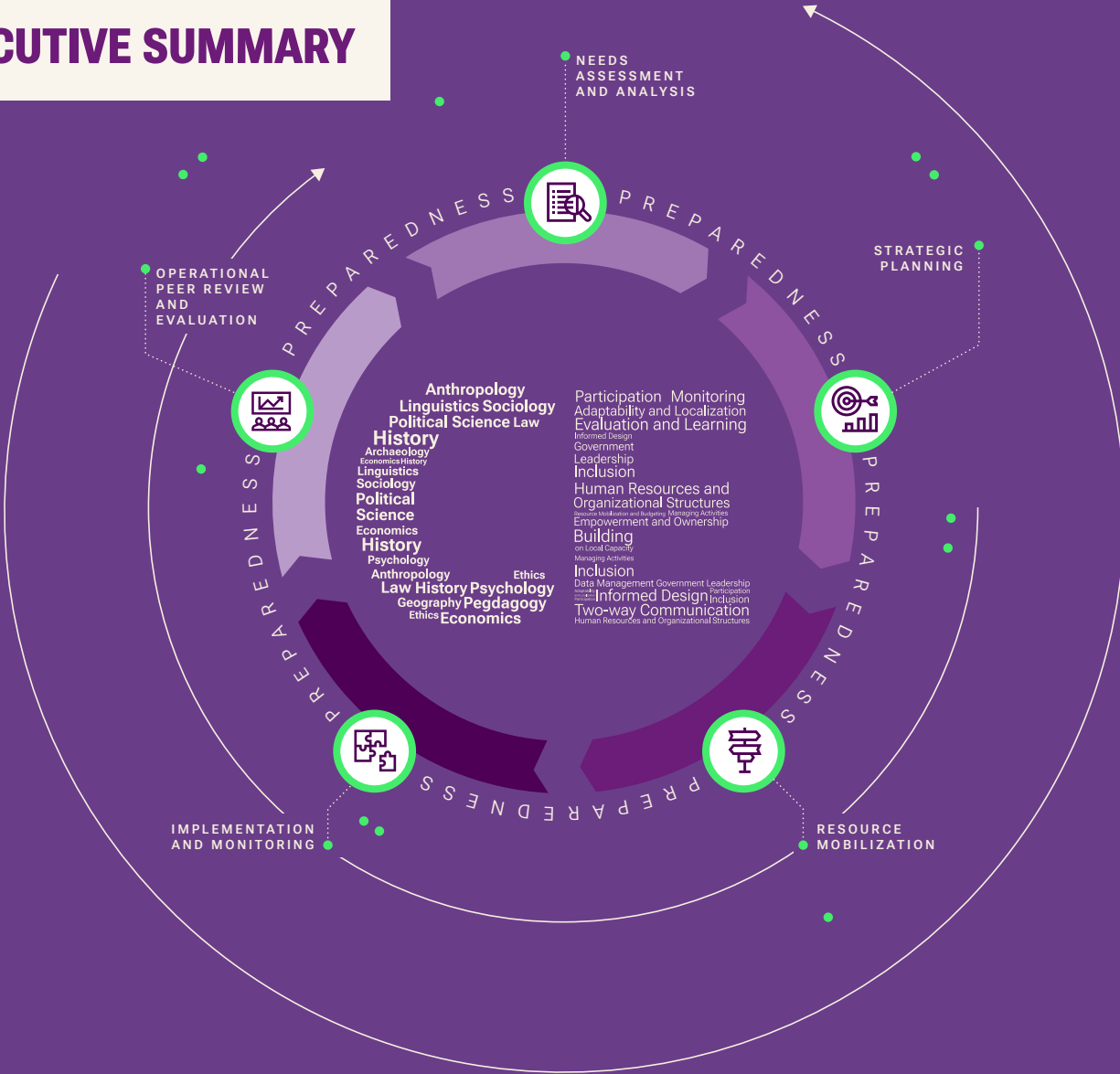


SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

COMMON PRINCIPLES AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE APPLICATION OF SS4CE IN HA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Social Sciences for Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action (SS4CE in HA)

Common Principles and Code of Conduct for the Application of SS4CE in HA

Executive Summary

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This document provides common principles for the ethical implementation of social sciences for community engagement in humanitarian action (SS4CE in HA). The common principles for data ethics, data sharing and code of conduct for the application of SS4CE in HA presented are part of the deliverables of the SS4CE in HA project. These global goods were united under this single document, based on the recommendations to address the identified gaps brought by the mapping reviews; two previous deliverables of the same project, that preceded the development of these common principles. For the remainder of the document, it will be referenced as “common ethics principles and CoC”.

The key added value and approaches that have anchored the development of this document are:

Acknowledgement of diverse knowledge systems for respectful, collaborative partnerships. The intention of these common principles is to contribute to creating more ‘equitable and just’ systems building on existing guidelines, and more explicitly recognizing the importance of diversity, equity and justice in global society and the actions required to achieve it. Systematically conceding and including the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities, recognizing intersectionality and challenging Western-centric approaches to knowledge production, will contribute to more respectful and collaborative partnerships. By recognizing and incorporating the diverse knowledge systems that exist across the world we can build a more just and equitable world for all.

