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# A HUMANITARIAN LENS ON YOUNG LEADERS' CHANGEMAKING INITIATIVES

Examining Core Humanitarian Standards in Youth  
Leadership for Emerging Future projects

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Working on meaningful projects, particularly those aimed at humanitarian or social change, comes with its own set of challenges and rewards. At the core of everything we do is the drive to make a real difference, to build resilience and help communities flourish. But it is often not enough just to have good intentions. At times we require a clear set of guidelines to ensure that our work is impactful, accountable, relevant and truly meets the needs of the people we aim to support. This is where the **Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS 2024)** come in. The **CHS 2024** is a revised version of the original CHS from 2014 which is an internationally recognized standard that outlines the nine commitments organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can utilize. It is not just a measurable standard or a “handbook of humanitarian assistance”, it also has a direct bearing on the responder's primary role to measure and improve the quality and effectiveness of their assistance and in finding solutions to crises they face.

This document is a reflection of how the young changemakers of the Youth Leadership for Emerging Future (YLEF), (a program in which Ashoka, Save the Children and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy join forces to empower young local leaders from Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia who are working for their communities and are catalysts for systemic change) have aligned their projects with these standards. YLEF emphasizes capacity-building by equipping individuals, specifically young changemakers, with knowledge, skills, and networks, enabling them to connect and inspire one another. The program focuses not only on humanitarian preparedness but also on developing a wider range of skills and approaches to drive systemic change in their communities. Our goal is not only to

demonstrate compliance, but also to truly understand how these standards can contribute to the integrity of each work and to develop their potential humanitarian response capabilities. By incorporating CHS principles, we ensure that our projects are not just well-designed but are also responsive to the needs of the people we serve whether it's marginalized communities, vulnerable groups or stakeholders across different regions. The importance of this alignment lies in its ability to foster trust, transparency, and promote meaningful participation.

### Why is this so important?

Because without a solid foundation, it's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. The CHS principles remind us to listen, to adapt, and to be accountable. They push us to think critically about how we can do better not just for the sake of the project, but for the sake of the people whose lives we're trying to improve. When I first started exploring how to connect the work done under Youth Leadership for Emerging Future Program with these standards, I didn't realize just how much it would reshape the way I approach projects. This journey has been a constant reminder that at the core of everything we do are the people we serve. The CHS framework pushes us to think about how we can ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs met, not just in theory but in practice. We can also clearly see these efforts reflected in the projects being implemented under the YLEF Program by the young changemakers.

# CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS

Below is a visual representation of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) commitments. This diagram highlights the key principles that guide humanitarian efforts to ensure quality and accountability, sourced from *The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) Handbook 2024*.



# 1. COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS' WORKSHOP IN UKRAINE "UNITED"

From September 19 to 21, the "United" workshop in Mukachevo brought together young leaders from education, humanitarian aid, business, and NGOs. The event fostered knowledge exchange, collaboration, and solidarity among those working to address migration, support internally displaced persons (IDPs), and tackle pressing social challenges in Ukraine.





Participants of the Community Activists' Workshop in Ukraine 'United' project gain several crucial competencies that can significantly contribute to potential humanitarian responses and align within the framework of the Core Humanitarian Standards (2024). These include:

## Empathy and Psychological Support

A significant focus of the project is on mental health and social well-being. Participants gain skills in providing psychological support, understanding trauma, and implementing mental health initiatives. For example, 2 new members of the group focused on mental health are introducing crucial self-care practices, stress relief exercises, and create a space for discussions on maintaining work-life balance, discussion on taking care of yourself and loved ones, which are also vital in high-pressure humanitarian contexts. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) have become integral to humanitarian responses, particularly in conflict and displacement contexts.

**CHS Commitment 3: People and communities are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.**

**Requirement 3.1:** The project emphasizes mental health and social well-being, empowering participants to provide psychological support and manage trauma. This aligns with the commitment to supporting community resilience by equipping individuals with the skills to anticipate and reduce the psychological impact of crises through self-help initiatives and community preparedness actions.

**Requirement 3.4:** The integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into humanitarian responses by providing support to strengthen the existing

community systems ensures that interventions contribute to long-term positive effects on people's emotional and mental well-being, reducing the risk of exacerbating trauma.

## Cross-Cultural Communication

The project's global nature means that participants work with diverse groups, fostering skills in cross-cultural communication. This competence is essential in humanitarian settings, where understanding and respecting cultural differences can greatly enhance the effectiveness of aid delivery. Research highlights the importance of bridging cultural gaps between international aid workers and local communities to ensure that assistance is appropriate and effective. The project's emphasis on global collaboration helps participants develop these critical skills, enabling them to work more effectively in diverse environments.

