**STUDY REPORT**

**MAY 2023**

# CHS REVISION

# RESULTS OF ROUND ONE OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



© B. Dolo, community consultation in Touna village, Segou region, Mali (December 2022)

CHSAlliance

Groupe URD
Urgence . Réhabilitation . Développement

Sphere

### Groupe URD

Founded in 1993, Groupe URD is an independent think tank that specialises in analysing practices and developing policies for the humanitarian sector. Its multi-disciplinary expertise, based on continual field visits to crisis and post-crisis contexts, provides Groupe URD with insight into the functioning of the sector as a whole. Groupe URD believes in sharing knowledge and collective learning, helping aid actors to improve the quality of their programmes through evaluations, research, training, and strategic and quality support. Groupe URD has developed the Quality & Accountability COMPASS, which provides guidelines, processes, and tools to help implement the CHS in organisations and programmes. The data analysis and the production of this report was coordinated by Groupe URD.

### CHS ALLIANCE

CHS Alliance is a global alliance of over 150 humanitarian and development organisations committed to making aid work better for people. It supports its members and the wider aid community to promote and implement the CHS through their policies, processes, and programmes. It also supports monitoring and reporting how the CHS is being used by organisations and across the aid sector, including publishing the biennial Humanitarian Accountability Report, and manages the CHS verification scheme that is used to support self-assessments and external verification of how the CHS is applied.

### SPHERE

Sphere brings together a wide range of humanitarian agencies with the aim of improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. The Sphere Handbook is based on a set of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response. The Core Humanitarian Standard is one of the three foundational chapters of the handbook, informing and supporting the technical standards, together with the Humanitarian Charter and the Protection Principles. Furthermore, Sphere hosts and manages the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP); a group of humanitarian standard initiatives covering a wide range of programming sectors and themes. All HSP standards share common foundations, including the CHS.

# SUMMARY

## ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| AAP | Accountability to Affected Populations |
| ALNAP | Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisations |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisations |
| CHS | Core Humanitarian Standard |
| C4C | Charter For Change |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| HAP | Humanitarian Accountability Partnership |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| INEE | Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| ISO | International Standard Organisation |
| M&E | Monitoring & Evaluation |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PSEAH | Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment |
| SOHS | State of the Humanitarian System |
| UN | United Nations |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its launch in 2014, the Core Humanitarian Standard has been used by hundreds of organisations in many different contexts and is now recognised as one of the major standards in the international aid sector. After 7 years of extensive use, the Core Humanitarian Standard needs to be updated to adapt to the way the sector and the general environment have evolved. The revision process is based on lessons from users and contributions from various stakeholders concerned with the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. It was initiated by the three copyright holders in 2022, with the following objectives:

- Improve the clarity and purpose of the Standard as a quality and accountability framework;
- Address gaps, duplications, and issues raised via stakeholder feedback, and integrate lessons and emerging good practices into the Standard;
- Increase awareness, accessibility and use of the Standard by users, stakeholders, and other interested parties, including vulnerable, at-risk, and crisis-affected people and communities.

A 1st round of consultations was organised from May to December 2022. This report presents the results of this 1st stage of the revision process. A 2nd round of consultations will take place from May to September 2023, with the objective of launching the updated Standard in December 2023.

**3 385 individuals from more than 80 countries contributed to the 1st round of consultations**

The largest group of stakeholders who were consulted were primary users of the CHS: aid organisations & professionals. These represented approximately 79% of the total number of individuals who took part in the consultation process. The 2nd largest group was vulnerable, at-risk, and crisis-affected people and communities, who represented approximately 16% of the people involved. And the third largest category of stakeholders consulted was local authorities. Of these, 69% were in Asia, 22% were in West Africa, 8% were in Latin America, and 1% were in North America.

**Close to unanimous support from current users for the CHS as a framework for improving quality and accountability in the aid sector.**

A very large majority of the feedback received about the content of the CHS and particularly the 9 commitments was positive. Stakeholders feel that it is a good description of what people want and expect in terms of accountability in crisis situations.

The 1st round of consultations allowed us to gather information about the different ways the CHS is used to increase accountability to people in situations of crisis and vulnerability. For example, it is used to support strategies and policies, programme planning, monitoring, evaluations, the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment and to support due diligence processes.

Although they were mostly positive about the CHS and its core content, users and other contributors also shared some difficulties and concerns, and proposed ways to improve it and increase its relevance and use. The feedback presented in this report is organised by commitment and by cross-cutting theme. Among the most frequently mentioned cross-cutting themes are environment and climate change, localisation, partnerships, Nexus, power dynamics, community engagement, and global coherence with other standards in the sector. Detailed feedback related to these themes is presented in the cross-cutting section of the report. Each feedback has been weighted for each chapter to present a fair analysis of the feedback received (see the chapter on methodology for further details).

**Commitment 1: Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs**

| | |
|---|---|
| What needs to remain | Meeting people's needs is the core objective of any humanitarian or development action, and it needs to be reaffirmed and strengthened in the Standard |
| What needs to be updated | The needs of each different group can only be met if the context is thoroughly analysed and understood by stakeholders, and local actors provide support to ensure the action is timely and adapted to the context |

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

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|---|---|
| What needs to remain | Timeliness is an essential component to appropriately meet people's priority needs in all settings (emergency, preparedness or development) as they change over time, and to strengthen the triple nexus (humanitarian, development and peacebuilding). |
| What needs to be updated | The timeliness of a project needs to be combined with meeting needs. Local actors and community engagement should be given a more prominent role in order to foster locally led emergency responses, emergency preparedness, and adaptation. |

**Commitment 3: Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient, and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian response**

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|---|---|
| What needs to remain | The notions of resilience and capacity building are needed to ensure and reinforce better preparedness of communities and local actors |
| What needs to be updated | "Do no harm" and resilience are both essential concepts but need to be separated into two different commitments. Local leadership and capacities should be emphasised more. |

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

| | |
|---|---|
| What needs to remain | Acknowledging and clearly stating in a commitment that affected people have rights and should be able to take part in project-related decisions is essential and needs to be strengthened. |
| What needs to be updated | strengthen the role of communities, affected people and local stakeholders, giving them an active voice in the process and expecting organizations to demonstrate mutual accountability and transparency. |

**Commitment 5: Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints**

| | |
|---|---|
| What needs to remain | Having clear, effective processes to receive and handle issues, grievances or complaints is extremely important. This should be emphasised more strongly throughout the Standard and should be required for each phase of humanitarian or development actions. |

**7**

| What needs to be updated | This commitment could possibly merged with Commitment 4. Also, greater care should be taken with existing mechanisms, approaches and terms that are culturally and contextually inappropriate, to better communicate those mechanisms to the communities. |
|---|---|

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

| What needs to remain | Coordinated, complementary assistance is essential to avoid duplication and to ensure that all stakeholders participate fully, respect each other's mandates and share information with their partners to achieve better results. |
|---|---|
| What needs to be updated | Coordination should be strengthened at each level of a project by including communities and local actors, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and jointly planning, improving and adjusting actions. |

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

| What needs to remain | Learning processes need to be strengthened as part of a quality assurance approach in order to improve assistance and increase accountability to different actors. |
|---|---|
| What needs to be updated | Local feedback, knowledge, experience and concerns need to be taken into consideration to improve assistance and learning processes. |

## Commitment 8: Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers

| What needs to remain | Having competent and well-managed staff is essential to meet affected people's needs and their expectations about the aid they should receive. |
|---|---|
| What needs to be updated | Staff need to be empowered, trained, considered, and listened to from the onboarding phase, and their safety and well-being ensured while promoting a wider culture of accountability. |

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

| What needs to remain | The effective management of resources (financial, natural, etc.) is essential to ensure that aid is efficiently and ethically delivered and to establish a relationship of trust with communities and people affected by crisis. |
|---|---|
| What needs to be updated | Fraud and corruption need to be addressed by means of greater transparency, mutual accountability, audits, and communication to ensure trust and respect between stakeholders. The environment could also be emphasised more strongly in this commitment. |

# INTRODUCTION

The Core Humanitarian Standard was established in 2014, following an extensive consultation process that involved people and communities affected by crisis, aid workers and experts, national and international aid organisations and networks, and governments. The development process was consistent with international good practices for standards development, as set out by the International Standard Organisation (ISO). This included an open, transparent, participatory process with stakeholders and interested parties to achieve a consensus on the most relevant, effective and coherent set of commitments and actions to improve quality and accountability for people in situations of vulnerability or crisis.

