

# Part II: Attitudes and Skills

Protecting internally displaced and other affected communities requires not just knowledge, but the right **attitudes** and **skills**. Many of these are not inherent in people; however, they can be developed and refined over time, at both the individual and institutional levels.

## Chapter 1

# Attitudes

An attitude is the **manner of behaving, feeling or thinking that demonstrates a person's disposition or opinion**. The attitude of a humanitarian worker can benefit or damage an operation greatly and, with it, the quality of protection enjoyed by IDPs and other affected communities.

### Demonstrating attitudes

#### 1. Respect core humanitarian principles

<b>What is it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being humanitarian requires respect for the basic principles of humanitarianism, including the humanitarian imperative, neutrality, independence and impartiality. These are outlined in Part I.1 of this Handbook and are also often reflected in the <b>codes of conduct</b> of various humanitarian agencies.</li></ul>
<b>Why is it important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is the foundation of every humanitarian agency's mandate.</li><li>• It helps ensure that all humanitarian workers, regardless of which agency they represent, share a <b>common vision and direction</b>. All activities, ranging from recruiting staff to developing a protection strategy or negotiating with non-State actors must be based on these principles.</li><li>• Compromising these principles affects the agency, the image of other humanitarian actors and, consequently, the impact of our collective response. For example, actors who perceive humanitarian agencies to be partial may not provide access to IDPs in areas under their control. This may compromise the protection of IDPs and the security of the humanitarian community.</li><li>• If agencies are not able to work in a country without compromising these principles, a review of the value and purpose of humanitarian action and presence should be undertaken.</li></ul>
<b>How can it be enhanced?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Assess</b> how planned activities, including those of operational partners, adhere to or violate these core principles. <b>Ensure that all activities</b> are in line with the core principles.</li><li>• <b>Train</b> all humanitarian actors, regardless of their function, on the core principles and how they can demonstrate them in their work, such as through a code of conduct.</li><li>• Be aware of the <b>political environment</b> in which we operate and the perceptions that stakeholders may have of us or our work. This helps to avoid misperceptions of bias or political manipulation.</li><li>• Be <b>transparent and consistent</b> when carrying out activities and entering into a dialogue with <u>all</u> stakeholders. <b>Inform</b> interlocutors, partners and the public of the basis for our action, criteria for our decisions and overall goals.</li></ul>

## 2. Remain open-minded

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian workers need to be receptive to new and different ideas and the opinions of others to best effect a humanitarian mandate.</li> </ul>
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian agencies usually work <b>in support of and upon the invitation</b> of a government and/or a community. While we bring technical and other essential resources, we often lack local knowledge and should do not assume we know everything or can impose our views on a government or a community.</li> <li>Open-mindedness enhances the capacity to work in <b>different cultural environments</b> with people from different nationalities, ethnicities and socio-economic background.</li> <li>It helps to develop an understanding of complex situations, which allows for better planning and more appropriate interventions.</li> <li>It helps to deal with complex <b>negotiations</b> and is essential for effective <b>leadership</b> and <b>coordination</b> (see sections 2.3 and 2.5 below).</li> </ul>
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving <b>listening and genuine inquiry skills</b> (see section 2.2).</li> <li>Learning about developmentally appropriate <b>ways to work with children</b> and ensure their ideas and opinions are taken into consideration.</li> <li>Understanding <b>personal prejudices</b> and minimizing their impact on our work.</li> <li><b>Reviewing discussions</b> with colleagues and other partners when views diverged and conflicts arose with the aim of understanding why this happened and how such situations could have been resolved differently.</li> <li>Through <b>continuous learning</b>, both formal and informal. It exposes us to a range of interests and issues and broadens our horizons.</li> </ul>

## 3. Be positive and proactive

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remaining <b>positive</b>, in this context, is to believe that a situation can be improved and solutions achieved. The complexity of an operation should not prompt despair.</li> <li>Being <b>proactive</b> is to seek ways to improve programmes and interventions rather than reproduce activities by rote. This includes seizing opportunities rather than remaining passive.</li> </ul>
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian workers are required to deal with the consequences of violence, conflict or natural disasters that have devastating effects on thousands of lives. The magnitude of the crisis, disorganization, lack of resources, security concerns, over-whelming amounts of information, policy gaps, failed negotiations and poor living conditions can all lead to feelings of negativity and resignation. Negative emotions can affect an individual, spread throughout a team and adversely affect an operation.</li> <li>As humanitarian agencies can sometimes be the last hope for IDPs and other affected communities, humanitarian workers are entrusted with that <b>hope</b> and have the <b>duty</b> to deploy all efforts and energy to protect persons of concern.</li> <li>It helps in finding the <b>right approach, identifying opportunities, being creative</b> and making decisions that are in the best interests of IDPs and others of concern.</li> <li>It contributes to <b>effective protection interventions, successful negotiations, and sustainable partnerships</b> and ensures that a <b>team</b> works effectively and energetically.</li> <li>It is essential for <b>leading</b> a team, an operation or a project, and is also necessary to ensure the <b>welfare</b> of colleagues.</li> <li>It can help humanitarian workers <b>control their environment</b> rather than letting the environment control them.</li> </ul>



