

# Volunteer Handbook

## Welcome Note

*“It's not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing.  
It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.”*

*- Mother Teresa*

***Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,***

***Warmest greetings! By volunteering to join the CHARIS community, you are an essential part of our efforts to support and engage in God's work in humanitarian aid in the region. With your contributions, we hope to be the face of Christ to those in need beyond the shores of Singapore.***

***We are committed to supporting your work in CHARIS, providing you with the opportunity to use your talents and gifts to become engaged and thoughtful volunteers. Thank you for offering your skills, time, and treasures to assist CHARIS in its purpose. May our Lord bless you and your work.***

**Josephine Koh**

Chair of Volunteer & Outreach

Sub-Committee, CHARIS

This Volunteer Handbook (hereinafter referred to as “Handbook”) applies to all volunteers of CHARIS. It is intended to help you navigate becoming a volunteer with CHARIS. In this Handbook, you will learn about who we are and what we do, our partners and Member Organisations, our values, purpose, as well as the policies and procedures around volunteering.

Your work as a volunteer is critical to our success in reaching out to the vulnerable in the region. For the purposes of this Handbook, all references of CHARIS include, where applicable, its Member Organisations.

We hope this Handbook provides you with the information you need to know to be an effective volunteer. Policies and procedures may however change from time to time to accommodate changes in circumstances and applicable laws. At any given time, existing policies and laws will prevail over inadvertent errors or outdated materials in this Handbook. Please read and understand this Handbook carefully. If you have any queries or would like to obtain more information on any matter, please feel free to contact the Secretariat Office. We welcome you to CHARIS and wish you a meaningful volunteering journey with us.

## About CHARIS

Caritas Humanitarian Aid and Relief Initiatives (Singapore) Ltd (or CHARIS) is the umbrella body for overseas humanitarian aid by the Archdiocese of Singapore. CHARIS was first launched as an archdiocesan body on 19 August 2010 by Emeritus Archbishop Nicholas Chia. CHARIS is part of Caritas Internationalis, which is made up of over 160 Catholic relief, development and social service organisations working together to build a better world for the poor and marginalised in over 200 countries.

Inspired by the Catholic faith, CHARIS is the helping hand of the Church – reaching out to the poor, regardless of race or religion, to build a world based on justice and fraternal love.

### Purpose

**As one Body in Christ, to inspire, unite and enable the Catholic Community in Singapore, to love and serve our neighbours in the region through humanitarian aid and disaster response.**

The stylized cross signifies CHARIS as a Catholic organisation. The cross forming an “umbrella” depicts CHARIS’ role as the umbrella body for overseas humanitarian aid by the Archdiocese of Singapore. The colour purple represents both the colour of suffering (used during Lent) and the “coming” of hope which we seek to bring to those suffering overseas.



## Strategic Pillars

### Inspire

To inspire the Catholic community towards Catholic Social Mission, grounded in compassion, empathy, and fraternal love.

### Unite

To unite the Catholic community, parishes, and member organisations for action towards answering the call of the poor, and to be in unity with the Caritas and other regional networks.

### Enable

To enable Catholic individuals, communities, and organisations undertaking overseas humanitarian work through empowerment and capacity building.

## Our Partners

As the umbrella body for overseas humanitarian work by the Archdiocese of Singapore, CHARIS works closely with members of the Caritas Internationalis Confederation in fulfilling its mission outreach for those in need overseas.



**Caritas Internationalis (CI)** is a confederation of over 160 members who are working at the grassroots in almost every country of the world. When a crisis hits, Caritas is already on the ground.

CI has its headquarters in Rome, co-ordinating emergency operations, formulating development policies, and advocating for a better world for everyone.

CHARIS had a shared membership to CI with Caritas Singapore since its launch in 2010, and became a full-fledged member of the Confederation at the CI 21st General Assembly held in Rome in May 2019.



**Caritas Asia (CA)** is one of the seven Regional Offices under the Confederation of Caritas Internationalis (CI). It was established by the Asian MOs, with the endorsement and approval of the confederation, during the General Assembly of CI in 1999 in Rome. It currently has 25 member organisations in 24 countries in Asia, including CHARIS.

The primary role of Caritas Asia is to serve and support the member organisations in the region in the achievement of their mission, and has the responsibility to intensify interchange and mutual aid among the member organisations for the promotion and harmonisation of their work and to achieve the goals pursued in the region by the Confederation.