Since its launch in 2014, the CHS has become a key reference in the aid sector. Hundreds of organisations use the CHS to guide and orient their work with growing evidence that it has driven improvements for those organisations that consistently apply it as part of their work.[1] The CHS has also shaped and influenced global efforts to strengthen and improve quality and accountability in the sector.

In line with international good practices, standards need to be reviewed regularly to adapt to a changing environment, drawing on learning and new developments and innovations. The CHS is no exception. The global context has changed significantly since the Standard was created. The climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, protection, and safeguarding concerns, and growing awareness of unequal power dynamics in the aid sector all need to be considered as part of the revision process to ensure the Standard is aligned with current issues and new developments.

The policy environment has also changed. Several important initiatives have emerged that build on and contribute to the aims and objectives of the CHS. Examples include efforts to strengthen safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector, promote greater localisation and participation in the design and implementation of aid programs, and updated technical standards and guidance covering different programming areas.

For the CHS to reach its full potential, users and stakeholders need to take stock of the lessons learned over the past 7 years, reaffirm the core commitments of accountability to people and communities, and identify and integrate the changes needed to improve accessibility and use of the Standard. Accordingly, in May 2022, the three copyright holders of the Standard, CHS Alliance, Sphere, and Groupe URD, launched an 18-month consultation process to update and improve the Standard, which was eventually concluded in December 2022.  The present report sheds light on the results of this first phase of the revision process.

# 1.   CHS REVISION PROCESS

## 1.1   REVISION OBJECTIVES

The CHS revision process does not aim to replace the existing Standard but to update and improve it. This means building on what works well and adjusting the existing content and presentation to incorporate new developments and good practices.

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[1] *See for example: Humanitarian Accountability Report, Quality Compass, reports from Ground Truth Solutions, SOHS…*

The objectives of the revision process are to:

- Improve the clarity and purpose of the Standard as a quality and accountability framework;
- Address important gaps, duplications, and issues based on stakeholders' views and feedback, and integrate learning and emerging good practices into the content of the Standard;
- Increase awareness and enhance accessibility and use of the Standard by users, stakeholders, and other interested parties, including for vulnerable, at-risk, and crisis-affected people and communities.

The outcomes of the revision will ensure that the Standard continues to serve as a global quality and accountability standard grounded in local realities, which can be used to drive better quality, more effective and accountable programmes and organisations, and more equitable relationships between vulnerable people and communities, and local, national, and international actors.

## 1.2     REVISION SCOPE

The revision focuses on the current text of the Core Humanitarian Standard to identify and achieve consensus on the key changes necessary to strengthen and improve the Standard. This includes reviewing:

- **Purpose**: reaffirming its relevance and value as a core people-centered accountability framework;
- **Content**: reviewing the organisation and content of the CHS (Commitments, Quality Criteria Key Actions, and Organisational Responsibilities) to identify areas for improvement;
- **Presentation and Language**: Simplifying the language, increasing clarity and accessibility for different stakeholders and users.

As part of the initial consultation process, stakeholders provided many comments and proposals that are outside of the scope of this revision. These have been recorded and will be used to feed into the development of supporting documents and guidance at a later stage based on the content of the updated Standard.

## 1.3     REVISION TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

**May – December 2022: Round One of the consultation**

The revision process is made up of several phases. This first phase of the process consisted of a broad consultation process (called Round One of the consultation) which lasted for 8 months from May to December 2022. This consultation provided individuals, organisations, networks, and decision-makers with an opportunity to share inputs and views on the current text of the Standard. The results of the consultation are presented in this report.

**January - April 2023: Draft 1 of the updated Standard**

The results of the first consultation round will be used as a basis to draft the updated Standard, which will also build on data and feedback gathered since 2014 through various channels (e.g. CHS self-assessment, verification and certification processes). Draft 1 of the updated Standard will be presented in early May 2023.

**May – September 2023: Round Two of the consultation**

A second consultation round will take place from May to September 2023 to engage again with users and stakeholders and share the analysis from the previous phase and the proposed changes to the Standard. This will help to further finetune the Standard. Round Two will be used to systematically collect feedback

on Draft 1 of the updated Standard to assess the level of agreement with the proposed changes and identify issues that require further consideration. As in the first feedback round, several tools and events are planned to allow stakeholders in various regions of the world to contribute to the process. These include country case studies, regional consultations, webinars and surveys. Further information will be provided on the CHS website upon confirmation.

**October – December 2023: Final draft of the updated Standard**

Following Round Two of the consultation, the data collected will undergo another round of analysis, this time focusing on the degree of consensus on the proposed draft of the updated Standard. An analysis report will be written and will inform the final draft of the updated Standard. The final draft of the Standard will be validated by the CHS Management Group and the CHS Steering Committee[2].

**December 2023: Launch of the updated Standard**

# 1.4    STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

In line with ISO guidelines[3], the revision process has been based on broad stakeholder engagement with the aim of reaching as many different stakeholders as possible. However, in line with the CHS's main purpose as a people-centred quality and accountability framework, the views and perspectives of vulnerable people and communities, local and national actors, and current users of the Standard will be prioritised throughout the different consultation phases of the process.

The revision process is also a good opportunity to raise awareness of the CHS and seek greater coherence and alignment with other accountability initiatives in the humanitarian and development sectors. The process will therefore reach out to other stakeholders and potential users who are not yet familiar with the Standard to discuss the current Standard and identify how an updated Standard could support overall efforts to improve people-centred approaches to quality and accountability.

The following key stakeholder groups have been identified:

a. Vulnerable, at-risk, and crisis-affected people and communities;
b. Community-based organisations and local civil society actors;
c. National emergency coordination and civil protection bodies;
d. Aid organisations (national, international, and networks) and aid professionals;
e. Multi-lateral organisations and coordination bodies;
f. Government donors and funding bodies;
g. Non-traditional humanitarian actors, development actors, and other global accountability initiatives;
h. Research and learning institutes and networks supporting the humanitarian and development sectors.

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[2] *See the presentation of each entity on the following page: https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/about-us*
[3] *https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100440.pdf*

# 2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ROUND ONE OF THE CONSULTATION

## 2.1 KEY QUESTIONS

Round One of the consultation focused on gathering input from users and stakeholders on the current text of the Standard. Prior to the data collection, several key questions were defined by the CHS Revision Team and Management Group. These were the basis of the overall methodology, and were used to design tools and implement the consultation activities.

The key questions were:

- Does the current set of Commitments describe the essential or most important elements of quality and accountability from the perspective of what people affected by crisis want and can expect from organisations that aim to support them? Are there any gaps, duplications or areas that need to be strengthened? What are they, and how should these be addressed?
- Does the current set of Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities describe the essential or most important elements needed for organisations to meet these accountability commitments? Are there any gaps, duplications or areas that need to be strengthened? What are they, and how should these be addressed?
- Are there any other cross-cutting issues, gaps, duplications or established good practices that need to be considered as part of the revision? What are they, and how should these be addressed?

## 2.2 DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Due to the variety of different categories of CHS users and stakeholders, the revision process included a variety of methods to ensure that they would all have the opportunity to engage with the process. D Data collection and analysis was carried out with the informed consent of the participants and the procedures involved were in keeping with GDPR requirements and complied with the data protection and privacy policies of the CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD.

**Primary data collection**

Below is the list of tools that were developed and provided for Round One of the consultation:

- An online platform to register comments on the text of the CHS;
- An open online CHS General Survey targeting aid organisations and aid workers;

- Supplementary questions in the CHS Self-Assessment Staff Survey targeting staff in organisations undergoing a CHS Self-Assessment exercise.[4]
- Community key informant interview questions used as part of CHS Self-Assessment exercises in certain organisations;
- Community focus group discussion guidelines for organisations to use with communities they work with;
- Feedback forms to collect views from aid workers, organisations, and partners;
- Open webinars and events to collect input from stakeholders and thematic experts;
- Key informant interviews with leading aid experts, donor representatives and national government authorities.

In addition, the Revision Team welcomed and received other direct feedback through other channels such as emails. All the input received was recorded in a database so that it could be processed and incorporated into the data analysis at a later stage.