**CHS Commitment 1: People and communities can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.**

**Requirement 1.1:** The project's focus on fostering skills in cross-cultural communication ensures that diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated into all aspects of the humanitarian response, particularly in ensuring that aid is culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of different communities.

**Requirement 1.3:** Effective cross-cultural communication enables the delivery of information in languages and formats that are accessible, understandable, and respectful, ensuring that humanitarian assistance is relevant to the cultural and social contexts of the affected populations.

## Collaboration and Networking

By fostering a sense of community and collaboration among diverse groups, the project enhances the ability of these groups to respond quickly and effectively to emerging crises, thereby mitigating the impact. The project involves organizing workshops and training sessions aimed at equipping participants with practical skills in crisis management, mental health support, and social work. These skills are essential for both immediate response and long-term recovery efforts in crisis situations. The project also builds a network of activists, experts, and organizations that can mobilize quickly in the event of a crisis. This network is a crucial element in both preparedness and mitigation, as it allows for the rapid deployment of resources and expertise where they are most needed.

### **CHS Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.**

**Requirement 6.1:** The project's emphasis on collaboration and networking supports coordinated humanitarian responses by ensuring that the work of different organizations and community groups is complementary and that resources are mobilized efficiently in case of crises.

**Requirement 6.4:** Building strong networks of activists, experts, and organizations, in particular working to unite at least 15 participants belonging to NGOs and charitable organizations from EU countries and Ukraine (who are working with migration, refugees specifically Ukrainians around the globe) also aligns with the commitment to equitable decision-making and resource sharing, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian assistance.

## Advocacy and Policy Influence

The project empowers participants to advocate for the rights of displaced individuals. By engaging in policy discussions and advocacy efforts, participants help shape the laws and policies that affect refugees and migrants, ensuring that these communities are supported and protected. By participating in such advocacy, project members can contribute to creating a more supportive policy environment for refugees and migrants ([International Organization for Migration](#)).

### **CHS Commitment 7: People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.**

**Requirement 7.3:** Advocacy efforts by project participants contribute to creating a supportive policy environment for refugees and migrants, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their needs are addressed in humanitarian actions. This aligns with the commitment to using data from feedback and monitoring to guide decision-making and improve humanitarian responses.

### **CHS Commitment 5: People and communities can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.**

**Requirement 5.6:** Advocacy efforts also relate to ensuring that complaints are welcomed and acted upon, contributing to a more accountable and responsive humanitarian system that learns from and adapts to the needs of the affected populations.



# 2.

## INNOVATION IN CRISIS INTERVENTION – PILOTING SOCIALEASATOR

Socialeasator is an innovative platform that empowers individuals in crisis with easy access to counseling and community support. To expand its impact, we conducted extensive research across 28 target groups to explore its potential for piloting in a new country.



The Socialeasator project aims to provide individuals in crisis with a comprehensive tool for effective emergency response. This initiative focuses on equipping people with the necessary resources and strategies to manage crises efficiently, ensuring the implementation of the CHS:

### **Crisis Intervention Skills**

The platform enables Czech participants to gain hands-on experience in crisis intervention by providing expert advice through health specialists, doctors or credible research data, resources, and tools to support individuals in various crisis situations, such as health issues, financial crises, and mental health challenges. This experience is directly transferable to humanitarian contexts where immediate, effective responses are crucial.

**CHS Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.**

**Requirement 2.1:** The hands-on experience in crisis intervention gained through the Socialeasator platform ensures that participants are well-prepared to provide timely and effective support during various crises, including health issues, financial challenges, and mental health emergencies. This aligns with the commitment to planning and implementing programs that respect and build upon local knowledge and capacities.

**Requirement 2.4:** The platform's reliance on expert advice and credible research data ensures that interventions adhere to relevant technical standards and recognized good practices, a key aspect of providing high-quality humanitarian aid.

### **Community Support and Engagement**

Participants learn how to foster and manage supportive communities. Socialeasator emphasizes building a sense of belonging among users facing similar challenges and expands on shared learning, which is vital in humanitarian settings where community resilience and mutual support are often key to recovery.

**CHS Commitment 3: People and communities are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.**

**Requirement 3.1:** By fostering community support and engagement, the Socialeasator project strengthens local leadership and community-led efforts, enhancing resilience against future crises. Participants learn to create environments where users can support each other, reflecting the commitment to supporting local capacities and reinforcing community resilience.

