

Quality + Accountability + Safeguarding
(QAS)

in Humanitarian - Development - Peace
Contexts

QAS IN ACTION

A Smart Guide
for Aid Actors

community
WORLD service ASIA peace
resilience
dignity

NO LOGOS, NO EGOS: EMBRACING A PEOPLE- CENTERED APPROACH



We prioritise the needs of the communities by setting aside egos and focusing on collaborative and people-centered solutions.

Therefore, logos of related-organisations, contributors, partners and donors to the development of this Guide 'QAS in Action' on Quality, Accountability, and Safeguarding (QAS) for Humanitarian, Development, and Peace (HDP) actors are not here at the forefront.

Community World Service Asia (CWSA) is a leader on QAS since two decades, and the enabler and publisher of this Guide 'QAS in Action'. CWSA believes deeply in collaboration and cooperation. Full acknowledgements are available at the end of this publication.

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This Guide 'QAS in Action' is for now available in **English**.
Please contact us if you wish to suggest **other languages**.

ONLINE VERSION AND TRAINING

This Guide 'QAS in Action' is available online.
It is accompanied by a short training module.

PRESENTIAL TRAININGS, TRAININGS OF TRAINERS, OR OF MENTORS

Training design and delivery can be tailored to your needs and context:
Contact us!

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Enabled & published by: [*Community World Service Asia \(CWSA\)*](#)

This Guide 'QAS in Action' aims to support a holistic and contextualised application of Quality, Accountability, and Safeguarding (QAS) from a people-centered perspective, rather than organisational.

This Guide 'QAS in Action' is designed for anyone dedicated to supporting communities' life with dignity in a transparent and safe manner. It will benefit specifically aid actors working locally, in communities' living areas.



WHAT REALLY MATTERS

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR AID ACTORS:

PEOPLE FIRST!

ADOPT A PRINCIPLED ATTITUDE
- RESPECT DIGNITY - BE TRANSPARENT - DO NO HARM

BE A LEADER ON QAS!
IN YOUR PROJECTS AND TEAMS

ADOPT PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE:
STEP INTO THEIR SHOES!

SPREAD THE LEARNING
USE AND SHARE THIS GUIDE 'QAS IN ACTION' TO
PROMOTE EFFECTIVE AND GOOD PRACTICES.

QAS IN SIMPLE TERMS



Aid Actors

Include Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) actors, meaning all those involved in delivering assistance and protection to communities facing challenges and needing support for their survival and well-being.



Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) Nexus

Connects humanitarian, development, and peace actors and actions to address risks and needs in a way that considers people’s full social, economic, and political realities.



People-centered & Area-based approach

Reflects our growing strategic and operational will to consider people and communities in their geographical location, rather than aid organisations and operations. It allows assistance and protection to be considered from a multi-sectoral and inclusive perspective. It is a result of a renewed commitment towards collective accountability to affected people (AAP), including community and area-based mechanisms for participation, feedback and sensitive complaints. This approach operationalises the HDP Nexus theory.



Principles

Are foundations reflecting the uniqueness of aid actors and differentiating them from other actors mapped through a people-centered or area-based approach. Charters and Codes of conduct translate values and principles into commitments and actionable requirements for aid actors’ appropriate behaviour.



Quality, Accountability, and Safeguarding (QAS)

Refers to a set of principles, standards, and commitments designed to ensure that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities are carried out effectively, responsibly, and safely.

PREAMBLE

Why QAS matters?

A QAS Framework is essential for translating our core humanitarian values into actions. It aims to ensure that these values are consistently applied, resulting in meaningful impact for the communities and people we serve.

Why is this Guide ‘QAS in Action’ needed?

After decades of QAS promotion, we recognise that its application remains fragmented across actors and contexts, through the HDP Nexus. This inconsistency hinders progress in serving communities effectively. Hopefully, we have collectively reached a momentum to formalise the aid sector’s learning. This Guide ‘QAS in Action’ offers concise guidance and practical tools to apply QAS in the aid sector, focusing on areas like learning, collaboration, and safeguarding.

Who is this Guide ‘QAS in Action’ for?

This Guide ‘QAS in Action’ is designed for all actors committed to applying QAS in practical, context-specific ways. It is not limited to any specific roles or organisations. It rather addresses the broader need for both strategic and operational application of QAS. This Guide ‘QAS in Action’ will benefit specifically those working locally, close to communities.

Understanding the QAS Framework

Key essential areas have been identified for QAS application: learning, analysis, collaboration, implementation and transition. These are enriched with an analysis of cross-sectoral themes, such as power dynamics, organisational versus people-centered approaches, the Nexus, climate change, innovation and the use of digital tools.

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INTRODUCTION

1 / CONTEXT: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF QAS IN HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT, AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

QAS refers to a set of principles, standards, and commitments designed to ensure that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities are carried out effectively, responsibly, and safely.

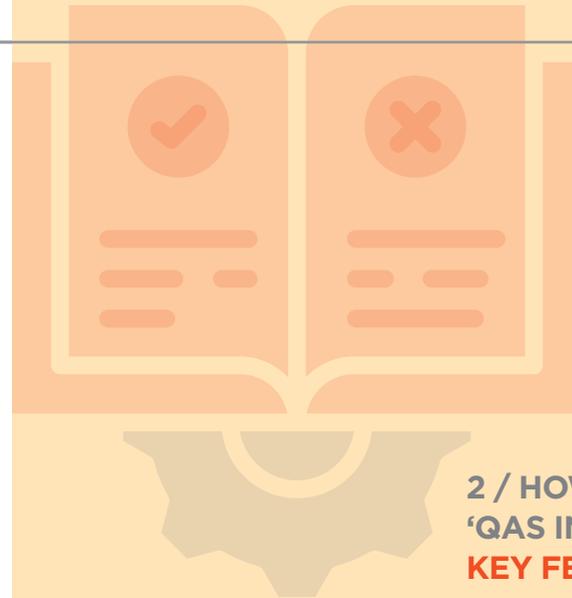
These principles, standards and commitments have been translated by various inter-agency initiatives into references and tools such as the *Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)*, *Sphere* and a set of ‘companions’ under the *Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP)*, the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) commitments and guidance*, etc.

These tools should be systematically applied in a contextual manner in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work with the aim of

addressing the needs of people in crisis while respecting their dignity, involving them in decisions, and ensuring their safety.

Compliance mechanisms have also been designed along the standards and commitments to verify their application, from both community, user and donor perspective. These mechanisms range from self to mixed and fully externally led verification processes.

While this is all in place and available, implementation remains at stake. It is critical to accelerate the process of mainstreaming QAS throughout strategies and activities, as this reflects aid actors’ unicity and commitment to the communities and people we seek to serve.



2 / HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE ‘QAS IN ACTION’: KEY FEATURES

The diverse nature of HDP activities means that no-one-size-fits-all and the need to search for single and simple solutions are rarely effective. Tailoring QAS requires deep understanding and adaptability from all actors working through the HDP Nexus.

This Guide ‘QAS in Action’ intends to support aid actors in applying QAS throughout their activities in a meaningful, contextualised and localised manner.

Therefore, the chapters provide guidance from diverse perspectives: the big picture, community members’ views, application through essential areas, cross-sectoral themes, lead initiatives and finally tools and resources.

