



CHS Revision Panama Regional Workshop Report



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Y COOPERACIÓN



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This report has been produced by CHS Alliance as part of the 18-month global consultation process to update the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality & Accountability (CHS). It was written by Philip Tamminga, CHS Revision Manager and Aydée Marín Pallares, CHS Steering Committee member.

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of the outcomes of a CHS Regional Revision Workshop held in Panama City, Panama on July 11-12th, with the support of the Spanish Government Agency for International Cooperation (AECID). The workshop brought together over 60 people from 14 countries representing different stakeholders and users of the CHS. The purpose of the workshop was to review and provide inputs and recommendations on an updated draft text of the CHS as part of the CHS Revision process led by the CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD. The workshop was facilitated by Philip Tamminga, CHS Revision Manager, and Aydée Marín Pallares, CHS Steering Committee member.

The workshop shows that there is wide support for the proposed draft text of the updated CHS, with participants consistently ranking the revised texts of the CHS Commitments, Key Requirements and General Requirements as very relevant. Nearly 200 suggestions were made to improve the draft text, along with many relevant recommendations on how to leverage the revision process to build greater awareness and support for the standard, making this a very participatory and inclusive consultation exercise. The results of the workshop will be used as inputs to prepare a final draft of the updated CHS for presentation and adoption by the end of 2023 - early 2024.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop were to test and validate the relevance, utility and applicability of the updated CHS as a framework for people-centred quality and accountability. Specifically, the workshop provided a space for participants to:

1. **Share experiences on accountability to affected people (AAP) and CHS in the region**
2. **Review about the revised draft Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality & Accountability (CHS) and share recommendations on how to improve it**
3. **Identify capacities and needs to increase the implementation of the updated CHS once adopted**

Organisation and agenda

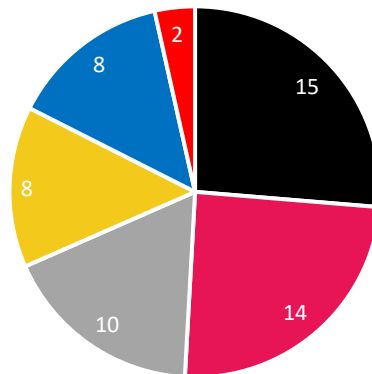
The workshop took place over 1.5 days and used a participatory approach to allow for open discussions and debate on the draft text of the updated CHS. It was also an opportunity to bring together various stakeholders to share experiences on the challenges and opportunities to strengthen and consolidate ongoing efforts to support people-centred accountability in the region.

The first day focused on discussing the main challenges and opportunities for supporting people-centred accountability in the region and the role of the CHS in facilitating this, with the morning of the second day dedicated to sharing experiences and good practices in the region supporting application of the CHS.

Registration to the event was open, with invitations sent to different organisations and networks working in the region, including individuals and organisations that had engaged and contributed to the first consultation round. Efforts were made to ensure geographic balance and a mix of different stakeholder organisations, prioritising participation of local, community-based organisations.

In total, the event gathered over 60 participants from 14 countries, with representation of all relevant stakeholder groups: community-based organisations, national and international NGOs, National Red Cross and the IFRC, UN agencies, government authorities and civil protection agencies, and donor agencies.

Organisations attending the Latin America CHS Regional Revision Workshop



■ UN ■ Government ■ INGO ■ NNGO ■ Red Cross Red Crescent ■ Independent

Accountability and the CHS in the Latin America Region

The workshop opened with welcoming remarks by Carlos Rumbo, Director General of Panama's Civil Protection Agency, SINAPROC. He highlighted the opportunity of the CHS Revision process to build greater awareness of the standard in the region. He provided examples of how the Government of Panama, along with other countries in the region working through CEPREDENAC, a regional civil protection coordination body, had already made significant progress incorporating many of the themes in the CHS in their legislation and procedures.

This was followed by a panel discussion with four representatives of different stakeholder groups discussing their perspectives on the challenges to people-centred accountability in the region and the relevance of the CHS:

- Laura Valencia - Communications Coordinator and founding member of the Global Refugee Youth Network (Ecuador).
- Ana Mencivelso - Programme Director, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia (IELCO), (Colombia).
- Rogerio Mobilia Silva - Deputy Head of Office, UN OCHA ROLAC, Panama.
- Alejandro Fuente Espeja, Responsible for Humanitarian Action projects for Latin America and Caribbean region, AECID, Spain.

Ana Mencivelso, speaking from the perspective of a small community-based organisation, highlighted the need to better integrate the work done at the community level to accompany people and communities in both emergency situations and attend to their longer-term development needs. The draft text makes this clearer, and it helps to emphasise the important role of community-based organisations in supporting the nexus, but also helps to set out some guidelines on what principled, ethical action looks like, including for faith-based organisations.

