CHS Alliance

APPLYING THE CHS: LESSONS FROM EMERGENCY CONTEXTS

PILOT GUIDE

H2H Network
Humanitarian Action Support

DISASTERS EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

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This resource is in an ongoing, consultative drafting process involving many people and organisations, and does not represent the views of any one organisation.

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Welcome to Applying the CHS: Lessons from Emergency Contexts, Pilot Guide.

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a globally-recognised standard that helps actors engaged in humanitarian action deliver principled, accountable and high-quality aid.

The CHS is widely applied across emergencies and crisis contexts. This Pilot Guide has been designed to be used by organisations actively responding to sudden-onset crises - maybe for the first time – and that want to uphold the Commitments of the CHS.

The Pilot Guide builds on good practice and lessons learned. It was originally designed to be used by organisations responding to the devastation caused by the earthquakes that impacted Türkiye and Syria in February 2023. It is our hope that the guide will prove useful in other emergency contexts as well.

The CHS outlines Nine Commitments that can guide you and your organisation to improve the quality and impact of assistance. By following these Commitments, you embark on a journey to continuously improve both the quality and the accountability of a response.

The CHS encourages you to be more **accountable** to communities and people affected by crises.

*"Accountability is the process of **using power responsibly,** taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those affected by the exercise of such power."*

CHS booklet

How to use this resource

If the CHS is new to you, you can use this resource to learn more about it and find practical ideas to begin applying the Standard in your work. If you are already familiar with the CHS, the Pilot Guide will provide you with practical examples and reflections to help facilitate your understanding of the CHS and strengthen its application in your work.

Themes in this Pilot Guide are aligned with the CHS Commitments. It is recommended that you read this resource alongside the Core Humanitarian Standard. Words marked with an asterisk (*) are included in a glossary which can be found at the end of the document.

Themes

Participation of crisis-affected people in decision-making

Providing information to crisis-affected people

Feedback and complaints mechanisms

Protecting crisis-affected people from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH)

Building community resilience

Capacity sharing and strengthening

Staff well-being

Working with partners

START USING THE CHS

Start using the CHS

If you have just picked up the CHS for the first time, you might be wondering where to start and how other organisations are using the Standard.

Here is some advice that organisations that have been using the CHS in their work would like to share with you:

START BY LOOKING AT WHAT YOUR ORGANISATION ALREADY DOES THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE APPLICATION OF THE STANDARD.

BUILD ON WHAT YOU ARE DOING WELL AND FIND SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO IMPROVE EXISTING PRACTICES.

IDENTIFY A FEW ENTRY POINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT, RATHER THAN TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING AT ONCE. TAKE IT ONE STEP AT A TIME.

AFTER COMPLETING YOUR FIRST SET OF ACTIONS, REPEAT THE PROCESS AND CHOOSE OTHER AREAS TO WORK ON.

REMEMBER, THE PROCESS WILL TAKE TIME. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU ARE TAKING REAL STEPS TOWARDS IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF YOUR WORK.

"Just start somewhere that is relevant to your organisation; just Needs Assessments, for example. Look for an indicator you can work on and start there."

Tooba Siddiqi, Community World Service

"Go step by step when using the CHS. Assess a commitment and then, once you see an improvement, go for the next one and the next one."

Samson Kariithi, Human Appeal

"Seek help from your international partners; sometimes demand that help, especially from partners who are already CHS-certified, that is our job."

Mireille Flores Avila, Christian Aid

"Simply put, embedding the CHS Commitments requires time and goes beyond the emergency phase."

Kordian Kochanowicz, Danish Refugee Council

"Don't be scared of trying to apply the Standard, if something doesn't work, that's normal and it's ok. In the end it will help you learn and not hamper your work."

Wiktoria Dudek, Homo Faber Association

"Spend time talking with colleagues about what it means to you in practice. Don't look at the INGO, look into it from your perspective - look at the quality of your response and what you think is important."

Inge Leuverink, Cordaid

ENSURING THE PARTICIPATION OF CRISIS-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED THE PARTICIPATION OF CRISIS-AFFECTED POPULATIONS IN DECISION-MAKING INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Participation is embedded throughout the CHS. It is a basic right for people and communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

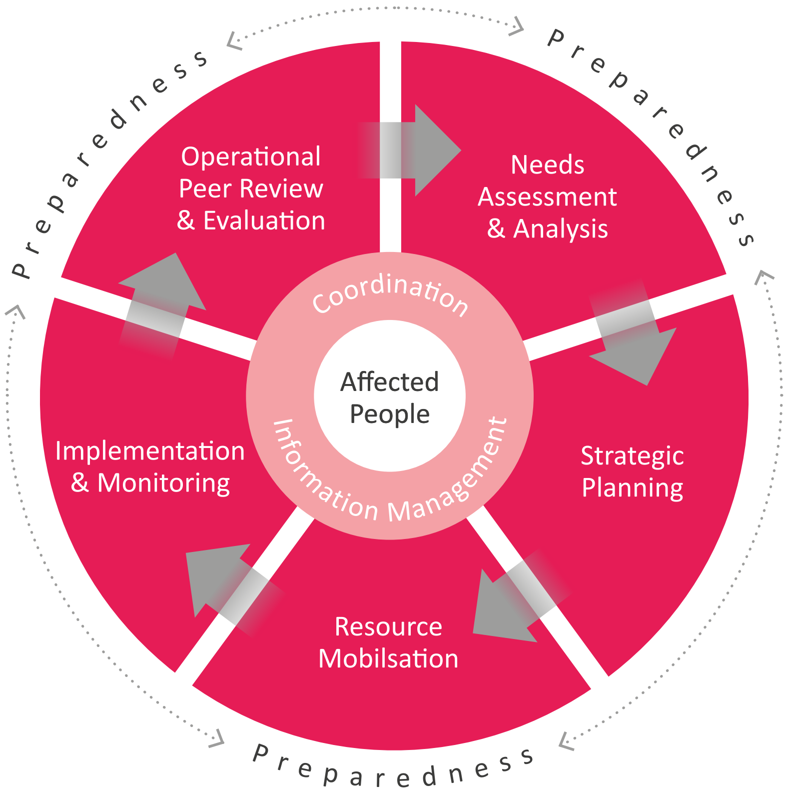
Furthermore, people and communities affected by humanitarian crises need to be involved in decision-making to help make your work relevant, timely and effective. Real participation will help your organisation, programmes and projects be better informed and more accountable to the people you are supporting and partnering with.

