



A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

Toolset 3-F

Policies, strategies, guidelines

TS3-F-3 – Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Humanitarian Response

Context	The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (commonly known as 'Sphere') aims to improve the quality of humanitarian responses in situations of disaster and conflict, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system to disaster-affected people.
Implementing organisations	The Sphere Project.
Description of good practices	<p>Protection, GBV and WASH are incorporated in a number of areas in Sphere:</p> <p>Protection Principles</p> <p>In general the protection-related activities of humanitarian agencies can be classified broadly into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventative: Preventing physical threats or human rights abuses from occurring or reducing exposure or vulnerability to such threats and abuses. Preventing protection threats also includes efforts to foster an environment conducive to respect for the rights of women, men, girls and boys of all ages in accordance with international law. • Responsive: Stopping ongoing violations by responding to incidents of violence and other rights abuses. • Remedial: Providing remedies to ongoing or past abuses, through reparation and rehabilitation, by offering healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance or other services and support, and helping the affected population to access available remedies and claim their rights. <p>Sphere identifies four Protection Principles, which all humanitarian actors should be guided by at all times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection Principle 1. Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions – Those involved in a humanitarian response take steps to avoid or minimise any adverse effects of their intervention, in particular the risk of exposing people to increased danger or abuse of their rights (p.33). • Protection Principle 2. Ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination – People can access humanitarian assistance according to need and without adverse discrimination. Assistance is not withheld from people in need, and access to humanitarian agencies is provided as necessary to meet the Sphere standards (p.36). • Protection Principle 3. Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion – People are protected from violence, from being forced or induced to act against their will and from fear of such abuse (p.38).

- **Protection Principle 4. Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse** – The affected population is helped to claim their rights through information, documentation and assistance in seeking remedies. People are supported appropriately in recovering from the physical, psychological and social effects of violence and other abuse (p.41).

It is noted, however, that the principles are not 'absolute', as it is recognised that circumstances may limit the extent to which agencies are able to fulfil them.

In 2001, the Global Protection Cluster included a co-ordination system with focal points for the following areas:

- Child protection
- Gender-based violence
- Housing, land and property
- Mine action
- Rule of law and justice

Other guidelines have been developed for other protection areas, such as on the protection of civilians, protection in natural disasters, refugees and internally displaced persons.

Core Standards

The Core Standards cut across all sectors:

- **Core Standard 1 – People-centred humanitarian response** (p.55)
- **Core Standard 2 – Co-ordination and collaboration** (p.58)
- **Core Standard 3 – Assessment** (p.61)
- **Core standard 4 – Design and response** (p.65)
- **Core Standard 5 – Performance, transparency and learning** (p.68)
- **Core Standard 6 -- Aid worker performance** (p.71)

All of the above core standards are relevant to the reduction of violence related to WASH. Key elements include:

- Recognising that people's existing capacities and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of the humanitarian response, including building on existing community-based and self-help activities.
- Enabling people to lodge complaints about the programme easily and safely, and establish transparent, timely procedures and responses to remedial actions.
- Locating public meetings in secure and accessible areas for all members of the community, including women whose attendance in public events may be limited by cultural norms.
- Speaking openly may be difficult for some people. Children should be spoken to separately and, in most cases, women and girls should be consulted in separate spaces. Aid workers engaged in the collection of systematic information from people who have been abused or violated should have the necessary skills and systems to do so safely and appropriately.
- The response should meet the assessed needs of the disaster-affected population in relation to context, the risks faced and the capacity of the affected people and state to cope and recover.
- The design should ensure equitable distributions and the impartial targeting of assistance. Respecting people's personal information will protect their safety and dignity. For example, people living with HIV and AIDS may be stigmatised; survivors of human rights violations must be guaranteed safe and confidential assistance.
- Establishing codes of personal conduct for aid workers that protect disaster-affected people from sexual abuse, corruption, exploitation and other violations of people's human rights. Codes should be with disaster-affected people.

- Establishing grievance procedures and taking appropriate disciplinary action against aid workers following confirmed violation of the agency's code of conduct.
- Aid workers' control over the management and allocation of valuable aid resources puts them in a position of power over the disaster-affected population. Such power over people who are dependent on assistance and whose protective social networks have been disturbed or destroyed can lead to corruption and sexually abusive situations. Sexual activity can never be demanded in exchange for humanitarian assistance or protection. No individual associated with a humanitarian response (aid workers, the military, state or private sector personnel) should be party to abuse, corruption or sexual exploitation. The forced labour of adults or children, illicit drug use and/or trading in humanitarian goods and services by those connected with humanitarian distributions are also prohibited.

WASH

The WASH chapter covers a range of technical specifications, indicators and guidelines relating to the provision of safe water supply, safe excreta disposal, improved hygiene practices, improved solid waste disposal, vector control and drainage.

Key elements that are included and which contribute to a reduction in vulnerabilities to violence include:

- The recommendation that a vulnerability and capacity analysis is undertaken to understand the different vulnerabilities and capacities of populations, plus the need to disaggregate data by sex and age during assessment to ensure that the WASH sector adequately considers the diversity of populations.
- The need to assess and identify risky practices and to involve affected individuals and vulnerable people in the siting and design of waterpoints and in the construction of laundry and bathing facilities. Where possible, communal latrines should be provided with lighting or households provided with torches.
- The provision of water supply, excreta disposal and hygiene facilities that are securely located.
- For excreta disposal and bathing facilities, these should also be in a well-lit area with good visibility of surrounding areas and should provide adequate privacy and have locks on doors.
- The provision of water supply that has an adequate flow – to reduce queues and hence risks of arguments and fighting between people waiting for water.
- The provision of adequate hygiene materials such as soap and menstrual protection materials – to reduce the need for transactional sex to obtain them.
- The need to systematically seek feedback on the design and acceptability of both facilities and promotional methods from all different user groups on all WASH programme activities. It should be ensured that women and girls feel safe in using the facilities provided.
- Shelters, paths and water and sanitation facilities should not be flooded or eroded by water, as this can make access more difficult and increases risks of harassment, particularly in urban areas.

Humanitarian Charter

The Humanitarian Charter specifies:

- **Our beliefs** – It expresses the shared conviction as humanitarian agencies that all people affected by disaster or conflict have the right to receive protection and assistance and ensure the basic conditions of life with dignity. These beliefs are based on the **humanitarian imperative**: that action should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster or conflict and that nothing should over-ride this principle.

- **Common principles, rights and duties** – The core rights which the Humanitarian Charter supports include:
 - The right to life with dignity
 - The right to receive humanitarian assistance
 - The right to protection and security
- **Our commitment** – Recognises that active participation is essential to providing assistance, that we will support local efforts and we will aim to minimise any negative effects of humanitarian action. It also notes that we will act in accordance with the guidance in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994).

Key documents that inform the Humanitarian Charter, such as treaties, covenants and protocols, are included in Annex I.

Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994).

The Code of Conduct includes the following principles (pp.370–2):

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.
5. We shall respect culture and custom.
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster, as well as meeting basic needs.
8. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
9. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects.

References/Links

Taken from: The Sphere Project (2011) Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response. Geneva, Switzerland: The Sphere Project. Available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/> [accessed 11 October 2013].

**VIOLENCE
GENDER
& WASH**

A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

Toolset 3-F

Policies, strategies, guidelines