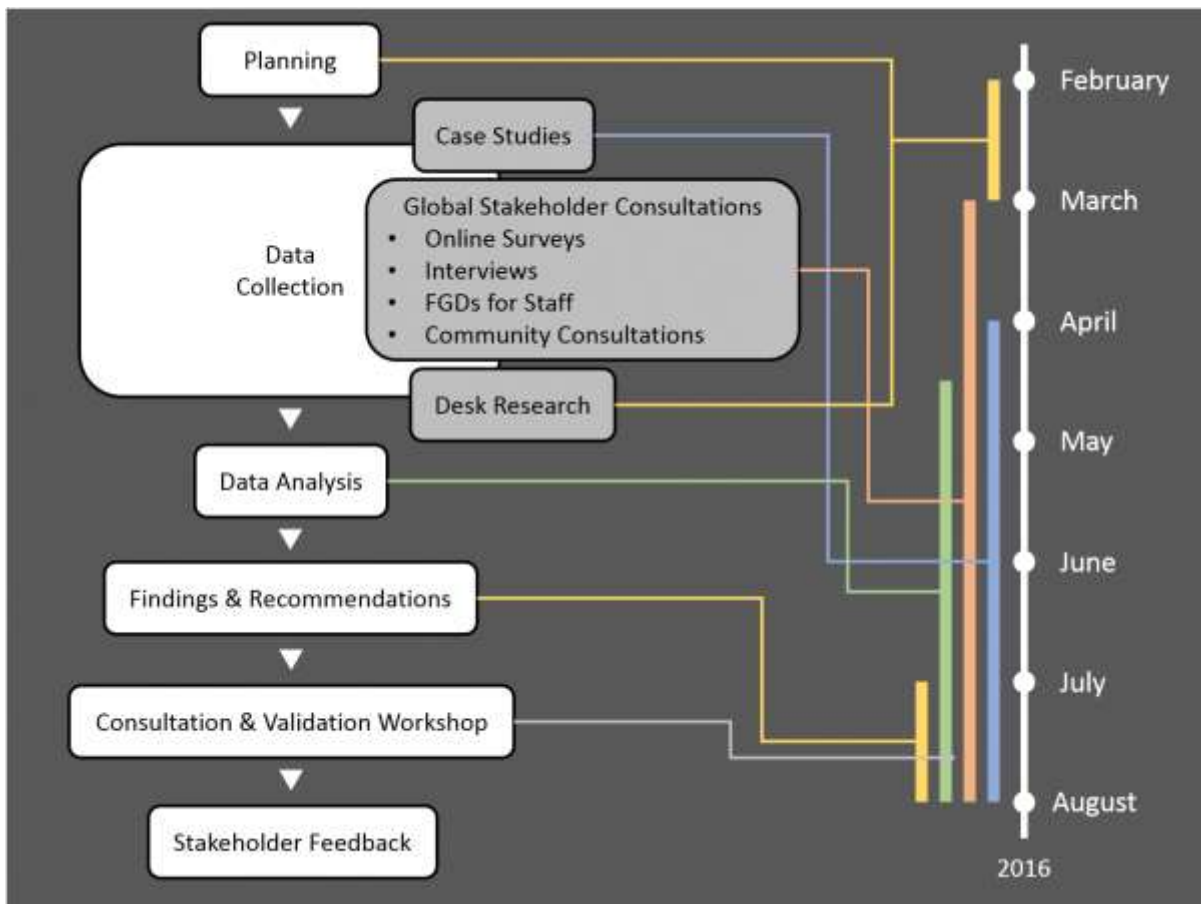


Figure 1: Consultancy on CHCF - Process and Methodology

### 3.2 Participants and key informants

Consultation was done with a broad range of stakeholders worldwide including both direct and indirect users as well as potential and non-users of the CHCF. Key informants and respondents were mainly sourced from the START Talent Development Programme and partners, CHS Alliance staff involved in the CHCF project, ELRHA, stakeholders working on the Qualifications Framework, and academia.

Eighty-three respondents participated in the online survey, while 17 FGDs for staff were conducted in seven countries, along with 29 key informant interviews (KIIs), eight community consultations and one validation workshop. Drawing on the stakeholder consultations, 10 case studies were prepared. This was followed by a consultation and validation workshop in London with 26 participants. In total, the global stakeholder consultation process engaged and reached around 358 respondents in the humanitarian and development sector (See Annex 3: List of Respondents).

### 3.3 Methodology

The methodology employed for the data collection and analysis was a combination of **quantitative** and **qualitative** tools comprising online surveys, FGDs, one-on-one interviews and community consultations. The online survey questionnaire was complemented by a

series of semi-structured key informant online and onsite FGD interviews using an interview guide. (Please see *Annex 4: Interview Guide*).

### Desk research

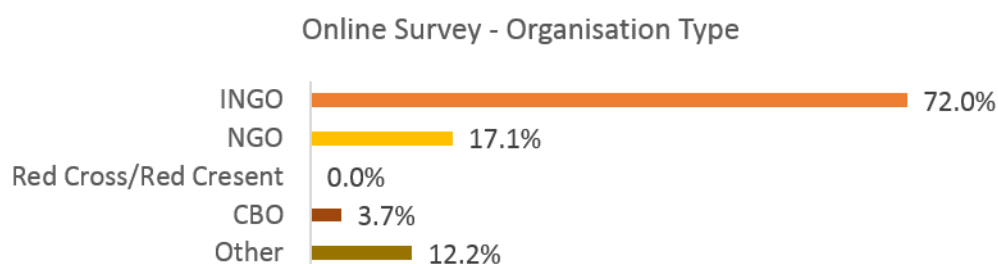
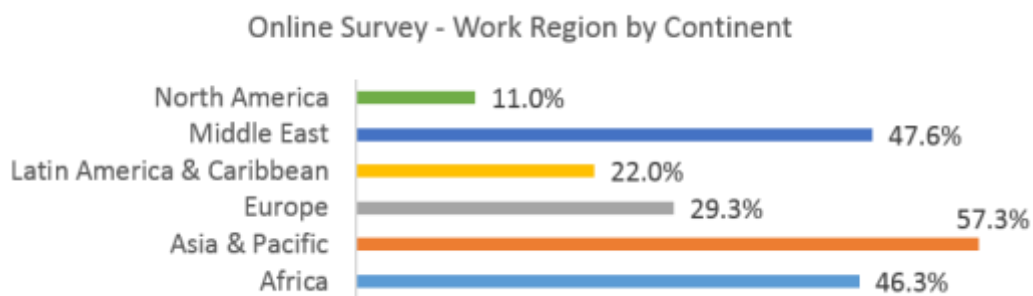
Desk research was conducted prior to the global stakeholder consultation process. This involved literature review of over 50 print and online publications sourced from not only the humanitarian sector but also the non-profit and development sectors, private sector and academia. Historical background of the development of competency models and its contemporary application were also studied. In addition, a comparative analysis of competency frameworks of the following organisations was conducted:

- 3 international organisations in the humanitarian sector
- 1 international organisation in the development sector
- 1 European government aid development agency
- 1 regional development bank
- 1 multinational oil and gas company
- 1 university

Findings from the desk research were used as a preliminary contextualisation of the global stakeholder consultation process (See *Annex 4: Desk Research Findings*).