How do I start?

- **Early-stage engagement in sudden-onset emergencies:** In an emergency, especially during the early stages of a response, you may only be able to consult with a small number of crisis-affected people. Over time, there will be more opportunities for more people and groups to become involved in decision-making.
- **Step-by-step community involvement:** Start with *indirect community representation.* This might mean consulting with elected representatives.
- **Direct participation of the crisis-affected population:** Keep expanding your consultation to include direct participation of the crisis-affected population.
- **Mitigate risks of participation:** Assess and mitigate risks that may be present when engaging with crisis-affected people. For example, ensure you meet in a place that is safe for everyone that participates.
- **Foster continuous learning and collaboration:** As you progress in your project(s), share and discuss learning with communities, ask them what they would like you to do differently and talk through how to strengthen their role in decision-making or management. This can be achieved through building local committees that gradually take on more decision-making.
- **Address diversity and disabilities in participation:** Ensure the inclusion of people in all their diversities, including invisible differences and disabilities in these discussions.

When do I start?

Participation of crisis-affected people should start immediately and take place throughout the project cycle, from needs assessment through to the design, implementation and monitoring and project closure.



How have organisations integrated the participation of crisis-affected people in decision-making into their response?

THE UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

- United Nations body created in 1991
- Global mandate
- Focuses on humanitarian coordination

Inviting representatives of crisis-affected people to meetings

The Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)* taskforce in Northwest Syria, together with a local partner, invited the participation of a woman called Fatima (not her real name) from the affected population to attend a high-level coordination meeting. Fatima lived in an IDP camp, where she held an important position within the community. The meeting was held virtually, and Fatima was given the opportunity to speak directly to humanitarian response decision-makers. She showed them her living conditions via the video conference link and explained the problems she experienced living in the camp. For example, the tent provided was transparent at night and she had no privacy. Having indicated some of the challenges, she also suggested possible solutions that could improve her situation, as well as that of others. While organisations and response coordination structures had understood there to be issues related to camp provisions, seeing directly how someone was affected helped them better understand the immediacy of the problem and the impact of their decisions on crisis-affected people's lives. After hearing Fatima's story, a shipment of 4,000 more tents of the same inadequate quality was halted and more dignified shelters were procured.

Before the meeting, an assessment of Fatima's participation was conducted, paying particular attention to any potential risks that she may face as a result. They also briefed Fatima on what to expect from the meeting, different people's positions and why she was being invited. After gaining her consent, a request was sent to the humanitarian coordination leadership and OCHA regarding her participation and providing a rationale for her participation.

What challenges might I face?

During emergencies, it is difficult to find time to consult people affected by crisis; when your efforts are focused on saving lives, time is precious and there are looming deadlines. To make things easier, work towards forming a local committee as soon as possible, even before assistance is being provided and any proposals are made. The committee can then be ready to give their input and be involved in proposal development, project implementation and required adaptations.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Accountability to affected people and protection resources	Türkiye - Syria Multilingual Toolkit - CLEAR Global	Clear Global, 2023	Multiple languages, including Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish	https://trello.com/b/POG7oSsr/türkiye-syria-multilingual-toolkit-clear-global
Participation and engagement of the crisis-affected people	Minimum Quality Standards And Indicators For Community Engagement	UNICEF, 2020	English	https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/8401/file/19218_MinimumQuality-Report_v07_RC_002.pdf.pdf
	An Introduction To Community Engagement In WASH	Oxfam, 2019	English, French	https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/an-introduction-to-community-engagement-in-wash-620611/
	The Nine Basic Requirements: For Meaningful And Ethical Children's Participation"	Save the Children, 2021	English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Albanian, Serbian	https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/nine-basic-requirements-meaningful-and-ethical-childrens-participation/
Participation and feedback and complaints mechanisms	Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability	Red Cross Red Crescent, 2021	English, French, Spanish, Arabic	https://www.ifrc.org/document/cea-guide

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO CRISIS-AFFECTED PEOPLE

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED PROVIDING INFORMATION TO CRISIS-AFFECTED PEOPLE INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

People and communities affected by crisis need access to information to make good decisions.

Providing information also allows you be more accountable to communities and people affected by crisis. If they know what you have committed to doing, they will be better able to hold you to account. The risks of not sharing information appropriately include misunderstanding and delays. A lack of information sharing can result in inappropriate projects that waste resources, reputational risks to your organisation and doing harm rather than good.

> *"Information is a vital form of aid in itself… Disaster-affected people need information as much as water, food, medicine, or shelter. Information can save lives, livelihoods and resources."*
> **IFRC World Disasters Report**

How do I start?