**Secondary data collection**

Throughout the consultation process, the Revision Team establisheda list of relevant secondary sources to support the process (e.g. *State of the Humanitarian System 2022* by ALNAP[5], *Humanitarian Accountability Report 2022* by CHS Alliance[6], *Listening is not enough* by Ground Truth Solutions[7], *Charter 4 Change[8], Pledge for Change*[9], *100,000 Perceptions of Risk[10]* by the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction…). These sources, which included reports, studies, articles, webinars and podcasts, were used during the data analysis and writing stages to ensure that the updated Standard would build upon existing knowledge. They were also used to triangulate and confirm trends and conclusions from the stakeholder consultation, and to make sure the Standard adopted the most widely accepted terminology and definitions

## 2.3 METHODOLOGY FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

**1st step: data coding**

A large number of documents containing the views of individuals and organisations was collected and recorded as part of Round One of the consultation. These included feedback forms, reports, emails, pictures from workshops, screenshots from online events, questionnaires results, etc.

The first stage of the data analysis consisted in coding all data, based on a predefined coding system that was discussed and agreed upon with the Revision Team. This system was organised around the current structure and text of the CHS which stakeholders were invited to comment on, and incorporated additional cross-cutting themes such as partnership, environment and climate change, power dynamics, diversity, and inclusion… The coding of the data resulted in the identification of more than **4000 unique segments**, which correspond to distinct extracts from documents on specific topics and themes.

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[4] *In contrast to the General Survey, participation in the staff survey is a purposeful sample of staff, including local and international staff working at headquarters and in country programmes,.*
[5] *ALNAP (2022) The State of the Humanitarian System. ALNAP Study*
[6] *Humanitarian Accountability Report, CHS Alliance, Geneva (2022)*
[7] *Ground Truth Solutions, Global analysis report, Listening is not enough, November 2022*
[8] *Charter for Change – Localisation of Humanitarian Aid (charter4change.org)*
[9] *Pledge for Change (pledgeforchange2030.org)*
[10] *100,000 Perceptions of Risk, Views from the Frontline 2019, Global Recommendations Report, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction*

**2nd step: consolidating key findings**

Once segments were individually coded, a second step was necessary to **group and consolidate key findings** based on the feedback received. To proceed with this exercise for each theme, segments were processed again and grouped by key ideas. Feedback on each theme was then summarised to determine a limited number of key findings that could ultimately facilitate the analysis of the consultation and feed into the drafting process of the updated Standard.

**3rd step: weighting of key findings**

The methodology used to weight key findings assumed that each segment or feedback had the same value, regardless of the stakeholders who formulated it or the type of consultation in which it was shared.

For the purposes of this analysis, a segment was considered to be a unique occurrence in a document. This methodology does not consider the number of individuals or organisations that shared the same point of view. However, if the same element was expressed several times in a single document (several occurrences), then it was coded multiple times, thus reinforcing its weight.

As a result, the methodology for weighting the key findings is based on the **recurrence of an idea across all coded segments on a single theme.** This recurrence was expressed as a percentage of the total number of segments coded for a single theme. For all the themes, the highest value was 49% (which means that almost half of all the segments expressed the same idea on a specific theme) and the lowest was 1% (only a few segments expressed the idea). This large spectrum of results shows that most feedback was considered and valued, and therefore that the process was transparent It is important to emphasise that the key findings of this report are a faithful presentation of what was heard during the consultation phase. The conflicting and complementary segments are equally represented and valued, and do not represent the views of the authors.

Based on these percentages, a 4-level scale was established to weight each key finding based on the number of times it was repeated, as presented below:

> **Level 1**: the key finding was found **very frequently**

> **Level 2:** the key finding was found **frequently**

> **Level 3:** key finding was found **often**

> **Level 4:** rthe key finding was found a **limited number of times**

This methodology was consistently applied throughout the report. As a result, key findings for each commitment and the cross-cutting themes are presented by order of importance according to this weighting methodology.

While this approach has limitations (see the section below), the Revision Team reviewed the data and found that the overall number and weighting of segments was largely consistent with a more detailed analysis of the data and consistent across all stakeholder groups and regions. It therefore was considered to be robust enough to guide and inform the drafting process.

## 2.4  LIMITATIONS

As with any global consultation process, one of the main challenges is to ensure that different stakeholder groups are involved, that they have equitable opportunities to participate and share feedback, and that their views are represented fairly and accurately in the data analysis process. Several feedback channels were therefore developed to maximise the opportunities for participation in Round One. However, there were a number of limitations.

- Some of the tools that were developed, such as the individual and organisational feedback forms and the online platform, **were not used to the extent anticipated,** based on previous standard revision processes.[11]  Others, like the CHS General Survey, were not launched in a timely manner due to design delays and potential overlap with other survey questionnaires in the sector, which may have limited the number of responses. To mitigate this aspect, Revision Managers and copyright holders engaged directly with various stakeholders through Key Informant Interviews to ensure that most categories identified would be represented.
- **Webinars and online events** were one of the most effective means of generating stakeholder feedback and input, which can be seen from the large number of participants (see chapter 3.1 for further details). However, these events make it difficult to collect certain kinds of information (e.g. gender, type of organisation, positions, experience in the sector…) and to effectively evaluate the level of engagement of participants in the process. To mitigate this last aspect, participants were counted only if they attended at least 10% of the event.
- **Background information was not collected** in most online events, which made it impossible to have an exhaustive statistical analysis of all the stakeholders who engaged in the consultation process. The figures reported in this document only represent those that could be registered and verified. In some cases, the author may give estimates on the basis of available data, with the mention of a point of attention.
- The **feedback period** lasted 8 months (from May to December 2022), which allowed a very large amount of input to be collected. However, it took some time for most stakeholders to actually engage with the process. As a result, a lot of information was received in the last months of the process, which further delayed the data consolidation and analysis.
- The **level of engagement of stakeholders** mostly depended on their respective level of interest, availability and willingness to organise events with their teams and partners to collect data and inform the process. In the end, the final result was very positive, with many organisations taking the lead on organising large events and thus supporting the consultation. This was initially anticipated as a risk, but turned out to be a strength which gives the consultation more legitimacy.
- Most **feedback was quite generic**, with fewer specific suggestions on what needs to be improved or changed in the Standard. In part, this could be because the research questions for the first round were quite open, but much more detailed feedback had been expected on the Standard, especially considering it has been in use for 7 years now. Another explanation could be that the Standard itself is an "umbrella" covering many inter-related topics relating to quality and accountability and is aimed towards a general audience, in contrast to technical standards targeting specialists in different programming areas.
- Although limited, there is a risk that some individuals engaged in the consultation process more than once through various channels. Considering that personal information was often not collected, it was not possible to cross-check attendance lists from different events. Therefore,

there could be a **risk that some people were counted twice** but this is a very limited risk given the wide diversity of actors targeted and the various channels used for the consultation. .

The lessons learned from Round One will help to ensure that stakeholder consultation and data collection in Round Two will be better designed and implemented. This includes survey design, reporting templates and consultation methods. In addition, data collection and analysis in Round Two will focus on determining the level of consensus and agreement on a proposed draft of the updated Standard, in contrast to the more open-ended focus of the consultation in Round One. This should greatly facilitate data collection and analysis as the scope will be more narrowly focused on assessing the degree of acceptance and consensus on any proposed changes to the Standard.

# 3.  GENERAL RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

## 3.1   STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The consultation process managed to reach a significantly large number of stakeholders through various channels. In total, at least **3 385 individuals** had the opportunity to engage in the consultation process and participated in at least one event. The figures below show the number of participants by category of stakeholder and the proportion of participants per type of consultation. The detailed list of stakeholders' interactions is presented in Annexe 1 of the present report.
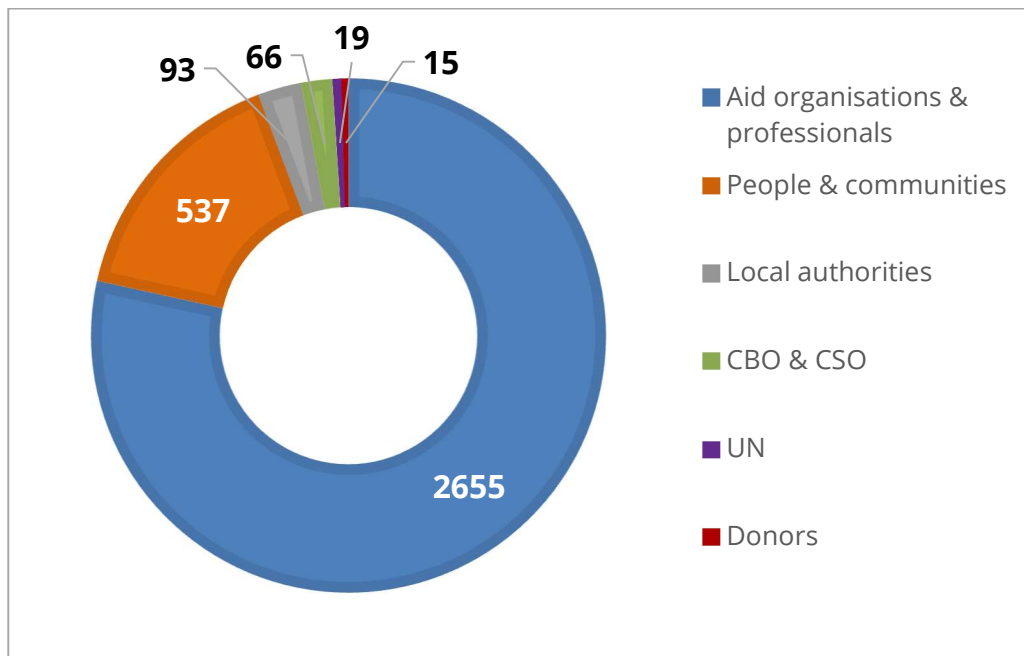


