

The General Assembly of the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative – HQAI, is delighted to report that **Maria Emilia Correa** and **Daniel Hitzig** have been elected to the Board of Directors. The new Directors bring in a wealth of experience and knowledge: Maria Emilia Correa is the Co-founder of Sistema B. Sistema B is a movement to advance a new economy where success is measured in terms of wellbeing for people and the planet. Daniel Hitzig is an independent consultant in media, communication, and public affairs. He was previously responsible for media and communication at the Swiss Alliance of Development Organizations and worked for over 27 years as a journalist for the Swiss TV and Radio.

## What is HQAI?

The Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative HQAI is an independent auditor for the humanitarian and development sectors, auditing against the **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)**. Professional, not-for-profit and non-governmental, HQAI's auditing services are intended to improve the quality and accountability of the entire humanitarian sector, - most importantly to ensure that organizations put vulnerable people at the centre of their work and in order to build trust with stakeholders and donors. To avoid potential conflicts of interest and following international good practice, HQAI is an independent certification body specially established for this purpose. Its certification process is accredited under the relevant ISO standards. With a few exceptions, organizations audited and certified by HQAI have both development and humanitarian activities. Private sector, military and other actors can be audited but not yet certified. (More info at [hqai.org](http://hqai.org))

## Why is humanitarian assistance necessary?

There is tremendous need for humanitarian assistance all over the world. Over one billion people live in countries affected by long-term humanitarian crises. These countries are home to half of the world's people living in poverty. The number of countries experiencing protracted crises (5 or more years of UN appeals) has more than doubled over the last 15 years, from 13 to 31. Over half of countries that require humanitarian assistance to deal with the pandemic are experiencing another long-term humanitarian crisis. Countless people from all walks of life are moved to act in response to the humanitarian imperative - the desire to prevent and alleviate humanitarian suffering wherever it happens.

## Why is accountability essential for the humanitarian and development sectors?

People affected by disaster or conflict have the right to receive protection and assistance and to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity. At the heart of the issue is an immense power imbalance between those who provide assistance and those who receive it. This imbalance can lead to abuse, as we unfortunately see too often. Accountability towards affected people (AAP) is the process of using power responsibly. It means taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power. Accountability offers mechanisms intended to counterbalance the power inequality such as identification of needs, participation in decision making, and access to complaint mechanisms.

## What are humanitarian standards?

Humanitarian standards are statements which describe the actions needed so that crisis-affected people can enjoy the right to receive protection and assistance and to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity. Humanitarian standards are developed by humanitarian practitioners with specific areas of expertise and are formulated based on evidence, experience, and learning. They provide a strong basis to advocate for the rights of crisis-affected communities. By applying them in preparedness and response

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operations, humanitarian agencies and practitioners make a commitment to quality and make themselves accountable to the populations they serve.

### **What is the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)?**

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) is a voluntary and measurable standard, which means its application can be objectively assessed. The CHS places **communities and people affected by crisis** at the centre of assistance. As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality aid. The CHS is the result of a **global consultation process**. It draws together key elements of existing humanitarian standards and commitments, and has the ambitious goal to provide the entire humanitarian and development sectors with a common reference framework for quality and accountability.

### **Who should use it?**

While formulated with a strong reference to humanitarian action, the concepts covered by the CHS are applicable to any organization working with vulnerable or at-risk communities. The CHS is for anyone delivering direct humanitarian assistance or supporting organizations to do so – NGOs, and governments. Even the military and the private sector are all encouraged to apply the CHS to any humanitarian work. The CHS outlines what organizations need to do to be accountable in humanitarian situations. It can also be used by communities and people affected by crisis as a guideline of what to expect from the organizations providing help.