- **Consult the community on their preferences:** Ask crisis-affected people how they prefer to receive information.
- **Disseminate information effectively:** Share information that is accurate, timely and easy to understand. This should include information about:
    - the types of assistance your organisation provides;
    - who is eligible to receive assistance;
    - how staff and volunteers should behave and treat people; and
    - information about feedback and complaints mechanisms and people's rights regarding protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- **Create accessible and inclusive communications:** Take into account the availability and accessibility of different means of communication, as well as the different information needs of different groups. Ask people and communities about their preferred means for receiving information. Provide information in languages spoken by the community and in formats and locations that they can access. This might include putting up posters in public spaces, showing a video in a waiting room or transmitting information at existing meeting points or through operational information channels.

- **Foster transparency:** Share financial information with communities and give them opportunities to feed back about cost-effectiveness, potential waste, fraud or exploitation and abuse.

When do I start?

Providing information to affected people should occur throughout the response project cycle. It is particularly important when staff and volunteers have direct contact with the community. This typically includes, but is not limited to, needs assessments, implementation, monitoring and project closure.

How have organisations integrated providing information to crisis-affected people into their response?

COMMUNITY WORLD SERVICE ASIA

- National non-profit organisation
- Working in Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Multi-sector focus, including emergencies, risk reduction, equality, inclusion and participation and quality and accountability
- CHS Alliance member

Using picture banners to inform the community

During an emergency, Community World Service Asia (CWSA) takes different actions to share important information. They want to make sure that the crisis-affected people know what assistance they can access, who can receive it and how to complain if something goes wrong. For example, when CWSA organises a distribution, they put up a banner at the distribution point. This tells people about the contents of the aid packages so they can make sure they received the correct items. The banner also provides information for people who do not receive a package. If someone was not selected to receive a package and they feel this is unfair, they can contact the organisation to complain. This simple action provides accurate, timely and easy-to-understand information to the people affected by the crisis.

What challenges might I face?

People affected by crises and disasters often feel they do not have access to the information they need. This is partly because information needs change during an emergency and you will need to make continuous efforts to provide the right information at the right time. Make information sharing part of your regular meeting agendas to ensure staff and volunteers have access to the most up-to-date information and can discuss the best ways to communicate with communities.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Providing information and communicating with crisis-affected population	Communication Is Aid	Free self-paced course available on Kaya humanitarian learning platform	English	https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768
	Introductory Tools And Guidance For Communication As Aid	CDAC Network, 2023	Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish	https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/tag/communication
	Collective Communication And Community Engagement In Humanitarian Action: How To Guide For Leaders And Responders	CDAC Network, 2019	Arabic, English, French, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian	https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/how-to-guide-on-collective-communication-and-community-engagement-in-humanitarian-action

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Complaints* and feedback mechanisms* enable crisis-affected people to share their views on the quality and suitability of your assistance.

Having strong complaints and feedback mechanisms are a vital part of being accountable to crisis-affected people. It allows them to share their views on the quality and suitability of your organisation's assistance and highlight any problems or concerns. These mechanisms help you monitor, learn and improve your work.

How do I start?

- **Create appropriate feedback systems:** Create systems for receiving feedback and complaints that are culturally appropriate and within your organisational capacity.
- **Ensure feedback channels are accessible and inclusive:** Systems do not have to be large or complex but they do need to be accessible, inclusive and responsive. For example, you can:
  - Provide a suggestions box – but be mindful of literacy rates, and make sure this is placed somewhere that people can access easily, discreetly and safely.
  - Schedule a group discussion – make sure different groups feel able to participate.
  - Share a phone or instant messaging number – but first check access to technology.
- **Inform people about feedback mechanisms:** Tell people and communities about the mechanisms, how they can share their feedback or make a complaint (see the providing information section above) and what they can expect in terms of your response to such feedback and complaints.
- **Prepare staff and volunteers for handling feedback:** Make sure staff and volunteers know what to do with feedback and complaints, including in relation to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH) (see the PSEAH section below). All staff and volunteers need to be trained regularly on this topic.

- **Manage the complaints and feedback mechanisms:** Continuously manage the mechanisms by having dedicated and known staff and volunteers within your organisation regularly check for feedback or complaints and respond to them appropriately in a timely way. Make sure you keep a record of each complaint or piece of feedback, so you can track them and find any recurring issues or patterns that require a different approach, such as a wider adjustment of support.
- **Continuously learn:** Act on complaints and feedback and learn from this. For example, you can use the information to make changes to activities or design new projects in partnership with crisis-affected people and communities.

When do I start?

Plan and budget for feedback and complaints mechanisms during the needs assessment and design stages of the project cycle. The main focus of these activities will be during project implementation and monitoring stages.

How have organisations integrated complaints and feedback mechanisms into their response?

Setting up a complaints and feedback mechanism

Al-Sham Humanitarian Foundation (AHF) set up three channels for feedback, suggestions and complaints at their health facility – a suggestion box, an email address, and a WhatsApp number. They also made sure their staff and volunteers understood the importance of feedback and complaints and ensured they were aware and available to receive complaints in person.

The complaints and feedback mechanisms were promoted through:

- hosting awareness-raising sessions in the hospital waiting room,
- engaging with community leaders,
- visiting the community,
- distributing brochures with email and WhatsApp information from their ambulances.