<p><b>How can it be enhanced?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking care of oneself by eating and resting well, even during emergencies in hardship locations is essential</li> <li>• Finding a safe way to <b>dispel frustrations</b> regularly, such as by talking with colleagues or friends, exercising, spending personal time away from colleagues, and maintaining personal space in crowded living conditions, is helpful.</li> <li>• <b>Staff welfare</b>, improvements in living conditions and peer-support networks are essential for keeping staff morale high.</li> <li>• <b>Team-building</b> exercises are useful and help team members to learn to support each other.</li> <li>• Strong leadership that <b>empowers</b> all staff and provides focus in the operation is crucial in keeping a team motivated.</li> </ul>
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#### 4. Remain empathetic

<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy is the ability to <b>identify oneself</b> with the situation of others. Empathy should not be confused with being emotionally involved with a situation, which can mar objectivity, adversely affect standards of professionalism, and be perceived as bias by various parties, which, in turn, can compromise the neutrality of an operation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is it important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps to understand the <b>situation and the concerns of IDPs</b> and affected communities, to build trust, and to encourage others to share their views and concerns, thus improving planning and programming.</li> <li>• It helps to understand the concerns of <b>humanitarian partners, governments and colleagues</b> that might be difficult to express publicly but nevertheless affect a humanitarian operation. It helps to be <b>tactful</b> in sensitive situations and to enhance partnerships and negotiations.</li> <li>• It helps to respond to <b>personal and professional concerns</b> of colleagues, not least to maintain an effective team.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can it be enhanced?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managers can help <b>sensitize their teams and partners</b> on the root causes of protection concerns and the challenges that displaced persons face every day. This may help staff better understand and commit to protecting IDPs and other affected communities.</li> <li>• <b>Participatory assessments</b> and planning bring humanitarian workers closer to IDPs and affected communities. It encourages humanitarian workers to understand the situation of IDPs and simultaneously empowers IDPs to claim ownership of a programme. This process also helps to build empathy towards IDPs.</li> <li>• <b>Active listening</b> can help to ensure that humanitarian workers understand others before they make themselves understood. It also leads to a more empathetic approach to discussions and communication.</li> </ul>

#### 5. Be a team player

<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability and willingness to work together with other colleagues and organizations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is it important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We all have the same goal: To ensure protection and provide assistance to affected communities. However no single individual or agency has the capacity or ability to deal with the range of issues that need to be addressed in a humanitarian operation.</li> <li>• Resources, which are frequently limited, need to be shared and used optimally.</li> <li>• Working alone will not only adversely affect the quality and impact of an intervention by an individual or an agency, but that of the broader humanitarian community, and consequently the situation of IDPs and other affected populations themselves.</li> </ul>



<p><b>How can it be enhanced?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with other humanitarian organizations and participate in joint activities where needed and beneficial. Share information (be transparent), ensure that communication channels are open at all times, and avoid keeping “hidden agendas.”</li> <li>• Actively seek the views and ideas of colleagues and other partners and respect their contributions. Try to understand their positions, even if you might not agree with them.</li> <li>• Put aside personal interest and considerations and be ready to adapt your priorities to those of the team.</li> <li>• Offer constructive criticism, but avoid being pessimistic. Persuade, but do not force ideas onto others.</li> <li>• Share successes and failures with the team, bring problems out in the open and actively seek to resolve them.</li> <li>• Be flexible. Avoid being “territorial” over an issue; be as inclusive as possible.</li> <li>• Encourage team-building activities and spend time helping others who need support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Be self-aware</b></p>	
<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>personal understanding</b> of ourselves, especially our strengths and weaknesses, and our personal biases and prejudices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why is it important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness allows us to acknowledge and <b>use our strengths</b> to support an operation and simultaneously work towards improving our weaker areas. This can include <b>gaps in knowledge, skills</b> or other <b>attitudes</b>.</li> <li>• Maximizing and building on individual <b>strengths</b> within a team optimizes the effectiveness and impact of a team and mitigates weaknesses.</li> <li>• Ignoring <b>weaknesses</b> leads us to perpetuate them at the expense of the displaced and other persons we serve and colleagues with whom we work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can it be enhanced?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review</b> the day/week’s events and determine what went well, and why, as well as what could have been done better.</li> <li>• Take <b>psychometric</b> and <b>emotional quotient</b> tests, available in management courses or on the Internet, to establish personal strengths and areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Discuss with and seek <b>constructive feedback</b> from colleagues, friends and family regularly. Our personal behaviour is often reflected in our professional lives.</li> </ul>