**Caritas Singapore** is the official social mission arm of the Catholic Church in Singapore, and the umbrella body for 28 Catholic member organisations whose work touches the lives of many regardless of race or religion. Caritas Singapore aims to be the manifestation of God's Love in Action. Through their programmes, they journey with people in need in the community toward empowerment and a better future. The Caritas Singapore family's work supports the poor and destitute; families, children and youth; people with physical or mental challenges; those with terminal illnesses or HIV/Aids; the incarcerated; and migrants in Singapore.

Caritas Singapore is a member of Caritas Internationalis, and the sister organisation to CHARIS.

## Our Member Organisations

Our Member Organisations are Catholic organisations and groups within the Archdiocese of Singapore that are involved in overseas humanitarian work. There are 18 Member Organisations of CHARIS at present (shown below) and CHARIS aspires to continue reaching out to all who are engaged in overseas humanitarian work.



## What we do

Amongst other work that CHARIS undertakes as a Catholic organisation, we are engaged in the following three core activities:



### Mission Trips

CHARIS and its Member Organisations organize mission trips that provide overseas opportunities for Catholics to put our faith into action. These mission trips also support and encourage the formation and growth of CHARIS' Member Organisations in overseas mission work.

### Disaster Relief

CHARIS' operational role is to coordinate the Singapore archdiocesan response to natural disasters in the region. Activities for disaster response are viewed in three stages: Preparation, Relief and Reconstruction.



### Humanitarian Aid

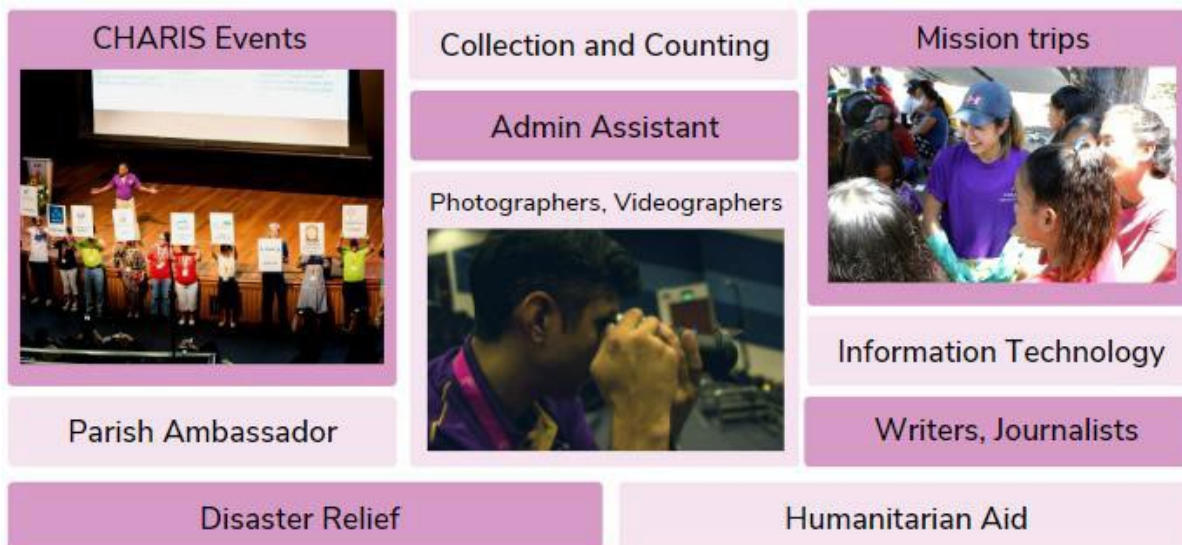
Beyond responding to natural disasters, CHARIS also seeks to alleviate human suffering caused by adverse circumstances such as war, civil strife, crisis and poverty.

## Volunteering with CHARIS

Volunteering with CHARIS extends beyond providing funding or organising overseas mission trips and providing disaster responses and humanitarian aid. Doing God's good work comes in many forms and magnitudes. Every task that CHARIS volunteers set out to do, no matter how small, we do with the heart to reach out to the vulnerable communities in the region.

CHARIS has a wide range of volunteering opportunities that cater to the interests and skillsets of our many volunteers. As the umbrella Organisation of the Member Organisations, CHARIS hopes to match the skills and interests of volunteers to the needs of the Member Organisations, and to support our brothers and sisters in Christ for the glory of God. We invite our volunteers to be open to the many opportunities that may come your way, and hope that you would experience God's love through your volunteering experiences.