Aid actors often look for learnings’ immediate benefits towards practical use and application. This has been taken into account in the development of this Guide ‘QAS in Action’:

Choosing a perspective and reading one chapter of interest is possible, as well as reading the whole Guide itself.

CHAPTER A THE BIG PICTURE OF QAS

1 / THE QAS FRAMEWORK: A ROADMAP THE QAS PILLARS AND HOW THEY INTEGRATE

Quality, Accountability and Safeguarding are inter-connected and hard to isolate.

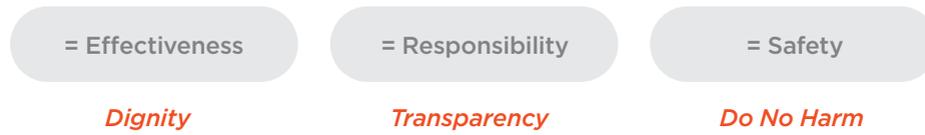
An example: sexual misconduct by aid actors is a failure to uphold safeguarding standards and is a breach of accountability to communities, through an abuse of trust. It does harm to individuals and impacts their life. It impacts the overall quality of our work and the reputation of the aid sector.

Another example: quality will be at stake if there are no functional complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) to consider communities' views (accountability), including their perception of safety (safeguarding), and enabling continuous adjustment of a project (quality).



DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS

Quality, Accountability, and Safeguarding (QAS) refers to a set of principles, standards, and commitments designed to ensure that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities are carried out effectively, responsibly, and safely.



Quality is about being effective while respecting people's preferences.

Quality criteria are relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (OECD DAC evaluation criteria).

Accountability means giving accounts to all those involved, primarily to affected communities, as per the people-centered approach.

The **accountability chain** involves all actors, e.g. civil society organisations, agencies, donors, states and the public. Our focus is with **communities**.

Safeguarding is about protecting communities' rights and assuring people's dignity, through preventing, mitigating and responding to misconduct by aid actors, such as fraud, corruption and sexual misconduct, encompassing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH).

FROM ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP) TO ACCOUNTABILITY TO ALL

Humanitarian accountability was considered since the end of the 90s – based on the lessons learned after the response to the emergency in Rwanda in 1994 the *Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (JEEAR)* - mainly through Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), or communities.



While this approach does correspond to our ultimate objective, it is important to consider the full accountability chain, which also applies to organisations, donors and the public. Communities and people remain at the center, however, the full accountability chain reflects responsibilities from all actors towards all people.

How could AAP be successful if donors or organisations were not transparent and would not be respecting internally what they say should be applied with community members?

How could we be coherent if aid organisations would not treat their employees and partners with the same level of respect than the one they require them to adopt towards the communities they serve?

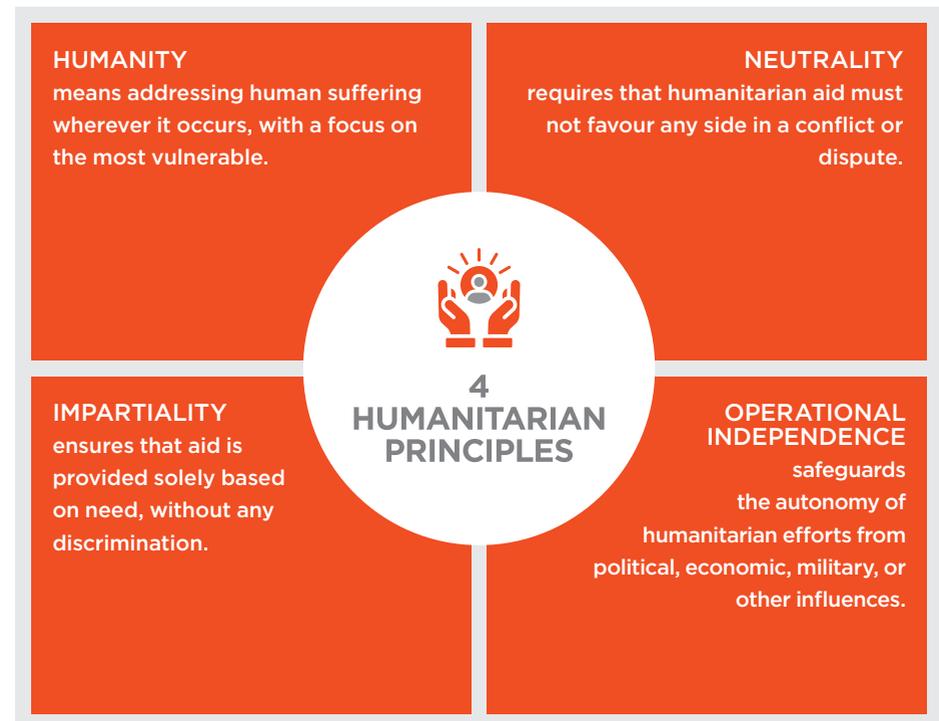
Would the aid sector be legitimate if its efforts to put in place participation, feedback and sensitive complaints mechanisms for communities would not be reflected internally for all employees and partners?

What if course correction of the projects cannot reflect the changes needed as per monitoring and evaluation recommendations due to donors' in-agility?

Our values apply to all, and while we want to ensure that they are enforced with vulnerable communities, they also apply to any of us, humanitarian-development-peace actors, and those contributing resources, such as donors and the public.

The aid sector and humanitarian action in particular is framed by a set of international laws underpinning the right of communities we serve. These laws have been translated into principles that are easier to understand and apply in the field. Improving QAS actually contributes to enforce the rights of the communities and people.

- Do No Harm - *Brief & Long*
- *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief*
- *Humanitarian Charter*
- *UN Charter 80 years*
- *Humanitarian Principles*
- *Protection Principles*
- *Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*



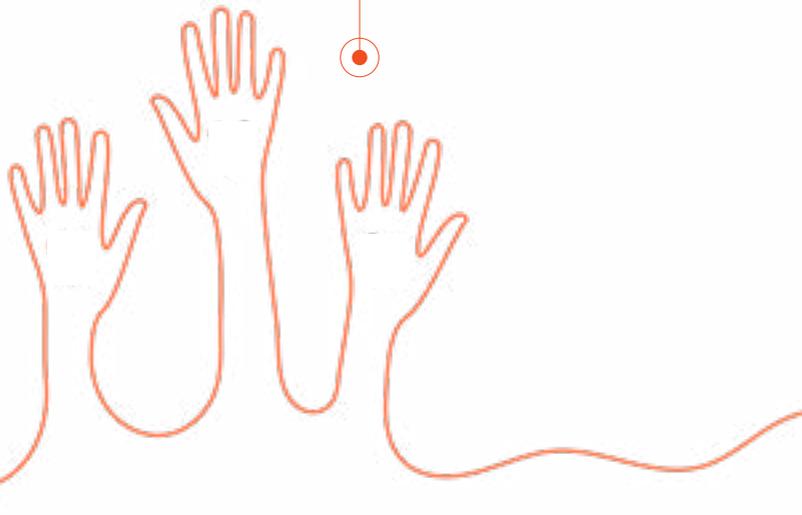
PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm.

Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation.

Ensure people's access to assistance according to need and without discrimination.

Help people claim their rights.



PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)



Zero tolerance

SEA constitutes acts of gross misconduct and are grounds for termination of employment.