Figure 1 – Number of participants by category of stakeholders

- The **primary users of the CHS** (aid organisations & professionals) were the largest category of stakeholders who took part (N = 2 665), essentially through online staff surveys that allowed a very large number of respondents to take part (47% of this category of stakeholders);

- **Vulnerable, at-risk, and crisis-affected people and communities** represented at least 16% of the total number of individuals involved (N = 537). It should be noted that some aid professionals are former recipients of humanitarian assistance and consider themselves to be part of a vulnerable or marginalised group;
- The third biggest category of stakeholders involved in the consultation were **local authorities,** with 69% of them in Asia, 22% in West Africa, 8% in Latin America, and 1% in North America;
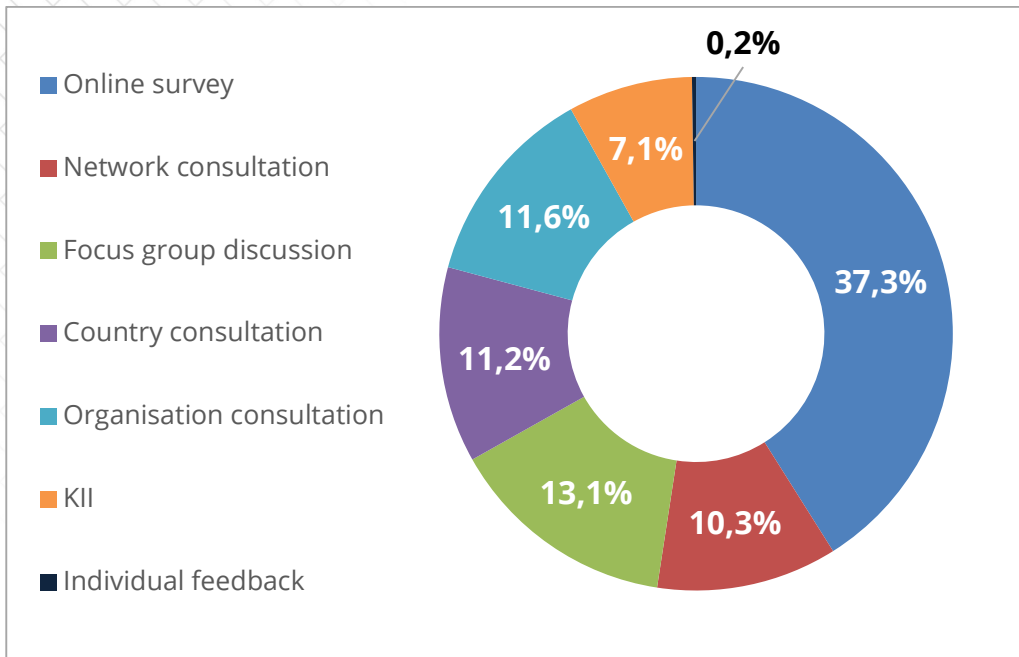


Figure 2 - Proportion of participants reached per type of consultation

- As explained in the limitations chapter, individual feedback forms were not used as widely as expected and only represent 0.2% of the feedback received (N = 8). This category corresponds to individuals, mostly aid professionals, who got involved on their own initiative via a form that was available on the CHS website.



Figure 3 - Participants by region (data is available only for 1 486 individuals or 44% of the total number of stakeholders)

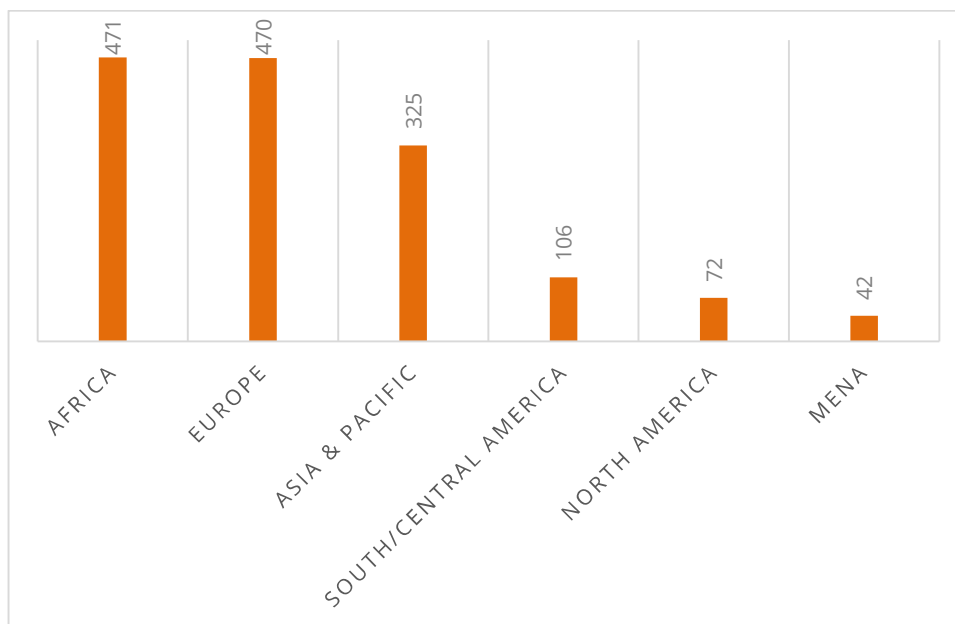- Information about the geographical distribution of stakeholders is available for 44% of the total number of stakeholders. Some events (online events, CHS Self-Assessment Staff Surveys, and some organisational consultations) did not record detailed information about the participants, which makes it difficult to have a consolidated analysis. As a result, the information provided in the graph above and in this section is a partial representation of the total. Nevertheless, it provides interesting information about the geographical distribution of a large proportion of the stakeholders.

- Based on the data available, we can see that the consultation process involved stakeholders in **more than 80 countries** worldwide, with a large number of participants in Africa, Europe, Asia - Pacific and Central/South America.

## 3.2    GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE CHS

Round One of the consultation showed **close to unanimous** support for the CHS as a framework for improving quality and accountability in the aid sector. For example, in the general survey[12], in response to general survey questions on the relevance and utility of the Standard, over 85% of respondents (N=200) indicated that the CHS commitments "mostly" or "completely" describe what people want from organisations that aim to support them.
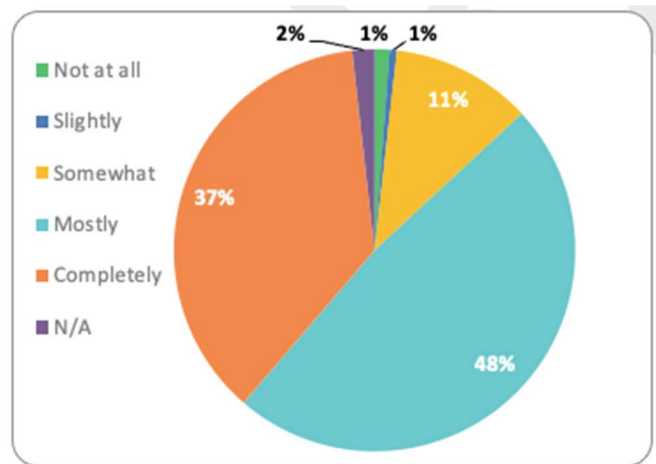
Figure 4: Relevance of the CHS /

Q 14: How well does the CHS describe what affected people want from aid organisations?[13]

This data is similar to the responses from those who took part in self-assessment staff surveys (N=1009). Over 70% answered that they "very much" or "absolutely" agree that the CHS commitments describe affected people's expectations from aid organisations.  In addition, around 70% also stated that the CHS Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities describe the most essential elements of quality and accountability.