Possible volunteering opportunities include:



If you are specifically interested in Disaster Response and/or Humanitarian Aid, the details on Disaster Relief Programme and Humanitarian Aid can be found at the end of this Handbook in the [Appendix](#).

## Recognising Volunteers

CHARIS wants to ensure that all volunteers know our appreciation for your contributions and are strongly motivated to continue to serve. The volunteers should experience the sense of pride and understand the importance of your role. CHARIS would implement a good system of recognition in this regard.

CHARIS would regularly organize volunteer appreciation events to thank the volunteers for the time and energy offered to the beneficiaries. Volunteer contributions may further be highlighted through publicity in media stories or in our Annual Report.

## What you can expect from CHARIS

CHARIS recognises that our volunteers are invaluable, and form an essential part of CHARIS' effort to carry out its purpose. CHARIS will follow our Code of Governance, Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct to uphold your confidence and trust in us as a charitable organisation. Our volunteers bring the experience, knowledge and skills that help CHARIS best serve the needs of the vulnerable in the community.

### CHARIS is committed to:

- offering volunteers new skills and experiences
- providing volunteers with the appropriate orientation, training and development in line with the pillars of CHARIS' vision
- connecting with volunteers through regular engagement and communication
- upholding and respecting each volunteer's dignity and rights
- treating each volunteer with courtesy, fairness and consideration

### The Secretariat Office seeks to cultivate a good relationship with the volunteers through the understanding that:

- The Secretariat and the volunteers have come together to glorify God by achieving CHARIS' mission and vision
- Each of their roles are complementary and mutually enhancing
- Each shall understand and respect the needs and abilities of another, using language that is respectful and professional when communicating with each other and the beneficiaries.

## What CHARIS expects from you

The way we interact with those we serve and the manner in which we carry out our duties reflect CHARIS as an organisation. We are largely assessed and perceived based on the behaviour of our members and supporters, in particular, by the individual and collective performance of our volunteers. It is imperative that all in CHARIS act in a manner that is Christ-like and that evokes public trust and confidence. Accordingly, each volunteer must act in all matters in a manner that will safeguard the reputation and integrity of CHARIS and will preserve and strengthen public confidence in CHARIS activities.

This Handbook sets out the Policies and Procedures governing volunteering efforts in CHARIS, and we hope you find them effective in the course of your time with us. The spirit of volunteerism is based on the following values:

### Respect

Serve in a manner that upholds respect and dignity with the Secretariat Office, fellow volunteers and the beneficiaries. CHARIS respects religious traditions, cultures, structures, and customs as long as they enhance and uphold the dignity of the human person. Treat everyone with courtesy, respect and Christian charity. Come with an attitude of service and serve with humility.

### Compassion

United in one human family, we are profoundly moved by the suffering of others and have a moral duty to recognise the humanitarian imperative to respond. While serving, we ask volunteers to be sympathetic to the vulnerable and to do their best to alleviate their pain.

### Cooperation and Partnership

We ask for your cooperation with the Secretariat Office and fellow volunteers, maintaining a good team spirit that creates a healthy environment to serve. This solidarity binds us together in the common mission of bringing humanitarian aid to the vulnerable. We should not act or say anything which might affect or obligate CHARIS or its Member Organisations to any third party. (e.g. Public statements to the press, lobbying efforts with other organisations, financial obligations)

### Equality, universality, impartiality and openness to all peoples

All women and men, girls and boys are created equal and make their own unique contributions to our world. CHARIS is committed to serve all, particularly those who are poorest and most vulnerable, irrespective of race, age, sex, physical ability, ethnicity, creed or political persuasion.

### Participation

As a volunteer of CHARIS, we wish to ask for your wholehearted participation in your commitments in order to deliver the best possible aid to the beneficiary we serve. To build a relationship with the CHARIS community that will enable you to have a fruitful experience volunteering with CHARIS.



# Policies and Procedures

The following policies of CHARIS shall apply to all volunteers:

## Protecting CHARIS Property and Exercising Stewardship

Unless otherwise agreed in writing by CHARIS, all materials designed or created for CHARIS and any product of volunteer work (e.g. Programme materials, software, etc.) are deemed the property of CHARIS, including any and all intellectual property. Volunteers are to ensure that CHARIS assets and intellectual property are not misused and are further protected from theft, fraud or other damages. Maintaining the appropriate standards of honesty and integrity in financial accountability is expected.

