

Concept Note: Evidencing the use of the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards 2018 – 2024

Background and Rationale

The Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities (HIS) was first published in 2018 by the Age and Disability Consortium as part of the ADCAP programme. The HIS was developed under the guidance of the consortium of CBM Global, DisasterReady.org, Humanity & Inclusion, HelpAge International, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Oxford Brookes University and RedR UK, who provided oversight and technical guidance in developing project activities and innovators of change in developing the HIS as well as many other complimentary technical materials.

The ADCAP Consortium partnered with the Kenya Red Cross Society, CBM Global and Christian Aid in Kenya; Concern Worldwide, Islamic Relief and HelpAge International in Pakistan; and Islamic Relief Worldwide and Christian Aid in the UK, who all embedded an inclusion specialist in their organisation to build the inclusive approach, challenging their own internal organisational change processes to strengthen the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in their work.

As a key component of this project to support their interventions, the HIS was designed both to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian actors to older people and people with disabilities, and to support the participation of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian action. The standards are used as guidance for programming, and as a resource for training and advocacy, particularly for influencing organisational policies and practice to be more inclusive.

The HIS consists of nine Key inclusion standards, derived from the Nine Commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS), and seven sets of sector-specific inclusion standards: protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; food security and livelihoods; nutrition; shelter, settlement and household items; health; and education. The sector inclusion standards are structured around three key areas of inclusion: data and information management; addressing barriers; and participation of older people and people with disabilities and strengthening of their capacities.

As a result of this publication, the ADCAP Consortium applied for the HIS to become a recognised standard holder as part of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP), which is an initiative of Sphere to coordinate and improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action through the promotion of humanitarian standards.

As part of the ADCAP program the learnings were compiled and published in a Good Practice Guide by documenting good practices and challenges that have emerged through the experience of the 3 year Age and Disability Capacity Programme (ADCAP) implementing partners, in embedding inclusion of older people and people with disabilities within their humanitarian policies and practices. Findings from the project recognise its use in strengthening the core knowledge of humanitarian staff in influencing and ensuring a basic understanding of inclusive programming and humanitarian inclusion standards.

The innovative research from ELRHA adopted the HIS model to develop new research opportunities to explore the barriers to and support opportunities for the inclusions of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian response (DOAI). As part of this commitment, the HIF/Elrha developed a new focus area within their portfolio on the inclusion of people with disabilities and older people, recognising that humanitarian innovation has much to contribute to this agenda and to generating a more effective and inclusive humanitarian response. The research has contributed to reaching a research and NGO audience at national to global level on areas related to data driven research, addressing barriers and ways of designing innovative approaches to ensure meaningful participation.

Since the development of the HIS, the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities have been released in 2019, and the CHS underwent a thorough update in 2024. The Sphere standards are also set to begin a review process later in 2024. While the rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and there is now an IASC level guidance focusing on persons with disabilities, similar protection and guidance does not exist for older persons.

As part of the HSP partnership, it is generally expected that standard holders to use the following criteria to consider including as a basis for triggering a revision:

- The current standards have been in use for sufficient time to have gained legitimacy and credibility – typically, a minimum of 5 years.
- The current standards have generated learning based on practical experience of their implementation.
- There have been major developments in the sector or a related sector, such as new evidence or new best practice (e.g., related to cash); or sector wide changes, such as humanitarian system reform, since the current standards were established.

We consider these criteria provide a framework to develop this evidencing approach to guide next steps.

We are aware of the HIS being used by various actors to support programming and in different research pieces, there has been very little formal evidencing around its uptake and usage. While reference to the HIS is made in various publications the actual uptake by humanitarian actors and its continued usefulness and relevance as a tool in the humanitarian sector is unknown.

Given the new developments in the sector – including the introduction of new tools and guidance – and the need to ensure that any standards promoted remain relevant and up to date in terms of best practice, an informed decision needs to be taken regarding the future of the HIS and if a revision or other directions should be proceeded with. As custodians of the HIS, HelpAge International (HAI) and CBM Global are accountable for ensuring that the standard remains relevant and adheres to the HSP standard review protocols and processes. The research is intended to provide a clear understanding of its value add in the humanitarian and DRR sector and how a revised standard should look if needed. As such, this project will focus on generating evidence to inform the decision-making process, with a final plan regarding the future of the HIS to be made and validated at the end of the project.