"As a faith-based organisation working directly with communities, the CHS has been useful for us to orient our work. The new draft is very simple and will be easy to understand for our congregations as it helps provide a clear ethical framework for our work."

She also mentioned the need for the CHS to allow for flexible uses and applications, particularly for smaller, community-based organisations, as well as the role of government authorities to take on the CHS as a reference framework. In this sense the updated draft texts are much more user-friendly and accessible.

"This draft is simple enough for almost anyone to understand the concepts. If it is well-known it will rebuild trust and confidence in organisations"

Laura Valencia highlighted the lack of spaces and opportunities for refugees, particularly youth and adolescents, to be engaged and involved in a meaningful way in discussions and decisions that affect them. She emphasised the leadership role that youth can take in many situations, but a lack of trust between youth and aid organisations often limits youth participation. The updated text of the CHS provides a good foundation to place renewed emphasis on people but could do more to increase visibility for participation of youth and adolescents in decision-making processes. She also highlighted the importance of creating spaces for meaningful participation of youth, in particular in efforts to strengthen preparedness capacities and providing funding and support for youth education and livelihoods:

"There is lots of talk about participation, but too often youth are not part the discussions. Our voices are not heard, and youth leaders have a lot to offer," she stated. "We need spaces for meaningful, significant participation of all different groups in decision-making."

Rogelio Silva spoke of the need for strong coordination around quality and accountability but highlighted that there are limited options to "impose" coordination in the current aid system. The aim should be to propose and convince all actors at all levels of the importance of a common framework for principled, effective and accountable action. The CHS provides a means to do this, and the new draft reaffirms the importance of local communities and actors to take on a leading role in efforts to support them in times of crisis, and to work with and through local and national coordination bodies and processes.

Better communication of the added value of the CHS could also help address politicization and polarization of aid issues by providing a common understanding of accountability from a humanitarian, people-centred perspective.

"We can't just tell people it's a good standard - it is! We need to build a convincing argument and accompany different actors to understand how it can help them," he said.

He also stressed the importance of the CHS in support of national and local authorities' roles and responsibilities around crisis prevention and response, and how the standard could become a useful reference to orient all actors to adopt better people-centred policies and practices.

"The focus on continuous learning and improvement is really important and is something we should all work on."

Speaking from the perspective of donor government, Alejandro Fuentes welcomed the draft updates to the CHS as an opportunity to consolidate work around "localisation" and the "nexus" and reinforcing the rights and dignity of people.

"The draft text is simple, clear, well-structured and very well aligned to AECID's priorities."

He highlighted that many donors like AECID have adopted strategies in line with the CHS, and in this sense, it is a useful and relevant framework to promote accountability internally with AECID as well as with partners. *"We see this a useful to frame our own work. However, some areas where the updated draft could be improved is on the triple-nexus, with greater links to peacebuilding, and strengthening support for diversity and inclusion."*

All panellists agreed that the draft text of the updated CHS uses clearer, more simple and accessible language, and is a useful, relevant tool to support greater quality and accountability for all stakeholder groups. However, some of the more significant barriers to wider take and support of the CHS are the lack of sustainable funding and capacity support for the region and the need to better disseminate the standard and demonstrate how it complements much of the existing experiences and good practices developed in the region.



Presenting the proposed draft of the updated CHS

Building on experiences and feedback of users and stakeholders

In the following session, the CHS Revision Manager, Philip Tamminga, provided an overview and rationale of the proposed changes to the current text of the CHS. This included a reminder of the overall guiding criteria for the CHS revision process, a summary of the various feedback, comments and suggestions made in the first consultation round, and the rationale for how these are reflected in the draft text. Some of the common trends in feedback from consultations held in the Latin America region were highlighted, including the need to make more specific mention of the role of government authorities in promoting standards like the CHS, the need to take a wider vision beyond emergency responses to encompass preparedness and integrated approaches to risk management, and the need to include more emphasis on respect for culture diversity alongside other forms of diversity inclusion. (A copy of the first-round stakeholder consultation analysis report can be found [here](#).)

He explained how the draft text attempted to incorporate the many different suggestions and feedback received, acknowledging that all issues may not yet be fully integrated. He reinforced the point that the purpose of the workshop was to review and validate the texts to determine if

the proposed changes are useful, relevant, and applicable for the various organisations participating in the workshop and reminded participants that their suggestions and comments would be used to help refine the standard. He also reiterated that the standard itself needs to be as concise as possible, and that some issues may require accompanying guidance and practical tools adapted to different types of organisations, crisis contexts and programmes.

