DEMAC TOOLKIT POCKET GUIDE
GUIDELINE ON THE 9 CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

O DEMAC DIASPORA
EMERGENCY ACTION
& COORDINATION

DEMAC TOOLKIT POCKET GUIDE

The DEMAC Toolkit is a compilation of ten short, hands-on pocket guides on diaspora humanitarianism. Out of the ten, five guides are tailored to diaspora actors, covering the following topics:

1. Where To Find Relevant Humanitarian Data and Information

2. Advocacy Toolkit for Diaspora Humanitarian Organizations

3. Guidance on Training and Learning Resources

4. Introduction to the Humanitarian System, its Structure, Standards and Approaches

5. **Guideline on the 9 Core Humanitarian Standards and Recommendations on their Operationalization**

This pocket guide is focusing on the e 9 Core Humanitarian Standards and Recommendations on their Operationalization. Interested in the other four booklets? Find the complete DEMAC Toolkit with all pocket guides on our website www.demac.org

![DEMAC logo](Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination)

DEMAC TOOLKIT POCKET GUIDE

Why this DEMAC toolkit?

The DEMAC toolkit intends to offer practical guidance to support diaspora organizations in their humanitarian response and enhance coordination with diaspora and the humanitarian institutional system.

The toolkit is informed by DEMAC lessons learnt, consultations and good practices on diaspora humanitarianism. It provides guidance for diaspora responders and sets the framework for increasing understanding, knowledge and capacity in humanitarian response.

The toolkit does not intend to provide a binding, predetermined list of interventions or types of activities that may or may not be implemented, as this is dependent on the specific context and would appear overly prescriptive. We encourage adaptation of this resource to your local context.

GUIDELINE ON THE 9 CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

Core Humanitarian Standards for diaspora organizations[1]
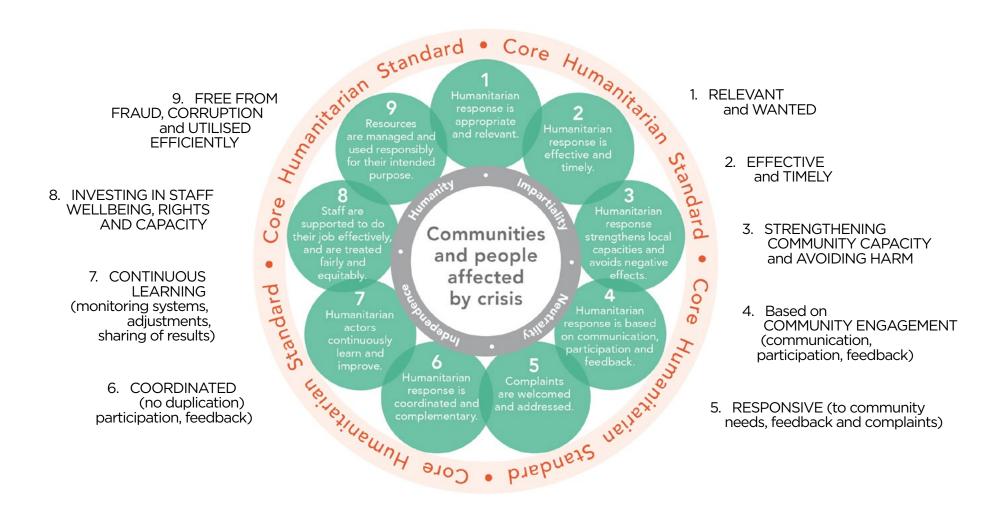
What are the Core Humanitarian Standards?

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

The CHS places communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action. As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable, and high-quality humanitarian aid. It is a voluntary and measurable standard.

[1] Resources used from: CHS Guidance Notes and Indicators

9 CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

9. FREE FROM FRAUD, CORRUPTION and UTILISED EFFICIENTLY

8. INVESTING IN STAFF WELLBEING, RIGHTS AND CAPACITY

7. CONTINUOUS LEARNING (monitoring systems, adjustments, sharing of results)

6. COORDINATED (no duplication) participation, feedback)

1. RELEVANT and WANTED

2. EFFECTIVE and TIMELY

3. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY and AVOIDING HARM

4. Based on COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (communication, participation, feedback)

5. RESPONSIVE (to community needs, feedback and complaints)

Core Humanitarian Standard

Communities and people affected by crisis

Humanity · Impartiality · Neutrality · Independence

1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely.
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed.
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

9 CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

Why do Diaspora Organizations have to comply with CHS?

Diaspora Organizations have connections with and an understanding of their country of origin which plays a vital role in humanitarian assistance, where they are often part of the first response in the aftermath of a disaster. Many can be considered frontline responders themselves, making direct and concrete contributions to emergency responses in their home countries.