The detailed comments from other data collection methods such as workshops or meetings also showed a pattern of strong support for the CHS, with hundreds of comments expressing that the CHS is a relevant and useful framework to guide more effective and accountable organisations and programmes.  This was the case across all stakeholder groups in all regions.

What stands out from this data is that stakeholder groups that were not previously aware of the CHS, such as government authorities, local actors and people and communities in situations of vulnerability or

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12 The General Survey is an open online survey that was launched by CHS Alliance which targets aid organisations and workers
13 Source: CHS Revision General Survey

crisis also **strongly supported** the concept of a common accountability standard and found the CHS commitments relevant.

## 3.3 USE OF THE CHS

Round One of the consultation also asked organisations to state how they use the CHS. The answers show that organisations that use the CHS use the Standard in a wide range of ways to increase accountability to people in situations of vulnerability or crisis.

In the general survey, nearly half of the respondents stated that their organisation used the CHS as part of their strategies and policies (48%), with similar numbers for programme planning (48%), monitoring (45%), and evaluations (43%). Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH) (41%) and organisational capacity strengthening (44%) and organisational learning (40%) were also mentioned as important uses of the CHS. Interestingly, only 30% of the respondents said that the CHS is used for external due diligence and compliance purposes. These figures are similar to those from other exercises carried out as part of Round One of the consultation and with other data such as the CHS Self-Assessment exercise or external validation audits[14].

This data suggests that the CHS has a high degree of acceptance and legitimacy in the sector and plays an important role as a normative framework for aid actors. As noted above, stakeholders that were unaware of or not using the CHS - including communities - consistently reported that it was a useful and relevant framework to improve accountability. This appears to support the view that the CHS is largely meeting its original aims to support continuous learning and improvement across several different organisational and management processes.

Table 1: Use of the CHS / Q 13: How do you or your organisations use the CHS?[15]

| How do you or your organisation use or reference the CHS? | % | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Don't know / not applicable / Don't use the CHS | 9.59% | 21 |
| As part of our strategy/policies | 47.95% | 105 |
| Programme planning | 46.12% | 101 |
| Programme monitoring | 45.66% | 100 |
| Programme and Organisational Evaluations | 42.92% | 94 |
| Internal quality assurance | 38.36% | 84 |
| Organisational capacity strengthening | 43.84% | 96 |
| Organisational learning | 40.18% | 88 |
| External advocacy | 22.83% | 50 |
| Fundraising | 21.46% | 47 |
| External compliance / due diligence processes | 29.22% | 64 |
| Risk management | 29.22% | 64 |
| Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment | 39.73% | 87 |

14 See for example, the Humanitarian Accountability Report 2022 or HQAI's analysis of external verification data (available at www.hqai.org)
15 Source: CHS Revision General Survey

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| All the above | 16.89% | 37 |
| Other (please specify) | 14.61% | 32 |

However, almost 40% of the General Survey respondents (N=143) reported that it was "difficult" or "very difficult" to apply the CHS in their programmes and organisations.

Figure 5: Implementation /

Q. 19 How difficult is it to put into practice the Nine Commitments in your programmes or organisation?[16]
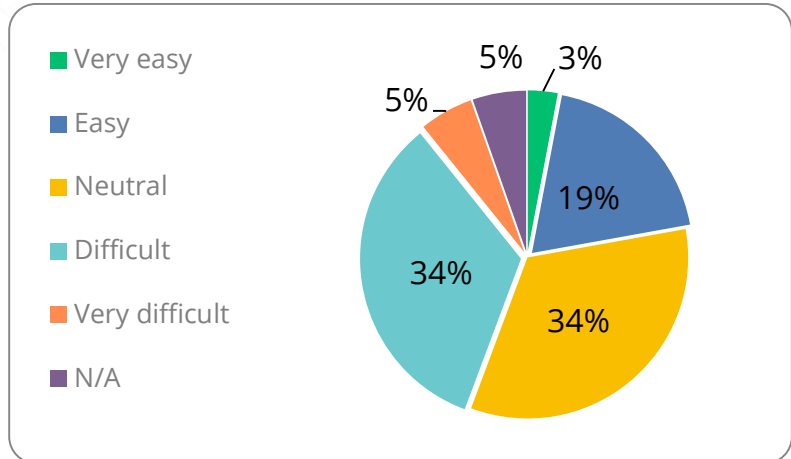


Many of the comments from stakeholders about the Standard concerned the accessibility of the language, the high number and duplication of many Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities, and the need for better communication, tools, guidance, and support tailored to specific stakeholders, such as those working in partnerships. Others mentioned the need for donor agencies to recognise and support the implementation of the CHS, particularly for national and local actors.

Concerning the issue of clarity and language, which was raised by approximately 174 stakeholders, it was also frequently stated that the CHS should be translated into local languages and be context-sensitive with visual guides, keywords, examples, and guidance so that it can be used by a wide range of organisations. Also, it was suggested many times that CHS vocabulary and technical jargon should be simplified and that humanitarian expressions should be avoided. Moreover, it is expected that the revised Standard should be written using a more active voice and that there should be more coherence between the language and the vocabulary used in the Standard and the one used in other standards in the sector.

*"While it is good to simplify language and ensure greater access etc., the fundamental question of whether CHS is relevant to people remains. The relevance of CHS to agencies is good but should not be the priority"* **(INGO)**

Finally, it is important to note that many stakeholders provided feedback that the current options for verification and external certification used by some organisations could be more open, flexible, affordable, and accessible to organisations that want to participate in these exercises. While the Standard is an open, voluntary standard, it seems important to consider the possible risks or perceptions of exclusion from organisations with limited financial capacity. In this sense, having differentiated membership fees and options for verification and compliance is a topic for further discussion and consideration. Some stakeholders stated that local partners should also be included in the verification audit, and that these should be conducted through appropriate, rigorous, and timely self-assessment. The CHS compliance criteria should be incorporated into the donor selection process as a guarantee for quality and

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[16] *Source: CHS Revision General Survey*

accountability above all. Finally, the difference between the verification process and the Standard itself needs to be clarified.

Many of the above issues are beyond the scope of the revision process but have been documented to share with the custodians of the Standard for their consideration, as they affect current and potential new users of the updated Standard.

## 3.4 FEEDBACK ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHS

Stakeholder feedback on the overall structure of the CHS was quite varied. Overall, as indicated above, there was wide support for the overall structure of the CHS organised around Nine Commitments. However, there were also many comments about combining some Commitments, reorganising, and regrouping them, and reducing the number and division of Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities.  The key findings are summarised below:

Overall, **very strong support for the Commitments:** almost all stakeholders consider the content of the commitments as a good description of what people want and expect in terms of accountability.

**Elements of various commitments can be combined**: there were frequent recommendations to combine elements of some commitments (commitments 1 and 2, and commitments 4 and 5, for example).

**Group related commitments together:** many stakeholders suggested grouping related commitments together by themes, and using keywords or other means to clarify the key concept behind the commitment.

**The structure of the CHS supports monitoring and reporting:** stakeholders also highlighted that the Standard provides a measurable framework and indicators to report on how the commitments are being applied and met and to use this to support reporting back to communities and stakeholders. However, stakeholders also mentioned the need to clarify and reduce the number of indicators and contextualise them to different contexts and types of organisations.

**Community engagement & participation** was considered an important element to highlight and reinforce throughout the structure of the commitments, with recommendations to strengthen the focus as a people-centred Standard.

**Combine related elements of feedback, complaints, and response**: There were several suggestions to combine elements of the current Commitments 4 and 5, with a stronger emphasis on how people's feedback and complaints are responded to by organisations.

**Include local and national authorities**: feedback also called for greater inclusion of local and national authorities in the revised Standard, clarifying their roles and responsibilities to support people-centred accountability, and calling for aid organisations to liaise and coordinate better with authorities.

**Provide additional guidance**: Stakeholders also mentioned additional guidance and support for organisations on how to interpret and apply the CHS. While not directly related to the structure of the Standard, many stakeholders called for more practical support and examples to help clarify the key ideas behind the Commitments.

**Combine related elements around effectiveness**: stakeholders suggested there is duplication and overlap in the current elements of Commitments 1 and 2 and suggested these could be combined.

**Eliminate and reduce the number of actions**: stakeholders also suggested removing the division between Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities and reducing the numbers significantly by addressing duplication and overlaps.