Aydée Marín Pallares also shared some preliminary findings from a CHS Revision case study conducted in Colombia the week prior to the workshop. The case study team conducted interviews, meetings and focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups, were held to determine the relevance and utility of the draft text of the updated CHS in a country context like Colombia. This included three focus group sessions with community members, including a group supported by IELCO. The overall case study findings showed a high degree of support for the draft updated CHS, along with suggestions on how to improve the texts and use the CHS to support current and future accountability initiatives in the country.

Reviewing and validating the draft text

Working group sessions

In the following sessions, participants worked in small groups to review and discuss the different sections of the draft texts using the revision Guiding Criteria as a general framework:

- Criteria 1. Do the proposed changes **reaffirm and reinforce** the standard as a people-centred framework for quality and accountability?
- Criteria 2. Do the proposed changes address the **most important issues** that affect quality and accountability?
- Criteria 3. Do the proposed changes **clarify concepts, simplify language**, and make it **more accessible** for users and stakeholders?
- Criteria 4. Do the proposed changes **reinforce the measurability** of the Standard?
- Criteria 5. Do proposed changes **reinforce coherence** and **alignment** with existing quality and technical standards and good accountability practices?
- Criteria 6. Do the proposed changes have the potential to **increase adoption and use** of the Standard by a wider number of stakeholders, particularly local and national actors?

Criteria 1:

Participants expressed strong support for the draft text of the updated CHS as a coherent framework to support people-centred accountability. Participants all agreed on the added value of a common framework for quality and accountability that could be used by all relevant stakeholders to better support people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability. Many welcomed the expanded focus beyond strictly humanitarian emergency situations to include other work aimed at building capacities and resilience, preparedness and risk reduction, and saw the draft as complementary to longer-term development work. *"In the regional context, our focus has really shifted to preparedness and risk reduction, in line with Sendai. It's good that the draft text makes a stronger link to this"* said one participant.

However, several commented on the need to better articulate how the CHS is linked to rights, as expressed in the Sphere Standard, Humanitarian Charter, and many other international and national policy and legislative frameworks. Participants also highlighted the need to better explain how the CHS can and should be used by different stakeholder groups, especially public authorities and the private sector. In this regard, representatives from government civil protection agencies underlined the need to clarify that the standard does not supersede national legislation, which in many cases goes beyond the text of the CHS in terms of people's rights but can be a complementary tool that provides orientation on how to integrate people-centred accountability into national systems and processes.

Criteria 2:

There was general agreement that the draft text covers most of the key elements of people-centred accountability and addresses some of the key issues affecting accountability. Participants welcomed the sharper focus on people's rights to participate in decision-making processes, the recognition of local capacities, knowledge and resources, and the emphasis on working with and through local actors and initiatives.

Nevertheless, there are still several gaps and areas where the draft could be improved. Participants particularly highlighted the need to strengthen elements of gender, age and diversity inclusion, as well as to include more specific reference to cultural and language diversity. Stronger linkages to international disaster risk reduction and development initiatives, like the Sendai Framework, was frequently mentioned. *"The draft really needs to strengthen the elements around gender, age, diversity and recognition of different cultures and local knowledge"* according to one participant.

Criteria 3:

There was a strong sense from participants that in general the draft texts of the updated CHS are clearer, simplified and clearer and easier to understand compared to the current CHS. Participants also appreciated the fact that the draft texts have been translated and shared for comments in Spanish before final publication, which allows time to fine-tune and adjust terms that may not be translated well for the Latin America context.

Participants provided nearly 200 specific suggestions on where the text could be improved or adjusted to improve internal coherency and clarity. The most significant suggestions were around strengthening elements around diversity and inclusion, age, ethnicity and culture. Many other comments were around Commitment 1, clarifying that participation should be seen as a right for people and communities, and not an obligation or a superficial exercise for organisations to "tick the box." Instead, participation should be significant and meaningful based on people's preferred ways of working and priorities. Other comments stressed the need for participation to be adapted to the context and culture, with people's safety and security considered at all times, and go beyond planning and implementation, to co-management and co-design in all phases of work.

Another significant set of comments was around the concept of resilience and how this needs to be better linked to ongoing initiatives at the local and national level around preparedness and response capacities,

integrated risk management and risk reduction, and development. Many felt that the current text for Commitment 3 was confusing and limiting by mentioning resilience to future crisis, given the chronic vulnerabilities and risks faced by many people and communities in the region. Linkages to peacebuilding and migration were also mentioned.