A good understanding of CHS and its application when they respond to the crisis will result in high-quality services and ensure accountability to those they seek to assist. Diaspora organizations should seek to improve their practices, structures, and processes to ensure CHS are considered at each stage of their response.

Purpose of the CHS

The purpose of the Nine Commitments of the CHS is for humanitarian actors to:

- Improve quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide
- Promote the well-being and protection of those affected by disaster or conflict
- Increase accountability to the communities they serve so they can hold organizations to account to the expected conduct of staff and assistance promised

The CHS places people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian action.

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CHS 1 :
Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.
Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
The humanitarian response should be based on the needs expressed by the affected people/ communities. Understanding those needs will result in better tailored response.	• Do not assume – crosscheck: plan review of existing information on what needs the communities have. • Deliberately ask your contacts what the local needs are before planning your response. • Look up information on who is doing what in the affected communities and contact some of those to get more information. • Share your plans with local partners/contacts and ask if they agree to the response activities before execution. • Create communication channels with local communities so they can share with you community needs on an ongoing basis • Map 1-2 humanitarian organizations responding locally and contacting them on what activities they are planning and when. • Consider vulnerable groups such as children, older people, women, and people with disabilities – are your activities inclusive of their needs? • Contribute to any kind of needs assessment that is conducted by other organizations through participating in Key Informant Interviews or reaching out to local community leaders who have access to information. • Attend coordination meetings that aim to plan joint assessment or context analysis. • Develop basic needs assessment tools to structure and collect information from a different source - consult with peer DOs on how they collect information.

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CHS 2 :
Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.
Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is effective and timely.

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Response by the Diaspora Organizations is usually agile and timely. However, it might need to be coordinated with other organizations to ensure that needs-based assistance is provided at right time. DOs must be considerate of the scale of their support and the importance of working with others.	• Communities might have a lot of needs but prioritize which activities you can deliver considering time constraints and logistics. • There are joint advocacy actions by humanitarian actors, try to participate and advocate together with others • Coordinate with local entities, they might be able to help you solve logistical issues • Identify those needs that are still unmet by you and share them with other organizations who might be able to address those timely • Try to review and consider basic standards that are already available to ensure basic quality. • Develop basic monitoring and evaluation plans, document numbers, photos, and stories. Ask those whom you are helping if they benefited from your actions and how. Regularly monitor the effectiveness of your actions.

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CHS 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 action. **Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Communities are part of the decision-making on what kind of assistance is delivered to them and their skills and capacities are considered for longer-term recovery.	• Identify what are the skills and capacities that exist locally and can be utilized during the response. • Partner with local organizations, community groups, or initiatives to implement your activities. • Avoid creating parallel services but build on existing ones. • Ensure your response considers the Do-no-harm principle. • Ensure that assistance is not harmful to the communities, for example when there are scarce resources or not sufficient aid to the most vulnerable might create conflict over the scarce resources. Another example is that uncoordinated humanitarian assistance might distort the local markets.

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CHS 4 :
Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them. **Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Communities should be considered not as passive recipients of assistance but partners who can share their feedback and complaints with those who deliver assistance. DOs should be open to suggestions and feedback from the communities. The feedback can be not only about DOs' response but any complaint that is related to humanitarian assistance and the DOs can refer the case to relevant organizations.	• Sharing accurate, timely, and accessible information strengthens the humanitarian response. Ensure you share information about your assistance. • Consult with the communities about the activities that you plan to implement, ask for their suggestions and input. • If you share information about the people receiving assistance, ask for their permission and consent. Consider safety issues before publishing any information or photos. • Monitor social media on what people say about your assistance (when relevant) and if there are other unmet needs. • Ask communities how they prefer to share and receive information and use that platform for communication. • Do not reinvent the wheel, identify and review how other diaspora organizations promote community participation in their diaspora response and adapt the best practices of community participation when you plan and implement your own diaspora response.

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CHS 5 :
Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.
Quality Criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed.

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Basic structures of Complaint and Response will ensure that any misconduct is timely identified and resolved. DOs might have basic Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) processes in place to ensure transparency and accountability.	• Set up communication channels directly with the communities so they can reach out to you for any complaints or feedback about the activities implemented on the ground. • If there are any distributions, ensure a helpdesk or similar is available so communities can share feedback and complaints. • If there is a country-level complaint hotline or similar, share it with the communities so they can call and share their feedback. • Communicates to communities and local partners in all meetings that you welcome and accept feedback and complaints. • Ensure you discuss any feedback in a fair and appropriate manner and ensure follow-up actions. • Ensure you have an internal process for handling complaints and acting on them • Share your organization's codes of conduct with partners, stakeholders, and communities so they are aware of the standards of your work. • Use coordination platforms to share community feedback trends that you received about your diaspora response. Sharing will enable others to learn what type of feedback is received and can adapt their own response. For example, if you frequently receive feedback from communities on specific needs and you are not able to provide it, share it among stakeholders so they can consider it while planning their response.