No sex with children

Any sexual activity with children (<age 18) is strictly prohibited, regardless of consent or local age of majority.

Do not hire or bribe anyone for sex

Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex is prohibited, including hiring and soliciting sex workers.

No sex with beneficiaries

Any sexual relationship with beneficiaries involving improper use of rank or position is prohibited.

Always report suspicions of SEA

Humanitarian/development workers must report any concerns of SEA by a fellow worker and are protected from retaliation.

Create an environment free from SEA

All humanitarian/development workers must create and maintain an environment free from SEA and promote their Code of Conduct.

2 / QAS ACROSS THE PROJECT CYCLE PROJECT CYCLE MANAGEMENT (PCM)



HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE (HPC)



The project cycle (for the organisational level) or programme cycle (for the Inter-agency level) are composed of phases which always comprise: the identification and initial assessment, the formulation and design, the mobilisation of resources, the execution or implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and exit and continuous learning.

HOW QAS FITS INTO EACH PHASE OF THE PROJECT OR PROGRAMME CYCLE, FROM DESIGN TO EVALUATION

QAS strategies and activities are embedded into all phases of the project or programme cycle. QAS tools can be used throughout, sometimes at different phases.

For example, an assessment checklist can be used both for the initial assessment, to understand the context and create a baseline, as well as for monitoring during an activity, or for a final evaluation.

For further detailed presentation and guidance you can refer to the Booklet *Quality and Accountability for Project Cycle Management*, which is proposing a holistic approach for field practitioners. A photo under it also needs to be added. will share.

THE PROJECT OR PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT (PCM): A MODEL TO BE REIMAGINED

Recent analysis suggests that the project or programme cycle is an often organisational-biased way to visualize humanitarian, development and peace activities, impeding a fully localised approach. While it offers a common way to frame and describe what is being done, it may not be iterative and flexible enough.



3 / PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACHES SHIFTING FROM ORGANISATIONAL TO COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE- CENTERED PRACTICES

The above discussion point on the project cycle takes us back to an organisational approach. This approach proves to be too long term to enable a potential and meaningful shift from an organisational perspective to a community and people centered approach.

Focusing on local users, rather than organisations, supports a contextualised approach, and therefore a community or people centered approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO AID ACTORS

- ‘Put yourselves in the shoes of people’
- ‘Imagine this happens to you or your family’
- ‘How would you like to be treated?’
- ‘What type of participation would be satisfying for you?’
- ‘How would you like priorities to be chosen?’

MAKE QAS FRIENDLY, ACCESSIBLE, AND ADAPTABLE TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

QAS can be mainstreamed and become an accessible and adaptable part of any project by, for example, simplifying language, making training engaging, adapting tools, involving the community, ensuring functional and safe feedback channels, building and promoting transparency, staying flexible, and sharing capacities. These steps can transform QAS from a set of guidelines into a user-friendly, community-centered approach that resonates with the people it aims to serve.



CHAPTER B

QAS THROUGH A COMMUNITY MEMBER'S EYES

1 / MY HOMEPLACE AND THE PROJECT

As a community member, my journey through this project reflects how my needs were prioritised, my voice was heard, and my safety was ensured at every step. Here is how I experienced each moment.



2 / MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE PROJECT LEARNING AND CAPACITY SHARING

MY EXPERIENCE:

Right from the beginning, I was invited to join some sensitisation sessions. I learned about the project's objectives, my rights, and how the project was designed to protect and empower us. I felt encouraged to share my thoughts and concerns, and the training delivered made me feel more informed and confident.

HOW IT BENEFITS ME:

I now understand how the project works and how I can hold the team accountable. I know how the project will keep my community safe, and I can share information with my neighbours and colleagues. I have identified ways to contribute to the project, while I acknowledge limitations and challenges to cover all our needs.

QAS IN ACTION: The training was tailored to our local needs and included everyone, making sure no one was left behind, especially those who are often overlooked while we - members of this community - know that they are highly vulnerable in our context.

ANALYSIS INCLUDING CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

MY EXPERIENCE: When the project team came to assess our community's needs, they asked for my input as well as from various neighbours and colleagues. I shared my views on what challenges we face and what we need most.

It was good to see that they valued what we had to say, and I could feel they were using our feedback to design something collaboratively that would work for us.

HOW IT BENEFITS ME: I felt heard and respected, knowing that my input was used to design the project. The fact that they listened means the project will better meet our needs and reflect our context. While co-design would be the ideal, this was a first step.

QAS IN ACTION: The team involved us directly, making sure the plans were based on real information from our community. They also considered the risks and challenges we face, ensuring the project will not do any harm to our community.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS



MY EXPERIENCE: As the project developed, I was invited to meetings with other community members, local organizations, and government representatives. I contributed ideas on how we can all work together, and it was good to feel that my voice was important in these discussions. We, community members, were not just watching this project unfold: we were part of it.

HOW IT BENEFITS ME: Being involved in decisions makes me feel like this project is really for us, not just something thrown on us. It is empowering to know that my input matters and that I take part in decisions made about the future of my community and myself. Furthermore, my neighbours, friends and colleagues appreciated the role I took on behalf of our community and I was thanked for it.

QAS IN ACTION: The project worked closely with us and other local actors, ensuring we all had a say in how things move forward. The project team made sure we understood the process and that they were accountable to us.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

MY EXPERIENCE: When the project was underway, I saw things happening in our community, e.g. new services, improved infrastructure, and activities in which we could participate. I was asked to provide feedback, through various channels: meetings, suggestion and complaint boxes, a hotline and one-on-one conversations. I could share my thoughts on how things were going. When something wasn't working, the project team listened and suggested adjustments.

HOW IT BENEFITS ME: I feel valued because my feedback is used to improve activities. Knowing I can speak up if there is a problem makes me feel safe and respected. I also feel safe knowing that I can report a misconduct from the staff and that follow up will be provided, including investigation if needed.

QAS IN ACTION: The project made sure there were ways for me to provide feedback and see real changes, and even to complain anonymously in case of aid workers' misconduct. This kept me and my community safe. Overall, the project was flexible and responsive to our needs, and safeguarding measures were always in place to protect us.

TRANSITION, EXIT AND SUSTAINABILITY

MY EXPERIENCE: As the project started wrapping up, following the strategy adopted from the beginning, the team supported and prepared us and the local partners to continue the work. They talked with us about how things would be sustained after they left, and it was reassuring to know that the benefits wouldn't disappear once the project ended.

HOW IT BENEFITS ME: I feel confident that the improvements will last. Knowing the project has built something sustainable gives me hope that our community will continue after the project team leaves.

QAS IN ACTION: Since the beginning, the project was designed to last, with local actors taking over. The project ensured the system would stay strong.

3 / REFLECTIONS ON MY EXPERIENCE 'HOW I FELT'

This project made me feel included, respected, and protected. At every step, I felt that my voice mattered and that my community's well-being was at the heart of every decision and activity.



COMMUNITY MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE



QAS ESSENTIAL AREAS

I became more knowledgeable and empowered to contribute to the project.

My input helped shape the project to suit our needs in our context.

I worked alongside others to make sure the project focused on our needs.

I could share my thoughts, and my feedback helped improve the project.

I am reassured that the benefits will continue, even after the team leaves.