Finally, while the recognition of formal and informal local leadership and processes in the draft text was welcomed, there were several suggestions to clarify that there are many new and spontaneous ways and forms for communities to exercise leadership that need to be recognised and supported, with youth and adolescents as one example.

Criteria 4:

While all participants agreed with the need to reinforce the measurability of the CHS, most of the comments were on the need to develop and integrate CHS-related indicators into programmes monitoring and evaluation processes, adapted to different contexts and users. This was seen as a gap that if addressed would help consolidate and build greater awareness and use of the CHS.

Participants also appreciated the expanded focus of Commitment 7 to more clearly link monitoring, feedback and decision-making processes to adjust and continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of actions. Participants also felt the General Requirements section was a useful addition that allowed different types of organisations to find flexible and appropriate manners to integrate the CHS into their own working processes and demonstrate this.

Criteria 5:

While the proposed texts reference and are aligned to the Humanitarian Charter, Sphere Minimum Standards and other related humanitarian standards, participants felt that this could be more explicit in the text. This is important given the much greater awareness of Sphere technical standards in the region, and the need to reinforce that the CHS is one of the foundation chapters of Sphere.

Another frequent comment was the need to strengthen references to the CHS as grounded in protecting people's rights, including the right to access assistance in times of crisis. Beyond this, participants also frequently mentioned the need to make clearer links to other important initiatives that are well embedded in the region, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as reinforcing the roles and responsibilities of government authorities. *"We need to work closely with governments, public services and civil society and aid organisations to reduce risks. The CHS is a good framework for this, but we need to recognise the importance of governments as the ultimate guarantor of quality and accountability,"* said one government representative.

Criteria 6:

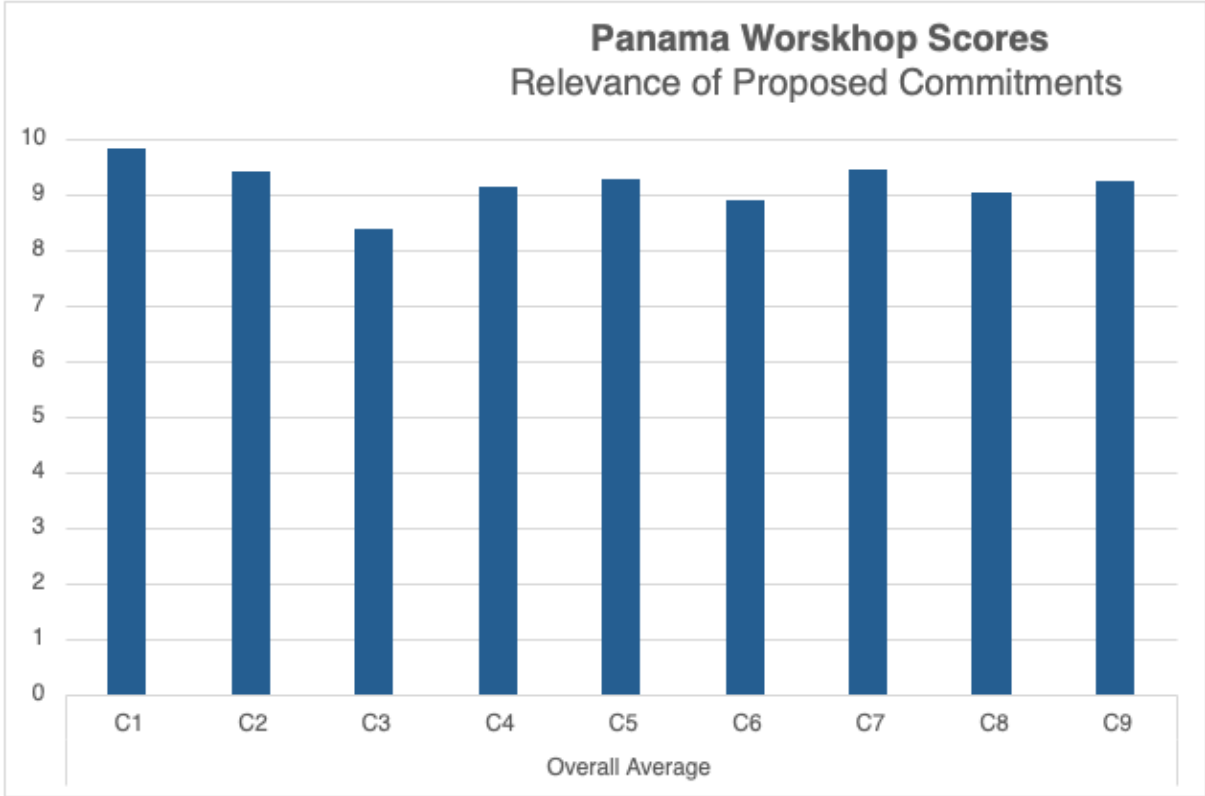
There was a clear consensus from the participants that the draft text is more accessible and user-friendly, and that the content is useful and relevant to multiple actors and stakeholders. Participants appreciated the attempt to reduce technical jargon, though there were examples of some terms that could be translated better. Several participants suggested including visual aids or diagrams to show the relationship between different standards and initiatives. One common suggestion was to reinforce the message that the CHS is relevant for all actors, and to build bridges between them: *"We need to integrate public sector, private sector, communities, and other actors under the umbrella of the CHS. If not, we won't be able to achieve complete, shared accountability in an effective and lasting manner."*