### Online survey

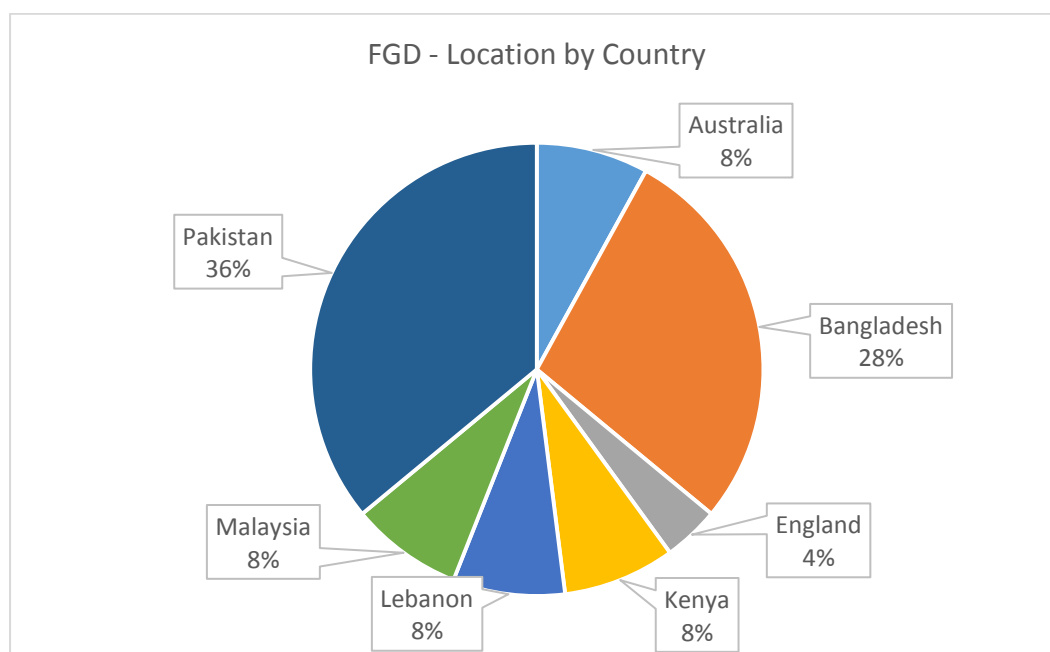
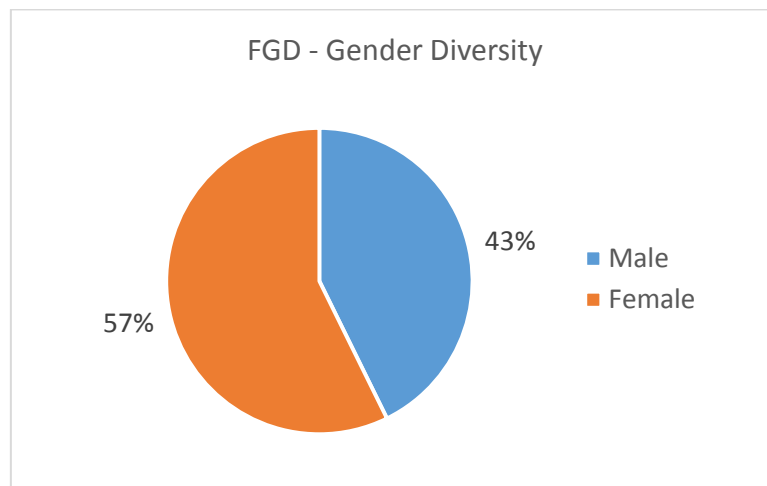
An online survey was designed and administered in March 2016. The online survey focused on the core competencies, relevance and user-friendliness of the CHCF. Survey questions revolving around structure, content, and format of the CHCF and competency frameworks in general were designed. A total of 83 respondents participated and completed the online survey. Detailed findings of the survey are presented in a summary report in *Annex 5*.



## Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

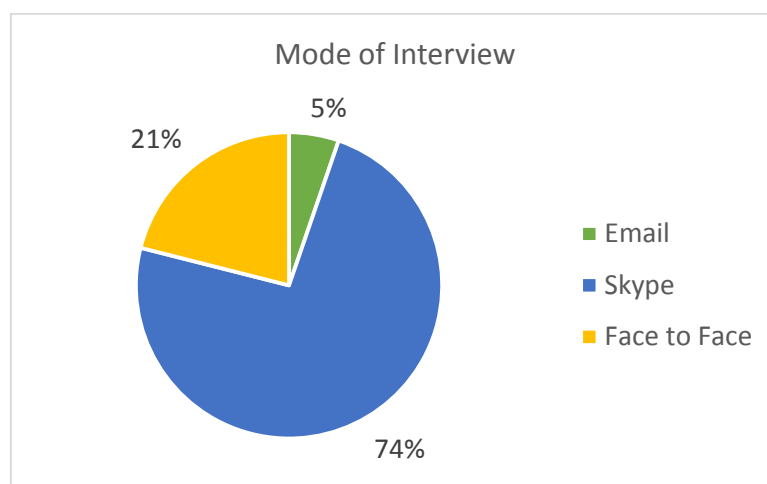
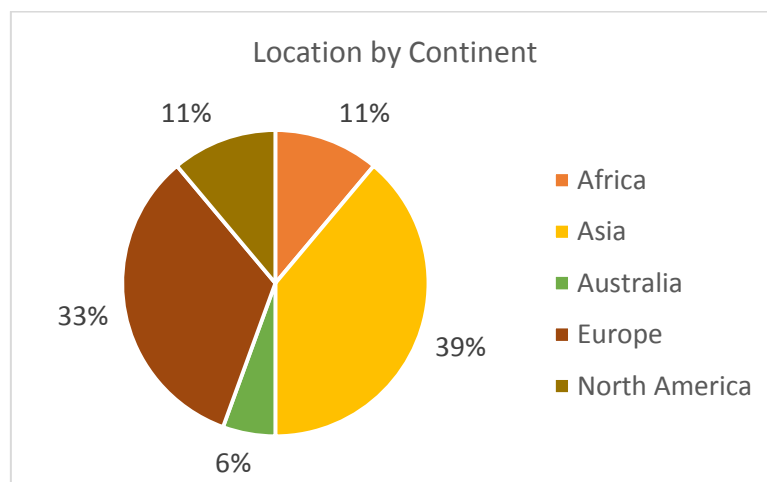
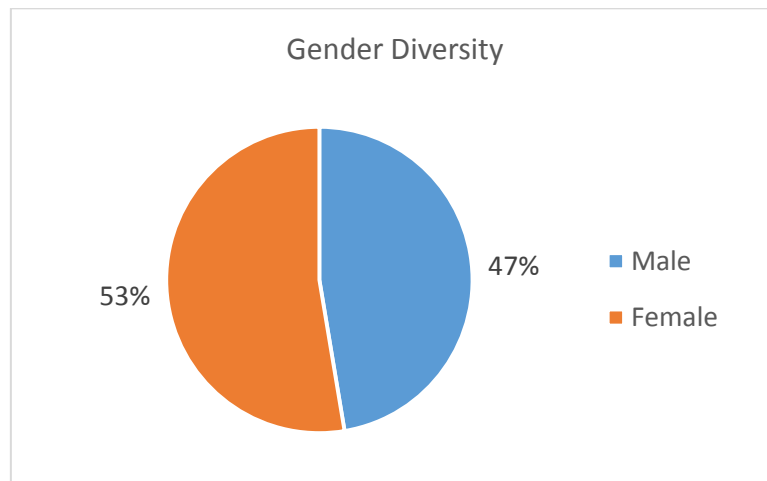
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in order to triangulate the primary data obtained from the online survey and secondary data from the desk research on the use of the CHCF. A total of 17 FGDs were conducted in seven countries across Asia, Africa and Europe: Australia, Bangladesh, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The Philippines was initially identified as a target country in which to conduct FGDs but this was not pursued due to a lack of response by potential host organisations to facilitate the consultation process. Field visits were largely hosted by members of the START Network or the CHS Alliance.

