

Chapter 1: Attitudes

1. Overview

1. 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 that, the quality of protection enjoyed by IDPs and other affected communities.
2. These attitudes can be developed and enhanced over time. By internalising and demonstrating appropriate attitudes at work with colleagues, partners, IDPs and other affected communities, a humanitarian worker can significantly enhance the quality and impact of her/his protection response.
3. Attitudes that humanitarian workers are normally expected to demonstrate are frequently outlined in the job description or terms of reference of the post. This chapter provides guidance on how they can be effectively demonstrated at work and how they can be enhanced at the individual level. The attitudes addressed in this Chapter include:
 - Being humanitarian
 - Remaining open minded
 - Being positive and proactive
 - Remaining empathetic
 - Being a team-player
 - Being self-aware
4. Many of these attitudes are inter-related. They also are pre-requisites to the skills that humanitarian workers need to demonstrate and that are noted in Chapter 2 of this Part.

2. Demonstrating Attitudes

A. Be Humanitarian	
What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1, Chapter 1 of this Handbook outlines the core principles of humanitarianism. These include humanity, the humanitarian imperative, neutrality, independence and impartiality. • This guidance is often reflected in the 'codes of conduct' of various humanitarian agencies.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the foundation of every humanitarian agency's mandate. • It helps ensure that all humanitarian workers, regardless of which agency they represent, share a common vision and direction. All activities, ranging from recruiting staff, developing a protection strategy to negotiating with non-state actors must be based on these principles. • It helps in maintaining professionalism at work. • Compromising these principles affects the agency, the image of other humanitarian actors, and consequently, the impact of our collective response (e.g.: actors who perceive us to be partial may not provide access to IDPs in areas under their control. This may compromise the protection of IDPs as well as the security of the humanitarian community.). • If agencies are unable to work in a country without compromising these principles, a review of the value and purpose of humanitarian action needs to be undertaken.
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review each action to ensure it is in line with the core principles. Before undertaking any activity, make a judgement on how the core principles of humanitarianism are reflected (i.e.: how does an activity adhere to or violate these core principles). • Train all humanitarian actors, regardless of their function (e.g.: protection, logistics, programme, administration staff), how they can demonstrate these principles in their work (e.g.: code of conduct training). • Be eminently aware of the political environment in which we operate and the perceptions that stakeholders may have of us or our work. This helps in avoiding misperceptions of bias or political manipulation. • Be transparent and consistent in all activities we undertake and in our dialogue with <u>all</u> stakeholders. Constantly inform interlocutors, partners and the public at large of the basis for our action, criteria for decision and overall goals. Good communication skills are essential in this respect (see <i>Chapter 2 on communication skills</i>).

B. Remain open-minded	
What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian workers need to be receptive to new and different ideas or the opinions of others to best effect a humanitarian mandate.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian agencies are often working in a country in support of and upon the invitation of a government. While they bring technical and other essential resources, it is important that humanitarian agencies and workers do not assume they know everything or can impose their views on a government. It enhances the capacity to work in different cultural environments with people from different nationalities and agencies with different perspectives. It helps in receiving information more readily from a range of sources. Consequently, it allows for better understanding, planning and more appropriate interventions. It helps in being flexible at work including changing individual priorities to suit the operational needs, adapting to new colleagues and situations, and providing support to a team. It helps in dealing with complex negotiations and is essential to effective leadership and coordination (see <i>chapter 2</i>).
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve listening and genuine inquiry skills (in parallel to advocacy. (See <i>chapter 2</i>)). Understand personal prejudices and ensure that they do not affect our work. Review discussions with colleagues and other partners where views diverged and conflict arose with the aim to understand why this happened and how such situations could have been tabled and resolved differently. Continuous learning (formal or informal) exposes us to a range of interests and issues and broadens one's horizons.