Objective

The objective of the review is to gain an understanding of the uptake and use of the HIS, and understand it's continued relevance in line with evolving humanitarian architecture to determine the appropriate next steps for the standard in terms of revision to ensure continued relevance in the field and uptake by key stakeholders.

To ensure practical learnings and active engagement to support the evidencing and revision of the HIS, the objective of the review is to take a highly participatory approach actively involving key stakeholders (mainstream actors, OPDs/OPAs, etc.) within the process.

Project Plan

Key aim : To understand the uptake of the HIS, how it is utilized by donors, policy makers, mainstream humanitarian organizations, OPDs, OPAs, research organizations and other key organizations, the challenges with uptake, how the standards fit within the existing humanitarian architecture and their continued relevance for the sector.

Result Area 1:

The situation of HIS within the existing and evolving humanitarian architecture, and the value add which it brings, are better understood.

Activities:

1. Analysis of the HIS and other inclusion standards and guidelines to identify areas of overlap and specific areas of value add which the HIS brings to promote the rights of older people and people with disabilities between 2018 – present day.
2. Infographic development showcasing how HIS fits within existing standards and guidelines.
3. Gain understanding of the Sphere review process and how the HIS and other tools could be useful to influence the future Sphere review.

Narrative Description:

The first activities of the project will focus on gaining a better understanding of how the HIS currently fits within the current humanitarian architecture.

A review of the existing relevant standards and guidelines will be conducted to analyze how age and disability inclusion is considered within existing documents. Areas of overlap with the HIS and major gaps – where the HIS brings added guidance – will be identified. This would include areas where the HIS currently brings added value, but also existing gaps in guidance where a revised version of the HIS could add value. While the HIS currently covers only humanitarian operations, the review will also cover guidance on DRR to analyze if a revision version of the HIS would bring a value to have a more nexus lens. An infographic will be developed as part of the documentation on the analysis to visually demonstrate how the HIS fits within the existing architecture and existing gaps.

This analysis will also help to support how the key standards from the HIS could be useful to inform the future Sphere revision (2028) or other standards.

Result Area 2:

Evidence generated around the usage of the HIS by humanitarian actors, donors, policy makers, research organizations and other key stakeholders to gain a more in depth understanding of the utilization of the HIS and its perceived continued relevance, how it has been utilized in practice and at what level, challenges with uptake/implementation, etc.

Activities:

1. Mapping of the roll out activities of the HIS (trainings, training materials, publications distribution, etc.) by HelpAge, CBM Global and other actors conducted at Global and country level to understand the uptake and use of these standard in shaping global humanitarian policy and information the global initiatives focusing on inclusion and intersectional approaches in humanitarian settings.
2. Literature review of utilization of the HIS (policy, research, advocacy/advisory documents, etc.) to gain an overview of the actors

who have utilized the HIS in various means and how it has been utilized.

3. Survey existing networks (DRG, HSP partnership, connections) to gain understanding of which actors have used the HIS for further investigation, including which parts of the HIS, such as key inclusion standards or sector standards and which languages were useful in influencing local responses.
4. Survey active Age and Disability Tasks Groups at country level in selected countries e.g. Bangladesh, Philippines and Ukraine to gain understanding of the uptake of different actors in the field response to use the HIS as a reference for influencing their work in direct implementation and influencing others in the cluster mechanism.
5. Key Informant Interviews with organizations (humanitarian organizations, donors, policy makers, etc.) with a mandate/commitment towards inclusion regarding use of the HIS at Global e.g. Global Protection Cluster and national level e.g. National Protection cluster members including national actors, OPD's and OPA's or committees.
6. Case study documentation on practices where the HIS has been utilized in policy design, programme development and/or capacity strengthening
7. Analyze the results of the consultations and literature review.
8. Define the key areas of interest for the HIS in the existing format.
9. Define key options for other inclusion topics of interest from the information collected e.g. focus on older people, develop inclusion topics related to new trends such as climate change, formulated with the pros/cons for each one.

Narrative Description:

Simultaneously to the first result area, activities will be undertaken to better understand the uptake of the HIS in the humanitarian sector at global and field level and how it is being utilized. Activities in this section are intended to be participatory and engage global decision makers in the Protection cluster with representative from mainstream actors and with international and national actors including OPDs/OPAs to ensure wide representation and ownership of the process and buy in for the revision process.