A majority of the FGDs were facilitated by the hosting agencies without any fee. The average duration of each FGD was 1 hour and 45 minutes. Below are more details of the FGDs:



## On- on-one interviews

Twenty-nine one-on-one interviews with key informants from a broad spectrum of humanitarian organisations were conducted. These were mainly done using pre-designed interviews and via Skype. A few face-to-face one-on-one interviews were also conducted simultaneously during the field visits for FGDs.



## Community consultations

In order to ensure perspectives of affected populations were included in the review of the CHCF, eight community consultations were undertaken in Bangladesh and Pakistan. These consultations were carried out on behalf of the consultant by selected aid agencies who used specific guidelines issued to them by the consultant. The aid agencies deployed community mobilisers and project staff who were familiar with the local context and were conversant in the local languages and dialects.

## Case studies

The consultant developed ten case studies and cross-case analysis to draw significant lessons to inform the findings and recommendations on the CHCF. The case studies highlighted stakeholders' experience and learning as a result of using the CHCF. This involved making a detailed documentation of what the stakeholders perceived as achievements, missed opportunities, and areas for improvement in the CHCF. The case studies can be found on the CHS Alliance website.

## Consultation and validation workshop

A consultation and validation workshop on the findings and recommendations of the consultancy on the CHCF was held in London on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016, hosted by the CHS Alliance. It was organised in conjunction with the project consultancy debriefing and discussions on the steps forward between the consultant, CHS Alliance Manager and Talent Development Manager. The purpose of the workshop was to review and validate the project consultancy findings and recommendations and to receive feedback and input on the proposed revisions or improvements to the CHCF. Twenty-six participants from 15 agencies participated in the workshop. Conscious attempts were made to invite participants who were involved in the development of the CHCF in 2011.

## Final feedback on proposed revisions to the CHCF

The proposed revisions to the CHCF were further reviewed based on feedback, input and guidance received during the consultation and validation workshop in London and feedback gathered during presentations to the Humanitarian Passport Initiative (HPI) on 15 July 2016 and to the Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP) on 19 July 2016, both in London. The indicative revised CHCF along with key findings and recommendations were, in parallel, made available on the CHS Alliance website to Start Network members and wider group of stakeholders. The final version of the indicative revised CHCF was also sent to all stakeholders who participated in the global consultation process for their comments.

## 3.4 Limitations and constraints

The limitations and constraints of the consultancy project and corresponding mitigation measures taken are as follows:

- Staff turnover in aid agencies made it challenging to rigorously ascertain the extent of the use and efficacy of the CHCF. Many staff that were previously involved in the development of the CHCF or similar competency models in their respective organisations were often no longer contactable or accessible. A case in point is the

Philippines, which was one of the selected countries for an FGD, but could not be engaged due to a lack of response by agency staff familiar with the CHCF or competency frameworks in general.

- The merger process of HAP International and People in Aid took longer than envisaged, thereby somewhat affecting the progress of this consultancy. Staff transition in CHS Alliance also somewhat interrupted the progress of the consultancy. The project manager initially assigned to this project left the organisation at the start of the consultancy. The succeeding project manager too departed within a short period, leading to the third and current project manager taking over quite close to the end of the consultancy process. Fortunately, the CHS Alliance Executive Director stepped in at a crucial stage to provide valuable guidance and ensure that the process was put back on track until its successful completion.
- The focus of the global stakeholder consultation was essentially targeted at staff that were available and willing to host the consultation process. Access to the staff was very much dependent on personal contacts provided by CHS Alliance, the Talent Development project manager, and the consultant's own network. The data collection phase took longer than planned due to the unavailability of respondents.
- The final consultation and validation workshop in London brought together under the same roof a number of staff that had the institutional memory of developing the original CHCF. In hindsight, it would have made the global consultation process smoother if inputs from these staff had been sought at the onset of the stakeholder consultancy process rather than at the tail end of the project.
- Although the case studies afforded notable evidences of success in implementing the HCF, a lack of baseline indicators made it challenging to accurately gauge the 'before' and 'after' effects of using the CHCF. Thus it was difficult to determine with a high degree of accuracy the larger goal of to what extent the CHCF had contributed towards professionalisation of the humanitarian sector, and to keep people affected by crisis at the centre of what we do.
- Apart from this project consultancy, there appeared to be another parallel initiative involving the review of the CHCF led by the Humanitarian Passport Initiative (HPI). Attempts were made to reduce the overlaps and close the gaps between these two assignments where possible, although it was beyond the scope of this project.
- There was minor confusion in the minds of stakeholders between the CHCF and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) booklet. A few respondents were referring to the CHS booklet rather than the CHCF during the stakeholder interviews. Further, the consultant was previously advised by the CHS Alliance to use the abbreviation HCF instead of CHCF, although many stakeholders recognised the framework by the latter abbreviation. For the purpose of consistency, the abbreviation CHCF is used throughout this report.

Despite these limitations and constraints, the consultancy was able to make solid progress with the global stakeholder consultation and develop a sufficient evidence base to conduct

extensive data collection and fairly rigorous data analysis. They do not materially affect the outcome of the analysis of the findings and recommendations of the review

## 4 Main Findings: General

The main findings on whether the CHCF is fit-for-purpose and effectively supports competency development and professionalisation of aid workers are outlined below.

### 4.1 Fit-for-purpose, relevance and value

**An overwhelming majority** of those who participated in the global stakeholder consultation affirm that the CHCF is **fit-for-purpose** and **adds value** to their staff development and humanitarian work. Ninety-three percent of the online survey respondents, 100% of the FGD for staff respondents and 80% of the one-on-one interview respondents unequivocally acknowledged the relevance of the CHCF and competency models derived from the CHCF towards strengthening staff competency development and in improving effectiveness of their organisation's humanitarian work.

Stakeholders acknowledge the CHCF as a pioneering, generic competency framework in the humanitarian sector that serves as a **useful reference point** for them. They affirm that its origins as a product of inter-agency consensus and consultation add to its practical relevance as a broad guidance tool. For example, several international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) who have developed their own competency frameworks have either referred to, or adopted elements of the competencies in the CHCF. The Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) Competency Framework, an inter-agency initiative of the Child Protection Working Group, for instance, specifically refers to the CHCF as a complement to child protection related competencies. The Working Group of the Global Nutrition Cluster, which together produced the Nutrition in Emergencies (NIE) Technical (Occupational) Competency Framework has used the CHCF as a platform on which to build the NIE competency framework. Further, the Humanitarian Passport Initiative (HPI) in its recent research report has identified the CHCF as providing the basis of a standardised approach to the development of core humanitarian competencies. Significantly, while the HPI research acknowledges weaknesses in the CHCF, it suggests that it is “better to improve on what is, to a limited extent, already familiar within the sector, rather than start an expensive and complex consultation on a ‘new’ framework, which is likely to contain similar categories/information<sup>5</sup>”. The HPI group has moreover proposed that the CHCF be sourced as a potential platform for all technical sectors such as nutrition and logistics.

Some of the **key strengths** of the CHCF as highlighted by stakeholders are as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> Humanitarian Passport Initiative, Initial Research and Inception Phase, Final Report: Output 1 – Competency and Qualification Framework, January – June 2016.