**Requirement 3.5:** The emphasis on shared learning and building a sense of belonging aligns with the requirement to establish a coherent approach that reinforces locally led actions and decision-making, promoting sustainability and long-term recovery.

### **Technical Skills in Digital Platforms**

By working with the Socialeasator platform, participants gain technical skills related to digital platforms, including managing user engagement, gathering and analyzing user feedback. These competencies are essential for scaling and deploying digital solutions in humanitarian crises, where technology can play a crucial role in coordination and delivery of aid.



## **CHS Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.**

**Requirement 6.1:** The technical skills related to managing digital platforms are crucial for ensuring that humanitarian responses are coordinated and complementary to other efforts. The ability to manage user engagement, gather feedback, and analyze data supports the creation of a coherent, well-coordinated response that leverages technology for greater impact.

**Requirement 6.4:** Participants' skills in deploying digital solutions also contribute to equitable decision-making and resource sharing, ensuring that digital tools are used effectively to support humanitarian objectives.

## **Data-Driven Decision Making**

The project includes gathering and analyzing data from focus groups and surveys. This competency is crucial in humanitarian efforts, where understanding the needs of affected populations and monitoring the impact of interventions can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the response.

## **CHS Commitment 7: People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.**

**Requirement 7.1 and 7.4:** The continuous collection and analysis of data ensures that the support provided is responsive to the feedback and inputs from communities, leading to more effective and adaptable humanitarian interventions. Sharing the analysis and learning from feedback and monitoring and any related changes with people and communities supported by the organization.

**Requirement 7.3:** The Socia easator project's focus on gathering and analyzing data from focus groups and surveys enables participants to make informed decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of affected populations. This competency aligns with the commitment to using data from monitoring, feedback, and learning to guide decision-making and improve programs.

## **Legal and Ethical Considerations**

Participants engage with GDPR compliance and legal frameworks in preparation for scaling the platform to new regions, beyond Czech Republic to possibly Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine. This knowledge is essential in humanitarian work, where privacy, data protection, and legal compliance are critical when dealing with vulnerable populations.

## **CHS Commitment 4: People and communities access support that does not cause harm to people or the environment.**

**Requirement 4.3:** Participants' engagement with GDPR compliance and legal frameworks aligns with the commitment to protecting and safeguarding data and information. This ensures that humanitarian actions are carried out in a way that respects the privacy and rights of individuals, minimizing risks and preventing harm ([Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#)).

**Requirement 4.4:** By adhering to recognized good practices in data protection and legal compliance, the project contributes to a coherent organizational approach that prioritizes the safety, security, rights, and dignity of people and communities, particularly when scaling the platform to new regions.

# 3.

## UNIVERSITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Universities FOR the Future is an attempt to design the world we would like to live in. Rooted in the belief that universities play a pivotal role in fostering civic engagement, this project is about taking concrete steps to craft a future envisioned by the next generation.



Effective communication, education, and research are integral aspects of working in alignment with the Core Humanitarian Standards (2024). Below is an overview of how the Universities for the Future project embodies these values:

## Analytical and Research Skills

Participants engage in rigorous research, including literature reviews and expert interviews, to critically analyze the current state of higher education. These research and analytical skills are crucial for understanding the underlying causes of crises and anticipating potential risks. In humanitarian settings, this translates into the development of evidence-based strategies that can preemptively address vulnerabilities within education systems, such as those experienced by refugees.

**CHS Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.**

**Requirement 2.1 and 2.3:** The analytical skills developed ensure that programs are built on local knowledge, capacities, existing actions and address the specific needs of affected populations, improving the timeliness and effectiveness of interventions.

## Communication and Outreach

The project involves creating and publishing videos from interviews and drafting a detailed paper. These activities will help participants improve their communication skills, including how to present complex information to various audiences. Effective communication is critical in humanitarian response for raising awareness, advocating for change, and coordinating with stakeholders.

**CHS Commitment 1: People and communities can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.**

**Requirement 1.3:** This competency ensures that communication with affected communities is clear, accessible, and culturally appropriate, allowing for better participation and more informed decision-making during crises.

## Strategic Thinking and Scenario Planning

By developing three scenarios for the evolution of higher education systems, participants will learn to anticipate and plan for multiple potential futures. This skill is transferable to humanitarian work, where scenario planning can help in preparing for various crisis situations and developing flexible response strategies. Scenario planning is particularly relevant in crisis contexts, where education systems may need to be rapidly adapted or rebuilt to meet the needs of displaced or conflict-affected populations ([UNESCO](#)).

