



# The Sphere Project

and

# Dignity

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## Abstract

In 1945, the newly founded United Nations established a commission to make an international bill of rights and they made the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This declaration is based on the respect for human dignity and this term dignity has since become the subject of many discussions on what it is and if it can be defined at all. It has been discussed if it should be understood as a religious term or if it should be separated from its connection to human rights, and despite all the discussions no one has come up with a very clear definition of what dignity is, and so the discussion on the purpose of the term continues. In 1997, a group of humanitarian agencies decided that action was needed if the quality of their work in disaster areas and conflicts was to have an effective impact on the affected people and so they began a project called Sphere. The aim of this project was to provide guidelines and minimum standards in a Handbook to humanitarian actors on how to respond in a humanitarian crisis situation and to streamline the cooperation between the agencies as well as inform on how to be held accountable for the actions they take during a humanitarian response. They based the project on two core beliefs which were that affected people have the right to life with dignity and that everything possible should be done to alleviate human suffering. However, in the time before and between the making of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Sphere Handbook, dignity has continuously been a central discussion due to its nature as being undefined, but still a recognized feature. This sparked my curiosity and in this thesis, I want to see how the concept of dignity has evolved and if there is any difference in the concept of dignity that was used in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Sphere Handbook which is now used by many humanitarian agencies.

## Introduction

***“The most challenging problem man faces is perhaps to offer a fellow human being a heart felt recognition as a self-conscious, free individual with a sense of purpose and direction”*** (van Baarda & Verweij, 2009, s. 508)

One might be tempted to believe that the before-mentioned quotation which I find hits the head on the nail with regard to the subject of this thesis and therefore deserves a page of its own, was the basis for the following; however, I am afraid that I do not believe that this was the case. In 1997, a project called Sphere was initiated by a group of NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement in order to try to improve the quality of actions taken during disaster response and also to be held accountable for them. They based the philosophy of this project upon two core beliefs of which the first was that people affected by disaster or conflict have a right to a life with dignity and second that everything possible should be done to alleviate human suffering that had come about as a result of disaster or conflict (ICRC, 2011, s. 4).

The Sphere Project produced a Humanitarian Charter as well as identified a set of minimum standards in areas essential to saving lives such as water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action. These standards are evidence based and represent consensus on best practice in humanitarian response. They also describe which conditions must be achieved in order for a population affected by disaster to survive and recover in stable conditions and with dignity. The Sphere Project included affected populations in the consultative process and thereby became known as the quality and accountability (Q&A) initiatives (ICRC, 2011, s. 4-5).

Together, the Humanitarian Charter and the minimum standards were published as a Handbook. It can be used to plan, implement, and monitor and evaluate during a humanitarian response and it is also regarded as an effective advocacy tool when it becomes necessary to negotiate with authorities for humanitarian space and for the provision of resources. Also, donors are beginning to use the standards by including them in their reporting requirements, so they are also used outside the humanitarian sector (ICRC, 2011, s. 5).

The Handbook has a structure that reflects the aim of the Sphere Project which is to establish the humanitarian response in a rights-based and participatory approach. The Humanitarian Charter provides the legal and ethical foundation for the Protection Principles as well as to the Core Standards and minimum standards. Its statement is of legal rights and obligations and of shared beliefs of humanitarian agencies that have been collected in a set of common principles, rights and duties, and being founded on the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative, they include the right to life with dignity, the right to receive humanitarian assistance and the right to protection and security. The Core Standards and the minimum standards articulate what these principles and obligations actually mean in practice. The Protection Principles are strategies and

actions meant to inform the humanitarian agencies from a protection perspective and are a core part of humanitarian action (ICRC, 2011, s. 6-7).

The Core Standards being the first set of minimum standards describe how fundamental the processes and approaches taken in a humanitarian response are to an effective response. Each standard has its root in the principle that disaster-affected populations have the right to life with dignity. Being qualitative in nature and specifying the minimum levels that need to be attained in a humanitarian response, the scope of the minimum standards is universal and applicable in any disaster situation (ICRC, 2011, s. 7).

As dignity is the key word in this Handbook and practically the basis for it, in this thesis I want to examine why dignity holds such a significant position in the humanitarian response system. What is it about dignity that makes it so important to human beings in order for them to sustain life? How can dignity be a key factor in the Core Standards and would it be possible to have the Core Standards without the focus on dignity? Where does the term dignity come from and how has the use of it evolved and changed in the humanitarian world? These questions lead me to my main research question which is:

**How have dignity and the use of the term evolved throughout time in the humanitarian sense?**

The reason I want to examine this is that I want to see if dignity as a concept continues to have the same meaning as was intended in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in which it was used and to see if the concept of dignity corresponds to that being used in the Sphere Handbook.

## Methodology

In order to answer my research question as mentioned in the Introduction chapter and to explain about Sphere, I will be using the latest edition of the Handbook published by the Sphere Project by presenting it in order to give a good understanding of the Handbook and its structure before combining this with the chapter of dignity. Let me already clarify that the Handbook is not written by the ICRC alone as it is reflected in the bibliography. This is a technical thing that I was not able to change. I will begin by describing the Handbook and its different main chapters so it becomes clear what it is about and how it is intended that humanitarian organisations use it. It is important to show the different chapters of the Handbook as it is a kind of manual in humanitarian response and it cannot be presented in full if any of the chapters are left out. Then I will look into the term dignity, where it comes from and how it has been perceived and used throughout time. I will primarily be using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles on the topic of dignity to present a view of its usage and I will be using articles in which different views and opinions of the concept are being discussed and shown in order to present these views and opinions and to discuss them. Finally, I will be combining the Sphere Handbook and its chapters with my knowledge on dignity, humanity and human rights to see if the concept of dignity has changed since it was formally introduced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The articles and chapters that I have chosen for the chapter on dignity have been selected because of their view on the term dignity and that they each present different views. I have searched for articles containing dignity as the primary search word in the university library search engine and I have chosen them from their relevance with regard to dignity. A lot of articles speak about the same when speaking of dignity, meaning that the topics they discuss around the term dignity are the same, and I have left out these articles, as I found it redundant to mention them. Instead I have tried to find articles that were opposed to one another and to the term dignity in order to show the variety of opinions that there is on this term.

I choose to use these terms 'humanitarian organisations' and 'humanitarian agencies' as equal terms in order to vary the language in the thesis. When using them, I refer to the organisations and agencies who are actively involved in the humanitarian response after a disaster or conflict has occurred. People who have been struck by disaster or conflict will be referred to as affected people as they are the target of the Sphere Handbook. All citations and references are marked with an s instead of a p for page. This was not something that I could change, and so the s stands for page.

## Limitation

I have chosen to primarily use articles and texts found through the Aalborg University library search web site. I have decided not to use a single theorist or the works of theorists as such as dignity may be used in a theoretically manner itself. With regard to the concept of dignity, Immanuel Kant was and still is very recognized for his work about dignity and he is regarded as one of, if not the primary author on dignity; however, I will only be using him and referring to him whenever he may be mentioned in the articles that I am using. As for the term dignity, I will not be using it in the sense of dying with dignity as I do not find this to be directly relevant for this thesis. Even though a lot of people die in disasters and conflicts, I will not be dealing with this particular subject in my thesis; although one might argue that responding to a humanitarian crisis and making sure that people recover and survive may lead to them later passing on with dignity as they were ensured a life with dignity after the disaster had occurred. However, this will not be part of my thesis. I will also not be treating dignity from a divine point of view as I find this irrelevant seeing that I am not applying a religious angle to the thesis. Dignity will only be referred to with the sense of being dignified, meaning having a higher social status than other members of society, when this is relevant in the articles, I am discussing, but it will not be a separate topic.