Learning

Analysis

Collaboration

Implementation and feedback Loops

Transition, exit and sustainability

CHAPTER C QAS APPLICATION THROUGH ESSENTIAL AREAS

Five essential areas have been carefully defined to encompass humanitarian, development and peacebuilding generic activities: Learning, analysis, collaboration, implementation and transition. While these areas can connect easily with the project cycle's phases, they reflect a people-centered approach rather than a project or programme.

LEARNING

Continuous learning and training foster a QAS culture, ensuring improvement and effective QAS mainstreaming across all activities.

ANALYSIS

Adopting QAS to analyse needs, risks, and contexts ensures that both data and community feedback provide relevant and accurate foundations for activities.

COLLABORATION

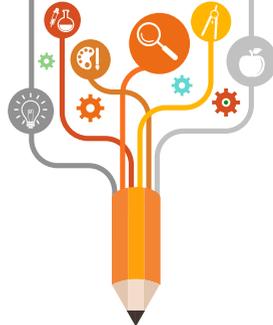
QAS enables us to engage all actors - local communities, NGOs, partners and governments - in equitable partnerships to collectively deliver common goals, in a coordinated manner.

IMPLEMENTATION

Real-time two-way feedback and complaints mechanisms, enabling continuous adjustments and improvements through ongoing monitoring, allow for quality project implementation.

TRANSITION, EXIT AND SUSTAINABILITY

QAS should be applied since the beginning through project transition and closure to ensure long-term sustainability.



1 / LEARNING AND CAPACITY SHARING

KEY CONNECTED CONCEPTS: *Anticipatory attitude, do no harm, good and bad practices, preparedness, continuous learning, capacity strengthening and sharing, knowledge management, testing, adjusting, innovation, localization.*

IN BRIEF: This essential area focuses on continuous learning and preparedness through the use of prior good and bad practices' analysis and evaluations. This is a good moment to contextualise, adapt and test tools. Building capacities of employees and raising awareness of communities are essential to ensure no harm is done through the project. Beyond capacity strengthening, capacity sharing is ideal for a successful project.

WHY IT MATTERS: In complex, volatile environments, continuous learning is essential, through the HDP Nexus. The 'learn-test-apply' cycle helps organisations reach higher quality levels and adapt swiftly to changing environments. This learning process remains central in all activities in the aid sector.

WHEN TO APPLY: Learning should occur continuously, especially in times when there is no crisis, to better understand communities' preferences, involve them, test and refine approaches.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Principled people-centered behaviour, listening skills, and respect are critical. Soft skills complement technical expertise, enabling ethical, innovative, and effective advocacy for the benefit of the communities we work with.

JOINT AND COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: Though resource competition exists, focusing on joint approaches for learning rather than organisational or single initiatives' strategies is extremely beneficial.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Is time allocated in your work plan for learning?
- ✓ Is it reflected in all employees and partners' terms of reference?
- ✓ How are communities involved in the learning process?
- ✓ Does your organisation have a learning strategy?
- ✓ Are there capacity strengthening or capacity sharing activities in place on QAS (trainings, workshops, training of trainers)?
- ✓ Are QAS related e-learning modules mandatory?
- ✓ Is practical support on QAS provided on a needs-basis?
- ✓ Are lessons from QAS implementation documented and shared?

RESOURCES & TOOLS

- [Sphere Humanitarian Charter](#): the cornerstone of Minimum Standards
- [Humanitarian Standards Partnership](#): Learning and training strategies, e.g. [LEGS learning strategy](#)
- [CHS Commitments](#):
 - Commitment 3 on better preparation and resilience
 - Commitment 4 on Do No Harm to people or environment
 - Commitment 6 on coordination and complementary support
 - Commitment 7 on continual adaptation and improvement based on feedback and learning
 - Commitment 8 on respectful, competent and well-managed staff and volunteers
- Capacity strengthening and training platforms: [Kaya](#), [PHAP](#), [UNITAR](#) (train the trainers model)
- [ALNAP's Guide on Evaluation of Humanitarian Action](#): A guide to improve learning and accountability through evaluations
- Rosters: AAP/PSEA with [Norcap](#), [RedR](#), surge capacity, [IASC help desk on AAP/PSEA](#), [IASC AAP community of practice](#)



DO'S

- ✓ Prepare in advance, raise continuous awareness on QAS principles, standards and commitments.
- ✓ Annex *Sphere Humanitarian Charter* to your Code of Conduct in every employee's contract and read it together.
- ✓ Ensure that learning appears both as a preliminary phase and continuously in your project cycle.
- ✓ Include learning in funding proposals.
- ✓ Locally, design collaboratively learning and training strategies.
- ✓ Make the most of hybrid approaches including the use of digital resources (e-courses, accessible online strategies, communities of practice, etc.).



& DON'TS

- ✗ Don't skip this phase: Learning is essential before crisis occur.
- ✗ Ensure that a continuous process supports learning from good and bad practices throughout the project life.
- ✗ Don't solely rely on online self-paced learning as it doesn't allow to contrast and ensure full understanding. Hybrid options are essential.
- ✗ Never assume people 'should know' or 'should remember': Refreshers are essentials.
- ✗ Avoid confusion between training and learning: a learning strategy is key to successful capacity strengthening and sharing.

2 / ANALYSIS INCLUDING CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING



KEY CONNECTED CONCEPTS: *Data-driven analysis, needs assessment, evidence-based data gathering, risk analysis, contextualisation.*

IN BRIEF: This essential area involves thorough analysis of the context, risks and needs. By integrating communities' views and feedback, organizations can make interventions more relevant and accountable.

WHY IT MATTERS: Understanding the context is critical for tailoring interventions to the specific community needs and reducing risks.

WHEN TO APPLY: Before any activity, and continuously as contexts evolve. Regular analysis helps anticipate changes and adjust projects accordingly.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Use data analysis tools, participatory matrix, engage local actors, and incorporate community feedback. Use findings to inform decision-making and ensure accountability.

JOINT AND COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: Collaboration on context analysis across organisations promotes a shared understanding and supports joint accountability efforts reflecting a people-centered approach.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ How is community contribution reflected in needs assessment and risk analysis?
- ✓ Are feedback and complaints mechanisms in place? Are they functional, i.e. reflecting communities' preferences, and safe?
- ✓ Are data sources accurate, reliable, and up to date?
- ✓ Is contextual analysis regularly updated and shared across partners?
- ✓ Is there a mechanism to adapt the analysis as the situation evolves?

RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Sphere & HSP Handbooks:** Sector-specific standards for assessing needs and applying humanitarian principles in different contexts; Assessment checklists.
- CHS Commitments:**
 - Commitment 2 on timely access and effective support.
 - Commitment 4 on Do no harm to people or environment
 - Commitment 6 on coordination and complementary support
 - Commitment 7 on continual adaptation and improvement based on feedback and learning
- IASC Contextual Analysis Toolkits:** Tools for assessing local contexts, including conflict, risk, and vulnerability assessments.
- IASC AAP/PSEA Toolkit:** Helps ensure that analysis integrates community input and safeguarding aspects.
- Risk Management Frameworks** (e.g., UN Risk Management Policy): Essential for understanding risks and mitigating them in the project context.
- Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP):** Needs assessments at the macro level.