As noted above, the review exercise resulted in nearly 200 suggestions and feedback on how the text could be improved for internal consistency and coherency, as well as some phrases that are potentially confusing and could be clarified. A full of suggestions can be supplied on request from CHS Revision Manager Philip Tamminga at ptamminga@chsalliance.org.

Validation and ranking exercise

Following in-depth discussions and feedback on the texts, working groups were asked to conduct a "straw poll" exercise to validate and rank the relevance and utility of the reformulated Nine Commitments and accompanying Key Requirements, along with the organisational General Requirements that together make up the normative elements of the CHS. These were then shared and discussed in plenary, with some clear trends emerging.

The results of the straw poll exercise showed very strong support amongst all participants for the reformulated Commitments and General Requirements. Nearly all Commitments were rated 8 or higher, with none under 6. The results for the General Requirements were very similar, though there were some comments that there was overlap with some of the Commitments, and that other key elements, such as participation, could also be included here to reinforce this as a requirement.



The results of the exercise show that without exception participants felt the proposed draft was relevant and useful, with no major objections or disagreements with the text. The results confirm that the draft texts addressed many of the issues, concerns and suggestions made by stakeholders in the first consultation round. The draft text can be further fine-tuned but provides a provides a solid foundation for preparing the final draft of the updated CHS.



Scaling up application of the CHS: Examples of good practices in the region

On the final day of the workshop, participants were asked to reflect on the feasibility of integrating and applying the CHS in their ongoing work, using the Nine Commitments as a reference. Most felt that application of the CHS is realistic and achievable for most types of organisations, though some may require additional technical assistance and capacity-strengthening support to progressively apply the standard. Others noted that much of the current CHS is already being applied in their own organisations, and it therefore may be a question of being able to demonstrate this by referencing the CHS in their internal procedures to the CHS, and reporting how they meet the CHS in their ways of working.

One of the benefits of the workshop was to bring together different stakeholders from across the region to share experiences. It was evident from the discussions that there are many outstanding examples of good practices in the region, but the lack of a space or platform to share them means that opportunities to exchange knowledge and learning are limited.

Examples of good practices shared by participants ranged from:

- Adapting community engagement strategies to align better to people's available times and communication preferences.
- Using information technology to provide accessible information off-line to migrants and people on the move.
- Moving away from standardised "one-size-fits-all" distribution of personal hygiene kits to allowing people to choose for themselves what items they want from a "shop".
- Supporting gender equity approaches in risk reduction planning for agricultural cooperatives
- Using family gardens to support traditional knowledge to increase food security and promote inter-generational dialogue and social cohesion.
- Sharing and adapting experiences using community feedback mechanisms to support more responsive and accountable public health services
- Creating spaces for civil society participation in national disaster risk management planning, monitoring and learning.
- Promoting a culture and demand for accountability amongst children and youth by using suggestion boxes to "feed" their opinions on activities.

These examples are summarised in the Annex 2, but the rich experience reinforces the need - and opportunity - to create more permanent spaces for shared learning and peer support in the region around the CHS and accountability.

Conclusions and recommendations

The workshop successfully brought together a wide group of representatives from different stakeholder groups in the region to share experiences and review and validate the relevance of the proposed draft text of the updated CHS. The participatory and inclusive approach allowed for many different views and perspectives on the CHS. Plenary and working group discussions, along with a straw poll exercise confirmed that the proposed draft text is overwhelmingly considered as relevant and useful for all stakeholder groups, ranging from community-based organisations, NGOs and civil society, national authorities and civil protection agencies, international NGOs and UN agencies. Participants found the draft text to be clearer, more concise and user-friendly, and saw great potential for wider take-up and use of the updated CHS in the region.

