Quality Standards and the project cycle management[1]

Here are some of the key questions to ask as you seek to include the Quality Standards in the phases of the project cycle:

PCM phase QS	Understanding the Context	Design	Project Initiation	Planning	Implementation & Monitoring	Evaluation	Closure
BEHAVIOURS	• Prior to carrying out assessments, do staff fully understand the values of the organisation in order to reflect these in their interactions with communities - showing dignity and respect, and acting with compassion and sensitivity? • Are staff clear on the types of conduct that are unacceptable to the organisation?	• Are you identifying key behaviours (fraud, discrimination, etc.) risk areas for upholding this standard during the lifecycle of the project?	• Are clear procedures in place to investigate allegations of unacceptable conduct? • Are the communities we serve aware of what constitutes staff's unacceptable behaviour • Do the communities know how to report staff's unacceptable behaviour? • Have staff members been identified and trained to carry out investigations when required?	• Are time and money set aside to carry out refresher and induction training for staff on behaviours? • Do the internal systems and processes minimise the risk of fraud, bribery and other forms of unacceptable behaviour? • Who will be collecting learning on behaviours during the implementation of the project.	• Is refresher training and induction being carried out throughout the life of the project for staff on the organisation's values and policies? • If there are reports about staff's unacceptable behaviour, are they investigated in a timely manner?	• Where relevant, consider asking the communities if they are satisfied with the way they were treated by staff throughout the project	• Have you documented any lessons learned on behaviours?

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IMPARTIALITY & TARGETING	• Will you explain in your community meetings the commitment to impartiality and the importance of targeting the most vulnerable? • Will the assessment include an analysis of the different ways in which people have been made vulnerable as a result of the emergency? • Will you agree with the community the criteria for identifying those who are most vulnerable?	• Have the beneficiary selection criteria been agreed with the community and communicated to staff and to the community so that everyone is clear? • Are you using actual household size to determine the level of assistance provided to different targeted families, rather than relying on an average household figure? • Are you using multidimensional vulnerability scoring approach to ensure that the most vulnerable get selected?	• Have you considered the amount of funding or materials available for distribution in comparison to the level of need, so that meaningful assistance is provided to those who have been targeted, and the assistance isn't spread too thin? • Have the communities been given enough time to give feedback on provisional beneficiary lists?	• Have time and funds been set aside for ongoing community consultations?	• Are you monitoring the project to ensure that the selection criteria continue to be appropriate and are reaching the most vulnerable?	• Consider asking the communities if they knew why they were (not) selected as project beneficiaries. • Consider asking the communities whether the most vulnerable were indeed selected to participate in the project.	• Have you documented any lessons learned on impartiality and targeting?

ACCOUNTABILITY							
	• Will you obtain the consent of the community to carry out the assessment? • Will you be transparent with the community about your organisation, your programme, and the purpose of the assessment? • Will you ensure the full participation in the assessment by all groups within the community, including those who are less visible? • Will you invite the community to ask questions and ensure that the assessment is a two way conversation?	• Do you have structures in place to solicit ongoing participation from the community such as beneficiary committees, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, or focus groups, which are truly representative of the community as a whole and include vulnerable groups which may traditionally be overlooked? • Have you agreed with the community what are the best ways of making this information available (e.g. Information boards, leaflets, public meetings etc) so that all groups within the community have access to the information? • Have you gained consent of the community to carry out the project, including signing a Memorandum of Understanding where appropriate?	• Have you agreed with the different groups within a community how they would like to give feedback to the staff during the project? • Ensured communities have safe access to the feedback mechanism? • Have you established an appropriate mechanism to receive feedback from beneficiaries and the wider community which reflects the preferences of the community? • Have you agreed with the community the type of information regarding the organisation, your standards, project plans, progress reports and feedback procedures to be made publicly available? • Is the whole community aware of the feedback mechanism and how to access it?	• Have you set aside a budget line for Accountability, to cover accountability staff and associated costs? • Have you set aside a budget for Accountability training for the rest of the team and planned the training?	• Are you changing project plans in light of the feedback received? • Are representatives of the community involved in addressing complaints and resolving disputes? • Are you closing the feedback loop in a timely manner recognising the difference between sensitive and non-sensitive feedback? • Are you using referrals if you receive feedback that is out of your project's scope? • Are you keeping a record of the feedback received, the responses given and project decisions made? • Are you ensuring the records can only be accessed by designated team members and that confidential data of the beneficiaries is protected?	• Are you asking the communities if the felt that they had access to relevant information about the project? • Are you asking the communities if they are satisfied with the influence they had over the project throughout its lifecycle?	• Have you informed the communities about the date of when your feedback mechanism will no longer be receiving feedback? • Have documented any learning that has to do with community engagement and accountability?