DO'S

- ✓ Ensure that data collection is comprehensive, up to date, and verified by multiple sources (triangulation) to inform accurate contextual analysis.
- ✓ Involve communities in the initial assessment process to capture local knowledge, culture, preferences and insights.
- ✓ Regularly review and adapt analysis to reflect changing conditions and environment locally.
- ✓ Use risk assessments to inform decisions and mitigate potential harm during activities.
- ✓ Share your analysis with partners and stakeholders to ensure a coordinated approach and joint understanding.



& DON'TS

- ✗ Don't rely solely on outdated or incomplete data when designing project activities.
- ✗ Don't exclude communities from the analysis process, as it risks missing critical local insights and future ownership.
- ✗ Avoid making static plans: contextual analysis should evolve with the situation.
- ✗ Don't ignore the impact of external risks (e.g. political instability, natural disasters, economic factors, etc.) on your analysis.
- ✗ Don't keep analysis siloed within your organization: collaboration strengthens accuracy and ultimately accountability.



3 / COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

KEY CONNECTED CONCEPTS:

Community engagement, coordination, partnership strategies, joint accountability, local ownership.

IN BRIEF: This essential area ensures that local communities, NGOs and governments collectively integrate and apply QAS. Effective coordination tools help gather evidence and measure change, fostering joint QAS.

WHY IT MATTERS: No organisation can succeed alone. Building strong partnerships and engaging communities ensures local ownership of activities, improving QAS outcomes.

WHEN TO APPLY: Throughout the project cycle. Early engagement with communities and partners is essential.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Create localised coordination mechanisms, share tools, and maintain communication with and participation of all stakeholders. Regularly review progress with partners and communities and adapt as needed.

JOINT AND COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: Pooling resources and knowledge strengthens efforts, making activities more sustainable and people-centered.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Are local communities engaged in meaningful dialogue and decision-making?

- ✓ Are partnerships established with clear roles and responsibilities, clearly defined and actively engaged?

- ✓ Are coordination platforms or tools in place to align efforts across partners?

- ✓ How are the results of collaboration (evidence of change) documented and shared?

- ✓ Are mechanisms in place to ensure collective application of QAS?

RESOURCES & TOOLS

- CHS Commitments:**
 - Commitment 4 on Do No Harm to people or environment
 - Commitment 6 on coordination and complementary support
 - Commitment 7 on continual adaptation and improvement based on feedback and learning
- Sphere & HSP Handbooks:** Guidance on coordinating with other organisations and sectors to improve service delivery.
- IASC Principles of Partnership:** Equality, Transparency, Result-oriented approach, Responsibility, Complementarity.
- IASC AAP/PSEA Principles for Collective Accountability:** Focuses on joint approaches to accountability, safeguarding, and community engagement.
- Partnership assessment tools (e.g. UN Partner Portal):** Assess and track partnerships.
- Coordination Platforms (e.g., Clusters, NGO Consortia):** Multi-agency coordination to enhance collaborative efforts.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) templates for partnerships** with clear responsibilities related to QAS.



DO'S

- ✓ Engage local communities, partners, and government stakeholders early in the project to build trust and sustainability.
- ✓ Establish clear communication and coordination mechanisms with all partners from the start.
- ✓ Regularly assess the effectiveness of partnerships and adapt roles and responsibilities as needed.
- ✓ Prioritize local ownership by sharing and transferring knowledge, skills, and decision-making power to local actors.
- ✓ Share credit for successes and accountability for challenges with all partners involved.



& DON'TS

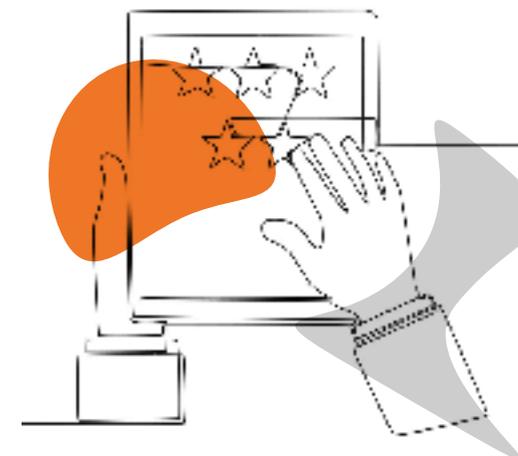
- ✗ Don't treat local partners as subordinates; Instead, aim for equal and mutually beneficial relationships.
- ✗ Don't neglect coordination or fail to participate in inter-agency coordination meetings.
- ✗ Avoid competition over resources; Focus on collaboration and common strategies for greater impact.
- ✗ Don't overlook the importance of documenting and sharing the lessons learned with all stakeholders.
- ✗ Don't assume that one size fits all: tailor collaboration strategies to each partner and context.

4 / IMPLEMENTATION AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

KEY CONNECTED CONCEPTS: Real-time feedback, complaints, continuous monitoring, adjustment, course correction.

IN BRIEF: During this essential area, QAS must be integrated into every step, with real-time feedback and complaints mechanisms enabling ongoing adjustments and improvements. Regular monitoring ensures adherence to QAS and helps adapt quickly to challenges.

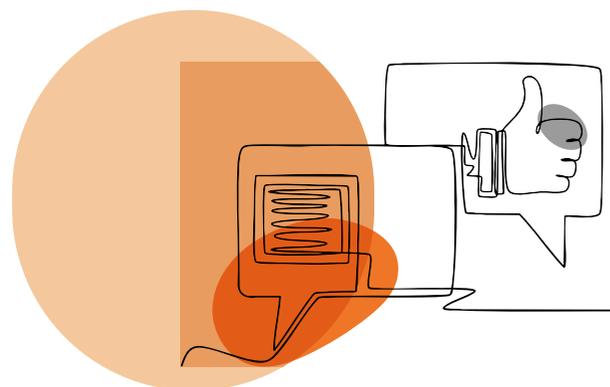
WHY IT MATTERS: Real-time adjustments based on community feedback and monitoring of data based on evidence ensure that activities remain effective.



WHEN TO APPLY: Throughout the implementation of the activities. Continuous feedback should guide real-time adjustments to maintain the project's relevance.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Develop simple and accessible feedback systems, such as suggestion boxes or community meetings, to allow real-time input. Ensure that monitoring data is shared and acted upon, and that sensitive feedback or complaints are managed swiftly and confidentially.

JOINT AND COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: Feedback loops empower communities to shape the project and ensure QAS compliance.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Is there a system for ongoing monitoring, and how are results shared, and with whom?
- ✓ How frequently is feedback incorporated into the project?
- ✓ Are real-time adjustments made based on feedback and monitoring?
- ✓ Are feedback mechanisms accessible to all stakeholders, especially communities? Are these mechanisms functional and safe? Can sensitive complaints be raised confidentially?
- ✓ Is there a process to ensure that community feedback influences decision-making?

RESOURCES & TOOLS

- CHS Commitments:**
 - Commitment 4 on Do no harm to people or environment
 - Commitment 5 on safely reporting concerns and complaints and getting them addressed.
 - Commitment 7 on continual adaptation and improvement based on feedback and learning
- Sphere & HSP Handbooks:** Detailed guidance on standards across sectors; M&E checklists.
- IASC AAP/PSEA Feedback and Complaints Mechanism Toolkit:** Setting up community-friendly feedback systems.
- Community Feedback Systems (Kobo, etc.):** Platforms to collect and analyse feedback during implementation.
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks (e.g. logframe):** Tools integrate community feedback, and inform adjustments.
- Community-Based Monitoring (e.g. scorecard approaches):** provide continuous input on project implementation.
- Surveys and Polls (e.g. SMS surveys, WhatsApp polls):** Tools for gathering real-time community feedback.

