

Core Humanitarian Competencies Framework case study

Concern Worldwide

Staff competencies and accountability

Background

Concern Worldwide (Concern) is a non-governmental, international, humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries. Concern has been working in partnership with communities for more than 40 years. The organisation is headquartered in Dublin and has more than 3300 staff in 51 offices around the world. Concern has been working in Pakistan since 2001, primarily on enhancing livelihoods, improving access to water and sanitation and responding to emergency situations.

The [core humanitarian competencies framework](#) (CHCF) was first developed in 2011, by representatives from a cross-section of humanitarian organisations under the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA, now the [Start Network](#)) led by ActionAid and facilitated by People In Aid (now the [CHS Alliance](#)). The competencies framework recommends a set of core competencies that organisations could adopt to systematically build the skills of their employees and thereby improve their efforts to assist people adversely affected by crisis throughout the world.

Rationale

Concern implemented a CBHA project in Pakistan in 2010 when the country was hit by a devastating flood. Both natural and manmade disasters resulted in a large number of vulnerable and internally-displaced people, drastically increasing Concern's portfolio, partners and staff. It was helpful to use the core humanitarian competencies framework at this time, given Concern's involvement in humanitarian assistance and the increase in the number of people it was serving. The competencies framework also added value to and complemented other Concern initiatives such as protection workshops, training and commitment to accountability. These initiatives together with the competencies framework aim to ensure good programming and prevent and reduce abusive behaviour towards programme participants.

As well as being a CBHA member, Concern was also a certified member of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP International), now the CHS Alliance, and needed to produce an accountability framework. One of the challenges faced by Concern's Pakistan programme at the time was aligning the core humanitarian competencies framework to the HAP Standard and HAP membership requirements. This was resolved by developing a Concern accountability framework.

Process

Concern had a global accountability framework in place as well as a country programme accountability framework. One of the components in the accountability framework was human resources (HR), which referred to and reflected on the Concern competency framework and the core humanitarian competencies framework. This accountability framework was used by the HR team in Pakistan when conducting interviews and performance development reviews and designing job descriptions.

Concern also produced a global policy document, entitled Programme Participants Protection Policy (commonly known as the P4), to clearly articulate the behaviour related to protection that is expected of all Concern staff, partner staff and consultants. The expected behaviours in the competencies framework were reflected in this policy and in Concern's code of conduct (CoC).

Expected behaviours include respecting culture, avoiding discrimination, and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). More importantly the P4 aligned to Concern's organisation mission and values.

The overall objectives of the P4 policy are:

- To protect the rights of programme participants, especially beneficiaries, not to be abused and exploited.
- To reinforce issues of staff behaviour to ensure staff do not abuse their power and influence to exploit others.
- To clarify the requirements for partner organisations.
- To ensure **all** staff and partners know about the expected standards of behaviour and how to raise concerns.
- To ensure that beneficiaries know about the expected standards of behaviour and how to raise complaints.
- To make sure that, in delivering programmes, Concern does not increase the vulnerability of beneficiaries and reduce the risk of exploitation and abuse.

Concern includes the P4 and CoC in all steps of the recruitment process and has incorporated the P4 in the induction and training of all staff. Concern also verifies that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them. Concern is monitoring P4 compliance amongst Concern and partner staff in their behaviour towards all programme participants.

Concern ensures that programme beneficiaries are also made aware of the standards of behaviour expected of organisational staff and those working on behalf of the organisation. A complaints and response mechanism for beneficiaries exists where beneficiaries can raise their concerns and receive a response.

Lessons learned

Concern learned that it is vital to continue developing the competencies of staff, especially in understanding the humanitarian context and accountability. It also learned there is the need to refresh understanding of staff competencies.

Additional information

As part of continuing efforts to strengthen the competencies of employees, the **CHS Alliance is undertaking a review of the competencies framework as part of the [Start Network Talent Development project](#)**. The review will engage as wide a cross-section of organisations and individuals as practically possible to identify the strengths and areas for improvement in implementing the framework. The review process has involved an online survey as well as focus group discussions in Asia, Australia, Africa, and the United Kingdom with participation from aid and development organisations as well as affected communities. The conclusions from the review process will be shared later in 2016.