I will be using the Sphere Project Handbook as the only humanitarian response handbook although a number of other standards have been published like the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education; Preparedness, Response, Recovery; the Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network's Minimum Standards for Economic Recovery after Crisis; and the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS). I find the Sphere Project Handbook to be sufficient for this thesis to deal with dignity as this is the very backbone of the Handbook.

When mentioning the humanitarian world I refer to all of the humanitarian organisations and agencies including the UN, ICRC and NGOs.



## The Sphere Project

In this chapter, I will present the Sphere Project in order to provide an overview of the project and its standards which a lot of humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations adhere to when responding to a humanitarian crisis. I will also present the reason why the project has come about and also who is using it today. As there are several areas within the project that operate with the standards set out in the Handbook, I will also present these areas in order to clarify how extensive the project is and the ground that it seeks to cover.

In 1997, a number of non-governmental organisations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement began working on creating the Sphere Project as they were interested in improving the quality of the actions they were taking during disasters and also being held accountable for them. The latest edition of the Sphere Project was published in 2011 which is the edition referred to in this thesis. The organisations based the entire Sphere Project around two core beliefs. The first belief is that anyone who has been affected by a disaster or a conflict has a right to life with dignity and therefore they also have a right to assistance. The second belief is that everything should be done in order to alleviate human suffering which has come about as a result of disaster or conflict (ICRC, 2011, s. 4).

To be able to support these two core beliefs, a Humanitarian Charter was framed by the Sphere Project and with this charter a set of minimum standards in so-called key-life saving sectors was identified. These minimum standards are to be found in the four technical chapters which consist of water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and least but not last health action. I shall revert to these four technical chapters later in this chapter. The minimum standards are based on evidence and are the result of a sector-wide consensus on best practice, meaning that they have been used and tried by the humanitarian agencies and organisations. They describe the conditions that must be met and achieved when responding to a disaster or conflict, so the affected population in stable conditions is able to survive and recover with dignity. Apart from the two core beliefs, the very inclusion of affected populations in the consultative process is also a core philosophy in the Sphere Project. It is crucial and absolutely necessary that the people is heard and respected by the humanitarian agencies that are coming to their aid. The Sphere Project also operates with Core Standards which are process standards that apply to all the technical chapters in the Sphere Handbook which I will present later (ICRC, 2011, s. 4-5).

The Sphere Handbook consists of the Humanitarian Charter and the minimum standards and together they form the Handbook which is not owned by any one organisation or agency, but is widely accepted and used by the humanitarian organisations and agencies. The structure of the Handbook is one that clearly shows that the primary aim of Sphere is to establish the humanitarian response in a rights-based and participatory approach (ICRC, 2011, s. 5). The Humanitarian Charter is a list of established rights and obligations and also shared beliefs and they are based on the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative saying that action must be taken in order to prevent or alleviate human suffering arisen out of disaster or conflict (ICRC, 2011, s. 20). The Handbook also consists of a set of Protection Principles which turn many of the legal principles and rights found in the Humanitarian Charter into strategies and actions meant to inform humanitarian work from a protection perspective (ICRC, 2011, s. 6).

The Core Standards describe how important all the processes and approaches are that are taken during a humanitarian response and there is a great focus on active participation of those who have been affected by disaster or conflict. Together with the minimum standards, they cover four sets of life-saving activities which are water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action. In the following sections concerning each of the four life-saving activities, I will be giving examples of what the Core Standards and the minimum standards are (ICRC, 2011, s. 7).

In the Handbook, there is a specific format. I have here highlighted the different sections in italic. First, the *minimum standard* is mentioned which is derived from the principle that anyone affected by disaster or conflict has the right to life with dignity. Next, some practical *key actions* on how to attain the minimum standard are suggested. Then follows a set of *key indicators* which are to be used as a kind of signal to show if one has attained the minimum standard or not. Finally, there are *guidance notes* which contain points that have to be considered in the context that one is in when trying to reach the key actions and indicators. A crucial thing to note is that no guidance is provided whatsoever on how to implement a certain activity. Instead, explanations are given to inform what needs to be in place to ensure a life with dignity for the disaster-affected population. Each humanitarian agency and organisation therefore has to choose a system that can conform with the Sphere minimum standards (ICRC, 2011, s. 7-8). Another thing that is important to note is that there is no guarantee that when conforming with Sphere, one is meeting all the standards and indicators. There may simply be some obstacles and difficulties that make it impossible to meet the standards like for example difficulty accessing the affected population or lack of cooperation from several sides.

Where the agencies and organisations are not able to meet the standards, they are encouraged to inform about this in their reports explaining why they were unable to meet the standards and how they could avoid this so that minimal harm is done to the affected population. This is also a way of conforming with the philosophy of the Sphere Project and the minimum standards, even if they are unable to meet all the standards set out in the Handbook (ICRC, 2011, s. 9). This relies on a great deal of trust and belief in the Sphere Project.

To sum up, the Sphere Project is based on the right to life with dignity and that everything possible should be done to alleviate human suffering which has come about due to conflict or disaster. Certain minimum standards have been specified for certain technical areas such as water supply; sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items and health action. The Handbook and its different chapters provide a guide for the humanitarian organizations to use when responding to a conflict or disaster in order to ensure that they all work in the same direction and with the same understanding of the situation for which they can be held accountable.

## The Humanitarian Charter

In this chapter, I will present the Humanitarian Charter which is part of the Sphere Project Handbook in order to explain why it is such an important part of the Handbook.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Humanitarian Charter is the legal and also ethical backbone of the Protection Principles, Core Standards and minimum standards mentioned in the Handbook. It collects and brings together the legal rights and obligations that are most essential for people who have been affected by a disaster or a conflict and it also tries to make an agreement between the humanitarian agencies on how to respond to disasters or conflicts and on what the responsibilities of the involved actors are (ICRC, 2011, s. 20).

The Humanitarian Charter is the recognition of the humanitarian agencies that all people who have been affected by a disaster or a conflict have the right to receive protection and also assistance to make sure that basic conditions are in place for them to uphold a life with dignity. The humanitarian agencies believe that the principles in this charter which I will present here below are universal. The principles are to be found in international law; however basically they derive from the fundamental **principle of humanity** which says:

*“that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 20)

This quotation and principle shows the starting point for all humanitarian work and it leads to the **humanitarian imperative** which is that everything should be done to prevent or alleviate any human suffering that has arisen from disaster or conflict and that nothing is above this principle (ICRC, 2011, s. 20). Above, I have highlighted in bold the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative as they are the two primary actions to always keep in mind when operating in a disaster or conflict area.

The humanitarian community that adheres to the Humanitarian Charter thereby acknowledges that first and foremost it is through the support of the community that basic needs of people who have been affected disaster are met and that the affected state is the primary actor responsible to make sure that assistance and protection are provided for its people. It also believes that it is necessary to have a combination of official and voluntary work in order to have an effective prevention and response which means that the humanitarian organisations and the public authorities have to work close together. It also recognises that the affected state may not always be in a position to assist and that it therefore is the responsibility of the international community to assist where possible and

needed. Special attention is given to the mandated organisations such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross as it is acknowledged that they have special roles to play in disasters and conflicts (ICRC, 2011, s. 21).

Also the humanitarian community consisting of many different humanitarian agencies acknowledges that it is important that each agency know how to interpret its role with regard to the needs of the population it is seeking to assist and also with regard to the responsibilities of the affected governments. As much as possible, the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative will be met (ICRC, 2011, s. 21).

As the humanitarian community base its services upon the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative, it thereby also recognises the rights of all people who have been affected by disaster and these rights including the following rights:

- *“the right to life with dignity”*
- *“the right to receive humanitarian assistance”*
- *“the right to protection and security”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 21)

It is worth noticing that dignity here is mentioned as the primary right. It is the primary right that the humanitarian agencies have to have in mind when responding to disasters or conflicts. It is based in international law and specifically in article 3 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights where the right to life is mentioned (UN, 1948). The right to life with dignity is about more than physical well-being; it is also about respect for the whole person and his human rights (ICRC, 2011, s. 22).