More importantly, participants validated the text as useful, relevant and applicable for their organisations and the Latin America context. Numerous suggestions were made on how to refine and improve the text, with many revolving around better integrating culture, diversity and inclusion into the texts, making stronger references to the role of governments in supporting the use and application of the Standard, and linking the CHS more clearly to national and international standards and initiatives that work to support people and communities in situations of vulnerability and crisis.

In terms of the feasibility of applying the CHS, most of the organisations represented in the workshop felt it was possible to adopt and work towards meeting the requirements of the CHS. Indeed, many already apply many of the key elements of the CHS in their work, such as supporting locally-led actions, initiatives and leadership, fostering participation, and using feedback and monitoring to adjust and improve programmes. These range from the macro and policy level, such as national and regional integrated risks reduction strategies recognising and enabling participation and diversity inclusion, to community-level approaches promoting active and significant participation of people and communities in decisions that affect them. This confirms that despite the limited

awareness of the CHS, many key accountability concepts and practices are well-established in the region

However, much more outreach and dissemination is required in order to reach the CHS's potential as a common quality and accountability framework for the region. In line with the reformulated Commitment One, participants stressed the need to educate people and communities on the CHS and their rights to be able to take a more active role in decisions that affect them. Participants also noted the opportunity to build on existing policy frameworks and work with national and local authorities, civil society and the private sector to understand and use the CHS to support efforts to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience, as highlighted in the reformulated Commitment Three. This requires a much closer relationship between humanitarian and development actors in the region, including government actors, all working under a common framework to reinforce participation and enabling people and communities to exercise their rights.

Participants also expressed the need for more spaces for ongoing dialogue, learning and knowledge sharing on the CHS and related issues. There was a strong call to build on the clear interest and commitment from across the region to engage in the CHS revision process, and use the momentum to organise more regular opportunities to share experiences, discuss challenges, and build a community of practice on people-centred accountability. This was combined with calls for more tailor-made capacity-development support, tools and guidance, with a strongly supported caveat that traditional "trainings and workshops" model is not the most efficient or effective means to build knowledge and capacity in the region, particularly if the tools and approaches presented are from outside of the region. Participants want and expect to learn and share examples from their own experiences and that of other actors in the region.

In summary, the workshop was a unique opportunity to engage with different stakeholders across the Latin America region in the CHS Revision process. The participants



strongly supported the draft text of the updated CHS as useful and relevant, with a very high level of agreement with the proposed Commitments, Key Requirements and General Requirements. The numerous comments and suggestions made to improve the texts show the high level of interest, commitment and "ownership" of the CHS revision, and are an invaluable contribution

to the CHS Revision process. This interest needs to be supported and sustained beyond the revision process, as this group will be instrumental in efforts to share and promote the updated CHS when it is formally launched in early 2024.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are grouped into two categories:

- recommendations relating to improving the text of draft updated CHS
- recommendations relating to increasing awareness and use of the CHS in the region

Improving the proposed draft text for the updated CHS

1. Include more explicit references to culture, gender, age, diversity and inclusion

All participants strongly recommended modifying the draft text to more explicitly reference cultural, language and ethnic diversity, with many highlighting the need to align to existing international and national commitments to protect indigenous people's rights. At the same time, there were many calls to strengthen and reinforce the commitment to non-discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race and other factors, and the need for more references for respect for diversity inclusion and recognition of how different factors increase vulnerability and marginalisation of many individuals and groups in the population before, during and after a crisis (intersectionality). This needs to be reflected in the final version of the text.

2. Incorporate more emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of governments and public services in supporting and sustaining people-centred accountability

The workshop had a strong contingent of representatives from national civil protection agencies in the region. All strongly supportive of the CHS and its potential to support and align with existing national and regional efforts around integrated disaster risk management, civic participation, and other related aspects of accountability. However, many underscored that the CHS should not supercede governments' responsibilities to coordinate and provide support and assistance to people and communities in situations of crisis, but the standard can provide a useful framework to describe quality, effective and accountable support and assistance. (See also a CEPREDENAC study of awareness and alignment of the CHS in national civil protection agencies for more analysis)

These points were widely supported by all other participants, who also saw the need to reinforce and explain how the CHS relates to and complements the work of government authorities, and the importance of involving governments in efforts to enable and sustain people-centred accountability.

3. Strengthen links to existing standards and international initiatives related to reducing risks and vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience, and supporting and enhancing local knowledge and capacities (triple nexus)

Over the past twenty years, Sphere has developed an active network of focal points, trainers and supporters that have successfully promoted the Sphere Minimum Standards and related elements such as the Protection Principles, across the Latin America region. As a result, Sphere standards are now referenced and regularly used by different stakeholders in emergency responses. However, the CHS is less

well-known, including the fact that it is one of the foundation chapters of Sphere. This has been a missed opportunity to build on the wide awareness around Sphere and demonstrate the complementarity with the CHS, and use this as an entry point to promote people-centred accountability approaches advocated in the CHS.