DO'S

- ✓ Set up accessible complaints and feedback mechanisms by different groups of people in the community from the start.
- ✓ Actively encourage feedback and ensure communities feel safe in sharing their thoughts and concerns.
- ✓ Adjust project activities in real time based on feedback to ensure activities remain relevant and effective.
- ✓ Monitor progress continuously and share findings transparently with all stakeholders and partners.
- ✓ Use technology and hybrid approaches (digital and face-to-face) to collect and act on real time feedback.

& DON'TS

- ✗ Don't delay setting up feedback mechanisms, as without them, you risk disconnecting from the communities.
- ✗ Don't ignore or dismiss feedback, even if it criticizes the project; Instead, view it as an opportunity for improvement.
- ✗ Avoid rigid project plans that can't allow for adaptation to feedback or changing environments.
- ✗ Don't forget to close the feedback loop by informing communities about how their feedback has been acted upon or not.
- ✗ Don't over rely on digital tools alone: make sure there are other offline options for those with limited technologies' access or distinct cultural preferences.

5 / TRANSITION, EXIT AND SUSTAINABILITY



KEY CONNECTED CONCEPTS: Long-term, exit planning, sustainability, local capacity, post-project.

IN BRIEF: This essential area should allow to ensure long-term sustainability through handover to local actors towards a continued impact beyond the project's cycle.



WHY IT MATTERS: Ensuring sustainability requires careful planning for transitions, making sure that local actors are equipped to maintain QAS principles after the project ends.

WHEN TO APPLY: From the inception phase until the latest stages of the project, and when preparing to exit. Transition strategies should be integrated at the very beginning to be successful.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT: Collaborate with local actors from the start, building their capacity to maintain QAS. Plan for sustainability by ensuring local ownership and providing adequate resources for the continuity.

JOINT AND COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: Proper exit strategies prevent disruptions and ensure that QAS measures persist, supporting long-term impact.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Is there a clear exit strategy since the start of the project?
- ✓ How are communities involved in defining the expected transition, exit and overall project sustainability?
- ✓ Are local actors prepared and resourced to take over and maintain activities once the project ends?
- ✓ Are long-term sustainable measures (resources, funding, training, etc.) in place from the onset?

RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Sphere* handbook across all sectors.
- Sphere & HSP* Handbooks offer guidance on planning exit strategies and ensuring sustainability through participatory approaches and resilience.
- CHS Commitments:**
 - CHS Commitment 1 on people and communities exercising their rights and participating in actions and decisions that affect them.
 - CHS Commitment 3 on people and communities being better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.
- Capacity strengthening tools (e.g. train the trainer models) equip local actors to sustain project activities after exit.
- Exit strategy guidelines (e.g. UNDP Exit Strategy Toolkit): Provides a framework for planning project handovers.
- Post project evaluation tools (e.g. *ALNAP* after action reviews, endline surveys) assess long-term impacts of the project and sustainability.
- IASC* Collective Safeguarding and Transition Guidelines.



DO'S

- ✓ Start planning for transition and sustainability from the beginning of the project.
- ✓ Involve from the beginning local communities and partners in developing the exit strategy to ensure long term ownership.
- ✓ Build local capacities to continue QAS implementation after the project ends.
- ✓ Ensure that there are resources (e.g. funding, training, staff) in place to support sustainability.
- ✓ Conduct post project evaluations to assess the long-term impact and share findings and lessons for future improvements.



& DON'TS

- ✗ Don't leave exit planning until the last minute: It needs to be integrated as early as possible to ensure sustainability.
- ✗ Don't hand over without ensuring that local actors have the resources and capacities to maintain the project.
- ✗ Avoid assuming sustainability without concrete steps; Testing these can be useful.
- ✗ Don't overlook the importance of documenting the transition process to learn from the successes and challenges.
- ✗ Don't simply 'leave and forget': Follow up with post project support and evaluation.

CHAPTER D

QAS CROSS-SECTORAL THEMES

Five cross-sectoral themes are identified for consideration to mainstream QAS: Power Dynamics and Inclusion; Organisational Culture vs. People-Centered Approach; Nexus Approach and Anticipatory Action; Climate Change and Environmental Responsibility; and Innovation, Technology, and Bridging the Digital Divide.

1 / POWER DYNAMICS AND INCLUSION

Addressing power imbalances is key to QAS, and one of the most important action leading to success. It involves recognising existing dynamics and taking practical steps to listen, especially those from community members, including marginalised people.

IDENTIFYING, RECOGNISING AND ADDRESSING POWER IMBALANCES



Practical actions include participatory planning, regular feedback loops, and clear accountability mechanisms to ensure representation and foster a culture of inclusion. Identifying power imbalance has for example been key to recognise sexual misconduct by humanitarian, development, and peace actors and address it through prevention and protection measures, as well as appropriate response to allegations.

ENSURING EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND DIVERSE REPRESENTATION



Practical steps include conducting inclusive assessments, setting diversity benchmarks, and facilitating safe spaces for dialogue and input. By prioritising representation, organisations can build systems that reflect the needs and perspectives of the communities.

BE A LEADER ON QAS!



Demonstrating leadership on QAS at organisation level as well as at collective levels in the aid sector is key influence power dynamics. All individuals can take up this function and have strong impact. The reward is a high level satisfaction degree in terms of achievement.

2 / ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE VS. PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH

A people-centered approach emphasizes the importance of aligning organisational goals with the rights and needs of communities.

BALANCING INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES WITH COMMUNITY NEEDS

Balancing a community and people-centered approach with internal organisational priorities requires adaptive practices, open communication, and employees' training to reinforce QAS values. Building a QAS focused culture involves embedding respect, empathy, and community responsiveness into organisational policies and strategies. It requires being mentally in favour of shifting power.

BUILDING A QAS-FOCUSED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Creating a QAS-focused culture within an organisation means embedding QAS principles into daily practices, policies, and values. This approach requires clear communication, continuous training, and leadership that models and reinforces QAS standards.

Practical steps include setting transparent expectations, developing supportive, functional and agile complaints and feedback mechanisms, and ensuring that QAS is actively practiced across all levels. By fostering an environment that prioritises QAS, organisations can enhance trust, maintain ethical standards, and align their internal culture with the communities they serve.

3 / HDP NEXUS APPROACH AND ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Mainstreaming QAS through humanitarian, development, and peace activities requires addressing interconnected challenges holistically through changing and sometimes volatile environments.

INTEGRATING QAS THROUGH HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT, AND PEACE ACTIVITIES (HDP NEXUS APPROACH)

By incorporating anticipatory actions and risk informed safeguarding, organisations can proactively respond to emerging crises. This involves regularly updating risk assessments, cross sector partnerships, and creating frameworks that prioritize long term resilience over short term response to emergencies.

ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Anticipatory action involves proactive planning and early interventions based on early warning signals. By identifying risks in advance jointly with communities, organisations can act before crises occur, reducing harm and building resilience in communities.