As for the right to receive humanitarian assistance, it is an essential part of the right to life with dignity as it concerns the right to a certain standard of living which includes adequate food, water, clothing and shelter. The Humanitarian Charter expresses that where a state is not able to provide this assistance, it must let others do so and they must do this with the principle of impartiality in mind meaning that no one will be discriminated against during the provision of assistance (ICRC, 2011, s. 22). For example it is not legal to only give humanitarian aid to one side of a conflict.

Finally, there is the right to protection and security which amongst others is rooted in international law and also in the affected state's own responsibility. Again, it is the state's own responsibility to take care of its own citizens in cases of emergency, disaster and conflict, but if it is not capable to do so, it must try to seek assistance from the international community. The right to protection also includes the right to seek asylum or sanctuary and includes the principle of non-refoulement,

meaning that a refugee cannot be sent back to a country in which he or she fears for his or her life, but I will not go into detail about this subject in this thesis (ICRC, 2011, s. 22).

The Humanitarian Charter ends with a presentation of the commitment of the humanitarian community. It commits itself to place the affected population at the centre of its actions and it aims at minimizing any harm that may come during the provision of humanitarian assistance. In the end, it commits itself to making every effort possible to ensure that any person affected by disaster or conflict is provided for in such a manner that it meets the minimum requirements for a life with dignity and it acknowledges that the accountability is to those it is seeking to assist (ICRC, 2011, s. 22-23).

To summarize this chapter on the Humanitarian Charter, the principles in the charter are based on the principle of humanity and also the humanitarian imperative which are acknowledged by the humanitarian agencies that adhere to the Humanitarian Charter. Where a state is unable to provide for its people during a disaster or conflict, it must try to seek assistance from the international community. Finally, the international community commits itself to place the affected population at the centre of its actions.

## The Protection Principles

The Handbook points out the two main pillars within humanitarian action which are protection and assistance (ICRC, 2011, s. 26). In this chapter, I will present the four different Protection Principles and how they are to be used in practice according to the Handbook, so it becomes clear what the purpose is with the Protection Principles.

The concerns of protection are safety, dignity and also the rights of the people who are affected by disaster or conflict, and they are the basis for the Protection Principles which consist of four principles as follows:

- “1. Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions*
- 2. Ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination*
- 3. Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion*
- 4. Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse” (ICRC, 2011, s. 29)*

These principles are founded in the rights that I have presented in the Humanitarian Charter, namely that of the right to life with dignity, the right to humanitarian assistance and the right to protection and security. At first glance, the principles seem somewhat straight forward and manageable, but as I will present, there is more to these principles than these words. The words highlighted in italic in the following chapters on the Protection Principles are the keywords which humanitarian agencies are supposed to pay attention to.

### Protection Principle 1

This principle is about *minimizing any harm* that may come as a result of the actions taken to protect the affected people; making sure that the people is still capable of *self-protection* and that the humanitarian agencies involved take great care of *managing any kind of information* about the affected people in such a manner that it does not put them at even greater risk (ICRC, 2011, s. 33).

The humanitarian agencies will inevitably face difficult choices when in a situation where protection is needed, and they will need to make case-by-case decisions in order not to become complicit in any abuse of rights. The agencies are advised to follow a checklist to make sure that the actions they take do not cause further harm and that their activities do not empower those that should not be empowered in a disaster or conflict situation for example armed groups. They should make sure that they are in contact with many different segments of the affected population so they ensure that they are included in their protection work and if any alternative form of protection is provided, it should be done in a safe environment and with the acceptance of the affected people (ICRC, 2011, s. 34).

The intervention of humanitarian agencies should not undermine the affected population's way of protecting itself. If they wish to move to another location which they believe is more secure, then the agencies involved should not stand in their way. In fact, they should assist them by providing firewood, water and other things that may help the people with their subsistence needs (ICRC, 2011, s. 34-35).

The agencies must also make sure that they handle information about the affected population with great care and do not put them at risk when handling this information. They must ensure that they have a clear policy on how to handle the information they retrieve, how they secure it and how any kind of abuse should be reported (ICRC, 2011, s. 35).

## Protection Principle 2

This principle concerns ensuring people's *access to impartial assistance* and the fact that *they are not denied assistance* and can receive the assistance *without discrimination* (ICRC, 2011, s. 36).

In cases where the authorities of the affected population are not able to provide assistance, they should not deny international organisations from providing this, and the organisations should carefully monitor the access to the affected population and in particular those who are the most vulnerable who typically are children, women, disabled and older people (ICRC, 2011, s. 36).

The authorities and the humanitarian organisations must not act in such a way that they deny the affected people of their right to receive humanitarian assistance which is a right that is derived from international law.



And finally, the humanitarian organisations must ensure that no discrimination takes place while providing assistance on the basis of the affected peoples' needs. No particular group must be singled out or be in focus, if this causes another group to suffer from it (ICRC, 2011, s. 37).

### Protection Principle 3

Protecting people from any kind of physical and psychological harm caused by violence and coercion is what this principle is about. The humanitarian organisations must ensure that the affected population does *not become the subject of violent attacks*; that it is *not subjected to coercion* like forcing them against their will which may result in causing them harm or violating their rights as for example the freedom of movement; and that it is *supported in its own efforts* to stay safe and find dignity (ICRC, 2011, s. 38).

It is always the government or relevant authorities of the affected population who is responsible for providing protection, and in cases of conflict all parties involved in the conflict must protect the civilian population, but where this is not possible, the humanitarian agencies should then agree on who provides protection and they should provide it in such a way that people are safe and able to make efforts to protect themselves. They should at the same time also monitor and report any violations of rights that they experience, however always keeping in mind to protect information about the affected people. The monitoring should also include schools and hospitals as these are specially protected under international law. Where explosives pose a threat to the affected population, this should also be reported, so action can be taken to remove them and ensure safe returns for the people (ICRC, 2011, s. 38-39).

As for not subjecting the affected people to coercion, it is crucial that the people know that they are not forced to stay or go to a place which they themselves have not chosen and also that they at any time have the right to seek asylum if they have been affected by disaster or conflict. Special concern should be taken towards the most vulnerable people such as children and women as they are at risk of being exposed to exploitation and also gender-based violence and the humanitarian agencies must seek to reduce these risks as much as possible (ICRC, 2011, s. 40).

Where possible, families must be supported in being kept together. Measures should be taken to teach people how to prevent children from becoming separated from their families and if they get separated, a tracing and reunification process should be in place (ICRC, 2011, s. 40).

## Protection Principle 4

In order to be able to *claim their rights*, the affected population must be supported in *obtaining information and documentation* and they must be assisted in getting the access to remedies that can help them recover from any effects they may have suffered, caused by abuse. The latter can be done by providing *community-based support* (ICRC, 2011, s. 41).

It is primarily the government who is responsible for ensuring that people's rights are respected and fulfilled, but where it is not capable of doing so, the humanitarian agencies must try to support and they can do this by informing the people of their entitlements. This can be either entitlements to an aid programme or entitlements that they have in the country in which they are citizens. Especially rights to housing, land and property must be paid special attention. And the affected people should be informed in a language and a manner that they know and understand, so they are aware of their rights and can be consulted about decisions that affect their lives (ICRC, 2011, s. 41).

During disasters or conflicts, many documents may be lost, and it is important to ensure that people still have their rights even though they do not have their documents anymore. The humanitarian agencies should assist in either securing or replacing lost documents. People have rights even if they do not have documents, but it may be necessary to show documents such as birth certificate, marriage certificate or passport to make sure that they access the full range of rights that they have. However, it is important not to confuse legal documents issued by the government or other authorities with those issued by a humanitarian agency which could ration cards or registration papers (ICRC, 2011, s. 42).