At the same time, governments, NGOs and the UN have fully embraced emergency preparedness and risk reduction as key to improving emergency responses. The Sendai Framework and the triple nexus (humanitarian - development - peacebuilding) were consistently mentioned as a key international initiative that needs to be referenced in the updated CHS. Similar mention was made of other efforts at the national and regional level to work at reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience, particularly from the lens of leveraging cultural diversity and local knowledge. The relationship between these initiatives and how the CHS is complementary to them needs to be explained and referenced in the updated CHS.

Building greater awareness, support and use of the CHS in the region

4. The CHS custodians (CHS Alliance, Sphere, and Groupe URD) need to invest in and support the development of a regionally-specific strategy to increase awareness and strengthen capacities to apply the CHS.

The revision process itself has been an excellent opportunity to bring together multiple stakeholders to discuss and share views on the relevance and added-value of the CHS. The workshop results show there is a strong level of interest and commitment to continue to engage, promote and adopt the CHS as a common people-centred accountability framework for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding effort in the region (the triple nexus). The strong existing network of Sphere focal points in the region combined with the significant progress and interest at the national level to support government policies and procedures in line with the CHS, means the region could become a stronghold for the CHS in the future.

However, there is a high risk that the level of engagement and support will evaporate over time if there is no sustained strategy to continue to engage, promote and strengthen capacities to adopt and implement the CHS in the coming years. Workshop participants consistently highlighted the lack of attention and support to develop tools, guidelines and support that are relevant, accessible and adapted to their country and regional context and to different stakeholder groups (governments, community-based organisations, national NGOs, etc). Participants frequently highlighted their interest in finding means to regularly discuss their work.

The lack of materials and support available in Spanish from the CHS custodian organisations is a major impediment to greater take-up and use of the CHS. However, resolving this issue will not be enough to ensure sustained use of the updated CHS. It needs to be supported with a regionally-appropriate communication, capacity-strengthening and knowledge-sharing strategy and resources to capitalise on the momentum from the revision process. CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD are highly recommended to continue the dialogue with stakeholders and look for collaborative solutions to address the need and demand for support in the region.

5. A specific strategy should be developed to build on and support existing national civil protection mechanisms and regional coordination platforms to align to the CHS and related standards

This is another area that shows enormous potential to consolidate the CHS as a common framework to orient national efforts to improve the quality, effectiveness and accountability of programmes, services and assistance to people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability. As noted above, the regional civil protection coordination body for Central America, CEPREDENAC, has already conducted a scoping study on the awareness, use and alignment of the CHS to existing national civil protection policies and procedures. Active participation of government representatives in the revision workshop



demonstrates the strong commitment to continuing to engage with the CHS. Incorporating the CHS into national-level legislation, policies and procedures would help ensure that all actors - including international actors - use a common approach and framework that puts people and communities at the centre. CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD are highly recommended to work with CEPREDENAC and other partners to advance this agenda.

6. UN agencies, international NGOs and donor governments should incorporate specific measures to demonstrate alignment with the CHS in their ways of working and with local partners

The workshop also highlighted the opportunity to collaborate with UN agencies, INGOs and donor governments to support and promote the CHS in their own work and with partners. Many different examples were provided on how these actors are embracing people-centred approaches in their ways of working, but these efforts could be more explicitly linked to the CHS, and promoted more widely in other programmes and partnership arrangements in the region.

Given the current lack of capacity of the CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD to support capacity-strengthening in the region and in Spanish, it would make sense to draw on UN and other international actors to step-up their support in the region. This could be through, for example, mobilising and sharing resources to support peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing, or a coherent capacity-strengthening strategy aligned to the CHS to support national and local partners capacities to adopt people-centred accountability approaches.

7. Invest in creating and sustaining a CHS and accountability knowledge repository, community of practice and spaces for knowledge-sharing and debate in the region

The final recommendation is directly linked to requests from workshop participants to create more regular opportunities to share and access experiences, learning and knowledge around the CHS and wider accountability issues in the region. It is clear from the workshop discussions that there is a wealth of existing knowledge and experience in the region that has not been documented or disseminated. Much of this is very closely aligned to the CHS's Nine Commitments. Making this more explicit and accessible would help demonstrate that the CHS is relevant, feasible and useful for different contexts, programmes and stakeholders, and act as an incentive to increase awareness and use of the CHS by more actors. More importantly, it would reinforce shared ownership of the CHS in the region, and provide an opportunity to share good practices and learning to other regions. Many participants noted their frustration that the views, experiences and perspectives from the region are not well-represented or reflected in wider debates around accountability in the aid sector. Work to consolidate and disseminate learning in the region might be one way to address this.