- The CHCF rightly places emphasis in understanding the humanitarian contexts and applying humanitarian principles and standards to assist affected populations.
- The CHCF serves as a useful guidance tool and resource for agencies, especially those that do not have, or have only limited resources and capacity, to develop their own competency frameworks.
- Key competency domains described in the CHCF, are by far and large, fit-for-purpose and relevant to upgrading staff competencies. These include competencies related to humanitarian principles and standards, achieving results, listening to and engaging in dialogue with crisis-affected people, prioritising safety and security of staff and community, coping with stress, and leadership competencies of managerial staff.
- The underlying principle of the CHCF on the needs and dignity of crisis-affected people – ‘keeping crisis-affected people at the centre of what we do’- resonates very well with stakeholders. Senior staff and staff involved in HR find the CHCF useful to advance capacity building of their teams by identifying their strengths and gaps in the core competencies, and thereby serving as a signpost to track staff development.
- When effectively implemented, the CHCF provides opportunities for strengthening competencies and professionalisation of aid workers at the local and national levels, thereby contributing towards capacity strengthening and shifting imbalance of power among local humanitarian actors and affected people.
- Understanding the context and humanitarian principles and standards described in the CHCF positively influences the organisation’s culture and ways of working.
- The CHCF could be used as a benchmark and comparative tool to assess competency models in the public domain, and eventually assist humanitarian organisations to evaluate their own competency frameworks.
- In some countries like Pakistan, some NGOs involved in humanitarian work suffer from a weak image in their society due to various reasons including poor support from their government. Adoption of the CHCF will definitely spur professionalisation efforts and thereby help improve the organisation’s public image.
- Smaller aid organisations that are severely resource-constrained and overwhelmed by day-to-day operational challenges welcome the CHCF as a readily available, low-cost template, which they could easily adopt and adapt.

#### 4.2 Implementation gaps: awareness, communication and training

Stakeholder consultations in Nairobi and London show that there is a high level of CHCF awareness in these locations. On the other hand, there is only relatively low to moderate level of awareness of the CHCF in Australia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Middle East and Pakistan. This relatively low level of awareness in these areas includes members of the Start Network.

Not surprisingly, the awareness level of the *Guide* to the CHCF among stakeholders is even lower. Around 90% of all those interviewed were only seeing the CHCF *Guide* for the first



time. The same perception problem exists too even among stakeholders who are actively using the CHCF. Those who have had a chance to look through the *Guide* found it comprehensive and useful. Respondents flagged the awareness gap as a missed opportunity to further mainstream the CHCF.

Possible reasons for the lack of awareness of the CHCF cited by stakeholders are as follows:

- Most of those stakeholders who were involved and expected to use and champion the CHCF did not receive systematic and sustained orientation or briefing on how to use the framework. Some compared this experience with the roll-out of the CHS and Sphere Standards, whereby they had to undergo intensive orientation or training on the tool. Regretfully, they did not have the opportunity to benefit from a similar organised orientation or systematic training with regard to the CHCF.
- Stakeholders who participated in FGDs in Australia specifically pointed out to inadequate CHS Alliance presence in their region as one of the reasons for the lack of familiarity with the CHCF. Previously, when there were People in Aid (now CHS Alliance) representatives in the region, regular interactions among CHS Alliance staff and colleagues in the humanitarian sector enabled them to keep abreast with new initiatives.
- There is a perception issue among some stakeholders from Asia towards adoption of the CHCF. Since the CHCF is perceived to be developed by UK- based INGOs, it is viewed as Eurocentric and lacking local and national NGO and community inputs. The perception issue contributes to a certain extent towards stakeholder resistance in the region towards adoption and mainstreaming of the CHCF.
- This consultant has not hitherto sighted any formal, documented plan on the different roles and responsibilities and expectations of the Start Network members in promoting and applying the CHCF. There was an understanding when the CHCF was developed that it should be a 'collective tool' to promote inter-agency use and avoid issues arising from single 'ownership' claims to the tool. CHS Alliance currently promotes and maintains the CHCF however it does not have the copyright and ownership to it.
- The CHCF is only available in two languages, namely English and French. This consultant has not found versions in other translated languages. Stakeholders find the limited availability of locally translated versions to be a constraint especially in countries where English or French is not widely spoken.

The awareness level of the CHCF is the highest amongst stakeholders who are directly involved in the Talent Development Project, especially at the entry level and mid-level training programme. There was a significantly high level of awareness in Nairobi on the CHCF compared to other countries consulted. The reasons for this could be attributed to:

- There is a permanent CHS Alliance presence (CHS Representative) in Kenya coupled with strong and regular HR networks.

- When the CHCF was developed, consultations and validation workshops were undertaken both in London, UK and Nairobi, Kenya. Therefore, there is a strong sense of familiarity and buy-in from the organisations in these regions.
- The Start Network Talent Development Project started in Kenya, followed by Asia, giving users in these regions more time to understand and use the CHCF.
- Stakeholders who regularly attend Humanitarian Human Resources (HHR) Conferences organised by People in Aid (then) in Europe and Africa are more familiar with the CHCF as it is often introduced and discussed at these gatherings. Such events were not held in Asia for many years until 2015 when a similar conference was organised in Kuala Lumpur.

### 4.3 Links to other standards, tools and initiatives

There appears to be inadequate links between the CHCF and key standards and tools in the humanitarian sector such as the Sphere Minimum Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) as well as other initiatives in the Talent Development Project. Stakeholders who are familiar with the CHS and those recently trained on CHS have expressed interest to know the link, and when and how to use both the tools. There is considerable confusion and frustration with the lack of clarity in the way these tools and initiatives are linked. Stakeholders complain that there are far too many new tools and initiatives produced in the humanitarian sector that are promoted to the same organisations. Until and unless it is a requirement, stakeholders are tempted to dismiss the myriad tools, especially if the implementation process of any new initiative is unclear and unsupported by appropriate resourcing and training.

### 4.4 Two-tier approach: all staff and 1st level line managers

A number of stakeholders, except stakeholders consulted in Nairobi, find the two-tier approach somewhat vague and overlapping. These stakeholders have requested that the two-tier approach for staff and first level line managers be clarified and streamlined. Some respondents do not understand the categorisation of who belongs to the 1st level line managers.

In addition, some respondents were of the view that the CHCF tiers, while aspirational, may not be practical during actual emergency response. In disasters of a large scale, hiring is often done quickly and often new hires with little or no experience in the humanitarian sector are employed. The CHCF does not have a clear guide on the key competencies required for new hires in such situations.

It was also felt that the tiers should represent the different experience and expertise present in the humanitarian sector – for example, entry, middle, and advance levels. The aspirational nature of the competencies and absence of guidance on competencies for the critical middle level employees were viewed as major shortcomings in the CHCF approach. As one stakeholder put it:

*“I don’t even think my director fulfils all the core competencies”, FGD participant, INGO.*

## 4.5 Target audience

Stakeholders representing development organisations were of the view that although the CHCF's primary target audience is humanitarian workers, it could also be used for the development sector. On the other hand, a few respondents representing dual mandated agencies suggested that the CHCF does not clearly target dual mandated organisations (humanitarian and development). Some of the core competencies in the CHCF were also found not to target competencies of aid workers in conflict areas.

The primary intended users of CHCF were Start Network members and implementing partners. The extent to which the Start Network members and implementing partners are familiar with the framework varies. In Bangladesh and Pakistan for example, the Start Network members and implementing partners were not fully aware of the CHCF. In Nairobi there was far greater familiarity with the CHCF among the Start Network members and the implementing partners. In some cases, Start Network member based in the UK office were familiar and using the CHCF. However, this was not the case with the respective country office.

On the other hand, other organisations (non-Start Network members) and institutes including academia are also referring to CHCF to a varying degree. Clearly the target audience for HCF has gone beyond START Network members.

## 4.6 Linguistic and cultural contexts

A significant number of respondents claim that the language in the framework is too ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. The core facilitators for the entry level programme for example, claim that when assessing the trainees on the different competencies, feedback varies depending on how the competency is interpreted by them. Even speakers who are proficient in English found that the language used in the framework is open to wide interpretation, especially if there is no orientation and training conducted on how to interpret and use of the framework.