With regard to access to remedies, people are usually entitled to seek compensation if they have lost their property or their rights have been violated, but in cases where they are not able to, the humanitarian agencies should try to assist them in getting access to justice. Also the affected people should be supported in getting access to healthcare if they have been victims of gender-based violence and such (ICRC, 2011, s. 42).

Supporting the affected people through community-based support can happen by supporting cultural and social practices such as burials and ceremonies and also by supporting educational activities for children. Survivors of violence should be supported in gaining access to psychosocial support and self-help activities, and the agencies that provide such support should collaborate in order to make a system of support (ICRC, 2011, s. 43).

To sum up on the chapters on the Protection Principles, the four principles are concerned with minimizing any harm that may come when trying to assist the affected people. The humanitarian agencies should try to get in contact with as many different people as possible and they should seek to ensure that they do not undermine the affected population's ability to protect itself and that they handle any information they get with great care. The affected people must be ensured access to impartial assistance, and the humanitarian agencies must make sure that the affected people are not denied access to this and that no discrimination takes place during the provision of assistance. They must also make sure that the affected population does not become the subject of violent attacks and are subjected to coercion in any way, and it must be supported in its own efforts to stay safe. The affected people must be made aware that they are entitled to claim their rights and they should be supported in obtaining information and documentation where possible, and also community-based support should be put in place, so cultural and social practices can carry on as usual in order to bring back some normalcy in people's lives.

## The Core Standards

The Handbook includes some Core Standards and in this chapter I will describe what the Core Standards are about and how they are to be used.

The Core Standards are in fact processes that are necessary in order to achieve all the Sphere minimum standards. They express the practical side of the principles of the Humanitarian Charter and therefore they are fundamental to the rights of people who have been affected by disaster or conflict so they can receive assistance that supports life with dignity. They define the minimum level of response that is to be attained by the humanitarian agencies (ICRC, 2011, s. 53).

There is a total of six Core Standards:

*“People-centred humanitarian response”*

*“Coordination and collaboration”*

*“Assessment”*

*“Design and response”*

*“Performance, transparency and learning”*

*“Aid worker performance”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 50)

They show very central points to be taken into account when involved in a humanitarian response.

There is a certain structure for each of the Core Standards where first the *Core Standard* is mentioned, then the *key actions* which are suggested activities and the *key indicators* which are a kind of signal to show whether a minimum standard has been reached. Finally, there are *guidance notes* which are specific points to consider and also guidance when one tries to apply the Core Standard, the key actions and key indicators in different situations (ICRC, 2011, s. 50). The words highlighted in italic are the main points of a Core Standard.

As key actions and guidance notes are meant to be read together in the Handbook, I will here summarize what each of the seven key actions and according guidance notes for each Core Standard is about in order to provide an overview. I will gather the key indicators in the end and do this for each of the following Core Standards. In the end, I will summarize all of the Core Standards.

## Core Standard 1

It concerns people's capacities and strategies to survive with dignity and how this is an integral part of the humanitarian response's design and approach (ICRC, 2011, s. 55).

It is important for the psychological and social well-being of people that they are part of the recovery from disasters. *Local capacity* is always to be used wherever possible as the local population that has been affected by disaster holds skills, knowledge and abilities. It also contributes to the local population having a feeling of restoring their community with dignity and with some kind of control. The affected population is usually the first to react whenever a disaster has struck and it should be consulted very early on in the response action (ICRC, 2011, s. 56).

A systematic *feedback mechanism* should be in place for the affected people to provide feedback that may change or improve programmes put in place to assist them (ICRC, 2011, s. 56-57).

*Representative participation* is about getting a well-balanced representation of the affected population to participate in the response system and about understanding why there sometimes may be barriers hindering participation and focus should be on trying to get the marginalised people involved (ICRC, 2011, s. 57).

When actions are taken on behalf of a people affected by disaster, it is very important to *share information* as this can reduce anxiety and it also contributes to a feeling of responsibility to the community as well as ownership. In low-practical terms this can for example be by having meetings in the local language and in such a manner that it is understandable for example by the use of pictures and such. Meetings should take place in *safe and accessible spaces* where those who have restricted mobility can access. There should be put in place some formal *complaint* mechanism where people can complain if they are not satisfied with the work done by the humanitarian agency as people have right to complain. Also it is very important to respect and keep in mind the *culturally appropriate practices* that may go on in a local community, respecting them however not supporting anything that may violate human rights such as denying education to girls (ICRC, 2011, s. 57-58).

As for the key indicators for Core Standard 1, a way of measuring or see a kind of success rate is when it is possible to see that projects are linked to community-based initiatives and when disaster-affected people participate actively in meetings on the organisation and implementation of the response. Also the increase of self-help initiatives made by the affected community and the

appropriate action taken on complaints received by the agencies can be seen as a success rate (ICRC, 2011, s. 56).

## Core Standard 2

This is about coordination and collaboration, meaning that the planning of humanitarian response should be done in coordination with relevant authorities and that humanitarian agencies as well as civil society organisations who also work with impartial humanitarian care work together to maximise the efficiency (ICRC, 2011, s. 58).

*Coordinated response* is about how the programme coverage, timeliness and quality require collective action which means that an active participation in the coordination will make coordination leaders able to divide the work and responsibility and make sure that nothing is duplicated and that there are no gaps. The collaboration and sharing of resources will optimise the capacity of communities, neighbours and also humanitarian agencies. It is advised that there is established a *common coordination mechanism* meaning that meetings that bring together different sectors can be used to address people's needs as a whole, rather than in an individual and isolated manner (ICRC, 2011, s. 59).

Initially, it is the affected state that has the *coordinating role* and is responsible for coordinating the humanitarian response. Humanitarian agencies should support this function and today the cluster approach is now typically used in many larger humanitarian emergencies where groups of agencies work together in the same sector under a leading agency. Thereby *efficient data-sharing* becomes even more important and easier to use if the same global technical protocol is used bearing in mind to protect this information (ICRC, 2011, s. 60).

In a humanitarian emergency, there is often a need for involving the *military and private sector*. The military, because it has expertise and resources within logistics, security and communication among other things, and the private sector, because it can add to these areas. However, it is important that the military activities do not create any kind of security risk or make it difficult for the affected population to see the distinction between humanitarian work and military or political agendas (ICRC, 2011, s. 60).

The key indicators for Core Standard 2 are that assessment reports and other relevant information are regularly sent to the relevant coordinating groups and that any humanitarian activities done by

other agencies in the same sector are not duplicated. Commitments are acted upon and agencies take account of other agencies, civil society organisations and authorities when responding (ICRC, 2011, s. 59).

### Core Standard 3

This concerns assessment, meaning that the way to prioritize the needs of a disaster-affected population is done through assessing the context, the risks to life with dignity and the capacity of the affected people and authorities (ICRC, 2011, s. 61).

Wherever any *pre-existing information* about local humanitarian capacity exists, this should be used in the *initial assessment*. The information retrieved in the initial assessment should be used to base the immediate relief on in the very early hours after a disaster has occurred. It is important to remember that *phased assessment* should be used, as assessment is a process that is used throughout the humanitarian response. When assessing it is necessary to get *data disaggregation* as soon as possible, so the needs of children and adults of all ages are identified. Children between the age of 0-5 do not necessarily have the same needs as children between 13-17. It is important to conduct a *representative assessment* which covers all the needs of the disaster-affected population and where special efforts are made to assess people who live in hard-to-reach areas. And it is also very important to use primary information which can be direct observation, surveys or discussions with a variety of people (local authorities, men and women, teachers, traders and also other humanitarian organisations), however, it can be difficult or even dangerous for some people to speak openly, and anyone working with assessment should keep this in mind when collecting data and assessing. The data that is assessed and collected must only be used with the consent of the individual person (ICRC, 2011, s. 62-63).