## Training

Volunteers will receive training as part of their volunteer service with CHARIS. All volunteers may, depending on the assignment, complete an orientation, on-the-job or program training, and participate in continuing education classes. The training will set out the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the volunteer's assignment.

## Conduct of Volunteers

Volunteers are to comply with the policies and procedures of CHARIS, including those adopted from the **Caritas Internationalis Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct for Staff, CI Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy**, as well as **CI Anti-Harassment Policy**. By signing up as volunteers and as representatives of CHARIS, volunteers are deemed to have agreed to comply with policies and procedures as aforesaid and will undertake the following:

- Adhere to, or understand and respect the social and moral values and teaching of the Catholic Church
- Act in good faith and treat other people with dignity and respect
- Respect all human rights and challenge discrimination, harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation that infringe the rights of others
- Perform duties competently with love, without prejudice or discrimination of any form
- Ensure that one acts in accordance with health, safety and security guidelines, and endeavour to safeguard others
- Not to engage in fundraising activities that are not approved in writing by CHARIS
- Ensure that CHARIS' reputation is not to be brought into disrepute
- Avoid "impos[ing] one's faith upon others...realis[ing] that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love"
- Inform CHARIS promptly in the event of any breach of any policy or procedure, including criminal conviction or investigation by the relevant authority in Singapore or elsewhere.

For more information or details on our policies, please go to <https://charis-singapore.org/volunteer-resources>.

## Volunteer Expense Reimbursements

Volunteer Expenses Allowed:

- Any necessary expenses incurred in carrying out activities of CHARIS
- Meals (lunch/dinner) if volunteers work more than 4 hours.
- Taxi fare if volunteers work after 10:30pm (note: all other transports expenses to and from venue before 10:30pm are not allowed)

## Reimbursement Procedure

- Volunteer purchases have to be agreed by CHARIS in advance and expenses supported by receipts reimbursed in accordance with the authorization limits below
- Alternatively, volunteers may request vendors to invoice CHARIS directly

## Payment Authorization limits:

- Less than SGD 1,000 – CHARIS Secretariat may approve
- SGD 1,000 to SGD 3,000 – Committee Chair to approve
- More than SGD 3,000 – Per CHARIS payment approval policy in addendum D, Finance Manual.

## Health and Safety

Volunteers are expected to declare all medical conditions that can potentially be harmful to your own safety and the safety of those around you.

## Preservation of Privacy & Confidentiality

As part of its corporate governance structure, CHARIS abides by the Personal Data Protection Act 2012 (PDPA) and formulates its personal data protection policy for both its internal stakeholders (e.g. staff) as well as external parties (e.g. donors and volunteers) on handling of personal data. Volunteers are to abide by the legal requirements under the PDPA and CHARIS' policies and should properly manage the data and information of CHARIS, its Member Organisations, donors, volunteers and beneficiaries.

Every volunteer of CHARIS is required to respect and maintain confidentiality of all information, including but not limited to, the personal information and data of every person, as well as the business documents, reports, records, files, to which the volunteer has access to whilst carrying out his/her responsibilities, duties and/or assignments.

Without claiming them to be exhaustive, the following are acts that serve as illustrative instances that are deemed necessary for compliance to ensure that information given to CHARIS are kept strictly confidential and that the integrity of such personal particulars and information entrusted are not compromised:

- Not to divulge to any unauthorized third party or use any of personal information without the prior consent of CHARIS
- Not to disclose to any unauthorized individuals, confidential information which may come to the volunteer's knowledge during the course of engagement in CHARIS
- Not to discuss, disclose, share, release or use any details of data to any third party, unless strict prior written consent has been obtained from the party involved, and/or the Secretariat
- Not to duplicate, remove or retrieve, information or documents from the premises or digital sources of CHARIS in any form (printed, photographically, digitally, or any other form or medium) unless strict prior written consent has been obtained from CHARIS.

## PDPA

CHARIS collects personal data of volunteers so as to assess, select, recruit and mobilize volunteers, and to communicate with volunteers regarding the services and the activities of CHARIS. CHARIS will advise volunteers about the personal data collected, the purpose of use and to seek the necessary consent in respect of the use of the personal data.