# 4.   DETAILED RESULTS PER COMMITMENT

## 4.1 COMMITMENT 1

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs**

What needs to remain: meeting people's needs is the core objective of any humanitarian or development action and it needs to be reaffirmed and strengthened in the Standard

What needs to be updated: The needs of each different group can only be met if the context is thoroughly analysed and understood by stakeholders, and local actors provide support to ensure the action is timely and adapted to the context.

*"It was highlighted that a lot of organisations do not put the needs and interests of the communities first. They show up, take pictures, and never come back. At the same time, some organisations provide clarity over their work."* **(Feedback from a community member in Umerkot, Pakistan)**

Key findings:

**Diversity and inclusion need to be strengthened**: a differentiated approach is needed for different groups (gender, age, disability inclusion, sexual orientations, and other marginalised and disadvantaged groups…)

**Assistance should be appropriate to the context:** there is a call for a more holistic and comprehensive analysis adapted to the context, situation and needs, ensuring that actors have a deep understanding of the local context

**Communities/local stakeholders must have a say** before projects are implemented and actors must listen to them. They should have the power/right to accept or reject a project and express their leadership.

**Community engagement & participation** should be reinforced in the risk & needs assessment and throughout the programme cycle.

**Coverage and timeliness** of the action are essential and could be better linked with Commitment 1.

**Data protection** should be highlighted in this commitment.

**Climate change and environment mainstreaming** should be included in the initial assessment phase, although they may require different approaches.

**References to people's rights** should be strengthened in the commitment and related key actions, using human rights-based language.

**Humanitarian jargon** is not appropriate (e.g. what is an "appropriate and impartial needs assessment"?) and should be revised to broaden the scope of the Standard.

**Actors need to be accountable towards communities** and present the results of the needs assessments for which they required their participation

**Wording of the text** makes communities very passive actors; this needs to be changed and give people a more active voice and role

**Institutional policies** (mentioned in Organisational Responsibilities) are important but are not sufficient to actually ensure and demonstrate that needs assessments are qualitative and accountable as required in the Standard. Responsibilities should go beyond policies.

Providing appropriate and relevant assistance also means adapting to changing needs and contexts over time. Therefore, commitments and actions should integrate the idea of the **nexus** more.

## 4.2  COMMITMENT 2

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time**

What needs to remain: timeliness is an essential component to appropriately meet people's priority needs in all settings (emergency, preparedness, development) as they change over time, and to strengthen the triple nexus (humanitarian, development, peacebuilding)

What needs to be updated: The timeliness of a project needs to be combined with meeting needs. Local actors and community engagement should be given a more prominent role in order to foster locally led emergency responses, emergency preparedness, and adaptation.

*"It can be more measurable if we define the right time because some organisations say that two months is a considerable period to deliver the assistance while other organisation says that four months is a considerable period for the same assistance; in order to access the assistance, you need to cry and pretend a lot of suffering, otherwise, your chance is low to get the assistance"* **(Feedback from community members in Sanliurfa, Turkey)**

Key findings:

**Emergency preparedness, contingency planning & early recovery** need to be reinforced with a stronger focus on community-based solutions, in particular in relation to climate change and the environment.

**Adaptive management, building on community engagement and flexible funding mechanisms** are critical to ensure that stakeholders can quickly adapt their actions to meet their needs appropriately and in a timely manner.

**Community engagement and support to local actors** are key elements to strengthen the timeliness of actions as they are the first responders in most crisis and vulnerability situations.

**Some terminology needs clearer definitions:** what is deemed timely and effective, and from whose perspective? This can be interpreted in various ways depending on the stakeholder, but the most important perspectives are those of people and communities themselves.

Although most stakeholders are aware of the importance of delivering assistance on time, **access remains a major barrier** to timely responses.

**Selection criteria:** more transparency is expected from actors on the conditions for gaining access to services and the reasons for not being eligible.

Assistance needs to be timely, but it is equally important that it should be **sustainable** and that the **duration** is appropriate.

**References to monitoring activities** (*"2.5 Monitor the activities, outputs and outcomes"*) would make more sense if consolidated in Commitment 7 (Learning and continuous improvement), with links to feedback.

**Resource management could be made more efficient** by also having trained staff with knowledge of the local context and humanitarian technical standards.

**The key action related to the referral** of unmet needs would fit better under Commitment 6 (Coordination) than Commitment 2.

Better **coordination** between actors could be a way to reinforce timeliness, beyond information sharing and more joint planning.

Include in this Commitment a reference to **protection**, GBV risk mitigation and an intersectionality approach.

**Merge Commitment 2** with Commitments 1 and 3.

## 4.3 COMMITMENT 3

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient, and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian response**

What needs to remain: the notions of resilience and capacity building are needed to ensure and reinforce better preparedness of communities and local actors

What needs to be updated: "Do no harm" and resilience are both essential concepts but need to be separated into two different commitments. Local leadership and capacities should be emphasised more.

*"When I raised my voice and highlighted the mistakes, the staff at that organisation threatened me; I was not invited anymore to any activity when I share my opinion about the corruption; Some staff shared my wrong information and caused me a problem then later they said you misunderstood us; One organisation said to me we cannot select you because you do not wear Hijab"* **(Feedback from community members in Sanliurfa Turkey)**

Key findings:

**Strengthen local capacities and the economy**: include institutional actors (local authorities, municipalities…), strengthen the focus on **local leadership** of local actors' communities, and strengthen exit strategies.

**Split Commitment 3 into different commitments**: mixes too many things and is not clear in some parts, needs to focus on safeguarding, and protection, and **proposals to separate resilience/capacity building/local leadership;** in addition, "**do no harm" and safeguarding are linked with Commitment 5.**

**Key action 3.2 needs to be broader and include risk management** (risk assessment, mitigation, prevention).

**Language**: limit the jargon (resilience, exit strategy), adapt to communities and what they want to see, and focus on sustainable outcomes.

There is a need to **broaden the analysis of negative impacts.**

**The environmental issue should be mainstreamed in the Standard** as something that will be protected, respected, and not negatively affected.

**Additional guidance** is therefore necessary concerning resilience, protecting the environment, "do no harm" and safeguarding.

## 4.4 COMMITMENT 4

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information, and participate in decisions that affect them**

What needs to remain: Acknowledging and clearly stating in a commitment that affected people have rights and should be able to take part in project-related decisions is essential and needs to be strengthened.

What needs to be updated: strengthen the role of communities, affected people and local stakeholders, giving them an active voice in the process and expecting organizations to demonstrate mutual accountability and transparency.

*"We have a lot of experience in integrating the key elements of the CHS into our national policies, such as participation, gender equity, respect for different cultures, and risk management. This should be considered in the review, and we want to participate and collaborate in the process."*
**(Government representative, Honduras)**

Key findings:

**Participation needs to be emphasised more** through a more active role for communities in all phases of decision-making and **the engagement of local authorities** should be mentioned more frequently.

**Communication needs to be strengthened** via **shared information** but also **transparency**, listening, and working with communities. It needs to be **less top-down**, regular, two-way, and context-driven.

Many people suggested **merging feedback components with Commitment 5**, increasing active follow-up and reporting on actions taken.

Feedback is only one **part of wider engagement and interactions with communities.**

For **monitoring and reporting, calls for more regular engagement and reporting back to communities** for review and validation of findings, methods and processes

Participation and communication **as part of their rights mentioned,** some suggestions to **go beyond informing, but actually making sure that rights, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders are respected**

## 4.5  COMMITMENT 5

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints**

What needs to remain: Having clear, effective processes to receive and handle issues, grievances or complaints is extremely important. This should be emphasised more strongly throughout the Standard and should be required for each phase of humanitarian or development actions.

What needs to be updated: This commitment could possibly merged with Commitment 4. Also, greater care should be taken with existing mechanisms, approaches and terms that are culturally and contextually inappropriate, to better communicate those mechanisms to the communities.

*"Most organisations do not have a formal complaint response mechanism. It is important that communities are aware of how they can lodge complaints with the government"* **(Feedback from a community member in Umerkot, Pakistan)**

Key findings:

Many calls for **approaches to be contextualised to local culture, and conditions.**

**Strong issues with the term "complaints"** and other terms as culturally inappropriate.

Also **call for better monitoring, follow-up, and reporting to communities and individuals** about actions taken.

Need for **more guidance on implementation.**

People and communities should **participate more in the design and management of mechanisms.**

Need for **better communication about mechanisms and links to existing channels, including engagement with local and state authorities**.