Not only must the needs be assessed, it is also important to *assess the vulnerability* for different groups in the population such as older people and ill people (especially people with HIV and AIDS), some of them may be subject to discrimination and marginalisation. When conducting assessment, this information should be cross-checked and validated and assessment *check-lists* should be used as they ensure that all key areas have been examined and make the data accessible to other agencies. The *capacities* that the affected population has for coping and recovering should be identified. The positive as well as the reason for the negative capacities; for instance such as heavy alcohol consumption. The safety and *security* of the affected population and also any host

population should be assessed from the onset and continue to be assessed in order to identify any form of threats of violence, coercion or denial of basic human rights. The assessment reports that are produced should be *shared* with other humanitarian agencies as they provide precious information (ICRC, 2011, s. 64-65).

The key indicators are that assessed needs are directly linked to the capacity of the affected people and that the rapid and in-depth reports show views that represent all of the affected people including the vulnerable groups and the host community. The assessment reports are disaggregated and there is information about vulnerability, context and capacity. Any widely supported format of assessing has been used and the rapid assessments are followed by in-depth assessments (ICRC, 2011, s. 62).

#### Core Standard 4

This Core Standard concerns design and response which is about designing the humanitarian response based on the assessed needs of the disaster-affected population (ICRC, 2011, s. 65).

As it is the primary role and responsibility of the affected state to provide for its own people with assistance and protection after a disaster or conflict has occurred, the humanitarian organisations should only intervene if they estimate that the state does not have the capacity to fulfil its responsibilities. This should be done by *supporting the existing capacity* in the affected area. *Access* to aid should be provided for by timely information and a programme design that corresponds with the cultural consideration of the community, for instance there may have to be a separate queue for women with children and older people. Assuring access to basic services, security and respecting human rights are *the foundation of life with dignity*. The way in which the humanitarian response programme is designed and implemented has a huge effect on the affected people and therefore also on their dignity and well-being. People's intrinsic value, religious and cultural identity must be respected as this increases their psychosocial well-being and is a very important element in the right to life with dignity (ICRC, 2011, s. 66-67).

It is important to consider the *context and vulnerability* when designing a humanitarian response. There may be a number of vulnerable people who face several factors at the same time such as older people who are members of a marginalised ethnic group. It is also important to be aware of the *conflict sensibility* meaning that humanitarian assistance can have a negative impact as aid can be used to increase exploitation and abuse and it can also widen the power gap between different



groups in the population. The design of the programme should be made so it ensures equal distribution of the assistance in an impartial way (ICRC, 2011, s. 67).

*Meeting Sphere's minimum standards* depends on the context and the resources and living standards of the affected area prior to the disaster. The affected population should be included in the response as much as possible and the programme should be designed so any disparities and risks are minimised as much as they can. Where *early recovery and risk reduction* is concerned, it is vital that local capacity is strengthened; services and education are restored as well as markets and livelihood opportunities because this will promote an early recovery. Any immediate threats to life should be stabilised as quickly as possible and hereafter an analysis of present and possible future risks should be conducted in order to reduce future risks and design a programme that can assist with this (ICRC, 2011, s. 67-68).

The key indicators are that the programme design is based on specific needs- and risk based analysis and that the design addresses the gap between the people's needs and their own capacity to meet them. The design is changed according to changes in the context, risks and the needs and capacities of the affected people and it includes actions that reduce people's vulnerability to future risks and help them to be capable to manage and cope with them (ICRC, 2011, s. 66).

## Core Standard 5

This concerns performance; transparency and learning which means that the humanitarian agencies and their performance are continually examined and communicated to the stakeholders and the projects are also continually adapted to the performance (ICRC, 2011, s. 68).

A mechanism such as *monitoring* is very important during a humanitarian response as it compares intentions with results and measures the progress of the response. It indicates if anything needs to be revised and it verifies the target criteria and also if aid is in fact reaching the people intended to receive it. Monitoring should consist of both quantitative and qualitative data and there has to be openness and communication about the monitoring in order to increase the accountability to the affected population. If the population itself is able to do the monitoring then this will enhance the transparency and the quality and ownership of the information (ICRC, 2011, s. 70).

The *agency performance* covers the agency's overall function such as how it cooperates with other humanitarian organisations and adheres to good practice and other codes and principles. And the

*impact monitoring* which is the monitoring of the impact that the response has on the population and community is essential for the humanitarian response as the context may change. Regularly it should be checked if the programme still has *relevance* for the affected population and if not, then a revision should take place. There are different *methods for examining performance* and it is important to recognize that different approaches go along with different performance, learning and accountability purposes. It is possible to use programme evaluations which are typically used at the end of a response; real-time evaluation can also be used, and this is directed on responding to immediate changes. Finally, there is the *sector-wide performance* meaning that the sharing of information about each agency's performance in the response and progress towards meeting the Sphere minimum standards is important and an invaluable source of sector-wide performance data (ICRC, 2011, s. 71).

The key indicators are that programmes are adapted in response to the information retrieved from the monitoring and that a representative view of the affected people is included. Information sharing between the humanitarian agencies, the affected population and the authorities must happen on a regular basis and the performance is regularly monitored to see if the Sphere minimum standards are met. The main results of this monitoring are shared with the stakeholders and the agencies continue conducting objective evaluations that follow recognised standards of evaluation practice (ICRC, 2011, s. 69).

## Core Standard 6

The final Core Standard is about aid worker performance and how the humanitarian agencies must provide for their employees in such a way that they have the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitude required in order to plan and implement a humanitarian response with humanity and respect for the affected population (ICRC, 2011, s. 71).

Managers with leadership training should be familiar with the code called the People In Aid Code of Good Practice, so they know about the *management good practice* and policies and guidelines for the planning, recruitment, management and deployment among other things. The *recruitment procedures* must be transparent and open to all staff and applicants. The *aid worker's control* in the management and allocation of resources inevitably puts them in a power position over the disaster-affected people and this can in the worst-case scenario lead to abuse and corruption if it is done by the wrong aid workers. They should *respect the values and the dignity* of the affected population

and do their best to avoid behaving in a way that may be culturally unacceptable. As *aid workers very often work long hours* for an intensive time period, the agency is obliged to care for the well-being of its workers. The aid workers must be made aware of the risks and the agency must try to protect them and give them adequate rest and recuperation and also access to psychological support. During *the early phase of a disaster*, it may not be possible to develop the staff capacity, but after the initial phase, performance reviews of and feedback from the staff should be done in order to identify and support any areas where learning and development is needed. And *psychological first aid* should always be immediately available for those aid workers who have experienced particularly distressing event. Psychological debriefing should not be used as it is ineffective (ICRC, 2011, s. 72-73).

The key indicators are that the staff's performance reviews shows adequate competency levels and that any aid worker who does not comply with good practice and codes of conduct are formally disciplined. Principles in the People In Aid Code of Good Practice are visible in the agency's own policy and practice and finally, that the incidence of aid worker's illness, injury and stress-related health issues is stable or decreases over the course that the disaster response runs (ICRC, 2011, s. 72).