### Dismissal

Volunteers are expected to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interest and safety of all volunteers, staff, beneficiaries and CHARIS.

CHARIS has the right to refuse a volunteer's placement or to terminate the volunteer service if:

- There is a perceived risk to the health or welfare of any person, including the volunteer's health or welfare.
- The volunteer does not comply with CHARIS' policies and procedures, including those adopted from the Caritas Internationalis Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct for Staff, CI Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy, as well as CI Anti-Harassment Policy.
- The volunteer has gross misconduct or insubordination including being under the influence of alcohol and drugs, theft of property or misuse of equipment, abuse and mistreatment of involved parties, creating a disturbance on CHARIS' premises, at sponsored activities or in areas which could jeopardise the safety of others, unauthorised disclosure of CHARIS' proprietary or confidential information.
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct of the volunteer.
- The volunteer does not comply with any reasonable request for personal information, including name, identification number, address, personal and emergency contact details, police clearance and signing of receipt of information.
- Volunteers who have not reached the age of 16 years.

### Concerns and Grievances

CHARIS promotes and maintains high standards of corporate governance. Our Whistleblowing Policy allows for staff, volunteers, donors or the general public to report suspected cases of fraud, misconduct or other improprieties, and are assured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimization for whistle-blowing in good faith and without malice.

This policy serves to provide protection for anyone who files complaints or provides information on a serious offence that may have an impact on the organisation. Examples of such offences include actions that:

- are unlawful
- are not aligned to the values and practices of the organisation
- endanger the health and safety of persons
- seriously breach fundamental internal controls
- deliberately conceal information tending to show any of the above

### Confidentiality of Identity

Every effort will be made to protect the complainant's identity. The identity of the complainant shall be confidential unless disclosure is necessary, in which case disclosure shall be made only with consent, and to the extent necessary and only to such persons on a "need to know" basis.

You may also submit your concerns by mail to:

Private & Confidential  
For the Attention of Audit Committee Chairman  
Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives, Singapore (CHARIS)  
55 Waterloo Street  
#07-02  
Singapore 187954  
Email Address: [audit\\_committee@charis-singapore.org](mailto:audit_committee@charis-singapore.org)

### Conflict of interest

Volunteers must prioritise according to CHARIS' mission over any personal, business or marketing interest and should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationships or exploit others to further your personal, religious, political, business interest. As such, volunteers are to refrain from engaging in any transaction in which personal interests conflict, potentially conflict or appear to conflict with those of CHARIS.

Some conflict of interest situations are easily identifiable, whereas others are more subtle. In general a conflict of interest may be deemed to arise when your loyalty and interests are divided whilst representing CHARIS in your dealings with external parties, whether making recommendations or taking decisions in such dealings. It can also arise when the volunteer uses the position in CHARIS to advance the private business or financial interests, whether or not at the expense of CHARIS.

In general, volunteers must be aware of the following illustrations of potential conflicts :

- **Accepting Payment or Gifts:** No volunteer shall accept payment of any kind (including gifts, cash, discounts, concessions, services or other similar item or benefits) for services rendered as part of volunteer service. This includes payment for speaking engagements or for participation in workshops or similar activities.
- **Improper Influence:** Any volunteer, or close relative, should not, when acting on behalf or when acting on behalf of another person, business or Organisation, attempt to influence CHARIS' position on any issue, matter or transaction nor participate in any discussions pertaining to a related organisation.

### Return of CHARIS Property

Volunteers are responsible for CHARIS and its Member Organisations' property, which includes all materials, files, keys, passwords or any other written or electronic information issued to volunteers or in volunteers' possession or control. All CHARIS and its Member Organisations' property must be returned on or before your last day. CHARIS may take all actions deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

## Other Information

For enquiries:

vs@charis-singapore.org

Office and office Hours:

**CHARIS**  
**Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives, Singapore**

55 Waterloo Street  
#07-02 Catholic Centre  
Singapore 187954  
Tel: +65 6337 4119

Office Opening Hours: Monday – Friday (9am-6pm)

Social Media:

Website	-	<a href="http://www.charis-singapore.org">www.charis-singapore.org</a>
Facebook	-	<a href="https://fb.com/CHARISingapore">fb.com/CHARISingapore</a>

Instagram	-	@charis_singapore
Youtube	-	CHARIS Singapore

Entity Status:

The Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives (Singapore) Ltd is a Company Limited by Guarantee with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA) UEN: 201715440W and a registered charity.

