



Case Study

Response in Nepal after the earthquake in 2015

This case study shows how two complementary sets of humanitarian standards can be used in a humanitarian response, considering the example of the work of Dan Church Aid in Nepal.

If you would like to share your own experience, please contact us at: hsp@spherestandards.org

Background and Context

On 25 April 2015, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit Nepal. It was the largest earthquake to take place in the country in 80 years. Less than three weeks later, on 12 May, another 7.3-magnitude earthquake struck the already devastated country. Together, the two earthquakes killed nearly 9,000 people and injured around 22,000 more. With 14 out of 75 districts severely hit, the lives and livelihood of hundreds of thousands of poor and vulnerable families across Nepal were seriously affected.

Dan Church Aid (DCA), a member of the ACT Alliance, began its immediate response on the third day after the disaster. Along with other ACT member organisations, DCA started distributing cooked meals in the affected areas and providing immediate Shelter, WASH, and Community-based psychosocial support. In areas where markets were functioning and accessible, DCA provided cash assistance based on the community's desires and needs. This support continued through the recovery phase¹.

¹ The information of this case study are based on the interview of the DCA country Director of Nepal and the report "ACT response to Ghorka earthquake": https://nepal.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_learned.pdf

The Sphere WASH standard

DCA realised from the early days of the emergency that without specific intervention, certain parts of the population - though directly affected by the earthquake - would be left behind. Therefore, the NGO used Sphere standards to design and structure its humanitarian intervention and target marginalised communities.

The standards are an expression of the rights of people affected by crisis, as set out in the Humanitarian Charter. People affected by disaster or conflict have a right to life with dignity and to assistance; as a consequence, all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster or conflict.

DCA applied Sphere WASH Standard 1 on WASH programme design and implementation, recommending that “WASH needs of the affected population are met and users are involved in the design, management, and maintenance of the facilities.” They developed a water trucking system to reach the most affected communities. Their operations further expanded to the construction of temporary latrines, rehabilitation and repair of drinking water systems, and distribution of hygiene kits.

Sphere encourages as a key action to “systematically seek feedback on the design and acceptability (...) from all different user groups on all WASH programme activity”. DCA established a Complaint Response Mechanism for disaster survivors (along with a complaint box, flex, and leaflets with telephone numbers of key persons), to ensure its WASH activities were adapted to their needs and social habits. The NGO also coupled this intervention with the provision of psychosocial support and counselling.

The Minimum Economic Recovery Standards: Core Standard on Coordination and Effectiveness

When assisting populations affected by the earthquake, DCA rapidly recognised the need for rapid support for people’s livelihoods. Linking relief to recovery interventions, it expanded its response by providing cash support through mobile phones, based on the community’s desires and needs. This helped, for instance, to build intermediate shelters for earthquake-affected communities. This development was made in conjunction and ²coordination with many partners. It echoed well the Core Standard 2 on Coordination and



² Source for the picture : <https://www.danchurchaid.org/articles/three-months-on-after-the-nepal-earthquake-danchurchaid-distributes-cash-to-10-418-households>. Photo Credits: Shreya Singh

Effectiveness in MERS 2nd Edition, recommending that “Economic recovery is planned and implemented in coordination with the relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organisations, working together for maximum efficiency, coverage, and effectiveness- in partnership with the private sector for greater impact”.

DCA’s market survey and analysis were conducted in partnership with ICCO Cooperation and mobilised a private sector company, Hello Paisa, to distribute cash through mobile phones. These models constituted pioneering work in Nepal: they were the result of a tripartite partnership between an international NGO, an NGO and a private company, which was later replicated by other agencies.

Dave Smith, Country Director for DCA in Nepal and Bangladesh, mentioned that humanitarian standards helped DCA develop this partner approach and increase the effectiveness and accountability of its programme. “Sphere and other humanitarian standards have been incorporated in our organisation’s training and policies”, he added, “guiding us to use a partnership approach with local stakeholders and following the Grand Bargain’s commitments”



The Sphere Handbook presents common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response. It comprises the Humanitarian Charter, the Protection Principles, the Core Humanitarian Standard, and minimum humanitarian standards in four areas: water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH); food security and nutrition; shelter and settlement; health.

To read the Sphere standards, click [here](#):



The Minimum Economic Recovery Standards represent the industry-based consensus on what constitutes an effective and appropriate response to help disaster-affected populations to regain their livelihoods and provide for themselves and their families with dignity, through financial services, productive assets, employment, and enterprise development.

To read the MERS, click [here](#)

The Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) aims to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action through an increased application of humanitarian standards. It comprises seven standards: Sphere, the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (SEEP Network), the Minimum Standards for Market Analysis (CALP), the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities (ADCAP)

For more information on HSP standards, please visit: <http://www.humanitarianstandardspartnership.org/>

