

PRINCIPLES OF AID: MESSAGES

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About the Message Library

People affected by disaster must have access to timely, appropriate and accurate information to help them keep themselves and their families safe and well. They should know their rights, entitlements and be able to give feedback. Responders have a duty to put in place appropriate, systematic and coordinated mechanisms to ensure this.

Our Message Library offers clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for you to adapt and use in the context you are working in. These are intended to help you make a quick start on communicating with communities while you further develop mechanisms for on-going dialogue with diverse groups within each community.

For help contextualising and using the messages we recommend you do our e-learning course and read the following technical guidance.

E-learning

<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768>

Guidance

<https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/cdac-message-library-user-guidance>

Right to humanitarian assistance

You have a right to humanitarian assistance. You do not need to give money or sexual favours to receive it. Contact [insert info] if you are asked for this.

Humanitarian principles

Four humanitarian principles determine how humanitarian actors conduct themselves: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings. **Humanity** means that suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. **Neutrality** means that humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Humanitarian action must be carried out **impartially**: on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief class or political opinions. Humanitarian action must be **independent**: autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. These principles are derived from international humanitarian law and are universally recognised.

Humanitarian assistance must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs. It must also minimise any negative impact.

CHS in plain English

What you can expect from our organisation as a person affected by crisis

When our organisation works with a community to help them respond to a crisis, we promise to follow nine general commitments. This page explains those commitments in plain language, so you know what you can expect from us.

Emergencies can bring problems for us too. So although we always try to follow the commitments, sometimes we might not be able to. But we want to learn and improve over time, so you can help us by providing us feedback.

We will do our best to:

1. Understand and meet your needs.
2. Give support when you need it.
3. Provide support that helps you to recover and prepares you to respond to a similar emergency in the future. We should not harm you.

4. Inform you about the support you can expect and how you should be treated. We will do our best to give you a say in decisions about the support provided.
5. Ensure that you can report problems if you are unhappy with the support we provide or with the way our staff treat you. No one should harm you if you make a complaint. We will take action in response to complaints.
6. Work together with other organisations that provide support. We try to combine our knowledge and resources to better meet your needs.
7. Learn from experience so that the support we give you improves over time.
8. Ensure that the people who work for us have the skills and experience to support you.
9. Manage resources in a way that is responsible, limits waste and has the best result for you.

Note: "resources" refers to all of the things, such as materials, money, and medical care, that we use to support people affected by the emergency.

Assistance priorities

Humanitarian assistance is provided to families and individuals based on need. Those most in need will receive assistance first. Wherever possible, we will base the provision of assistance upon an assessment of the needs of disaster survivors and the local capacities already in place to meet those needs. You may be asked to participate in a survey.

Right to humanitarian assistance

No-one should be denied assistance according to their sex/gender, status, age, religion or ethnic group. To find out about assistance available to you or if you are unfairly being denied assistance contact [insert contact info here].

We shall respect culture and custom

We will endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities and countries we are working in.

Building on local capacities

All people and communities – even in disaster – possess capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Where possible, we will strengthen these capacities by employing local staff, purchasing local materials and trading with local companies. Where possible, we will work through local organisations as partners in planning and implementation, and cooperate with local government structures where appropriate. We will place a high priority on the proper co-ordination of our emergency responses.

Role of women

We recognise the crucial role played by women in disaster-prone communities and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our assistance programmes.

Participation

By working together, we can cope better with this situation. Ways shall be found to involve community members in the involved in the design, management, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian assistance.

Accountability

We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. You can ask us for information about our organisation, our project implementation and opportunities for you to get involved. You can also give feedback or raise a complaint. Contact [insert details].

Public information

In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster survivors as dignified humans. You have the right to refuse any photography, filming or interviews if you do not feel comfortable with what is being asked of you or can report individuals by contacting [insert info].

REFERENCES

For more information on this topic, we recommend you read the following references.

Core Humanitarian Standard (2015). **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (multiple languages)**.

<https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard/language-versions>

Core Humanitarian Standard (2015). **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (plain English version)**.

[https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS Plain Language English.pdf](https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS%20Plain%20Language%20English.pdf)

OCHA (2012). **OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles**.

www.alnap.org/help-library/ocha-on-message-humanitarian-principles

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

www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/publication/p1067.htm

Sphere (2018). **Sphere Handbook**.

<https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>

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If you would like to contribute to topic reviews, have found a message that needs greater clarity, or wish to create a new topic, please contact us at info@cdacnetwork.org.