

Core Humanitarian Standard Introduction training

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In January KUNO hosted the two day Core Humanitarian Standard Introduction course. Nineteen participants, from the more experienced to those who only just entered the field of humanitarian practice, received an introduction on the humanitarian principles and the Core Humanitarian Standard and exchanged their professional experiences. A short report of two wonderful days of reflection and learning in the meeting room of CARE Netherlands in The Hague.

After all participants were introduced by their “neighbour”, Genevieve Cyvoct, the trainer from the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance, kicked off the two day course. After a quick introduction on the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Alliance, we turned to the humanitarian principles, which lie at the base of the Core Humanitarian Standard. Humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality are seen as the core of the humanitarian principles. But upholding these principles in humanitarian practice is not as easy as it might seem. In an assignment we had to match case descriptions with one of the principles. Each of the cases described a situation in which one of the humanitarian principles was challenged. In the discussions that followed it became clear that it is almost impossible to uphold all four principles and it often means trying to balance the four, while helping those in need.

We then took a look at the nine commitments that make up the Core Humanitarian Standard. These commitments touch upon the appropriateness, relevance, effectiveness and timeliness of humanitarian aid, but also the need for feedback and complaints systems. All commitments were further explored through an assignment. Two of these assignments stood out.

The first commitment focuses on the appropriateness and relevance of humanitarian aid. To help in the understanding of the commitment all the participants were invited to participate in a roleplay. In this roleplay a need assessment of a small community had to be executed. The miscommunication, chaos and the priorities of the different stakeholders made for an interesting, but confusing discussion. During the assignment it became clear that quite a lot of people were not heard, and the project group doing the assessment had a set idea of what they wished to do. Even though there was a lot of laughter and joking, everyone understood that this was not the right way to do a needs assessment.

The ninth and final commitment discusses resource management: people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically. To put theory into practice all participants were invited to an extensive game. After reading the case study, the different groups had to make a decision on how to spend their resources through questions like Who should we hire? Where will the office be located? And how are we going to assist the affected population? Along the way some risk and bonus cards came along; either rewarding the groups for their project or leaving them with less money due to unlucky circumstances.

The groups got quite competitive which made it a very engaging assignment. The winning group was rewarded with some Swiss chocolate, which they were kind enough to share with the rest of the group.

After all the commitments, Genevieve spent the final ninety minutes of the second day on the possible actions that could be taken by the different participants and organizations after this course; what does the self-assessment entail and how do you get your organization certified? Many of those attending were already working towards these options.

With all questions answered and loaded with new information (a USB-stick filled with a library of publications on standards), we turned to drinks and bites to end the training with some networking and evaluation.