## APPENDIX

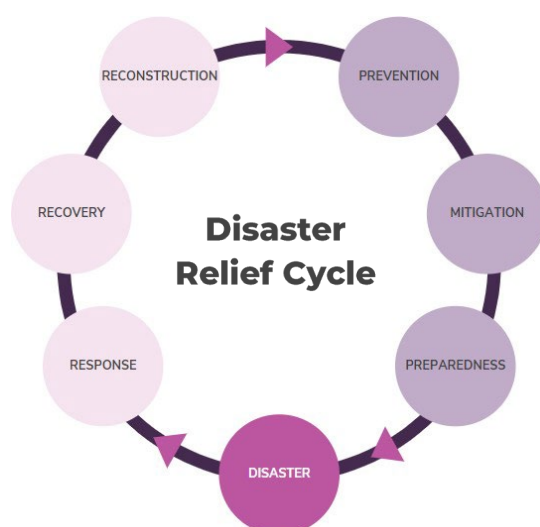
# Disaster Relief Programme

CHARIS adopts and applies from Caritas Internationalis (CI) a working definition of *disaster* in her disaster relief (DR) operations.

*Disaster* is understood as a sudden, and calamitous event that causes social, economic, infrastructural, and environmental losses that exceed beyond the capabilities of the affected communities and societies to mitigate using its own resources.

*Major disaster* is understood as a situation where there are substantial casualties and displacement of inhabitants, great human suffering and distress, extensive material damages, and severe disruption to the functioning of the affected community and society. CHARIS recognizes that there is no clear demarcation for the instance where a damaging event becomes a disaster, or when a disaster is designated major.

CHARIS takes into consideration the condition and quality of life pre- and post- event in evaluating the relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation needs of the affected community and society.



CHARIS hopes to be more actively involved in the recovery and mitigation phase of the disaster relief cycle. To be involved in Disaster Response missions, volunteers are required to attend the training and development sessions arranged by the CHARIS DR Committee. This ensures not only your safety, but the maintenance of the level of service we are providing to the vulnerable parties.

For Mission Volunteering, the CHARIS DR Committee is to screen volunteers for

- Volunteer medical history
- If the volunteer is age appropriate
- If the volunteer possesses the required skill set

# Humanitarian Aid

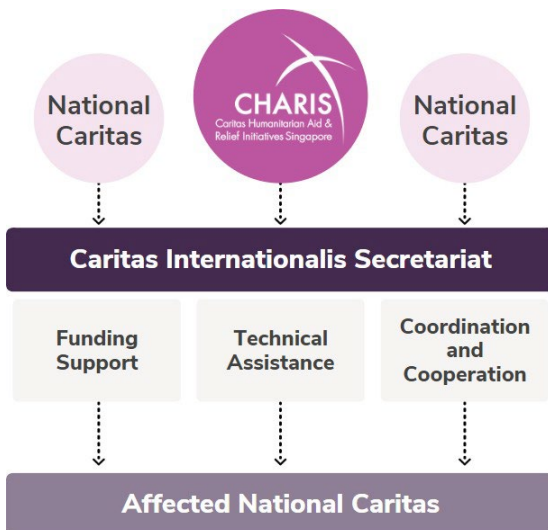
*Humanitarian aid* is the organized response to the suffering of thousands of people affected by natural and man-made disasters. It has the purpose of saving lives, reducing suffering and respecting human dignity.

Humanitarian aid offered by Organisations like CHARIS is based on the belief that all people affected by disaster or conflict have the right to receive protection and assistance to ensure the fulfilment of basic living conditions and a life of dignity.

There are many parties involved in supporting disaster affected communities, including the affected community itself.