An 'open-door' policy welcoming all complaints and suggestions was adopted. Each complaint was documented and tracked by a MEAL manager. Meanwhile, the project manager was responsible for addressing and resolving each issue. They made a commitment to respond according to complaint classifications and to communicate through the same channel the community member used to contact them. All interactions were recorded in a logbook.

**PROFILE:
AL-SHAM HUMANITARIAN FOUNDATION**

National non-profit organisation founded in 2013

Working in Türkiye and Northwest Syria

Focus on health, nutrition, food security, non-food items and shelter

CHS Alliance member

Initially people were reluctant to complain, thinking it would not make a difference. However, the organisation learned that building trust is crucial in encouraging people to share their concerns. They gained trust by responding promptly and respectfully to complaints. The community increasingly felt more connected to the project, knowing their voices were heard and that they could influence change.

At first, staff felt concerned that the complaints and feedback mechanisms were a way of criticising them. But they participated in awareness-raising sessions about how the information could improve their work and saw, over time, that their commitment to addressing complaints significantly improved their organisation's reputation and the relevance, appropriateness and impact of their work. For example:

- Some female patients were uncomfortable being transported in ambulances staffed by men. After receiving a suggestion, an all-female nurse ambulance team was established to accommodate female patients.
- A person with a disability complained that they could not access the ambulances. In response, funds were allocated to make necessary changes and now six out of twenty vehicles are adapted for people with disabilities.

What challenges might I face?

People do not always feel able to make a complaint about an organisation or individual. For example, it might be culturally inappropriate, there might be barriers to complaints mechanisms or fears of repercussion. You will need to think carefully about what mechanisms you create and how they are managed.

For example, in a support centre for women in Gaziantep, the women would cook together. While they cooked, they often shared how they were feeling about aid projects. They trusted the project manager of the support centre and invited her to listen to the group. The organisation knew people rarely used formal complaints mechanisms, so they adjusted their approach to collecting feedback in this informal way that was better suited to the community.

You might also receive complaints and feedback in different languages and your organisation may not have the capacity to handle them. Many organisations are currently combining their resources to establish collective mechanisms. This way a complaint can be given to any organisation and within the collective mechanism there are appropriate staff or board members with a wider range of language skills or other knowledge that can ensure the complaints and feedback can be handled appropriately in a timely manner.

> *"I believe complaints and feedback mechanisms can serve as a platform for communities to share solutions and suggestions, helping us understand our strengths and areas for improvement."*
> **Staff member from an international organisation.**

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Participation and feedback and complaints mechanisms	Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability	IFRC, 2021	English, French, Spanish and Arabic	https://www.ifrc.org/document/cea-guide
Feedback and complaints mechanisms	Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback In Humanitarian Contexts Practitioner Guide	ALNAP CDA, 2014	English	https://www.alnap.org/help-library/closing-the-loop-effective-feedback-in-humanitarian-contexts
	Feedback Starter Kit	IFRC, 2017	English	https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/help-library/feedback-starter-kit-tool-15

PROTECTING AFFECTED PEOPLE FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT (PSEAH)

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED PSEAH INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

It is everyone's responsibility to protect people from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Working in humanitarian emergencies means direct interaction with adults and children who are in a vulnerable situation and/or at risk.

Sudden-onset emergencies and other crises change power dynamics suddenly. For example, as humanitarian actors or individuals and organisations involved in the response, you have access to goods and services that puts you in a position of power over people who may face multiple needs and are in vulnerable situations. PSEAH practices and policies help you protect people and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

How do I start?

- **Provide information and raise awareness:** Work to inform and raise awareness in communities and provide information about sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment as well as the organisation's commitment to this issue, and expected staff and volunteer behaviours in relation to PSEAH: What it is, their rights, how to report cases and what to expect once a case is reported. For example, you could use posters (see resources below) and audio messages in various languages to effectively disseminate these messages.
- **Incorporate PSEAH into the response:** Embed PSEAH into your emergency response. This should include:
    - creating a code of conduct that makes it clear what practices and behaviours are prohibited (templates are available in the resources below).
    - check the history of new staff and volunteers.
    - tell staff, volunteers and communities how to report any cases (suspected or actual).
    - plan how to manage complaints/reports in a timely, fair, appropriate and safe manner and how to further investigate cases.
- **Engage with PSEAH networks for support:** Join the PSEAH network in your area for further support, coordination and exchange of information.

- **Provide essential training for frontline workers:** Provide minimum training for all frontline workers about PSEAH. For example, short briefings during the first phase of an emergency to ensure knowledge of essential elements, then shift to in-depth sessions as soon as possible (see training resources below). Training and awareness sessions should include:
  - definition of SEAH/PSEAH and what it means with concrete examples.
  - clear explanations of the code of conduct and expected behaviours (including staff and volunteer obligations, what is absolutely prohibited and potential consequences of any acts).
  - PSEAH referral pathways*.

When do I start?

Preventive actions against SEAH cases occur throughout the response and project cycle, from the needs assessment, to implementation and monitoring. Prevention is particularly important for staff and volunteers who are in direct contact with crisis-affected people and communities.

How have organisations integrated PSEAH into their response?

Creating clear PSEAH messages at all opportunities

Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA) had many new staff responding to the earthquakes in February 2023, but felt they did not have enough PSEAH training. They decided to bring back more experienced staff - staff who were well acquainted with humanitarian principles and PSEAH obligations. They also enlisted volunteer teams on the ground and provided them with PSEAH training. This approach ensured a better response and prepared the organisation for any future deployments.

Now, before any service delivery, the SEMA team spends time sharing information with the community about their rights. They make sure they know that the service is free and explain how to report any exploitation and abuse. The team also ensures a reporting system is available and functional at distribution sites.