**Frequent suggestions to merge with Commitment 4**, but also to use findings for learning and adapting programmes (link with commitment 7).

**Better staff competencies and resources needed** to handle feedback.

Some calls for **better data protection measures.**

Also need for **better coordination for feedback and actions**

## 4.6  COMMITMENT 6

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance**

What needs to remain: Coordinated, complementary assistance is essential to avoid duplication and to ensure that all stakeholders participate fully, respect each other's mandates and share information with their partners to achieve better results.

What needs to be updated: Coordination should be strengthened at each level of a project by including communities and local actors, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and jointly planning, improving and adjusting actions.

*"There is too much disorder. Finally, we don't know who does what, or who is who. There is no logic, an order can be given today and changed tomorrow. And this confuses them in the end, they don't know what to do, whom to listen to, what order to follow" (Feedback from a community member in Chad)*

Key findings:

Many **calls for more coordinated joint planning**, monitoring not just information-sharing, **coordination for impact, not just reducing duplication or gaps**, or attending meetings.

**Greater involvement of communities and local actors** in all stages of coordination.

**Calls for moving away from external coordination mechanisms** to use and **respect other coordination mechanisms** (including states and government bodies), a strong call for **more engagement and leadership by local authorities and states.**

Also calls for **greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different actors**- more shared accountability.

**Consistent feedback from various stakeholders to improve monitoring, learning, and adjusting programmes** as part of coordination.

**Guidance is needed** on how to coordinate effectively.

Also need for **better communication with all actors, especially communities**, on plans and activities.

## 4.7 COMMITMENT 7

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection**

What needs to remain: Learning processes need to be strengthened as part of a quality assurance approach in order to improve assistance and increase accountability to different actors.

What needs to be updated:  Local feedback, knowledge, experience and concerns need to be taken into consideration to improve assistance and learning processes.

*"The conditions must be created so that aid recipients can take charge of their own lives rather than relying on aid continuously and endlessly. And those whose capacities have been strengthened must be accompanied."* **(Feedback from community member in Nigeria)**

Key findings:

**Communities' involvement in the improvement and learning processes**: feedback mechanisms, active listening, evidence-based solutions, learning from local knowledge and communities with experience sharing and in determining their needs, taking local concerns into account (lack of consideration of their needs and preferences).

**Implement sharing mechanisms**: e-learning platform, guidance notes, surveys, feedback, success stories, and recommendations through videos, reports, and discussion sessions.

**Improve monitoring, evaluation and learning**: more resources, community participation, processes more explicit, **dedicated M&E staff**, a yearly deep evaluation process, independent M&E body.

**Continuous improvement and learning** involves having a continuous learning system in place with quick changes and a culture of change and adaptation.

**Mutual learning within humanitarian networks** by implementing a system of improvement among organisations and sharing knowledge among organisations and communities.

**Empower staff through training, and capacity building adapted to each context**

**Need for more practicality**: this commitment is hard to implement into actions and the expression "lessons learned" is too broad, need to integrate learning into the project cycle, and need to refine and provide further guidance.

**Need for consolidation/knowledge management**: lack of documentation of lessons learned implies a need for data centralisation.

**Terminology**: replace "experience and knowledge" with "expertise and knowledge" (7.2, 7.1, 7.6).

**Joint responsibility means having collective accountability**, and develop further partnerships

**Transform the learning commitment into a cross-cutting issue throughout the CHS**

## 4.8 COMMITMENT 8

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers**

What needs to remain: Having competent and well-managed staff is essential to meet affected people's needs and their expectations about the aid they should receive.

What needs to be updated: Staff need to be empowered, trained, considered, and listened to from the onboarding phase, and their safety and well-being ensured while promoting a wider culture of accountability.

*"The actor must be in good conditions to do his job well: you can't help when you need help yourself"*
**(from a community member in Niger)**

Key findings:

**Empower staff with capacity building and learning** through lessons learned, updates, knowledge, adapted to the context, promoting continuity of staff with developed skills **to mitigate turnover.**

**Train staff without omitting the local staff**.

**Additional key action on staff well-being**: workload management, prevention of discrimination, wages, transparency, health policies, concerns and grievances management, including the donors in staff care, suppliers and contractors' compliance with the Code of Conduct.

**Additional key action on onboarding phase**: mandatory training and continuing education, based on humanitarian and accountability principles and standards.

**Safety and security of the staff**: duty of care, additional key action on PSEAH.

**M&E staff performance**: need for self-capacity assessment or staff feedback.

**Need for more practicality**: commitments not well formulated, lack of references to the actions expected, or vagueness.

**Communities' involvement**: what do they expect and how are they involved? What about local staff and volunteers?

**Reinforce interpersonal/relational skills, and train staff on standards** (CHS, Sphere, risk management).

**Diversity and inclusion** are reflected in teams and behaviours.

**Additional key actions could be added on complaint mechanisms**

## 4.9  COMMITMENT 9

Current text of the Standard: **Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently, and ethically**

What needs to remain: The effective management of resources (financial, natural, etc.) is essential to ensure that aid is efficiently and ethically delivered and to establish a relationship of trust with communities and people affected by crisis.

What needs to be updated: Fraud and corruption need to be addressed by means of greater transparency, mutual accountability, audits, and communication to ensure trust and respect between stakeholders. The environment could also be emphasised more strongly in this commitment.

*"There is no rational management of resources. There are detours of objectives that frustrate people. Complaints are made but not always returned"* **(from community member in Nigeria)**

Key findings:

**Improve transparency and communication on resource use and accountability from organisations toward communities**: there is a need for "do no harm" over natural resources, emphasis on local resource usages, accountability procedures, and more redress.

**More emphasis on corruption** through reporting mechanisms, rational management of resources, control of funding to beneficiaries, and encouraging a culture of open discussion to declare any fraud, **need to focus on the abuse of power.**

Need for **more audits and M&E** especially with finances by conducting risks assessments for example.

**Environment protection and focus on climate change** as a conflict/crisis facilitator and environmental safety as a donor requirement

**Active participation from affected and involved local stakeholders in the control and responsibility** of resources (funds for local partners).

**Need for more practicality**: commitment too broad with too many requirements leads to less effectiveness.

**Joint accountability between donors and local authorities**: the mutualisation of activities enables an opening and closing accountability in conjunction with local committees and **establishing lasting partnerships** with donors

Need for **guidance and training for staff** on implementing indicators.

**Continuous improvement and lessons learned from the cultural context and fraud control.**

**Costs/Impacts models guidance** needed for clusters.

Need to take into consideration the **nexus and the need for differentiated approaches.**

# 5.   CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

## 5.1 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Summary of the feedback: people cannot be isolated from their environment, they are intrinsically linked. Environment and climate change need to be considered and mainstreamed throughout the CHS, as essential elements to consider when designing projects, to protect when implementing activities, and to restore whenever possible

*"Going beyond helping people and the lasting impact of the humanitarian presence, there is [a] need to articulate what the impact is on the natural ecosystem and what the ecological footprint is of a humanitarian response. It's a bit ironic that climate change creates more work for humanitarians, while they themselves seem to make little effort to reduce their own contribution to it"* **(from NGO feedback)**

Key findings:

**Environment & climate change strengthened** in the CHS is a general consensus although they require different approaches.

**Responsibility & accountability of aid workers towards the environment**: refer to some key elements such as environmental risk assessment, staff awareness raising, carbon footprint monitoring, sustainable supply, waste management, and environmentally friendly technologies.

**Environmental & climate change mainstreaming throughout the CHS** rather than having a separate commitment.

**Environment & climate change should be seen as a major risk driver** in most crises and as one major crisis itself.

**Projects need to better analyse, integrate, and adapt** to local contexts, knowledge, capacities, and ecosystems.

## 5.2  LOCALISATION

Summary of the feedback: locally led actions should be mainstreamed throughout the Standard with empowerment, leadership, support, accessibility, language, and partnership

*"The language-tone of the document should shift the subject from "we external Humanitarian INGOs" to "we Humanitarian actors", so as to include also local national humanitarian actors. It should be avoided to assume that local actors are not part of the duties, as seems to be deduced from some points of the writing.",* **aid worker individual feedback**

Key findings:

**Strengthen local leadership/shift power** as a general objective: advocate for more community-led solutions, elaborate, validate the project, actively participate in all stages, mobilise capacities, local context/capacities should underpin projects (link with C3.1), etc.