## How does CHARIS and Caritas work in emergencies?

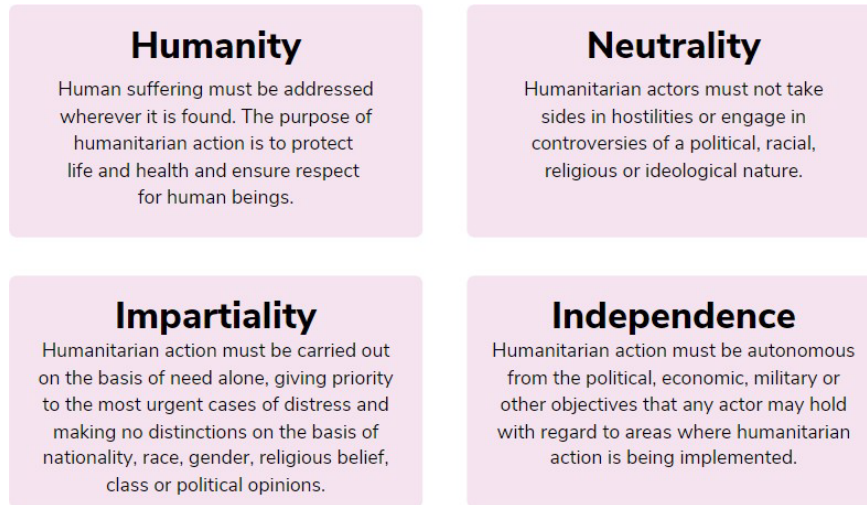


Caritas has independent member organisations in over 160 countries. In the case of an emergency, the national Caritas organisation of the affected country is the key actor, hence Caritas is often already present at the site of the disaster.

If the resources of the national organisation are insufficient to respond to the disaster, the worldwide network offers its solidarity, coordinated by the Caritas Internationalis Secretariat. The global Caritas network (which includes CHARIS) will then send aid through funding, technical assistance, and coordination.

# Humanitarian Aid

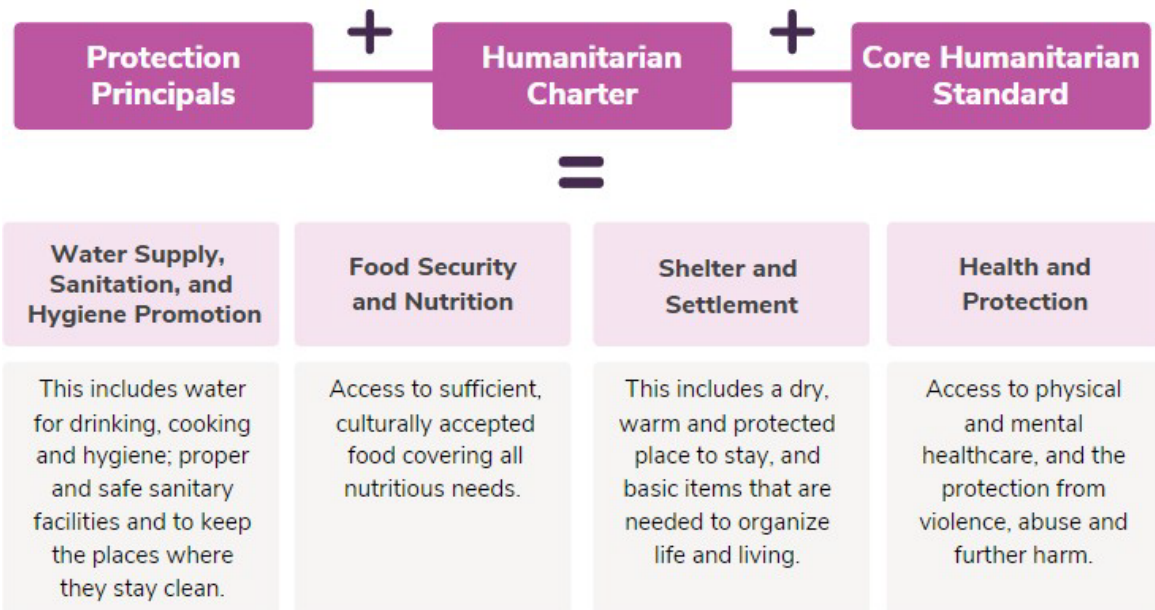
As a humanitarian organisation of the Catholic Church, the response of CHARIS to disaster affected communities is based on and driven by Catholic Social Teaching. CHARIS follows the four humanitarian principles that are at the center of humanitarian work



CHARIS' aims to approach the disaster relief using the SPHERE guidelines.

## What is SPHERE?

Global movement started in 1997 aiming to improve the quality of humanitarian standards.





# Humanitarian Aid

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first.

3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.

2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.

4. We shall endeavor not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

5. We shall respect culture and custom.

6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.

8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.

7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.

10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.

## 10 Core Standards of Humanitarian Aid

SPHERE outlines the important practical standards and serves as target points for humanitarian relief. Its principles are based on the need to support vulnerable communities while preserving their dignity as human beings.