The word 'competencies' itself is not so easily translated into other languages. There is no literal translation to describe competencies in many non-English languages. It requires additional description to ensure that the meaning as prescribed in the CHCF is properly understood in these languages. In the Malay, Bangla and Urdu languages for example, competencies may be translated as 'quality' or 'ability' or 'skill' with a lack of emphasis on the crucial aspect of 'behaviour' or values'. Similarly, terms such as 'leadership' in the CHCF may be interpreted as hierarchical when translated in a local language even if the intent of this domain is to move away from hierarchical based descriptions.

Some respondents have found that the language used reads more like activities than description of behaviour associated with competencies. For many, it is unclear as to whether the statement in bold in the framework (competency description) is the expected behaviour, while the bullet points under each of the bold headings is the criteria to meet the competency related behaviour.

It is unclear to some respondents if the CHCF was developed in consideration of varying cultural contexts. For example, as cited by a few respondents in the FGDs, during emergencies the deadlines for completing projects is very tight and project teams work under tremendous pressure to comply with deadlines as well as to ensure funds are used within the stipulated project period. In cases where temporary staff is hired (example for two or three months of the project period), it is perceived as unrealistic to expect a 'work life balance' approach. The CHCF and *guide* do not adequately address these issues.

This consultant has not come across any translation of the framework from English to other languages except in French. Respondents from Asia and Middle East particularly were of the view that such a tool should be translated into local languages for more effective adoption, application and eventual mainstreaming.

#### 4.7 Brochure

Those who have copies of the CHCF pocket-size booklet and are familiar with the contents are satisfied with the booklet as it is. The pocket-sized booklet is found to be particularly attractive due to its portability.

*"We like it, don't change it," FGD participants, Nairobi*

But wholehearted acceptance of the brochure in its current format is confined to only a small minority of users. **An overwhelming majority** of stakeholders (except in Nairobi) however have nonetheless commented that the brochure could be **simplified and made more user-friendly** to appear less text-heavy, cluttered and imposing. A popular suggestion made by most participants was to increase the use of visuals and graphics in the CHCF brochure.

There is also a huge expectation among stakeholders to reduce **information overload** in the brochure and to adopt a **horizontal format** that reads from left to right, and has bigger font size for easier reading. There were also recommendations to number the domains in the CHCF for easy reference. At the first glance, especially for those who are seeing the brochure for the first time, it is difficult to grasp and discuss all the six competencies and the additional behaviours required for the first level line manager. Comparison was made to the CHS booklet which has graphs that readers could easily identify with and understand.

#### 4.8 Application and effective use

Practical application of the CHCF is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Understanding behaviours needs to be demonstrated by staff in humanitarian response.
- Clarify expectations of staff in a consistent and objective way.
- Create a shared language across agencies about what is expected of staff.

The project consultant developed 10 case studies to showcase the application and effective use of CHCF. Refer to a blog and case studies published on CHS Alliance website: <http://www.chsalliance.org/news/blog/how-is-the-core-humanitarian-competencies-framework-being-used-around-the-world>

## 4.9 Why the CHCF works?

- Overall, it was found that in organisations where the use of CHCF is a policy requirement or management best practice, it is used systematically and effectively. The CHCF is used in different ways to suit different needs in an organisation. There is a clear indication that the CHCF is being used in all stages of the employee life cycle and HR practice area especially in recruitment, selection, performance management, learning and development. The use of the CHCF is clearly evident in the entry-level training and mid-level training (CONTEXT) scheme, where it is integrated in these different trainings (See case studies for detailed account of CHCF use. At the time of reporting, nine (9) case studies were submitted). In the absence of a formal and systematic orientation on the CHCF, a comprehensive guide to clearly show how CHCF is integrated and applied in the programme is beneficial for users.
- The CHCF is also linked to the coaching programme where coaches interviewed affirm the usefulness of the core competencies in the coaching process. Coaches found the competencies in the CHCF useful for their own progress in addition to supporting trainees' and mentees growth. Anecdotal evidence of changes at organisation level is beginning to show results.
- The CHCF is also found highly useful for surge capacity, specifically in the development and maintenance of the roster system. At least two agencies are using the competencies in the CHCF as a reference to select and develop their roster members.
- There is clearly a shared language among those who have undergone the entry level or mid-level training that allows for greater collaboration. The intent to develop individuals with 'transferable skills and knowledge' appears to be met, although the consultant found no concrete evidence to support this view.

## 4.10 Why the CHCF does not work so well?

- A recurrent concern from the overwhelming majority of stakeholder interviewed is the lack of buy-in from senior management to embed the CHCF in their organisations. Trainings provided are usually for capacity building at individual level and therefore limiting changes at organisational level in a profound manner. For example, there is a high level of frustration in cases where trainees return to their organisations after the entry level or mid-level training and find themselves returning to a disabling environment. The ethos of living by competencies can be undermined if it is not understood by host agencies where these trainees are placed. Changing behaviour requires time. And endorsement and support by senior management is critical for any effort to adopt and mainstream the CHCF.
- Many INGOs are using their own competencies framework. A few who have access to resources and technical expertise have developed indigenous competency framework for leadership. The lack of emphasis for leadership competencies is the one of the reasons given for developing separate leadership competencies as well as for the inadequate application of the CHCF in leadership training. Although the leadership is expected to have all the core competencies and be familiar with these competencies,

additional leadership competencies are seen as important to have apart from the core competencies.

- Existing policies and guidelines in some organisations highlight the competencies gap and desired competencies in the organisation. However, this is not necessarily done in a structured manner. NGOs mainly find the CHCF highly useful and relevant especially when they do not have access and resources to develop a competencies framework. There is also inconsistency in usage of the CHCF between head office and country offices of an organisation. A number of START Network members based in certain countries have not used the framework as they are not familiar with the usage and they lack proper training and communication.
- With the emergence of many new frameworks and tools, the CHCF faces stiff “competition” as organisations are in a dilemma as to which frameworks or models to emphasise, propagate or refer to within an organisation. The hard reality expressed by some stakeholders is that the core competencies in the CHCF are desirable but not necessarily practical. There is a strong tension between desirability and practicality. Although aid agencies claim it is a challenge to use and measure effectiveness of a competency framework, some continue to work on developing competency frameworks. In one of the agencies, it has taken two years to ensure all staff members are familiar with their own competency framework.
- One of the respondents representing a donor agency has stated that there is no specific emphasis on people management issues in the CHCF and competency frameworks in general in NGOs and INGOs. This gap in stressing people management issues could be one of the contributing factors for the limited reliance on the CHCF.
- One of the challenges faced in implementing the CHCF is linked to career pathing and how these changes in behaviours are identified and measured. There is a lot of investment to build capacity of aid workers at the individual level, however little emphasis is placed to measure the change or to transfer the learning to the team or organisational level.
- Some HR practitioners are not familiar with the CHCF and competency frameworks in general. They are therefore unable to guide project managers.
- There is also a disconnect in the use of the CHCF between talent development project and the rest of the organisation. The talent development project faithfully uses the CHCF while the rest of the organisation uses its own competency framework and is ignorant of the framework.
- It is a challenge to get managers to apply core competencies in addition to technical competencies. A clear link between core and technical competencies is missing.
- There is inadequate capacity within the organisation to address misaligned behaviour and misconduct. This causes loss of trust within among staff who raise such concerns and when no ensuing mitigation action is taken against deviations in behaviour or

conduct. Besides, not many agencies have the resources nor ability to investigate the matter in an effective manner.

- The first competency domain is about understanding the context. However the design of the training schemes does not necessarily demonstrate this area of competency. The training under the Talent Development Project for example is delivered in English (except in the Democratic Republic of Congo where it is delivered in French). One of the main criteria for participating in the training courses is fluency in English. This by default excludes many staff who may be directly involved in humanitarian work. While some of the core facilitators may be experts in the subject matter, they are unable to effectively train the trainees due to the language barrier. To engage properly with communities we need aid workers who can speak and engage with communities and fluency in English is not the criteria for one to have maximum impact with. English becomes important when we work with internationals as well as with reporting. Not all those trained will work in an environment where English is most required. We also have to have people who are fluent in the language where the disaster happens. This limits the notion of creating a shared language on competencies and the CHCF at the grassroots level.