**Access to the CHS remains a challenge**: feeling that it is built by INGOs for INGOs, **need to make it simpler and accessible**, including the vision of quality through a local lens, the need for communication/promotion/training of local stakeholders (proposal to have "national CHS committees")

**Empower local actors**, systems, agencies, and capacities should be clearly outlined

**Language**: what terms are the most appropriate? Does localisation convey the neocolonial view? Should we use the terms inclusive localisation or decolonisation?

**Supporting locals (communities and NGOs) in becoming partners and working hand-in-hand with INGOs** with trust and compliance: accessing funds from donors, involved in the assessment stage, design, and implementation

**Local resource mobilisation should be promoted** (human, knowledge, traditional, financial, etc.) and communities should play an active role

**Localisation mainstreaming throughout the CHS** rather than having a separate commitment

**Lack of access to funding for smaller organisations remains problematic** (although it        is        a strong commitment of the Grand Bargain)

**How can an organisation be accountable for localisation**? How can it be measured? Local auditors?

## 5.3  PARTNERSHIPS

Summary of the feedback: there is an overall need and expectation of having the CHS focused on mutual, equitable relationships, shared accountability, and trust between every stakeholder, and seeing this Standard through a two-way approach.

*"One important lesson is knowing your partners in advance and building that relationship. It also is about knowing you couldn't do this on your own and needed to work with others" (local civil society actor)*

Key findings:

**Strong expectations to reinforce the place of partnership** in the CHS: provide a clear definition, need to focus on equitable partnership relationships with people and the community as key partners.

Partnership is a **mutual process** based on **trust**.

Create **new forms of partnerships** with the private sector, governments, and institutional stakeholders.

Partnership is about **power distribution** (and mitigating the transferal of risk).

Partnership should be **mainstreamed** throughout the CHS, with a focus on context-based programming.

The **importance of the relationship needs to be valued and fostered** in the CHS, not only the results.

**Keywords for the definition**: shared goals, shared responsibilities, and shared accountability.

## 5.4  NEXUS/DEVELOPMENT LANGUAGE

Summary of the feedback: there is a clear overall message that the CHS norm needs to go beyond its humanitarian contextual limits and embrace a larger nexus approach to be able to be used by a wider range of actors and to provide solutions for people facing various types of crisis and vulnerabilities.

Key findings:

**CHS should use "development language" such as** joint plan, inclusive approaches, listening, responsiveness, accompanying….

**Have resilience as a cross-cutting issue throughout the norm**: increase follow-up and monitoring plans for risk reduction that contribute to resilience.

**Emphasise the triple nexus**: include the peacebuilding component

**Go beyond the humanitarian sector**: the CHS is not understandable outside the humanitarian sector

**Changing the norm's name**

**Inclusion of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation** (anticipatory action)

**Talking more about "protracted crisis rather than acute crisis"**

**Refer to the Humanitarian Accountability Report**

**Review whether the 9 commitments are relevant and applicable to all response contexts**

CHS should be **part of the organisation's core policy** as well

Guidance would be needed to explain how the Standard applies to **humanitarian/development nexus work**

## 5.5  POWER DYNAMICS

Summary of the feedback: power dynamics, abuse, and mistrust need to be recognised and considered in the revised Standard as undeniably and unfortunately part of the sector and could be addressed through better professionalism, transparency from organisations, and empowerment of all stakeholders.

*"Another female participant said that "when I talk honestly and mention the mistakes in the organisation, they put me on the blacklist and prevent me from any possible support". She added that there is no more trust in some organisations which were working honestly in the past"* **(community focus group feedback, Democratic Republic of the Congo)**

Key findings:

**Empower stakeholders, local communities, marginalised groups, and authorities in project implementation** (inclusion): all stakeholders, communities, and affected people need to be seen as **rights holders**. There is a need to strengthen the role of local authorities in the Standard, **to**

**acknowledge the power imbalance in the sector and encourage a better distribution between actors**, ensure a system of community representativeness to guarantee sustainability of actions, careful control of resources by those affected, **ensure inclusive leadership and representation**.

**Need for more transparency through accountability to stakeholders and affected people**, information sharing, and learning lessons.

**Power-sensitive organisational culture**: staff well-being, mechanisms to respond to any discrimination, protocols for actions, reparations, and mitigation, integrate a feminist/gender approach to address structural discriminations and try to work towards breaking down traditional hegemonic models, consider structural inequalities, learning mechanisms about power.

**Recognise power dynamics, abuse of power issues, and mistrust**

**Need for more integrity and professionalism**: funds and aid go directly to communities, need for M&E

**Conduct needs assessments** focusing on differentiated needs, inclusion of people with specific needs, and respecting the diversity of actors/beneficiaries

**Joint accountability: equitable power sharing and responsibilities between partners**, working together in a coordinated way, including communities, changing power relationships to partnerships, trust building, mutual learning.

**Limit and sanction inappropriate behaviour and misconduct**

**Structure and reformulation of the Standard**: commitments as duties, reformulate the Standard to a more active voice, define, and address power, mention the word harassment.

**Having a positive view of power** means protecting from harm, providing help when necessary, empowering people, enabling capability and resilience.

## 5.6  COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Summary of the feedback: one of the most important pieces of feedback received from this consultation is that engagement and participation by communities and people must be mainstreamed and significantly improved throughout the revised Standard.

*"Everything that is done for me without me is eventually against me"* **(NGO representative in Niger)**

Key findings:

**Empower affected communities by increasing their active and inclusive participation in processes**, monitoring, and decision making

**Mainstream and strengthen community involvement throughout the CHS**: making it a community-centred standard (Community Engagement as the first commitment, what is the subject of the norm – US vs THEM?), CHS community-led revision.

**Information sharing and accountability to all actors** including affected communities.

**Strengthen further the concepts of joint accountability and two-way communication** (trust-building with communities).

**Need for more practicality**: strong commitments accompanied with **clear guidance and efforts from all actors** (make it a reality), NGOs and donors should meet the communities' requirements by all means necessary, sector-wide community feedback collection and analysis as a sectorial/donor requirement.

**Designed programmes, feedback, and complaint mechanisms contextualised to local culture (culture-sensitive) and types of crises**: respecting actors' rights, diversity, identity, and culture, participation, and respect of indigenous people.

**Listen to the beneficiaries** (also considering informality and rumours).

**Select community representatives' groups**: refer to authorities when necessary but **be cautious regarding the various authority layers and putting communities first**.

**Clearly define community engagement** and local actors in the revised Standard.

**Community-led learning processes**: communities' involvement in the improvement and learning processes.

**Conduct needs assessments** with communities and affected people.

Work with the communities to **enable resilience.**

There is a need for a **specific commitment on localisation, meaningful participation, and accountability.**

# 5.7  COHERENCE WITH OTHER STANDARDS

Summary of the feedback: the CHS needs to be revised, linked, and aligned with other existing standards that have similarities or additional relevant recommendations

Key findings:

**Linkages, complementarity, compliance need to be ensured with other standards** (e.g., Sphere, OECD, INEE, PSEAH, C4C, ACT).

Further comments**: "confusion" regarding the CHS as the ONE & ONLY STANDARD** as there are other standards.

**Mainstream the CHS within technical and transformative standards.**

**Already existing internal standards in organisations might make it difficult to change to the CHS in a short period of time** (HAP is more influential).

**Align the CHS with the Grand Bargain and other initiatives.**

**Use other reference** organisations/ referral bodies.

**Visibility on CHS and internal accountability systems**/ mechanisms (e.g. IASC).

Need for **coherence between the CHS and national regulatory frameworks.**

**Donors need to agree on a set of priority standards** to prevent competing demands and initiatives.

Review and **align the language of the CHS with other standards.**

# CONCLUSION

CHS Alliance, Sphere and Groupe URD would like to **thank all individuals, organisations, networks, representatives, institutions who contributed to Round One of the consultation** for the revision of the CHS. The significant engagement has shown how important the Standard is for the sector and has provided a great deal of input to help the Revision Team update and strengthen its content and make it a more accessible and relevant Standard.

This consultation was also an opportunity to widely **share ownership of the Standard** as the CHS is voluntary, open and accessible and therefore belongs to each individual and entity who commits to adopt a people-centred approach to support people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability effectively and accountably.

The elements formalised in this report will be used by the Revision Team in writing the revised version of the Standard. The revised version will reflect most of the feedback that has been given during Round One of the consultation, in anticipation of Round Two which will collect additional input based on the first draft of the revised Standard.

Building on the next stages of the revision process, the Standard will emerge stronger, simpler and more accessible, thus reaffirming its relevance and value as a **core people-centred accountability framework**.