SYRIAN EXPATRIATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

National non-profit organisation founded in 2011

Working in Türkiye and Syria

Focus on health, nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support, protection and education

Moreover, SEMA shows videos regarding PSEAH in reception halls and their outreach teams incorporate PSEAH messages during their community visits to reach people with specific needs, including older people and people with disabilities. They use social media to share messages and increase people's exposure to important PSEAH messages.

It is vital that all staff and volunteers know that:

1. They are not allowed to have any kind of sexual relations with members of any crisis-affected population or community (even when consensual), under any circumstances.
2. They must report any cases or suspected cases they are aware of.

What challenges might I face?

It can be challenging to make sure staff and volunteers are informed and clearly understand humanitarian principles, obligations, rules and guidance, as well as your organisation's expected behaviours and systems. However, these elements are crucial and it is an obligation for all to prevent any abuse of power or misconduct. Therefore, look for opportunities to raise awareness, train or remind staff and volunteers about PSEAH, even within a short window of time.

For instance, refer to PSEAH in your briefing to staff and volunteers before they engage directly with crisis-affected people and communities. Reinforce important messages during staff meetings and use posters in staff areas. Utilise other messaging opportunities, such as instant messaging or signatures at the end of emails to embed and continuously remind.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
PSEAH communication resources	PSEA at the Frontline. Communication with highly-illustrated print, audio and multimedia formats	IASC, 2022	Available in 22 different languages, including Turkish and Arabic	https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/psea-frontline-together-we-say-no?f%5B0%5D=language_frontline%3A1051
	PSEA Task Team Posters, video links, training with messages for adults and children	OCHA, 2023	English, Turkish and Arabic	https://response.reliefweb.int/turkiye/psea-tt-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-task-team
PSEAH Training	CHS online PSEAH e-learning training	CHS Alliance	English	https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/e-learning-understanding-and-using-the-chs-pseah-index/
PEASH indictors and compliance	CHS PSEAH index		English, Arabic, French, Swahili	https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/pseah-index/
PSEAH Guide	PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook		Arabic, English, French, Japanese, Turkish	https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/pseah-implementation-quick-reference-handbook/
PSEAH, data collection and interpreting	Türkiye – Syria Earthquake Emergency Language Support And Resources	Clear Global, 2023	Multiple languages, including Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish	https://clearglobal.org/turkey-syria-language-support/
PSEAH Policy templates	Safeguarding policy templates	Bond	English	https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/safeguarding-policy-templates/
The PSEAH network in your area will also be able to support capacity building.		Join the PSEAH network in Türkiye: https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/location/europe-caucasus-and-central-asia/turkiye		

BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Resilient communities recover faster from any future disasters.

This is why supporting community resilience activities is an essential part of humanitarian efforts.

By supporting community resilience activities, you contribute to better-prepared and less vulnerable communities.

How do I start?

- **Strengthen local capacities for resilience:** Build on existing local capacities and partner with communities to improve resilience as soon as possible.
- **Support diverse local groups for resilience:** Find out what local groups are already doing to become more resilient, making sure you consider the diverse range of groups that exist, such as women's groups, older people's associations, youth groups and organisations for people with disabilities. Offer support to make resilience even stronger. Avoid establishing stand-alone resilience projects that are unsustainable.
- **Offer strategic support for lasting resilience:** Design services and provide assistance that reduce the impact of shocks, such as natural hazards, in the future.
- **Collaborate with local government and organisations:** Build partnerships that strengthen resilience, that ideally start before a crisis situation and that can continue after an emergency is over. For example, work with local authorities, existing organisations, associations and structures within communities and any dedicated disaster-preparedness structures.

When do I start?

Start identifying current capacities during your needs assessment and design stage, and do this in consultation and partnership with the community. Listen and let the community decide when is the best time to start focusing on resilience, then work together to build resilience based on their identified priorities and preferred approaches.

How have organisations integrated building community resilience into their response?

PROFILE: YAKKUM EMERGENCY UNIT

- Disaster response unit of a national non-profit organisation founded in 2001
- Working in Indonesia
- Focus on inclusive emergency response and disaster risk reduction
- In the process of undertaking a self-assessment against the CHS

Building contingency plans and evacuation routes with the community

In 2021, there was a volcano eruption in Indonesia. YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU) initially conducted emergency response activities and then worked to improve community resilience. For example, they provided training for local communities on how to respond in emergencies. This included teaching first aid, how to assess their own capacities, evacuation procedures, use of early warning systems and how to extract information from local authorities. The training took place about six months after the eruption.

Many people took part in the training, including local officials, emergency response teams, community centres, and the disaster management committee. They made sure people with disabilities and older people were included. During the training, they worked together to create contingency plans and evacuation routes. Visual aids, like posters showing evacuation routes helped people understand the information. A year later, when another eruption happened, the community was better prepared. The efforts had helped make the community stronger and more resilient when confronted with this shock.

What challenges might I face?

It can sometimes be hard to prioritise building community resilience when there are many competing and urgent needs, often with immediate life-saving implications. Work collaboratively with partners and the crisis-affected people to carefully select and prioritise community resilience activities that will help them be better prepared for future emergencies. These activities can sometimes be built into existing community engagement and partnership structures, as well as projects and outreach services. Communities are likely to already be taking action to build their resilience - it is critical to work with them.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Community Resilience	Framework For Community Resilience	IFRC, 2018	English	https://www.ifrc.org/document/ifrc-framework-community-resilience

CAPACITY SHARING AND STRENGTHENING*

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED CAPACITY SHARING AND STRENGTHENING INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Humanitarian actors and others engaging in humanitarian action need the right knowledge and skills to do their jobs effectively.