## 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Fit for purpose, relevance and value

The vast majority of stakeholders find the CHCF as fit for the purpose for which it was intended, relevant and of added value to deliver appropriate, high quality and effective humanitarian response.

While there were obvious weaknesses, the **basic thrust of the framework and core competency domains** and elements **were found to be relevant** in supporting capacity development of aid workers.

At the same time, **stakeholders generally feel the need for the CHCF to be revised and updated** to keep in tune with the changes in the operating environment of the humanitarian sector since the tool was introduced five years ago.

### 5.2 Two-tier approach: all staff and 1st level line managers

A substantial majority of stakeholders have proposed that the two-tier approach be clarified or reviewed to integrate it more securely into the overall CHCF. Issues surrounding what competencies separate managers from field staff need to be addressed. The absence of competency guidelines for the crucial middle level of aid workers equally needs to be addressed.

The consensus among stakeholders is for an approach to the CHCF that would indicate competencies at progressive levels that map competencies required for staff with little or no knowledge and experience in the humanitarian sector, staff with a few years of experience and skill, and leading up to senior staff with extensive skills and experience in the sector, including managerial expertise.



Desk research and comparative analysis of existing competency models used by organisations in the humanitarian, development, private and academic sectors support a **progressive approach in mapping competencies**.

### 5.3 Implementation gaps: awareness, communication and training

The lack of awareness of the CHCF, and absence of systematic and sustained orientation, communication and training on how to use it has emerged as one of the main shortcomings in implementation and mainstreaming of the framework. Communication and training on how to use the CHCF appears to have been either not sustained over a long term or patchy, and users have claimed that they have largely been left to their own devices to interpret and apply the framework based on their subjective reading of the *guide* to the CHCF. Implementation issues such as this have been found to be less severe when there is donor or project requirement to adopt the CHCF along with requisite budgetary support.

**Any revisions to the CHCF must be predicated on a systematic and effective dissemination and communication programme, and more effective hands- on training** for users to understand and apply the tool. Even seasoned HR practitioners and senior managers across humanitarian and for-profit sectors require guidance on how to interpret and apply competency models. Surely staff in the humanitarian sector deserves all the assistance they can obtain to understand and use the competency framework.

**If this critical measure to bridge the gap between a revised CHCF and systematic and sustained awareness, communication and implementation of the initiative is not followed through, then any prospect of expanding the mainstreaming the CHCF could be hampered. This would be a lost opportunity to take the CHCF forward.**

### 5.4 Effective use and implementation

If the primary intended users of the CHCF are Start Network members and their implementing partners, it can be concluded that the framework is showing a difference. This observation is backed by anecdotal evidences that suggest evident improvements in aid worker competencies in many areas for those agencies that have used the CHCF. Those who are not Start Network members see the relevance and value of using the CHCF and are interested in adopting it if there is buy in from their management. Academia and training service providers also see the relevance and value of using the CHCF or similar competency models.

### 5.5 Measuring behaviour change

Huge investment has been made to build staff competencies through the CHCF. However there seems to be a lack of emphasis on a systematic approach to measure the behaviour change arising from using the tool. Any revision to the CHCF should also be complemented by inclusion of simple, practical tools to measure the 'before' and 'after' effects of adoption of the framework.



## 5.6 Brochure

The overwhelming majority of stakeholders find the current design, layout and presentation of contents in the current brochure too wordy, cluttered, and overloaded with information and side bar quotes. Many find the print size incredibly small to read. The lack of numbered competency domains hinders understanding. In short, the brochure should be made **more user-friendly**.

## 5.7 Linguistic barriers

There is an appeal for the CHCF to be made available in additional languages, apart from English and French. Linguistic barriers also impact on communication, dissemination and training issues affecting implementation of the framework that was discussed earlier.

# 6 Specific Findings and Suggestions for Revisions

Specific findings, which are directly related to the proposed revisions, were derived from the analysis of the online survey, one on one interviews, FGDs, community consultations, case studies and desk research.

### Feedback from Consultation and Validation Workshop

Feedback gathered from participants in the consultation and validation workshop in London on 21 July 2016 suggests that some of the issues on the perceived shortcomings in the CHCF that have surfaced during the global stakeholder consultations process had been raised previously and debated when the CHCF was developed in 2011. The consensus arising from the consultation and validation workshop suggests that the framework should be revised and updated where necessary, while its core elements and thrust be retained in line with the findings from the vast majority of stakeholders involved in the consultation process.

### Proposed Revisions

See below for proposed revisions to the CHCF for each competency domain, and the brochure. **These suggestions should be regarded as indicative only and viewed as a departure point for additional stakeholder consultations, validation and piloting.** The first column lists the suggested revisions followed by justifications for the revisions. The last column indicates the views gathered during the consultation and validation workshop held in London on 21 July 2016. The **indicative revised CHCF** attached with this report is based on these proposed revisions (*See Annex 7: Proposed Revisions of CHCF*).

## 6.1 Specific recommendations: 3Ss – streamline, strengthen, simplify

Arising from the findings drawn from the global stakeholder consultations, the following specific recommendations are offered on proposed revisions to the CHCF. Based on the feedback from the majority of stakeholders and as further affirmed by participants of the consultation and validation workshop, the consultant is of the view that the **essential thrust and basic elements of the CHCF should be retained**.

Nonetheless, the consultant suggests that revisions or improvements be introduced to the CHCF framework to account for the evolving humanitarian environmental landscape and changing needs and aspirations of stakeholders in the intervening five years since the CHCF was rolled out.

The **six core competency domains of the CHCF remain relevant**. Most of the competency descriptions and qualifying criteria deserve to be retained, although a few of them need to be **revised: clarified, and updated**. Descriptions need to be revised to reduce ambiguities but without losing their essential behaviour focus as state din the original framework.

Along with content refinements, there was strong call for the **presentation of the CHCF in the brochure to be simplified**. Moving certain details to the *guide* to the framework could be one way to reduce information overload.

The **awareness, communication and training tools** to support the implementation of the CHCF certainly need to be **re-visited and augmented**. Inevitably, the *guide to the framework needs to be correspondingly revised and updated*. Certainly, the **brochure needs to be recast** for a more user-friendly outlook. **Web and online resources** need to be developed to support and complement implementation.

**What is recommended is incremental improvements** rather than a drastic overhaul of a tool that has proven to be an important and relevant resource for users. In this regard, it is proposed that a **3S approach** to revision of the CHCF is adopted: **streamline, strengthen, simplify** to respond to stakeholder feedback and the evolving humanitarian environment.

Any further revision to the CHCF will obviously require more extensive and intensive stakeholder consultation. This has bearing on the duration required to make such improvements. The remaining duration of the Talent Development Project is two years, and any drastic change may significantly affect on-going initiatives in the project where reference is made to the CHCF.

In addition, the original intent of the CHCF to serve as a generic **descriptive competency framework** rather than a prescriptive tool should be retained.

As stressed earlier, developing awareness, and devising a systematic and sustained communication and training programme to support implementation is an indispensable requirement for future efforts to mainstream the revised CHCF.

See below proposed revisions to the CHCF and justifications.

Proposed Revision	Justification	Feedback from Consultation and Validation Workshop
1. Change the title and sub-title of the CHCF from “Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework. Keeping crisis-affected	✓ Current title and subtitle are generally accepted and many references have already been made to this framework; major changes	☉ No objection.