Practical measures include developing flexible response plans, setting up early warning systems, conducting and updating regularly risk assessments, and building community capacities to respond to potential threats. Anticipatory action strengthens preparedness and can save lives and resources by addressing issues before they escalate.

Anticipatory action connects directly with the learning essential area. It is key to document and share benefits of this approach.

RISK INFORMED SAFEGUARDING

Risk informed safeguarding integrates risk assessment to ensure that safety and dignity are upheld, especially in vulnerable communities.

Actions include regularly updating risk analysis, creating protective measures, sensitising and training all aid actors on safeguarding in high-risk contexts. Organisations must create safer and more adaptive activities that are agile and responsive to evolving needs and environments.



4 / CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Environmental responsibility requires integrating sustainability into every step of humanitarian, development and peace programming.

APPLYING QAS IN ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS PROGRAMMING THROUGH THE HDP NEXUS

Integrating environmental impact assessments, eco-friendly procurement, waste reduction protocols and awareness raising campaigns help to minimise harm to ecosystems while promoting sustainable practices. This all together ensure that activities respect and protect natural resources.

CHS Commitment 9 on ethical and responsive management of resources, *Sphere Thematic Sheet #1*: Reducing environmental impact in humanitarian response, and the Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience in Humanitarian Action guidance encourage accountability in resource use and promote practices that contribute to environmental resilience and nature-based solutions.

By integrating these references and using these tools, organisations can reduce their environmental footprint and support the resilience of both communities and their surrounding environments.

5 / INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Leveraging technology involves creating innovative solutions while ensuring equitable access to digital tools.

Practical approaches to QAS include testing new technologies for efficiency, making data accessible, and adapting platforms. Bridging the digital divide means prioritising inclusive design and training, so all, in particular local actors, can benefit from using these tools.

INNOVATING AND TESTING QAS SOLUTIONS

Innovation involves developing and trying out new approaches to improve QAS practices. This can mean piloting tools, contextualising standards, or testing methods and approaches in real life to see what works best. By continuously innovating and testing, organisations can better adapt to changing needs and environments and enhance the impact of their projects.

LEVERAGING DIGITAL TOOLS TO ENHANCE QAS

Digital tools play a powerful role, including in enhancing QAS, by aggregating and streamlining data collection, improving transparency, and enabling faster feedback and confidential complaints mechanisms. Technologies like mobile apps, online reporting systems, hotlines, call centers and data dashboards help organisations monitor progress, make informed decisions, and be accountable to communities. Digital solutions make it easier to mainstream QAS effectively, including in hard to access areas.

ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IN TECHNOLOGY-BASED SOLUTIONS

Accessibility and inclusion are essential when using technologies for QAS, to ensure that all community members can benefit from it. This includes designing user-friendly tools, providing training for those less familiar with technologies, and adapting solutions for specific low-resource settings.

Adapted and inclusive digital practices help ensure that technology supports the people it is meant to serve, and not exclude them.



CHAPTER E LEADING QAS INITIATIVES

The very first initiatives on QAS were initiated at the end of the 90s, as a result from the lessons learned from the emergency response to the Rwanda (JEEAR).

1 / RATIONALE FOR INTER-AGENCY JOINT AND COLLECTIVE INITIATIVES

Inter-agency initiatives are distinct in nature: who composes them, their main focus, topic or approach, as well as their enforcement mechanism differ.

It is crucial to consider that joint approaches are those reflecting people centered approaches, by considering communities rather than single organisations.

2 / LEADING THE WAY: INTER-AGENCY QAS INITIATIVES

The following key inter-agency initiatives are presented hereafter:

- **Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)**
- **CHS Alliance**
- **Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP)**
- **IASC Accountability & Inclusion Resources Portal**
- **IASC Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**
- **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**
- **International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)**

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)

We are the global network for advancing humanitarian learning. Our goal is for all humanitarians to benefit from our sector's collective experience. ALNAP stands for Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action. We support humanitarians everywhere to improve humanitarian action by exchanging evidence, experience and practical ideas.



Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments to ensure that organisations support people and communities affected by crisis and vulnerability in ways that respect their rights and dignity and promote their primary role in finding solutions to the crises they face.





Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP)

The Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) aims to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action through the promotion of humanitarian standards. The HSP offers training, tools, and policy and practical guidance for a harmonized approach to working with standards.



Sphere is a diverse global community that establishes, promotes and reviews standards for humanitarian action which provide an accountability framework for preparedness, resource allocation, response, monitoring and advocacy, before, during and after disasters and crises.



HelpAge International promotes the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities during emergency responses in both accessing assistance and participating in the decision-making processes that affect them. HelpAge International works with **CBM** Global to promote the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.



The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (“the Alliance”) sets standards and provides technical guidance to support humanitarian actors in preventing and responding to harm to children.



The CALP Network enables collaboration between organisations to increase the scale and quality of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA).



The Global **Camp Coordination and Camp Management** (CCCM) Cluster is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordination mechanism that supports people affected by natural disasters and internally displaced people (IDPs) affected by conflict with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate settings.



The **CHS Alliance** is a global alliance of humanitarian and development organisations committed to making aid work better for people, united by a common belief that organisations deliver higher quality, more effective aid when they are accountable to the people they serve.



The [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#) is an open, global network of members working together within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure that all individuals have the right to high quality, safe, relevant, and equitable education.



The [Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards \(LEGS\)](#) community provides standards and guidance for livestock-based livelihoods response in emergencies.



[Standards for Supporting Crop-related Livelihoods in Emergencies \(SEADS\)](#) provides international principles and minimum standards that support people responding to a humanitarian crisis to design, implement, and evaluate crop-related crisis responses.



The [Minimum Economic Recovery Standards \(MERS\)](#) was created and curated by the SEEP Network (Small Enterprise Education and Promotion) until its closure in December 2021. Contact Sphere for more information.

[Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\)](#)

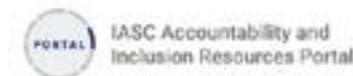
Created by United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182 in 1991, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system. It brings together the executive heads of 19 organizations and consortia to formulate policy, set strategic priorities and mobilize resources in response to humanitarian crises.



[IASC Accountability & Inclusion Resources Portal](#)

Accountability & Inclusion for People-Centered Humanitarian Action.

Find guidance on Accountability and Inclusion, connect with experts, and get support to implement effective people-centered practices.



[IASC 6 Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 2019](#)

[Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is committed to protecting affected populations from sexual exploitation and abuse within all the humanitarian response operations. The IASC PSEA Technical Expert Group supports Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams to deliver on this commitment through technical support, resources and partnerships.

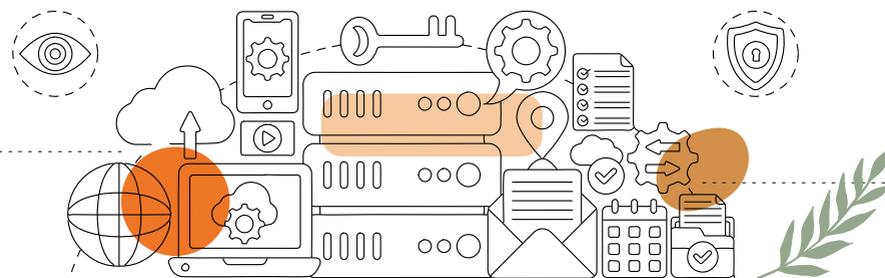
[IASC PSEA Global Dashboard](#)



PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

[International Council of Voluntary Agencies \(ICVA\)](#)

ICVA is a global network of non-governmental organizations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.