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CHS 6 :
Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance. **Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Humanitarian response is not implemented in silos but rather many actors try to aid. It is important to prevent the duplication of efforts and the waste of resources. The sharing of information and knowledge between stakeholders, joint planning, and integrated activities can also ensure improved outcomes of a response. DOs should seek coordination with other actors to be informed, share knowledge, and adapt.	• Participate in coordination mechanisms to enhance coordination during a response. • Identify 1 or 2 INGO that will help you to connect with coordination structures and meetings e.g., cluster meetings. • Establish connections with peer DOs to coordinate your actions. • Sharing information between different stakeholders and different coordination mechanisms makes it more likely that gaps or duplication will be identified. Ensure to share key activities that you plan to implement, community priorities that you identified, and gaps remaining. • Engage or collaborate with local partners. Set a clear and shared understanding of each other's mandate, and mutual roles and responsibilities so the partnerships are effective and accountable.

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CHS 7 :
Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organizations learn from experience and reflection. **Quality Criterion: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
A culture of learning and continual improvement should lie at the heart of a professional and committed organization and is fundamental to ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. Constant interaction with affected populations is necessary so that changes and adaptations can be made as soon as possible. DOs can learn from their response on how to improve the services that they provide to affected communities.	• Arrange meetings with partners and communities that you supported to discuss learnings and successes of the response. • Organize experience sharing among other DOs from the same countries of origin. • Discuss internally, reflect on what could be improved and what practices could be maintained for the future. • Make a list of Do-s and Don't-s for the future and ensure to use what you learned while planning another response. • Discuss what data you need to collect to improve your response, and what data can help you to know more about the impact your project is making. • Check what tools other organizations are using to monitor their activities and discuss if you could adapt some of their tools and approaches. • Cooperate with other organizations for joint monitoring and evaluation of response activities. • Try to use community meetings and/or social media platforms to ask the affected community how your actions made a change.

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CHS 8 :
Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers. **Quality Criterion: Staff are supported to do their job effectively and are treated fairly and equitably.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
The actions of staff and volunteers are the foundation of each of the Nine Commitments and the basis for an effective response. DOs should keep into consideration the well-being of their staff and volunteers. Each of them should have a clear understanding of their mandate and responsibilities.	• Ensure everyone in your organization understands the CHS, roles, and responsibilities. • Encourage Peer-to-Peer mentorship among staff and volunteers, and train DOs and local partners on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH) and safeguarding. • Establish a safeguarding committee so ensure that your staff and volunteers do no harm do no harm. • Regularly discuss with the humanitarian response team their roles and responsibilities. Identify the relevant skills within the team and distribute the tasks accordingly • Encourage everyone to learn and develop their understanding of the ongoing situation, and needed skills e.g., standards and basic quality measures. • Motivate and encourage local volunteers to support your initiatives, think of acknowledgment and appreciation process to value their work. • Ask communities if they are satisfied with the competency of your volunteers and partners. • Aid workers also need to take personal responsibility for managing their well-being. If you observe that you or anyone else in your organization needs psycho-social support, reach out to peer organizations for support.

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CHS 9 :
Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organizations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically. **Quality Criterion: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.**

Why is it important?	How it can be applied by DOs?
Communities affected by crisis bear the true costs of mismanagement, negligence, or corruption, so it is vital that organizations use resources wisely and honestly in order to ensure maximum impact. DOs should ensure avoiding duplication and managing resources effectively.	• Manage and use resources to achieve their intended purpose, minimizing waste. • Accept and allocate funds and gifts-in-kind ethically and legally. • Use resources in an environmentally responsible way. • Monitor and report expenditures against budget. • Ensure that resources are utilized effectively and conduct periodically internal and external audits. • Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) when necessary to ensure that there is a standard of operation available within the organization.

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Useful Resources

- **Core Humanitarian Standard:** https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/
- **Core Humanitarian Standard tools:** https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/tools
- **Sphere:** https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/core-humanitarian-standard/
- **CHS Alliance:** https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/resource/core-humanitarian-standard/

ABOUT DEMAC

The mission of DEMAC is two-fold:

1) to enable inclusive coordination and collaboration among diaspora organizations providing humanitarian assistance, and across diaspora organizations and institutional humanitarian actors, and

2) to facilitate higher levels of engagement and visibility for diaspora organizations in the humanitarian system.

The objective is to contribute to transforming the humanitarian eco-system by laying the groundwork for a deeper understanding of diasporas as humanitarian actor groups with different modus operandi for the implementation of aid in practice, identifying and opening potential spaces for engagement and cross-fertilization, and improving coordination between diaspora and institutional relief providers.

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