Applying a decolonial feminist approach to ethical community engagement. These analytical frameworks bring reflections on roles and power dynamics in the humanitarian arena, shedding light on the importance of intersectionality, which is the recognition of how different forms of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, ableism) intersect and compound to create unique experiences of marginalization and exclusion. By applying a decolonial feminist approach, we can better understand how intersectionality operates within the fields of humanitarian aid, social sciences and ethics, working towards creating more inclusive and equitable systems (see e.g., Lorde, 1981; Manning, 2018; Gargallo Celentani, 2017). Applying a decolonial, feminist and inclusive analytical lens in SS4CE in HA is not only crucial to uphold ethics and social justice commitments, but it is also essential for achieving more effective and sustainable outcomes. By centering the perspectives, experiences and needs of communities, interventions are more likely to be relevant, appropriate and effective, and will promote

the empowerment and resilience of communities in the face of humanitarian challenges.

Institutionalization requires systems change and builds on what is existing. Institutionalization of these Common Ethics Principles and CoC require humanitarian stakeholders to adopt them and commit to them in operational and research activities. The generalized adoption of the Common Principles and the CoC by organizational structures would create a channel for their integration into the existing body of ethics regulations and guidelines for HA, ultimately leading to increase accountability and actors’ compliance.

The proposed common principles and CoC aim to be practical, applicable and linked to current ways of working in humanitarian action. The recommended principles are a combination of humanitarian and research principles with the opening for the inclusion of locally relevant ethics and conduct principles. The aim is to present practical and operational guidance on the ethical application of SS4CE in HA during preparedness and response in humanitarian action, considering the different stages of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) and the steps and processes involved in its development.

Overarching key Recommendations

SS4CE should be systematically integrated during the needs assessment and analysis stages of humanitarian programming, ensuring affected and at-risk communities are engaged in the process and providing essential local evidence for strategic planning, as well as contributing to the baseline information upon which situation and response monitoring relies.

It is necessary to dedicate more resources specifically to community engagement throughout the HPC. The ideal is to do it from preparedness, which implies also dedicating funds to this stage and not just to the response to emergencies. A decolonial approach implies that humanitarians help to develop local capacities, so that eventually local organizations, together with people, take control of the preparation and response to a crisis, including managing funding and resources.

Identify local knowledge and strategies historically or recently developed in the face of the humanitarian crises people and their communities have experienced and suffered through, and those that can be adapted to the response to a humanitarian emergency.



Identify, train and hire local cultural mediators, not only translators, to encourage contextualization.

Foster appropriate local hiring practices with appropriate salaries and working conditions that enhance dignity.

Hire local researchers and data collectors that will contribute to the whole project cycle (e.g., analysis, strategy design, implementation and M&E).

Identify and engage with local authorities and local people that can act as local representatives to organize preparedness and response. This does not mean that humanitarians will only work with them, rather they must be interlocutors with the broader community. Care must be always taken that these representatives or local authorities do not displace or prevent the participation of certain groups.

Identify and work with local CSOs and NGOs already known by the community to implement the response to the context and to reach far, or vulnerable, people. Likewise, identify local researchers that know the community and its political and social-cultural dynamics. This collaboration must recognize the work that local organizations carry out, their experience and knowledge, and receive formal recognition.

Explore power dynamics and trustworthiness of authorities and institutions. Assess government/local authorities' commitment to humanitarian action, to what degree they could be involved in preparedness/response, and if sharing data with these entities poses risks to certain individuals, groups or populations.

Encourage the use of participatory methods. Use data collection methods, with intentionality and transparency, to engage with vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as women, people with disabilities, young, elderly people, asylum-seekers and refugees. Implement individual interviews, visit households and self-help groups, among other strategies.

Envision the creation of a Humanitarian Ethics Review Board (HERB). This global body will be formed by already existing ERBs/IRBs (from countries, academic institutions, etc.) but will focus on the intersection of social science research/assessment and humanitarian action.

Implement responsible data management to make sure that constant reflections and assessments on ethics issues through every element of the HPC are made, including power imbalances among the diversity of actors in the field. Set sensitive data according to the type of crises and context:

- **Data collection should respond to the vital interest of individuals at risk**, and according to data minimization, de-identification and anonymization. Before data collection, people must be informed clearly about the objectives of collecting data, both written and plain language, their security and protection data measures and their right to reject or how, eventually, their data be corrected or deleted.
- **Respect of ownership of personal and community data.** Local and community accessibility to own datasets for further actualization and use, and
- **Be aware of the limitations of the sampling** and being critical about it being representative of the population.
- **The focus of monitoring and evaluations should be on empowering communities and recognizing the autonomy and capacity of local organizations.** This is to verify that communities have actively participated in decision-making (including their own involvement in the response) and that they are co-owners of the data, among other aspects.

Communication must be 'careful' and 'safe': communicate the plan to the community/individuals concerned in plain language and disseminate the findings without exposing participants.

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