**CHS Commitment 3: People and communities are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.**

**Requirement 3.2:** The strategic planning skills developed by participants align with the commitment to supporting local capacities to anticipate and reduce risks, ensuring that communities are better prepared for future crises.

## Collaboration and Teamwork

The project emphasizes teamwork, with participants working together under the guidance of a supervisor to achieve common goals. These collaborative skills are critical in

humanitarian responses, where coordinated efforts across teams and organizations are necessary to manage complex situations. The ability to work effectively in teams enhances the delivery of coordinated humanitarian aid and ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making.

**CHS Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.**

**Requirement 6.1:** This competency ensures that humanitarian efforts are well-coordinated with local and international stakeholders, enhancing the overall impact of the response through effective collaboration.





# 4.

## YOUTH DIALOGUE FORUM 2024

The Youth Dialogue Forum (YDF) is an international initiative focused on enhancing youth participation in the civic sphere across Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia. By addressing the cycle of disengagement and providing incentives, YDF aims to empower young people to drive meaningful change and lead the next generation.



The Core Humanitarian Standards emphasize the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches. Below is an outline of how the Youth Dialogue Forum (YDF) embodies these principles through its efforts to engage young people in civic activities:

## Understanding Barriers and Creating Solutions

Participants engage in mapping barriers to youth civic participation and designing structures to overcome these challenges. This process develops their ability to critically analyze complex social issues and create practical solution skills that are important in humanitarian contexts.

**CHS Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.**

**Requirement 2.1:** The analytical skills developed ensure that programs are built on local knowledge and address the specific needs of affected populations, improving the timeliness and effectiveness of interventions.

## Co-creation and Networking

The forum fosters co-creation and networking among civic actors and engaged citizens. These skills are crucial in humanitarian settings where collaboration and coordination between different stakeholders like NGOs, governments, and local communities are essential for efficient and effective response.

**CHS Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.**

**Requirement 6.1:** The ability to collaborate across sectors: civic actors, citizens, NGOs, and governments is key to humanitarian settings where effective crisis response requires close coordination between multiple stakeholders. This emphasizes that such collaboration should be locally led and community-based, ensuring that humanitarian responses are both efficient and respectful of local capacities (UNOCHA).

**Requirement 6.4:** The skills gained through this project foster a coherent organizational approach to ensure collaboration is based on a commitment to ethical decision-making and resource sharing that respects the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

## Communication and Advocacy

Through digital discussions and live forums, participants enhance their communication and advocacy skills. These competencies are vital in humanitarian contexts for raising awareness about crises, advocating for the needs of vulnerable populations, and ensuring that the voices of those affected are heard in decision-making processes.

**CHS Commitment 5: People and communities can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.**

**Requirement 5.3:** which encourages regular monitoring to ensure stakeholders understand how to report issues and advocate for change. The project equips participants with the ability to raise awareness about pressing issues and advocate for the rights of marginalized communities, which is a critical function in humanitarian work where the voices of affected populations must be amplified and included in decision-making.

**CHS Commitment 7: People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.**

**Requirement 7.4:** These skills also support the focus on shared learning and feedback with communities and stakeholders, thus enhancing transparency.

## Strategic Thinking and Innovation

Participants are involved in proposing innovative solutions and good practices to enhance youth civic engagement. This strategic thinking and innovation are directly applicable to humanitarian contexts, where new approaches are often needed to address emerging challenges and improve the effectiveness of interventions.

**CHS Commitment 7: People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.**

**Requirement 7.1:** The need for innovation in humanitarian contexts is critical for addressing rapidly changing crisis situations and emerging challenges. The project

emphasizes the need for continuous feedback and adaptation by enabling participants to think strategically and propose new solutions. This capacity for innovation is essential in humanitarian work, where flexibility and creative problem-solving are critical for improving the effectiveness of interventions.

## Qualitative Analysis and Reporting

The project involves producing a comprehensive report that includes qualitative analysis of the forum's results. In humanitarian work, qualitative research and detailed reports are essential for assessing the impact of interventions, understanding the needs of affected communities, and informing future interventions.

**CHS Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.**

**Requirement 2.4:** Highlights the importance of applying relevant technical standards and recognized good practices, which this project reinforces through its focus on producing detailed, evidence-based reports.



# SOURCES

1. *The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability* 2024 Edition.
2. International Organization for Migration, *Objective 1- Saving lives and protecting people move.*
3. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action.*
4. UNESCO Digital Library, *Education in situations of emergency, crisis and reconstruction.*
5. UNOCHA, *Local Actors Play a Key Role in Humanitarian Action.*