3 / EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATIVE APPLICATION OF QAS

All stories hereafter are fictitious. They are proposed to illustrate and demonstrate why and how joint and collective application of QAS can be practically implemented in distinct contexts.

MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

In the aftermath of a devastating cyclone, a coalition of organisations, including local NGOs, international agencies, and government bodies, applied QAS principles to coordinate their efforts. Using [IASC AAP/PSEA](#) guidance to develop their Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms, they gathered community inputs on priority needs and preferences, which was instrumental in shaping the delivery of essential services such as food, shelter, and medical aid. Training sessions using the [Sphere Handbook](#), starting from the Humanitarian Charter, emphasised the importance of ‘Do No Harm’, safeguarding and protection, particularly for vulnerable groups like women and children. Digital tools like Kobo Toolbox helped to streamline data collection and feedback management.

INNOVATIVE CASH ASSISTANCE IN URBAN SETTINGS

A joint program between local NGOs piloted cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in a flood-affected urban area. The project used real-time feedback tools, including SMS surveys and WhatsApp polls, to adapt the assistance based on community needs. The program also relied on the [CHS Commitments](#), specifically Commitment 7, to ensure continual adaptation and improvement. Visual materials from the [IASC AAP/PSEA](#) packages were used to sensitise communities about their rights and the program’s objectives.



LIVESTOCK AND CROP-RELATED SUPPORT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

A national NGO project worked with local farmers and government agencies to create a livestock management program in response to a severe drought. The program applied **LEGS** and **SEADS** standards for both livestock and crop-related livelihood interventions, ensuring community relevance and sustainability. Combined training modules from **LEGS**, **SEADS**, **CHS Alliance** and **Sphere** supported local actors in conducting risk-informed assessments. A combination of in-person workshops and online e-learning resources (**Kaya**) empowered local farmers to co-design solutions and enhance the programmes' accountability.

JOINT ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN RECONSTRUCTION

Following a large-scale earthquake, **Sphere guidelines** were used to align reconstruction efforts with environmental responsibility. NGOs and local government partnered to ensure housing solutions minimised environmental impact and adhered to 'Do No Harm'. **Sphere Thematic Sheet #1: Reducing Environmental Impact** was a great resource to design workshops, as well as **CHS Commitment 9** on ethical and responsive management of resources. Community feedback was continuously collected using scorecards, ensuring transparency and collective ownership.



USING MULTIPLE STANDARDS FOR A COLLECTIVE INITIAL ASSESSMENT

In response to a prolonged drought in a region heavily reliant on agriculture, multiple organisations, including international NGOs, local government agencies, and community-based organisations, collaborated to design a collective initial assessment. The goal was to gather comprehensive data on the drought's impact on livelihoods, food security, and water access while ensuring the process adhered to QAS principles. Standards guiding the process:

Sphere provided overarching guidance on conducting assessments that ensure 'Do No Harm', inclusivity, and accountability to affected populations.

Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) ensured that accountability and community participation were central throughout the assessment process, particularly using Commitment 1 on appropriate and relevant assistance, and Commitment 4 related to Do No Harm.

SEADS (Standards for Supporting Crop-Related Livelihoods in Emergencies) offered specific frameworks for evaluating the drought's impact on crop-based livelihoods.

LEGS (Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards) addressed the needs of livestock-dependent households, ensuring a holistic approach to livelihoods-based interventions.

Inclusion Standards helped ensure that marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and older persons, were fully involved and accounted for in the assessment process.

APPLYING THE HDP NEXUS APPROACH THROUGH QAS IN HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT, AND PEACEBUILDING CONTEXTS

This story highlights how the HDP Nexus approach, underpinned by QAS principles, can address complex, multi-dimensional challenges while fostering resilience and peace.

In a post-conflict context facing recurring natural disasters, fragmented infrastructure, and socio-political tensions, a consortium of international NGOs, local organisations, and government stakeholders implemented a program to address immediate humanitarian needs, foster sustainable development, and promote long-term peace. Guided by the HDP Nexus approach, the program ensured that QAS principles were applied across all activities.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE:

- The [Sphere Handbook](#) guided the immediate response, ensuring the provision of safe water, food, and emergency shelter to displaced populations, with a focus on ‘Do No Harm’ and protection of vulnerable groups.
- Kobo Toolbox and community scorecards collected real-time data on needs and feedback from affected populations, ensuring accountability.
- [CHS Commitments 3 and 4](#) were applied to prevent exploitation and harm while maintaining community’s dignity.

DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS:

- [SEADS](#) and [LEGS](#) frameworks were used to rebuild livelihoods and improve food security, focusing on crops and livestock.
- Participatory risk assessments ensured that interventions were relevant to communities’ priorities and environmental conditions.
- Training sessions enabled to empower local actors to sustain the programme beyond the project exit.

PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES:

- The Humanitarian Inclusion Standards (HIS) promoted the inclusion of marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities and displaced women, in decision-making processes.
- Community engagement workshops, based on the [Sphere](#) Community Engagement Checklist, and the [CHS](#), fostered dialogue and trust-building between conflicting groups.
- Mediation and conflict-resolution training sessions ensured alignment with protection principles and promoted local ownership of peace efforts



CROSS-CUTTING QAS APPLICATION:

Complaints and feedback mechanisms were established using the [IASC AAP/PSEA](#) guidance, enabling communities to safely report feedback, as well as issues or concerns across all phases of the programme.

[CHS Commitment 7](#) on continual adaptation ensured the program evolved based on community feedback and changing contexts.

Digital tools like SMS surveys allowed the project team to gather inclusive, real-time feedback from remote and vulnerable populations.

CHAPTER F

QAS TOOLS & RESOURCES

Learning, applying, and testing QAS principles can take various forms - individually, collectively with peers, or collaboratively with communities. These approaches are not mutually exclusive but complementary, enhancing overall effectiveness when used together. Selecting tools and resources should consider the audience's preferences, learning styles, and accessibility.

The QAS tools and resources outlined below are available online [HERE](#). This platform serves as an iterative and evolutive space for continuous sharing and improvement.



1 INDIVIDUALLY: NAVIGATING, READING, LISTENING, WATCHING

- Evaluations, research, studies
- Podcasts
- Publications
- Visuals: Images, videos
- Websites



2 COLLECTIVELY, WITH PEERS: MEETING, PARTICIPATING, VISITING

- Communities of practice, platforms
- Events, fairs, conferences
- Trainings, workshops, learning events



3 JOINTLY, WITH COMMUNITIES: GATHERING, CONSULTING, PILOTING

- Awareness raising materials
- Information, education and communication (IEC) materials
- Stories

ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HSP	Humanitarian Standards Partnership
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IEC	Information, education and communication
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
LEGS	Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards
MERS	Minimum Economic Recovery Standards
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PCM	Project Cycle Management
QAS	Quality, Accountability, and Safeguarding
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEADS	Standards for Supporting Crop-related Livelihoods in Emergencies
SH	Sexual Harassment

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We also acknowledge the **Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance** and **Sphere**, which have served as the foundation and guiding frameworks for this work, and we thank them for their global leadership in upholding principled humanitarian action and providing tools that enable organisations to serve people better.

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