In conclusion, the Core Standards are about the minimum level of response that should be given by the humanitarian agencies when responding to a disaster or conflict. Local capacity should be supported, so the affected people can have the feeling of restoring their community with dignity, and the humanitarian agencies should make sure that there is a representative participation in the response system. Projects should be linked to community-based initiatives and disaster-affected people should participate actively. Information should be shared with the affected people to reduce anxiety. Coordination should be done with the local authorities and in a way so that collaboration optimises the capacity of all involved in the humanitarian response. Where possible, the military may be necessary to include due to its expertise in logistics and others areas, but its presence must not put the affected people at risk of attack or make it difficult to distinguish between humanitarian work and military agendas. Assessment reports are regularly sent out to the involved parties in the coordinating group to avoid any kind of duplication. The design of the humanitarian response programme is adapted according to the assessments that are made, so it corresponds with the actual needs of the affected people and into account the risks the affected people may be exposed to. The humanitarian agencies should make sure that monitoring is going of the progress of the response, and it should preferably be done by the affected people itself if possible. Finally, it must be ensured

that it is very capable humanitarian workers who are involved in the humanitarian response and that they possess the skills needed to provide for people in need, so they do not do harm.

## Technical chapters

The Handbook also consists of specific technical chapters covering different sectors of humanitarian response such as water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH), food security and nutrition, shelter, settlement and non-food items and finally health action. They are very detailed and the format is very much the same as for the Core Standards beginning with minimum standards, key actions, key indicators and guidance notes. However, as it would be too extensive to present each and every minimum standard, because I do not think that it will be relevant to this thesis to know exactly how to remove waste and how many litres of water each person and household need, I will rather present each area and highlight where dignity is at the focus. When reading the Handbook and especially the technical chapters, the Protection Principles and Core Standards are supposed to be used consistently with the technical chapters. In addition, the technical chapters are also what many evaluation reports contain when an evaluation is conducted by the end of a response. After the last technical chapter, I will summarize on the technical chapters.

## Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH)

This title is often shortened to WASH which I will use hereafter. The practical expression of the minimum standards that are set out for WASH derive from the Humanitarian Charter which is based on the principle of humanity and reflected in international law including the right to life with dignity, the right to protection and security and also the right to receive humanitarian assistance on the basis of need (ICRC, 2011, s. 83).

*“Everyone has the right to water and sanitation”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 83)

This is a right which is recognised in international law and it ensures that there is enough safe, acceptable and accessible water for all. This right is also linked to other human rights such as the right to health, to housing and to adequate food. It is in fact part of what is essential for a human being to survive a disaster. The state and also non-state actors are responsible for fulfilling this right (ICRC, 2011, s. 83).

One of the main objectives of a WASH programme is amongst others to promote the conditions allowing people to live with good health, dignity, comfort and security. In the initial stage of a disaster, it is crucial that water and sanitation is provided for as the affected population is more

susceptible to illness from diseases caused by inadequate water and sanitation. However, it is not enough just to provide water and sanitation in order to prevent disease, as the affected people also has to be informed about the prevention of water- and sanitation-related diseases and how to prevent spreading them. Involving the affected population in the local management of the provision of water and sanitation will help ensure easy and safe access to the entire affected population (ICRC, 2011, s. 84-85).

The promotion of good personal and environmental hygiene is the aim of any WASH programme in order to protect the health of the affected people. The needs of the affected people must be met and they are included in the design, management and also the maintenance of the WASH facilities as much as possible. Hygiene promotion is all about teaching people how to prevent that disease is spread through the water and sanitation and also how to make the best use of the water and sanitation facilities. In order to ensure personal hygiene, health, dignity and also the well-being of the affected people, it is important that they have access to hygiene items (ICRC, 2011, s. 88-94).

Water is very important in order for people to uphold life, health and also human dignity. In the extreme disasters, where no water is available, it is crucial that water is supplied for so the risk of disease can be minimised as much as possible and the survival rate increase as quickly as possible. And the water must be of such a quality that it can be used for drinking and cooking and also personal hygiene without risk of disease (ICRC, 2011, s. 97, 100). The affected people must be provided with adequate facilities so they can collect and store sufficient quantities of water and these facilities have to be of such a quality that the water is safe until consumed (ICRC, 2011, s. 103).

Another area which is also very important for people's dignity, safety, health and well-being is the provision of facilities for defecation. This is also in order to reduce the risk of disease and these facilities must be provided so areas with drinking water and the living environment in general is free of human faecal contamination (ICRC, 2011, s. 105).

Vector control is also something very important in a WASH programme. A vector is an agent carrying diseases like mosquitos carry malaria, and vector-borne diseases are often the cause of sickness and death in disaster areas. Once a vector-borne disease has been identified, it is usually very simple and effective means that are required to reduce the risk of spreading the disease. In case of malaria, bed nets and repellent lotions can be used. It is necessary to try to keep the environment where the affected people is located free of any vectors that are causing disease and nuisance or at least to a reduced level wherever possible. If chemicals are to be used to do vector

control, it is important that the affected people and the humanitarian staff are protected while using it (ICRC, 2011, s. 111-112, 114, 116).

Solid waste management is equally important in reducing the risk of disease. Not only is waste a breeding ground for vectors, but it also poses a high risk of infecting waste pickers, who collect recyclable materials from waste dumps. Drainage is another important part of getting a clean environment after a disaster has struck. Wherever there is standing water and wastewater, there is a high risk of disease and infections, and therefore it is important to minimise this risk as much as possible by addressing the drainage problems there may be (ICRC, 2011, s. 117, 121).

### **Food Security and Nutrition**

The right to food is also to be found in international law and also includes the right to be free from hunger. Where individuals or groups are unable to feed themselves or be free from hunger, it is the state that has the obligation to ensure this right directly to the affected people (ICRC, 2011, s. 143).

*“Everyone has the right to adequate food”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 143)

This right obliges first and foremost the state to respect the existing access to adequate food; to protect its citizens so no enterprises or other individuals deprive anyone from access to food; and to fulfil or facilitate people's access to resources that can ensure their livelihoods which include food security. Where the state is unable to comply with its obligations, the humanitarian agencies must work with the disaster-affected people in a way that ensures them their rights (ICRC, 2011, s. 143).

In disaster situations, it is very important to not only provide water and sanitation, but also access to food so the affected people can survive. Food security is about all people at all-time having access, physically, socially and economically, to sufficient and nutritious food so they can uphold an active and healthy life. Livelihoods are the capabilities, assets and activities that are used by a household in order to survive and to maintain their future well-being. They are safe when a household can cope with a disaster and maintain the capabilities (ICRC, 2011, s. 145).

In order to provide food security, it is important to do assessments that help to understand the type, degree and extent of food insecurity and to identify the most affected people and how to respond in the best way possible. Assessments are also used where undernutrition is concerned. And for infants and young children, a policy guidance and strong coordination should be implemented to support

these children and their mothers (ICRC, 2011, s. 150, 154, 159). It is important to keep in mind 'do no harm' when making food security responses. This means that the response should be as short-term as possible, because the affected population should not get used to being fed by a programme, but instead be supported in restoring their own possibilities to cope and feed themselves. Often, a cash or voucher transfer system will be set up which then can be used for a variety of goods or services. It is important to remember that people have the right to humanitarian assistance which can help them ensure their survival and preserve their dignity (ICRC, 2011, s. 175, 176).

Acute malnutrition increases the risk of mortality for the affected individuals and therefore access to services that can prevent this is crucial. Where severe acute malnutrition is found, it is highly preferred to have a community-based management and also therapeutic care to treat outpatients who do not have any medical complications and inpatients who do have complications or are infants (ICRC, 2011, s. 164)

### **Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items**

Shelter, settlements and non-food items are also a very important part of a humanitarian response and they form part of the right to live in security, peace and dignity with the security of tenure and protection from forced eviction and also the right to restitution (ICRC, 2011, s. 243).

*"Everyone has the right to adequate housing"* (ICRC, 2011, s. 243)

This is a right that is recognised by international law and it concerns sufficient space and protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind and other things that may threaten the health. It also concerns the availability of facilities and access to sustainable natural resources such as safe drinking water, energy for cooking and heating as well as washing and disposal facilities (ICRC, 2011, s. 243).