C. Be positive and proactive	
What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining positive, in this context, is to believe that a situation can be improved and solutions achieved. The complexity or intensity of an operation should not give rise to a sense of despair. Being proactive is to seek and improve programmes and interventions rather than routinely reproducing activities. This includes seizing opportunities rather than remaining passive.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian workers are required to deal with the consequences of violence, conflict or natural disasters that have devastating consequences on thousands of lives. The magnitude of the crisis, disorganisation, lack of resources, security concerns, overwhelming information, policy gaps, failed negotiations and poor living conditions can all lead to feelings of negativity and resignation. Negative emotions can affect an individual and spread throughout a team and can adversely affect an operation. As humanitarian agencies can sometimes be the last hope for IDPs and other affected communities, humanitarian workers are entrusted with that hope and have the duty to deploy all efforts and energy to secure the protection of such persons. It helps in finding the right approach, identify opportunities, be creative and take decision that are in the best interest of IDPs and others of concern. It contributes to effective protection interventions, successful negotiations, sustainable partnerships are sustainable, and also ensure that fatigue does not set-in and that a team works effectively. It is an essential trait in leading a team, an operation or a project, but also necessary to ensure the welfare of colleagues. It can help humanitarian workers control their environment rather than letting the environment control them.
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking care of oneself, even during emergencies in hardship locations is essential (eating and resting well). Finding a safe way to dispel frustrations on a regular basis is helpful – either by discussing with colleagues or friends, exercising, spending personal time away from colleagues and maintaining personal space in crowded living conditions are some examples.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff welfare, improvements to living conditions, peer support networks are essential in keeping staff moral high. It is essential for staff members to support each other and for managers to address. • Team building exercises are frequently helpful so that team members learn to support each other. • Strong leadership that empowers all staff and provides focus in the operation is crucial in keeping a team motivated.
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D. Remain empathetic

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy is the ability to identify oneself with the situation of others. • Empathy should not be confused with being emotionally involved with a situation that can mar objectivity, adversely affect standards of professionalism and be perceived as a bias by various parties, which in turn can compromise the neutrality of an agency.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the situation of IDPs and other affected communities. It helps build their trust and encourages them to share their problems, views and concerns. • To plan programmes that address their specific concerns, builds trust and breaks down power-relations between humanitarian workers and IDPs. • To understand the concerns of humanitarian partners, governments and colleagues that may be difficult to express publicly but nevertheless affect a humanitarian operation. It helps in being tactful towards sensitive situations and helps in enhancing partnership and negotiations. • To respond to personal and professional concerns of colleagues, not least to maintain an effective team.
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers can help sensitize their teams and partners on the root causes of protection concerns and the challenges that displaced persons face on a daily basis. This may help staff better understand and be further committed to protecting IDPs and other affected communities. • Participatory assessment and planning are activities that bring humanitarian workers closer to IDPs and affected communities. It encourages humanitarian workers to better understand the situation of IDPs and simultaneously empowers the latter in taking ownership of a programme. This process also helps in building empathy towards IDPs. • Active listening can assist in ensuring that humanitarian workers understand others before they make themselves understood. This too will lead to a more empathetic approach to an operation.

E. Be a team player

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability and willingness to work together with other colleagues and agencies to enhance the quality of protection available to IDPs and other affected communities.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All agencies have the same goal – to ensure the protection of IDPs and other affected communities. Yet no single individual (or agency) has the capacity or ability to deal with the range of issues that need to be addressed in an IDP operation. • Resources, that are frequently limited, need to be shared and used optimally to improve any humanitarian operation. • Working alone will not only adversely affect the individual or agency, but the broader humanitarian community, and consequently the IDPs themselves.
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate jointly in activities with other humanitarian agencies and members of your own agency. Share information (be transparent) and keep others up to date. Ensure communication channels are open at all times. Avoid keeping ‘hidden agendas’. • Actively seen others’ views and ideas and respect their contribution. Aim to understand their positions that may be different from yours. • Offer constructive criticism if necessary, but avoid being pessimistic. Persuade if necessary but do not force ideas onto others. • Share successes and failures with the team, bring problems out in the open and actively seek their resolution. • Avoid being ‘territorial’ over an issue. Aim to be as inclusive as possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put aside personal considerations to help the team achieve their goals. • Spend time in help others who need support. • Be flexible at work. Adopt individual priorities with those of the team to address important issues. • Encourage team-building activities that may help in every-day work at the office.
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F. Be self-aware	
What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A personal understanding of ourselves, especially of our strengths and weaknesses.
Why is it important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness allows us to acknowledge and thereafter use our strengths to support an operation and simultaneously work towards improving areas where we are not strong. This can include knowledge gaps (e.g.: understanding the local environment), skills (e.g.: interpersonal skills that allow effective interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds) or other attitudes (e.g.: being positive and active). • Maximising and building on individual strengths within a team optimises the effectiveness and impact of a team and mitigate weaknesses. • Ignoring weaknesses leads us to perpetuate them at the expense of the displaced persons we serve and colleagues with whom we work with.
How can it be enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the day/week’s events and determining what went well (and why) and what they could have done better. • Take psychometric and emotional quotient tests available in management courses or on the internet to determine personal strengths and areas for improvement. • Receive constructive feedback on a regular basis from colleagues as well as friends and family (given that personal behaviour often reflects in our professional lives).