<p>people at the centre of what we do” to “Core Humanitarian Competency Framework: Keeping affected populations at the centre of humanitarian response.”</p>	<p>to the title may create confusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Amend title from Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework to Core Humanitarian Competency Framework.</li> <li>✓ Revise subtitle for clarification: Broaden from crisis to humanitarian response, and avoid using pronouns like ‘we’.</li> </ul>	
<p>2. The CHCF adopted the definition of competency to mean, ‘the behaviours that employees must have, or must acquire, in order to achieve high levels of performance in their role.’ Six areas of core competencies were then identified as the ‘essential behaviours required by all staff, influenced by their skills, and knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This definition meets accepted criteria used by most organisations and academia and should be retained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ Retain definition.</li> </ul>
<p>3. All six competency domains to be numbered.</p> <p>4. Information on outcomes could be shifted to the <i>Guide</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ For convenient reference.</li> <li>✓ Description of outcomes is helpful although it does not add value to be included in the main framework. To reduce information overload and clutter, it might be better to move this detail to the guide to the framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ CHS Alliance Communication team to format and present for feedback from all those involved in the consultation.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Use of active, singular verbs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consistent with established practice, and to stress application of competency to individual staff development, use of active verbs in the singular sense is advocated. For example: ‘Understands’ humanitarian context is preferred over ‘Demonstrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ The original wording went through a rigorous process, so if the wording is all right, do not change it.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Domain 1: Understanding the Humanitarian Contexts and Applying Humanitarian Principles</b></p> <p>6. More emphasis to be given on cultural contexts and cultural sensitivity in the revised framework.</p>	<p>understanding' of humanitarian context.</p>	
<p>7. A new competency was created under Domain 1 with the focus on sensitivity to gender and diversity issues centring on sexual exploitation and abuse.</p>	<p>✓ Revise title of this domain to add 'standards' to emphasise importance of standards. To read: Understanding the Humanitarian Contexts and Applying Humanitarian Principles and Standards.</p> <p>✓ Most participants, particularly from Asia, observed that while cultural context was mentioned in the CHCF, it needs to be made more explicit in view of recurrent issues in humanitarian work arising from lack of cultural competence. The CHCF has only one reference made to cultural context and even then it is combined with political context.</p>	<p>⊙ Agree with revised title.</p> <p>⊙ In competency domain 1, 'Understanding the humanitarian context', perhaps separate the political and cultural contexts.</p>
	<p>✓ A significant number of participants observed that the CHCF needs to be updated on gender issues.</p>	<p>⊙ If the CHCF competency descriptions are made too specific to encompass a list of special target groups based on gender, faith, age, or disability, there is a risk of losing the broad flexibility of the framework and may risk missing other groups. Also, need to be careful not to extend domain description relating to gender issues to beyond competencies to issues of governance, regulation, legal or enforcement. Suggest an alternative word for 'diversity', for example, 'inclusion'.</p> <p>⊙</p>

<p><b>Domain 2: Achieving Results</b></p> <p>8. Emphasis on teamwork and collaboration.</p>	<p>✓ Teamwork and collaboration, although described in the CHCF, need to be more strongly emphasised because of their obvious importance in effective humanitarian response.</p>	<p>⊙ N/A</p>
<p><b>Domain 3: Developing and Maintaining Collaborative Relationship</b></p> <p>9. Revise title to read ‘developing collaborative relationship’.</p> <p>10. Emphasis on respect and compassion.</p>	<p>✓ Understood that developing relationship includes maintaining relationship.</p> <p>✓ Participants would like stress on the attributes of respect and compassion. These two traits are part of the underlying qualities of the aid worker, and should not be diminished in the drive to achieve results.</p>	<p>⊙ Retain title – ‘maintaining’ is a key word and should be kept as it indicates the development of sustainable, long term relationship.</p> <p>⊙ Emphasis on respect and compassion could be fitted under ‘listening and creating dialogue, but may need rewording.</p>
<p>11. Emphasis on communication.</p> <p>12. Innovation and communication technology have to be integrated.</p>	<p>✓ The element of communication, which is deemed as a very important means for effective humanitarian response, has not been given due emphasis in the original framework. This competency is crucial at all levels and even more crucial at senior staff and managerial levels. As in organisations in other sectors, participants feel that staff in leadership positions often displayed strong technical skills but struggled with mastery over communication competency.</p> <p>✓ FGDs with communities suggest that communities also expect clear and consistent messaging from humanitarian organisations and aid workers. They also expect aid workers to be honest and not to raise their</p>	<p>⊙ Partially agree. Communication is referenced throughout the CHCF, although the communication elements appear to sound as a top-down rather than a two-way process.</p> <p>⊙ Technology could come under ‘ensuring programme quality impact’.</p>

	<p>expectations through weak communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ With the revolutionary advance of communication technologies, including social media, leveraging of innovation and technology including in communication was deemed important. Desk research and comparative analysis of organisational competency models affirm this point.</li> <li>✓ Nonetheless, new and innovative way of communication need to be balanced with traditional communication channels and tools, including face-to-face interaction to maintain the vital human aspect of humanitarian response.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Domain 4: Operating Safely and Securely At All Times</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Retain as this domain is still very relevant. Numerous examples cited by respondents to show increased awareness for Domain 4.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ Retain, as it is still very relevant to humanitarian work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domain 5: Managing Yourself In A Pressured and Changing Environment</b></p> <p>13. Managing change has to be given more emphasis. Propose to revise the title to 'Managing Change' and include elements of managing change and change management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Desk research and comparative analysis of organisational competency models in the private sector and academia suggest that managing change as a key competency attribute should be given emphasis.</li> <li>✓ Managing change is an important competency in the volatile and constantly changing humanitarian landscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ Disagree with the proposed revision as the essence of competency domain 5 is resilience. Managing yourself under pressured environment is very different to managing change. Agree that the word 'yourself' be removed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domain 6: Demonstrating Leadership in Humanitarian Response</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Repetition. Revised title to read as 'Demonstrating Leadership'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ Agree.</li> </ul>

14. Revise title – remove ‘humanitarian response’.		
15. Continuous learning and knowledge sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Continuous learning and knowledge sharing culture needs to be stressed as part of competency development in a constantly evolving environment and to sharpen capacity building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ N/A</li> </ul>
16. Revision has been made to the two-tier approach that describes competencies for all staff as well as first level line managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The two tier approach raises a lot of questions in the minds of the staff especially since the original definition of first level line managers is unclear. The alternative proposal is to develop a three-level progressive scale of competencies without specifying positions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ Level one is the core, and extreme caution needs to be exercised not to ‘dumb down’ this level and push things to other levels. A three-tier structure, while ideally welcome, would however make the framework more cumbersome and complex. This would go against the suggestions for simplicity advocated by stakeholders. Updating the framework to progressive levels, while might be useful, again entails radical change to the CHCF. Any major change to the CHCF should involve additional collaborations and consultations with key stakeholders, including organisations that were involved in the original formulation of the CHCF in 2011.</li> </ul>
17. The alternative proposal is to design a progressive scale of competencies but without linking it to positions or job titles since different roles in different areas (based on the size and nature of organisation, area of intervention, size of response, etc.) require different levels of competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Many field staff carry out managerial responsibilities even though they may not be designated as managers.</li> <li>✓ The first level proposed in the original framework was also deemed as too ambitious for entry-level staff to achieve.</li> <li>✓ When staff are hired in major emergencies, aid workers will not be able to fulfil all entry level requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊙ The three levels should not represent functions in an organisation but rather the behaviours that staff need to demonstrate and develop. The levels should not symbolise rigid and static stages of hierarchical development, and instead focus on the ability to maintain and continuously</li> </ul>

		<p>demonstrate the competencies throughout a staff's professional growth and development.</p> <p>⊙ What constitutes in a proposed level three warrants in-depth discussion, deliberation and consultation with key stakeholders, including organisations that were involved in the conception of the CHCF in 2011. Such major revision can be considered at a later stage if and when justified. For now, retain the two-tier approach.</p>
<p><b>Brochure</b></p> <p>18. Have lesser words and more graphics to visualise the core competencies.</p> <p>19. Be presented horizontally instead of vertically for ease of reading.</p> <p>20. Describe behaviours as behaviours and not activities.</p> <p>21. Remove duplication of competencies.</p> <p>22. Number the competencies.</p>	<p>✓ Current brochure to be further simplified. CHS Alliance Communication team to design the new format and share it with stakeholders for feedback.</p>	<p>⊙ Agree if it is majority view.</p>

## 6.2 Communication, dissemination and training to support implementation

Below are some suggestions for improvement of communication, implementation and dissemination of the revised framework (See Annex 8: Proposed Dissemination Plan):

- Technical support should be systematically made available to orientate, guide and train end users on how to use the revised framework.
- A comprehensive communication and dissemination plan is a must to support implementation.