Annex 1: Participant list

Name	Surname	Job role	Organisation	Country
Abner Abdel	Laitano Aguilar	Director	Asociación Legión Honduras	Honduras
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Alejandro	Fuente	Responsable, Acción Humanitaria para America Latina y El Caribe	AECID - Cooperación Española	Panamá
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Annex 2: Examples of good practices

Examples of good practices shared by participants included:

- The Panama Red Cross takes time to understand the preferences of communities in order to better plan the most appropriate times and channels for engagement with communities. It also uses interactive dashboards to see where other organisations are working and implementing programmes and ensure better complementarity and coordination. The philosophy is integration of accountability at all levels: in the community, and within the organisation, as a shared tasks for everyone.
- The World Food Programme in Ecuador has used data on mobile phone coverage to understand the communication preferences of populations on the move and develop overlapping networks and channels to reach them with information, such as WhatsApp, to share information and videos, receive comments and feedback, and maintain a dialogue with them.
- In Venezuela, an inter-generational family garden project can help improve both nutritional health of participants, but also strengthen family ties and community dialogue, leading to greater inclusion and engagement of elder people and youth. It also helps to reinforce traditional knowledge to find solutions to community problems, such as using traditional crops, low-cost preservation of food and other forgotten "innovations."
- The IFRC Community Engagement Hub is an open-access platform with resources, tools and guidelines on how to incorporate community engagement and accountability into programmes. The experiences are mainly from the Red Cross Red Crescent but can be equally applied by other organisations working at the community level.
- UNHRC has several organisational processes that support learning and continuous improvements. There is a multi-disciplinary team that works across several different programme units, providing a broader perspective to analyse problems and find solutions to feedback, suggestions or complaints received. This is not limited to protection and safeguarding but is used across different programmes.
- The National Emergency Commission uses a monitoring and follow-up system for actions implemented in collaboration with civil society organisations as part of the National Integrated Risk Management Plan. However, it is important to note that while civil society organisations are convened to meetings, at times, participation is limited, with interested individuals participating in a personal capacity, not as organisational representatives. This limits the impact of the work. Sharing and disseminating the CHS more widely amongst the public and civil society would be a good way to show the importance of civic participation in quality and accountability initiatives.
- In Bolivia, Oxfam has developed internal protocols around people-centred feedback and response mechanisms that are not only used in programmes, but internally as well. The example is being shared with the Ministry of Health to adapt to health services.
- In the Darién border region between Panama and Colombia, IOM works with a mixed migrant group providing safe, child-friendly spaces for support and assistance at support centres. One accountability tool used is a "mailbox for feelings" that allows people to express their feelings and experiences safely about the learning materials and support provided, the treatment received by staff, or other observations. The information is collected in different formats, including regular opinion surveys, and analysed using Kobo, and is used to review and improve services for the next intake of migrants. As an example, one consistently repeated feedback was that there the scheduled times for in-person support were too limited, which allowed the project to adjust to add two additional shifts per week and one on the weekends. Other examples include holding monthly meetings with host communities to share updates and learning or using murals and other visual aids to provide information in accessible formats to migrants.



- Another example from IOM is around standard kits (NFIs). Through ongoing dialogue with communities and feedback received, the consistent message was "stop giving me things I don't need." For example, personal hygiene kits were often delivered in temporary shelters, but these are groups of people that are often leaving as soon as possible. It was well known that these kits were not used, leading to them being thrown away, sold or gifted to others, creating a whole market around this. Now, IOM offers people the opportunity to select for themselves what they really want in line with their priority needs and preferences or interests. This has generated a whole new set of internal adaptation to our administrative systems which has not been easy. But the result is we are now able to set up "stores" alongside migration routes and temporary shelters where people can enter with a sense of dignity and decide what items they want to take with them.
- This model is also in place for cooking kits. This was another complicated challenge for the organisation. Previously, it required rental of storage spaces, contracting transportation, security, etc. Now, there are agreements in place with commercial vendors where people can use vouchers to select what they want and needs. This is coordinated with WFP to complement that food security needs are also covered.
- The lesson learned is that previously, by delivering goods and materials that were not needed, assistance was not efficient or effective, and in fact, created risks for people carrying large suitcases or bags as targets for robbery. Now, people have a choice, restoring their dignity and making assistance more relevant and appropriate for the context and their own priorities and needs.