Organisations must support staff and volunteer development and help them use their knowledge and skills effectively.

During a sudden-onset emergency, like an earthquake, an organisation might urgently need more workers. But many volunteers and staff who join in these situations are new to this kind of work. It is vital to help them quickly learn the foundational principles, right skills and attitudes to be effective.

Your organisation should also look for ways to collaborate with other organisations to share and strengthen your respective capacities.

How do I start?

- **Identify capacities and areas for support:** Work with each staff member and team to understand their current capacities and what they need to learn to do their job well. You can start by asking, ‘What do they need to know and do to be effective?’ Then identify areas where they may need training or targeted support.
- **Look at different learning approaches:** Think about how to help individuals and teams meet their learning needs. For example, they could attend a training course, complete some online learning, get mentoring or peer support from a more experienced staff member, or receive technical support from a partner organisation.
- **Tap into existing platforms and networks:** Find out if working groups within the established humanitarian coordination system, such as those related to Accountability to Affected People (AAP) or Inclusion, exist and, alongside other coordination platforms and networks, such as a gender-based violence (GBV) sub-cluster working group or PSEAH network, can help to strengthen staff and volunteer capacities.
- **Collaborate for capacity strengthening and sharing:** Speak to partners - local, national and international - to understand their capacity strengthening needs and potential for capacity sharing. See if your organisation can engage in capacity sharing. For example, plan a joint distribution that uses the different strengths of each team.

- **Adopt a continuous learning approach:** Think about the best way to do capacity-strengthening activities for staff, volunteers and partners. They do not need to learn everything before they get started. It might be more effective for them to complete short learning activities (this might be training, mentoring or shadowing) on an ongoing basis while they are implementing a project so they can apply their learning in their work.

When do I start?

You will need to plan and budget for capacity sharing and strengthening during the needs assessment and design stages of the response and project cycle. The main focus for these activities will be during the planning and implementation phases. It is important to always seek further improvement and learning, with adapted approaches as staff and volunteers continue to develop their skills and the response evolves.

How have organisations integrated capacity sharing and strengthening into their response?

PROFILE: COMMUNITY WORLD SERVICE ASIA

- National non-profit organisation
- Working in Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Multi-sector focus, including emergencies, risk reduction, equality, inclusion and participation and quality and accountability
- CHS Alliance member

Strengthening the capacity of new staff and volunteers in emergency response

In 2022, during their response to the floods in Pakistan, Community World Service Asia (CWSA) had to enlist staff who were relatively new in the humanitarian sector and emergency response field. The new staff had a limited understanding of the sector and humanitarian standards, such as the CHS. Time was extremely limited, so CWSA had to focus on what staff needed to learn first. They simplified information and made it more relevant to the situation on the ground to make it easier to understand. They repeated key messages in staff meetings until everyone was aware and familiar with the CHS and the Nine Commitments, and how they could apply them in their work.

CWSA also created a short guide for staff about what the organisation does to ensure quality and accountability. The guide dealt with important topics such as monitoring and evaluation, protection, and community participation. CWSA gave this guide to staff before their orientation training so they could keep it for reference and use it while they work.

What challenges might I face?

Funding for activities like training and capacity sharing is often restricted to a specific project or topic and does not always support staff in developing relevant skills. Budget needs related to this area should be factored in immediately, and articulated if/when seeking funds. Moreover, you might need to think of other ways to help staff meet their learning needs, like peer-to-peer learning, on-the-job coaching or requesting support from other partners with specific experience and capacity.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Capacity sharing and strengthening	Guidance Note On Capacity Strengthening For Localisation	IASC, May 2020	English	https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-05/Guidance%20note%20on%20capacity%20strengthening%20May%202020.pdf
	Building An Organisational Learning And Development Framework: A Guide For Ngos	CHS Alliance	English	https://d1h79zlghft2zs.cloudfront.net/uploads/2019/07/L_and_D_Framework.pdf
	Care Emergency Toolkit, Chapter 8: "Capacity Building In Emergencies"	Care	English	https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/programme-support/8-capacity-building-in-emergencies

STAFF WELL-BEING

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE ORGANISATIONS INTEGRATED STAFF WELL-BEING INTO THEIR RESPONSE?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Humanitarian workers and those engaged in humanitarian action must be offered adequate support and treated fairly to enable them to deliver high-quality aid.

It is not possible to work effectively in a humanitarian response without a healthy working environment. That is why organisations should have processes in place to protect and promote staff well-being. Equally important is the need for workers engaged in response to support each other as colleagues.

If staff and volunteers have been affected by disaster or crisis, it is essential to recognise that there might be additional emotional and physical needs to manage any trauma experienced and prevent burnout*.

> *"Ultimately, if people are not treated well – if they are not well – then they cannot serve well"*
>
> **CHS Care And Compassion: Be Well To Serve Well, 2019**

How do I start?

- **Ensure a safe environment:** Create an environment that is safe for staff and volunteers to express emotions like grief, sadness or pain.
- **Allow staff and volunteers to choose their own support:** Staff and volunteers who are traumatised or suffer from burnout must remain in charge of decisions that affect their well-being; they should choose the support they need.
- **Prioritise duty of care:** Articulate and widely share a clear duty of care policy that includes actions to promote mental and physical well-being. Bring up duty of care issues and ways to tackle them regularly with managers.
- **Ensure PSEAH:** Maintain zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (see PSEAH chapter above for more information).
- **Lead by example:** Model self-care, openly discuss mental health and challenge inappropriate behaviour.