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GENDER	• Will you gain an understanding of the existing roles of men and women – their daily schedules and workloads and the prevailing attitudes towards men and towards women? • Will your assessment gather the perspectives of women, men, boys and girls through separate focus group discussions? • Will your assessment identify the ways in which vulnerability has increased for men and women as a result of the emergency?	• Have you designed individual project activities in a way that is appropriate to the target group of men or of women – in light of their daily routines, livelihood activities, domestic duties etc. • Has the project been designed to enhance the safety of women and children e.g. in relation to the physical location of project services or the time of day that meetings are held? • Are your indicators gender-sensitive?	• Is there a good overall balance of men and women on the team? • Are community committees or structures that will be overseeing the project going to be inclusive of both men and women and working in a way that participation is meaningful?	• Is the gender of staff appropriate to the specific activities that need to be carried out, recognising that some roles are only appropriate for men and some only for women? • Will the structures in place to solicit ongoing participation from the community such as beneficiary committees, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, or focus groups, be encouraging and facilitating the participation of women and children as well as men?	• Are you measuring and monitoring the impact of the project on both men and women and keeping disaggregated data? • Are you consulting women and girls about their safety and security throughout the project?	• Are men and women's perspectives considered when evaluating the impact of the project?	• Are there any documented lessons learned on gender?

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EMPOWERMENT	• When doing assessments, will you assess capacities and vulnerabilities as well? • Will your assessment assess the context and the expectations of sustainability and replicability for the different needs and services discussed in the assessment? • Will you find out what government services are in place or planned and think through how to support them where appropriate?	• Does the design of the project increase the capacities identified? • If relevant, are you promoting skills/livelihoods development or other sustainable coping mechanisms? • If relevant, are you supporting/empowering the community to advocate to change unhelpful policies/practices?	• Is there a consensus that the communities are expected to participate in the project throughout its lifecycle?	• If relevant, is there an exit strategy and has it been communicated to the affected communities?	• Are you monitoring to ensure that your project is not creating dependency?	• Do the community members say that they feel empowered/not disempowered as a result of your project?	• Are there any documented lessons learned on empowerment? • Are any required long term systems to provide ongoing financial input to ensure project sustainability (e.g. village contributions, local government or user fees)?

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RESILIENCE	• Will you carry out a risk assessment? • Will your assessment identify the root causes of vulnerability: whether official policy, cultural traditions, climate change, other factors?	• Does the planned response prioritise building social capital? • Does the planned response take into account disaster risks? • Does the project design prioritise environmental and economic sustainability? • Is the project designed to address long-term vulnerabilities?	• Did you consider carrying out an environmental impact assessment? • Are you working with local churches where they exist, to strengthen and support their role in the community and the project?	• Did you budget for environmental impact assessment?	• Do the communities have access to information about their risks? • Are you monitoring the project to check that vulnerabilities are being reduced and capacities are being built and not undermined? • Is the project being monitored to observe and manage its environmental impact?	• Are the communities saying they are better able to withstand future shocks as a result of the project?	• Are there any documented lessons about resilience?

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PROTECTION	• Will you identify and analyse potential protection risks? • Will you consult the communities to identify the threats, vulnerabilities, and negative coping strategies?	• Have you developed your project design in a way that avoids causing harm to the community members? • Have you considered taking preventive and mitigation measures with the objective of reducing the protection threats and the vulnerabilities and increasing the existing capacities?	• Have you ensured that your project is conflict sensitive (conflict sensitivity checklist)?	• Have you assessed the knowledge and skill set of the project staff on protection and its key elements? If the assessment highlights internal training and/or capacity strengthening needs, plan and budget for it. • Have you ensured core protection principles are embedded and specific protection risks are mitigated? Ensure those activities are properly supported with time, staff and resources.	• Do you consult beneficiaries to assess their views, opinions and perception in terms of safety, dignity, access and participation throughout the project? • Do you monitor to ensure your programme does not have a negative impact on communities?	• Do the community members feel that their protection risks increased due to your intervention?	• Are there any lessons learned about protection?

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TECHNICAL QUALITY	• Do you have a clear understanding of your areas of specialism and technical strengths as an organisation and will this guide the questions asked in your assessments? • Will you refer to the Sphere handbook to help identify the questions to ask? • Will you gain a clear understanding of the priorities expressed by the community and see which areas you have the technical experience and capacity to support?	• Do the project staff have the technical support needed to guide project implementation – whether through advisors, consultants, qualified staff on the ground? • Have you referred to the Sphere handbook in incorporating technical minimum standards and indicators into project design? • Is any other agency meeting or planning to meet identified needs?	• Have arrangements been put in place to ensure quality control when working with contractors? • Have you put arrangements in place to coordinate with other stakeholders working in the same locations (local government, other NGOs, church, etc)?	• Have you made provisions to ensure the response is timely (recruitment, procurement, etc.)?	• Are you monitoring the technical quality of the project and making technical adjustments where needed?	• Do the communities find response appropriate to their needs? • Do the communities find the response timely?	• Are there any documented lessons learned that have to do with technical quality?