Shelter has many functions and particularly in the initial stage of a disaster where it is necessary to provide security and protection from the climate to the affected people. It is also important for human dignity and in order to sustain family and community life; shelter helps affected populations to recover from disaster. There are two different groups of affected people when it comes to shelter; non-displaced and displaced. Those who are non-displaced should be assisted on the site of where their original home was and should be supported with the reconstruction if possible. Displaced people will often try to stay with family members or other people who share their religious or cultural ties and they should be supported if they wish to do this. However, if they are not able to



live with other family members, a temporary settlement should be provided in planned or self-established camps (ICRC, 2011, s. 244, 249).

With regard to non-food items, things such as clothing, blankets and bedding materials meet the most personal needs of an affected population to be sheltered from the climate and to maintain their health, privacy and dignity. Providing access to very basic goods like cooking utensils among other items is a way of enabling the affected people to prepare food, have thermal comfort and meet personal hygiene needs. The distribution of non-food items can be made by the provision of cash or vouchers to be used in a local market (ICRC, 2011, s. 268).

## Health Action

Health action is about more than just treating illnesses. It also concerns the control of communicable diseases, child health, sexual and reproductive health, injuries, mental health and non-communicable diseases (ICRC, 2011, s. 290).

*“Everyone has the right to health [...]”* (ICRC, 2011, s. 291)

This right is established in international law and can only be provided for, if the population is protected; the professionals who are responsible for the health system are well trained; the system in which they work can meet minimum standards of need and if the state is willing to provide security and stability. As health facilities are neutral places, it is prohibited to attack them. Significant impact on the public health and well-being of the affected people is almost always to be expected where disaster has struck, and therefore access to healthcare is crucial in the initial response phase. The humanitarian response and its primary goal are to prevent and also reduce mortality, and the health sector must provide health services that help reduce health risks (ICRC, 2011, s. 291-292).

The health care system must be equal for all and provide effective, safe and quality health services, and these services must be standardised and abide by accepted protocols and guidelines. Also the health care workers must be trained and competent and possess a mix of knowledge and skills to provide for the health needs of the affected population. A consistent supply of essential medicines must be accessible for the affected people and the health care services are free for the affected people during the duration of the disaster (ICRC, 2011, s. 296, 301, 302, 304).

With regard to communicable diseases, it is important that the affected people have access to information about prevention of these diseases which for example are malaria and dengue, and that they can be diagnosed and treated if they have contracted a communicable disease (ICRC, 2011, s. 312-314). As for child health, it is important to initially find out if the children have been vaccinated against measles and other illnesses, and if not, then to establish a vaccination programme in order to give the children protection. And there should be established facilities to receive newborns and care for them and any illnesses that they may contract (ICRC, 2011, s. 321, 323).

Sexual and reproductive health is also part of an essential health service in a humanitarian response. The services that this part of the health service is to provide are obstetric and newborn care, assist victims of sexual violence and prevent HIV, but also provide those who are living with HIV with the necessary treatment (ICRC, 2011, s. 325, 328)

Injuries are often a major cause of mortality during a disaster, especially natural disasters such as earth quakes. The health service is to provide effective injury care such as first aid and basic medical care, surgical care and rehabilitation (ICRC, 2011, s. 331-333).

Mental health as well as psychosocial problems can occur in any humanitarian setting. The trauma of the disaster, the loss of people and other distressing factors can add to putting the affected people at risk of having mental problems. Psychological first aid should be offered to those in acute distress and care should be provided for those who have mental health problems and are living in institutions (ICRC, 2011, s. 333-334).

Finally, the non-communicable diseases form part of an essential health service. This kind of disease is for example heart disease, strokes, bronchial asthma and epilepsy. People who suffer from any of these non-communicable diseases are in need of long-term medication and also routinely follow-up appointments and therefore the health service should provide for adequate medication (ICRC, 2011, s. 337).

To sum up on the technical chapters, they cover different sectors of the humanitarian response such as water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items and health action. The main objective for each of these areas is an attached right to have these things in order to have a life with dignity. Another objective is to promote conditions that will allow people to live with good health and dignity. This includes informing the affected people about how to prevent water- and sanitation-related diseases and about how to uphold

hygiene. Vector control is also very important as vector-borne diseases often are the cause of sickness and death, and that along with solid waste management may help reduce the risk of disease in a disaster or conflict area. Food and access to food is also a very important sector in the humanitarian response as people need food in order to uphold a healthy life, and a way to provide food can be by using a cash or voucher system. In cases of acute malnutrition, a community-based management as well as therapeutic care on site is highly preferred in order to be able to treat patients right away. In the initial phase of a disaster or a conflict, it is important to ensure that the affected people has access to shelter and non-food items in order to provide security and protection from the climate. Shelter also provides a possibility for the affected people to recover from the disaster they have experienced. Non-food items are for example cooking utensils, blankets and clothes. Finally, health is also extremely important in the humanitarian response, but it is important to remember that health is more than physical health and treating illnesses. It is also about controlling communicable diseases such as malaria and taking care of people's mental health by providing psychological first aid. The health facilities that are established or already exist are neutral places and may not be attacked and the health care must be equal for all; this includes providing care for sexual and reproductive health issues and also treating non-communicable diseases like heart disease and strokes. All of these areas combined make up the humanitarian response and are areas that are vital to ensure the affected people a life with dignity.

## Dignity

In this chapter, I will be looking closer at dignity in order to find out how dignity has been regarded throughout history, although I will not be going into depth as this is not a historical thesis, and only those highlights that I find relevant for this thesis will be shown here. I will present the notion of dignity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles and chapters about dignity and the perception of it and try to see what it is about dignity that is so important and essential for human beings in order to sustain life. Human rights will be mentioned together with dignity as they very often are mentioned together in the literature that can be found on dignity, and the rights that are mentioned in the Sphere Handbook also take their point of departure in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and therefore are linked to dignity. If they belong together is also a matter that I will be looking into in this chapter. I will also be looking at humanity as concept together with dignity as they also go hand in hand and I think it will be interesting to look into how they are connected when talking about dignity as concept. The demand for a specific political regime in order to respect a person's dignity and human rights will also be discussed in this chapter. The articles will form basis for discussing dignity, humanity and human rights.

When searching for literature about dignity, I often come across a particular quotation by the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) regarding his view on dignity. Though I will not be basing the chapter on dignity entirely on Immanuel Kant, I will however still present one of his famous sentences for which he is often quoted:

*“So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.” (AK 4: 429) (Kant, 1998, s. xxii)*

According to other authors, this means that Kant conceived dignity as the inherent worth of the human person and that with this follows a duty to treat people not as simple means, but also as an end in themselves (Bayefsky, 2013, s. 811) (Misztal, 2012, s. 102). Strictly speaking, a person is meant to meet and treat his fellow human beings with respect and dignity for the person that he is as he himself holds dignity and respect. He is not supposed to use the other person in order to gain dignity himself or impose dignity on the other. It is inherent and therefore lies within.

Dignity held an important position for Kant, and moving up to more modern times, we again find that dignity becomes important especially seen in the light of two world wars when the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights was created by the United Nations. The declaration was finally adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. In the preamble of the declaration is stated:

*“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,[...]”* (UN, 1948)

And in the first article of the declaration is stated:

*“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”* (UN, 1948)

Mentioning dignity in the very first part of the declaration and its first article demonstrates that dignity is regarded to be a fundamental part of human life. It is deemed to hold a very important place in the lives of people and it is not something that can be taken away. Here the notion of dignity also has the same meaning as we can conclude from the quotation by Kant, that it is inherent and that we are all to treat one another the same as we are the same.