- **Partner for staff well-being recognition:** Ask partners and donors to acknowledge and fund staff well-being in your organisation. For example, you might request funding towards staff mental health support services in a project budget.

When do I start?

Actions to care for staff and volunteer well-being should be embedded within your organisational structure. This is important immediately after traumatic events, such as a sudden-onset emergency, just as it is important in more protracted crises. Seek out opportunities for funding as soon as possible, for example, during the proposal writing stage of a project or programme.

How have organisations integrated staff well-being into their response?

NIRENGI ASSOCIATION

- National non-profit organisation established in 2015
- Working in Türkiye
- Working in education, psychosocial support, humanitarian aid and protection
- CHS Alliance member

Setting up peer support systems

Many of Nirengi Association's staff and partners were affected by the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in Türkiye in February 2023. To address their needs and support staff well-being, Nirengi provided a two-fold psychosocial support (PSS) programme that aimed to support staff to heal and enable them to help others. Firstly, group and individual PSS sessions were conducted to help staff cope with their own earthquake trauma of loss and grief through self-help activities. Secondly, staff were provided with information about the needs of earthquake-affected children and adults, including topics such as basic disaster awareness, psychosocial support, first aid, and how to talk to children about their losses.

Staff could also access legal assistance relating to property loss from Nirengi's legal team and attend basic legal knowledge sessions that provided them with information about property loss to share with their communities.

Through these activities Nirengi established a peer-support system that enhanced trust among staff and assisted them in dealing with their own situations while supporting the community they work with.

'Supporting the supporter'

Most of the volunteers working for this particular organisation are Syrian or Iraqi refugees. All volunteers undergo thorough training and participate in a range of activities. Because they have also been affected by disaster, they receive the same services as those they deliver as volunteers. The system is referred to as 'supporting the supporter'. This means that while they are supporting the communities as volunteers, they also receive the same services they deliver.

On the one hand, volunteers receive training and practical skills, and on the other hand, they are actively involved in providing services, enabling them to support their communities effectively. Additionally, they receive a financial allowance that covers transportation and meals for each day they participate in the activities.

PROFILE:
ANONYMOUS SUBMISSION – THE PERSON WHO SHARED THIS STORY PREFERS TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

"After the earthquake, even though I am working from my car because I lost my house, I have to respond the next day. Yet the donors said they couldn't help because they didn't have it in the budget. All our staff are traumatised, they work day and night and there has been no time for rest. When we add the budget line for staff care they tell us to cancel the budget line."

Kinda Al Hourani, Syrian Expatriate Medical Association

What challenges might I face?

It is difficult to balance staff and volunteer care with responding to the needs of the crisis-affected population, especially during the first phase of an emergency. When funding for staff well-being is not available, look for opportunities for peer support or cross-organisational support, for example with local and national NGOs. As a reflection of the difficulty of getting funding to support staff well-being, some organisations increase staff salaries to more directly support staff well-being options, the salary increase is then reflected in budgets to donors and partners.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Staff well-being	Training In Staff Care And Well-being For Field Managers	Free self-paced course available on Kaya humanitarian learning platform	English, Arabic	https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=1652
	Leading Well: Aid Leader Perspectives On Staff Well-Being And Organisational Culture	CHS Alliance, 2021	English	https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/leading-well-aid-leader-perspectives-on-staff-well-being-and-organisational-culture/
	Humanitarian Burnout Video	Save the Children, 2017	Auto translate options available as closed caption	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZFnSXPF7xI

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

HOW DO I START?

WHEN DO I START?

HOW HAVE LOCAL NGOS EXPERIENCED EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS?

WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT I FACE?

RESOURCES

Collaboration is crucial for a successful emergency response.

Working with partners makes a response more comprehensive, better coordinated and coherent. These partnerships can take different forms, like contractual relationships or shared decision-making and resources.

When you work in a partnership, it is critical to have fair and equitable relationships where power is shared. This way, both parties benefit from the partnership, improve their knowledge and capabilities and the result is a higher quality and more accountable response.

How do I start?

- **Strategic partner selection:** Partnerships should be complementary. Look for partners that enhance your work, for example, because of their expertise, resources or existing presence in the affected area. These could include government entities, community-based groups, international NGOs, UN agencies or others.
- **Solidify collaborative commitments:** Have clear agreements or memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with your partners. These can be an important way to hold each other accountable and reduce power imbalances. MoUs can outline roles, responsibilities and expectations including behavioural rules (codes of conduct), as well as the scope of work, financial arrangements, reporting mechanisms and protocols for coordination and communication.
- **Effective communication:** Create effective communication channels for information sharing. This may include regular meetings, coordination forums and shared data platforms.
- **Mutual capacity sharing and strengthening:** Share and strengthen each other's capacity. This could include technical or contextual understanding and advice or project management support, so everyone becomes more effective (see chapter on capacity sharing and strengthening, above).
- **Encourage a culture of learning among all partners:** Share best practices, lessons learned and successful approaches to improve the overall response and promote innovation.
- **Accountability in partnership:** Hold each other to account in all aspects of the partnership. Share updates on progress, challenges, and outcomes to crisis-affected communities and stakeholders.

When do I start?

Fostering fair partnerships starts from the moment you engage with potential partners, and sometimes even before initial contact. This dedication continues throughout the response and programme cycle and extends beyond it, becoming an integral part of your organisation's culture for long-term collaborations.