- A user guide that is supported by resources such as briefing pack, presentation, videos, PREZI and website should be developed before the revised framework is rolled out.
- Suggestions on how organisations could conduct awareness and briefing and training sessions on the revised framework should be included in the implementation plan.
- Orientate and train HR managers to familiarise them with the revised framework.
- Provide adequate translations of the revised framework, and where possible, training in additional languages.
- Processes to monitoring and ensure accountability of staff in implementing the revised framework should be proposed.
- Donors could consider listing the adoption of CHCF as a requirement so that there is buy in from senior management and the revised framework becomes embedded in the organisational culture.
- Institute measures to bring about a paradigm shift in organisational culture to ensure implementation, including - to have competencies reflect organisational and technical values.
- To link revised framework with other HR initiatives to create buy in from senior management and Human Resource practitioners.
- Include good examples of how other organisations use and mainstream competency framework and popularise it in their organisational culture.
- There is no need to tick all the six competencies boxes – helpful to create a team of differing competencies which complement each other.
- To continue to work on the competencies at entry level – ensuring this is included in every level of training carried out.
- Provide anecdotal evidences for each of the competencies for ease of use.

### **6.3 Long-term strategy and CHS Alliance priorities**

CHS Alliance representation could be in the current form (example CHS Alliance representative in Africa) or through organisations who are committed to promote the framework in the region. Clear targets however may need to be set in this case. Within the Start Network members, a number of members who would be willing to use the framework in whichever form most suitable for their context can be identified. More effort and resources (financial and technical) are required to sensitise Start Network's implementing partners especially NGOs to implement the framework. In the spirit of promoting inter-agency collaboration, collective ownership of the framework is recommended however targeted technical advice and support should be made available if the framework is to be actively used and promoted.

To address concerns around lack of technical capacity to address poor behaviour or misconduct, trainings such as PSEA, investigation trainings may be promoted in a more rigorous manner.

## 6.4 Purpose and target audience

The purpose of the indicative revised CHCF should remain as it is – to strengthen capacity of aid workers and improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian work and response. **Humanitarian workers should remain as the primary target audience of the framework.** The three important assumptions that underpinned the current CHCF should underpin any proposed revisions:

- Affected populations are at the centre of humanitarian response.
- The CHCF is not intended to supersede or replace existing agency competency frameworks.
- The CHCF only articulates core humanitarian behaviours, and agencies are to adapt, modify, refer or use additional competencies relevant to their operating and cultural contexts.

Since its development in 2011, the primary users of the CHCF have been Start Network members and their partners. It is proposed that the framework is pro-actively made available and disseminated to organisations beyond Start Network as expressed by some respondents working in the development sector, as the competencies are equally applicable to the development sector. CHS members may also benefit from the CHCF. These organisations may adapt the framework to suit their needs.

The indicative revised CHCF should be shared more widely with small and medium grassroots NGOs in developing countries as this is the group that would truly appreciate a framework like this as they do not have the resources to develop their own set of competency framework. Furthermore, grassroots NGOs are often at the forefront of humanitarian response.

## 6.5 Resources

Implementation of the proposed indicative revised CHCF should be supported with relevant resources, training and budgetary support. Please see section 7.3 for more information.

## 6.6 Link with other standards, tools and initiatives

The proposed indicative revised CHCF could be linked to the CHS, specifically with reference to Commitment 8: Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers. In addition, one may also deduce that core competencies are key in order to meet all the CHS commitments. The revised framework may be introduced when conducting trainings on the CHS. The CHS could update the training module for Commitment 8 to include the framework. The Sphere Standards has replaced its core standard with the CHS. This will also impact Sphere trainings. The 'Shifting the Power' project has recently developed a framework which makes reference to the CHS. As such there could be a natural link to the CHCF as well.

The proposed indicative revised CHCF may also be used independently without linking to any other standards as is seen in the Talent Development Project. Human Resource practitioners could use it for planning purposes, recruitment and selection, performance management and reward and retention purposes. It is up to the organisations to identify the need and use the framework to best suit their needs and context. The framework will serve as a reference point.

## 6.7 Piloting and testing

The terms and conditions of this project consultancy do not have the remit to conduct piloting and testing of proposed the indicative revised CHCF. It is strongly recommended that efforts be undertaken to conduct wider consultation that includes piloting and testing of the revised framework. This will impart greater rigour to the revised and updated content of the framework and promote greater 'buy in' and sensitisation from stakeholders and end users.

It is also suggested that efforts be undertaken to identify agencies that are willing to pilot and test the revised CHCF. A few universities have showed tentative interest during the global stakeholder consultation process. A number of universities in Pakistan, for example, have indicated interest to pilot and use the revised competency framework (especially using the self-assessment of competencies found in the guide) as part of their programme. Similarly in Australia, Deakins University has indicated interest to use the revised competency framework for its leadership course. The Working Group of the Global Nutrition Cluster, which together produced the Nutrition in Emergencies (NIE) Technical (Occupational) Competency Framework has also indicated interest to pilot the revised framework. It is also proposed that training providers such as RedR UK-Kenya and MzN that are currently offering the entry level and mid-level trainings are approached to pilot and test the indicative revised CHCF.

## 6.8 Baseline and indicators of success

Organisations or humanitarian projects that intend to use the revised CHCF should identify the baseline before use in order to gauge the impact after use. The articulation of impact, namely how people have used the tool and what its impacts are at the organisational level should be incorporated into the revised framework *guide*. Also, the revised CHCF could be tapped to share lessons learned within and across the training schemes undertaken in the Talent Development Project: entry level, mid-level and leadership level.

# 7 Overall Conclusion

The consultation process afforded an excellent opportunity to revisit the CHCF and reaffirm its relevance, value and whether it remains fit-for-purpose for stakeholders since it was introduced in 2011. The review process generated valuable feedback and validated the core competencies and basic thrust of the CHCF. Minor revisions that take into account the changing humanitarian landscape and refinements to the brochure have been proposed. An indicative revised CHCF is accordingly proposed in this report.

This consultancy wishes to restate stakeholder sentiment that any significant change to the CHCF should involve wider consultation and validation involving relevant stakeholders.

It is also critical to agree upon a systematic and sustained dissemination, communication and training programme for users for any future effective adoption and mainstreaming of the framework.

The indicative revised CHCF is expected to be published in September 2016. The revised *guide* to the framework will also need to be duly updated.

## 8 List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBHA	Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies
CHCF	Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CPIE	Child Protection in Emergencies
DEPP	Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme
DFID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
ELRHA	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HHR	Humanitarian Human Resources
HPI	Humanitarian Passport Initiative
HR	Human Resources
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
PIA	People in Aid
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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