



Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week 2018

Putting the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) into practice: challenges & opportunities for different users

This joint session of the CHS Alliance, Groupe URD and HQAI fostered very interesting discussions with participants whom we would like to thank for their proactive contributions. The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), published by the CHS Alliance, Groupe URD and Sphere, is a relatively new standard that already benefits from a broad buy-in from the sector. It became clear, however, that more awareness-raising is necessary and a short reminder of its origin, benefits and key components was beneficial for the group discussions. Overall the thematic sessions were a good opportunity for the representatives of the three facilitating organisations to present the CHS as a game changer that influences the activities and the philosophy on the ground and along the entire chain of quality and accountability.

With the five sessions building on each other and participants challenging and/or confirming the findings of previous groups, three major outcomes have crystallised out of the discussions:

Session outcomes

- **Universality of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)**

The CHS was developed by the sector for the sector and therefore is widely accepted. It is an umbrella that can be applied throughout the entire chain of quality and accountability, from the donor to affected people. The question arose as to which extent this universal standard is applicable to a very diverse, complex reality. Facing a wide array of contexts, spread across the blurry lines between the humanitarian and development sectors, the standard needs to be applicable by all, including multi-mandate agencies. One participant underlined that communities and people affected by crisis do not differentiate between development and humanitarian. The subsequent diversity of actors also reflects the long chain of accountability, from donors to INGOs, national organisations and affected people. "The standard can be applied by any type of organisation; it's not a matter of size, but a matter of objective," said Michael Carrier, Quality and Accountability Advisor at Groupe URD, thus putting forward the adaptability of the CHS. The CHS is a tool that can be used in various ways to promote quality and accountability. Different actors use the CHS in different ways, for example by choosing among various verification mechanisms, namely evaluation & monitoring, independent third-party quality assurance, peer review and, last but not least, self-assessment.

The CHS responds with exceptional flexibility. As Pierre Hauselmann, Executive Director of HQAI, put it: "Experience shows that the CHS strikes the right balance between flexibility and universality, and is sufficiently detailed to be meaningful."

- **Localisation**

Echoing the localisation agenda of the Grand Bargain, participants in our meetings wanted to understand how local actors can apply the CHS and how they can be supported in reaching the level of quality and accountability required by the standard. All three facilitating experts confirmed that local actors are getting more and more engaged with the CHS. Some organisations become members of the CHS Alliance, a membership organisation that promotes the adoption of the CHS and supports its members in applying the standard. Others reach out to HQAI asking for independent quality assurance services, either in the form of Verification or Certification. Yet other organisations reach out



Leading Edge Programme

Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week
5 - 9 February 2018

to the experts from Groupe URD to obtain field support in applying the standard and using it as a guideline in building their own processes. The audience was pleased to hear that more and more national and small organisations access independent quality assurances services by benefiting from HQAI's subsidy fund and group options.

- **A global context**

The discussions were mainly oriented towards organisations and their challenges and opportunities. However, the extraordinary patchwork of participants from national and international NGOs, the private sector, donors, the military, governments and the media, raised the question whether the CHS can be applied in a collective context. Bonaventure Sokpoh, Head of Advocacy, Policy and Learning at CHS Alliance argues that this is possible, illustrating his answer with an example: "We have recently launched a joint project with Ground Truth Solutions in Chad supporting the Clusters in integrating the CHS into the Humanitarian Need Overviews (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)."

Next steps to implementing solutions

The above-mentioned outcomes illustrate one thing in particular: the CHS responds to our participants' challenges, but it is not yet sufficiently known by all potential users. Some key steps for the three facilitating organisations in the near future will therefore be to focus on awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing.

- Build knowledge around the CHS (origin, objective, possibilities, benefits for communities and people affected by crisis) and effectively train new users around the globe;
- Build and share solid content on how the CHS can be used to promote quality and accountability in different contexts;
- Contribute to the localisation agenda by enhancing access of national and local partners to: information about the CHS, support in applying the standard and its verification mechanisms ;
- Continue testing the application of the CHS in different situations.

The experts and facilitators will be happy to follow up on individual requests. Feel free to find out more about their organisations on their websites and reach out to them by email:



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