How have local NGOs experienced equitable partnerships?

Creating flexible, trusting partnerships

Syrian Expatriate Medical Association (SEMA) experienced a mutually-beneficial and equitable partnership with an international partner organisation. Flexibility in the partnership was very important, as was trust. For example, in the middle of the grant period, two months after the February 2023 earthquake, SEMA realised that mobile clinics were no longer necessary. They asked the international partner organisation if they could redesign some activities and reallocate the remaining budget to make their support more effective and appropriate. The international partner organisation agreed to SEMA making the changes necessary to meet the needs of crisis-affected people. The mobile clinics were discontinued and funds were reallocated towards cash assistance.

Adaptations like this are often built on trust. In this case, trust was fostered through regular meetings every two weeks. The meetings between the teams focused on collective problem solving, where SEMA openly discussed challenges without feeling judged by their international partner organisation. In addition, the international partner organisation representatives knew the area of operation well, having visited Gaziantep and Syria multiple times and provided technical workshops.

**PROFILE:
SYRIAN EXPATRIATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

- National non-profit organisation founded in 2011
- Working in Türkiye and northwest Syria
- Focus on health, nutrition, MHPSS, protection and education

What challenges might I face?

Power dynamics in partnerships are not always conducive to fairness and equity. If you find that your partner is using their power unfairly, it can be difficult to hold them to account, especially if they have more resources or a strong presence in the international humanitarian sector. It is important that you use the tools available to you, for example the establishment of an MOU, to highlight any imbalance and advocate for transparency, accountability and a fairer partnership.

Resources

TOPICS	TITLE OF RESOURCE	PUBLISHER AND YEAR	LANGUAGES	LINK
Working with partners	Partnerships In Humanitarian Action	CDA, 2020	Available in 14 languages including English and Arabic	https://www.cdacollaborative.org/blog/partnerships-in-humanitarian-action/

Glossary

Accountability: the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power. (CHS)

Accountability to Affected People (AAP): refers to the commitments and mechanisms that humanitarian agencies have put in place to ensure that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives. (UNHCR Emergency Handbook)

Burnout: a syndrome from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Characterised by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy.

(World Health Organisation, 2019)

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS): sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. (CHS, p2)

Capacity sharing and strengthening: includes efforts to use and improve the existing strengths of staff and volunteers (from your own and other organisations).

Complaint: a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by an organisation's action or who believes that an organisation has failed to meet a stated commitment. (CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators p33)

Duty of care: a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety of others. It entails meeting recognised minimum standards for the well-being of crisis-affected people, and paying proper attention to their safety and the safety of staff. (CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators p33)

Feedback mechanism: a formal system established and used to allow recipients of humanitarian action (and, in some cases, other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience with a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action to improve some element of the response. Feedback can also be provided informally. (CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators p34)

Participation: "Enable communities to play an active role in the decisions that will impact their lives through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices on participation and ensure that the most marginalised and at risk are represented and have influence." IASC

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH): a term used by those working in the international humanitarian and development sector to refer to measures taken to protect people from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment by their own staff and associated personnel against communities and populations as well as within the workplace against their own staff and associated personnel (CHS PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook, 2021). Some organisations and donors also refer to PSEAH as Safeguarding.

Referral pathway: the various support and referral services available to victims/survivors of SEAH. (CHS PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook, 2021)

Zero tolerance: A zero-tolerance policy or approach means working to prevent any inappropriate behaviour, and taking immediate actions, including formal discipline, when any policy violations occur, even if they are not so serious as to be 'unlawful'. (Adapted from https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/eeo/03-07mc.pdf)

Annex 1: Methodology

This Pilot Guide was created based on interviews and discussions with organisations that work in emergency response contexts and are either members of the CHS Alliance or familiar with the CHS.

The original focus had been to collect lessons and practical guidance that could be used to support the response to the devastating Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in Türkiye in 2023, but insights and lessons included in this pilot have also come from organisations in other parts of the world, and in particular from organisations that have dealt with similar sudden-onset emergencies and have experience in shifting their focus to humanitarian action.

During the interviews, individuals shared their experiences of upholding one or more of the CHS Nine Commitments, as well as instances where they encountered significant challenges. All interviews were semi-structured and conducted in English, Turkish or Arabic.

Themes and lessons were selected to demonstrate, in brief, how organisations can uphold and apply the CHS. Once the draft pilot guide had been compiled, consultations and validation was undertaken, working with organisations and stakeholders in Gaziantep and Hatay in Türkiye in August 2023. This exercise allowed the consultants to learn and further adapt the Pilot Guide, drawing on interviews and other engagement with 32 people from 13 different organisations - 10 of which were national organisations.

This pilot guide was produced within a limited time period to ensure timely availability. Subsequent iterations are expected to provide a fuller set of practices, addressing the CHS Nine Commitments and consulting a wider range of organisations.

CHS Alliance welcomes your feedback on the content; please email info@chsalliance.org should you have questions or suggestions for content to include in future iterations.

Below is a table of the demographic reach of those who contributed to the initial interviews and data collection.

	Total
Total number of individuals consulted	**36**
Number of **women**	**20**
Number of **men**	**16**
Individuals who were working in a **national capacity**	**29**
Individuals who were working in an **international capacity**	**7**
People living with a disability who took part in consultation	**1**
National organisations involved in consultation	**17**
International organisations involved in consultation	**6**
Consultants involved in consultation	**1**