A mapping exercise will be conducted to gain a better understanding of the trainings, sensitization events and other activities which have been conducted by HAI, CBM Global and other actors. The intent of this mapping is to understand both what activities have been done, and what has been the effect of the activities in terms of usage and uptake of the standards to determine if any causal links can be created.

A literature review will be conducted to determine how the HIS is utilized in various research publications, policy papers, donor standards/guidelines,

advocacy and advisory documents etc. Where possible, follow up with the owners of the literature will be contacted to better understand their rationale for referencing/utilizing the HIS, how they have seen the contribution of the HIS, etc.

Existing networks and platforms will be leveraged to gain a better understanding of how actors are utilizing HIS in their work. These networks include the Sphere HSP group, DRG and UNHCR, Global Protection Cluster and National Protection Clusters and Inter cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)

Based on the results of the survey, actors who have demonstrated usage of the HIS will be contacted to set up more in-depth interviews to determine how they have used it, the challenges with utilization and how they could see the HIS continuing to fit within their programming. Actors who have not utilized the HIS and are willing to participate in consultations will also be contacted for in-depth interviews, to better understand why they have not used the HIS and how they see its continued relevance in the sector. It is important to understand the issues of context and language that may influence uptake of these standards and others.

Survey and interview questions will be designed to target organization staff at the decision-making level and will include staff in both global and regional/country level roles to better understand how the HIS is used in policy and programming. It will be designed to gain more information on: How the organization is using the HIS at different levels (or if the HIS is not being used, why not); What sections of the HIS are deemed useful and which are not considered relevant or is better covered by other guidance; What trainings or other support on the use of the HIS has been received or what would be helpful to receive; positive impacts of using the HIS; challenges with utilizing the HIS; and the continued value add of the HIS going forward and what should be considered in any revision of the HIS. What other trainings on inclusive humanitarian have been used and what other sources are actors using to strengthen the inclusion lens.

Case studies on the use of the HIS will also be documented.

The survey and questionnaire will be guided remotely with selected country teams organizing the workshops and sharing their findings.

These activities are designed to give a thorough overview of the uptake of the HIS and along with the analysis of the HIS vis a vis other standards/guideline in the sector, to inform the decisions around the next steps for possible revision of the HIS.

Activities:

Key Stakeholder Involvement

Global Protection Cluster: As a representative network of INGO's, UN actors mandated by IASC and representing 4 Areas of responsibility, key information can better understand present contexts in the lens on

intersectionality and recognition of the need to address the leave no one behind agenda.

HSP Partners: The other Sphere HSP standard holders will be consulted regarding the use of the HIS, and how to best integrate key components of each of the standards together.

Sphere Members: Sphere members will be included in the consultations, especially regarding how to best integrate the HIS within the Sphere and decisions around the future of the HIS and possible revision.

ADCAP Members/DRG members/Organizations with mandates around inclusion: Key organizations who were previously part of ADCAP or currently part of the DRG who have a mandate around inclusion will be important stakeholders to include in the consultations.

ADTWG in selected countries will be invited to join the consultation bringing their experiences in using various standards and guidelines and designed contextual materials using inclusion focused resources.

ELRHA TWIG, TGDRRCA and DiDRRN members who have broad experiences in inclusion across the inclusive preparedness and humanitarian response to provide guidance and advise

OPDs and OPAs: Both OPDs and OPAs will be a key part of the process. They will be included as part of the consultations to gain their viewpoints regarding the relevance of the HIS, how they have utilized it, and their viewpoints around the revision. Should a decision be taken to revise the Standards, they will be key stakeholders in the revision process and contributing content to the revision, which was a gap in the earlier work.

Timeline

This is a 12-month project, with expected completion by December 31st, 2025.

Activity		2024	2025			
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Result 1: Understanding of HIS within Humanitarian Architecture						
1	Analysis of HIS vis a vis existing standards					
2	Infographic development					
3	Gain understanding of Sphere review process					
Result 2: Evidence Generation on HIS Uptake						
1	Mapping of HIS roll out					

2	Literature review of utilization of the HIS					
3	Survey on HIS utilization					
4	Key informant interviews on HIS utilization (HNPW)					
5	Consultation workshops in three countries by national inclusion actors					
6	Case study documentation					
Result 3: Concrete plan for HIS revision						
1	Analysis of literature review and consultations					
2	Guidance for future influencing and integration on inclusion into future Sphere revision					
3	Review learnings for future recommendations					
4	Validation with key stakeholders					