But where does the concept of dignity come from? What could be the reason for using that term in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? To begin with the beginning, dignity has a Latin origin from the word ‘dignitas’ which amongst other things means worthiness and value (Morwood, 2012). It is believed that the drafters of the declaration agreed on using the concept of dignity because it is a concept that can be understood in both Western and non-Western cultures as it is recognized to refer to the worth of every human being (Hughes, 2011, s. 5). Seeing as the Declaration was not and is not referring to any religion whatsoever, it was decided that it would be possible to use the concept of inherent dignity because it could stand on its own and not refer to any religious reference. It is a universal principle that applies to all people (Hughes, 2011, s. 7). As the drafters were asked to formulate an international bill of rights, they recognized the importance of using neutral terms in order not to exclude anyone as could easily be the case if they were asked to include everyone and their different religious beliefs for example (Hughes, 2011, s. 5). By using a neutral term and by combining it with ‘inherent’, a concept was created that was able to stand on its own. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is for every human being and the inherent dignity is a concept that is within everyone and by using this, no one is excluded.

However, there is not only inherent dignity, but also achieved dignity. I will now look into the difference between the two in order to establish why inherent dignity was used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In his article *“The Concept of Dignity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”* (2011), Glenn Hughes is examining the function of the concept of dignity. As he explains, the drafters of the Declaration were asked to explain why it is humans that have inalienable rights, and they then indicated that human beings should have these rights because of their qualities such as value or distinctive worth meaning their intrinsic dignity. And this explanation is what is to be found in article 1 of the Declaration as I have quoted on page 37 in this thesis. This is why inherent dignity is the foundation upon which the Declaration rests. Human rights are the means that human beings with inherent dignity can use in order to achieve dignity. They are the link between the two kinds of dignity as can be seen here:

*“The link is this: the idea that a person ontologically possesses inherent dignity implies that he or she ontologically possesses – and therefore is socially and politically entitled to – the right to those freedoms and protections that would allow dignified living to be achieved.”* (Hughes, 2011, s. 12)

The respect shown for the inherent dignity allows a person to realize his own dignity. Hughes further explains that the concept of human dignity consists of four elements which are liberty, responsibility, irreplaceability and vulnerability and that from this concept the human rights are derived. The Declaration is on one hand specifying, proclaiming and promoting the rights which will lead to an achieved dignified living and on the other hand it states that persons are born with an inherent dignity and this has nothing to do with achievement, as it is present from birth. In order to fulfil one's destiny in life, one must have access to the things that are necessary to do this, and this is where the human rights come in as the tools and measures that can be used for this purpose. However, to be able to achieve human dignity, one must be actively involved in life meaning that a person has to engage in thought and expression (Hughes, 2011, s. 12). There is no precise formula on how to do this, and so the concept of achieved dignity is like a picture frame for human beings to fill in with the pieces they believe are important to form the right picture of their life with dignity. I agree that there exist two kinds of dignity, the achieved and the inherent, because I believe that we are all born with an inherent dignity, and in combination with human rights, we can achieve dignity in the sense of dignified living. I do not believe that there is a direct connection between the two, because the inherent dignity does not require any tools or measurements to be taken in order to have it. Although, inherent dignity still is rather incomplete in its definition, I think that this only allows for further embracement of the concept in the sense that it does not restrict anyone.

The term dignity is also mentioned in several constitutions worldwide such as in the constitution of Germany, India, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Switzerland, and also in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Constitution, making it a term that can be found in many legal instruments (Schroeder, 2012, s. 325). However, as I am not using constitutions as the legal instrument in my thesis, I am only mentioning the constitutions to show that the term is not only to be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also that it is a concept that is deemed to be so important that it actually has a prominent place in many countries' constitution.

When speaking about dignity, it is difficult not to speak about humanity as already seen in the quotation of Kant on page 35 in this thesis, and especially when the topic concerns humanitarian response. Dignity and humanity are both concepts that are extremely important in the humanitarian world and it is as such not possible to do humanitarian work without these in mind. The humanitarian work is done for the survival of and aid to humanity, so people may keep their dignity and live on. But where humanitarian work is supposed to be separated from any political relations in order not to be influenced and be accused of taking sides in a conflict or disaster situation, it is hard to separate humanity from political relations. The state is supposed to protect its citizens and the citizens are, mostly, the ones who decide who is supposed to look after and protect them and their interests. Thereby, humanity becomes involved in political relations. The state or whoever may be in charge of a nation in need of aid is also the one to call for assistance in case of conflict or emergencies, if it estimates that its people is in danger and it is not able to protect them. But in cases of conflict or emergencies, I agree with Peter Nyers who in his book *“Rethinking Refugees – Beyond States of Emergency”* states that:

*“Life is sacred, and so we should resist the artifice of political boundaries to help those caught in emergency situations that threaten their dignity as human beings. The moral appeal of humanity thus gains its force from the universal character of a shared “human existence””* (Nyers, 2006, s. 37)

because when we as an international community are called upon to assist, there is no time to consider political boundaries or borders, if we really want to preserve life. However, this is how it works in an ideal world where there would be no distinction between friend and perceived enemy. Observing aid getting to emergency areas by watching the TV is one thing; another is probably being there and witnessing the situation. Humanity is, to many people only, what they see when

there is a disaster and a humanitarian response is set about to rescue and aid the affected people, but humanity is also an everyday thing that we rarely take into account or consciously think about because we tend to take it for granted. Humanity is also the quality of taking care of oneself and one's fellow human beings as a person is no good to himself or anyone if he does not take care of himself, and where he struggles, his fellow human beings should step in and assist him. In preserving humanity, we are also interested in preserving dignity, as people will try to live with dignity in whatever degree they are able to have it. When living with dignity, less is actually more, as dignity is very much also a psychological factor, and even if a person feels that he does not have anything but a little dignity, then this can be enough for him to survive. Dignity is the last and only thing that a person has which is not a material object and which cannot be valued, but which can mean life or death for a person, so it is a most fundamental thing in human life.

As previously stated on page 39 in this thesis, humanity is involved in political relations and thereby make people citizens, and this implies that every person also possess human rights (Nyers, 2006, s. 37). But how are human rights and dignity connected? Is it right that they are connected or should they rather be separated from another? The connection between human rights and dignity is shown very clearly in the preamble and the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as mentioned on page 36 in this thesis and it would seem that this is just how it is supposed to be, however, not everyone thinks so. Where the human rights and the inherent dignity are recognized as self-evident truths, meaning that of course they belong to human beings without any doubt, there are those who believe that the two should rather be separated (Schroeder, 2012, s. 324).

In her article "*Human Rights and Human Dignity*" (2012), Doris Schroeder believes that there are three different reasons why these two should not be joined together, but rather be separated. The first reason is about justification. Referring to a number of different religions that have dignity included as a very central point and thereby making the religion a justification for man having inherent dignity, she argues that the declining number of religious believers in the world no longer makes it possible to justify the self-evident truth of dignity. If religion is not included, then it becomes much more difficult to justify why all human beings have inherent dignity. And as for human rights, their justification and self-evident truth can be found in the legislation, and the rights would be for people who have been given them by their legislature. However, I fail to see why dignity should not belong together with human rights, because of the fact that dignity is indeed mentioned in the preamble and the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is no religion or religious character in the Declaration and it is a legal foundational document stating that human beings have inherent dignity and human rights. I do not believe that dignity cannot be



seen as a secular self-evident truth. Because from a rational point of view, human beings need to have basic truths in their lives such as there being subjects which have nothing to do with religion, but only with the human being itself.

Doris Schroeder's second reason for wanting to separate dignity from human rights involves Kant and what she calls "*the Kantian cul-de-sac*" (2012, s. 329). She mentions that Kant believed that every human being able to reason was able to justify its own moral laws and know right from wrong and therefore they possess an inner worth, dignity. Their ability to reason is the foundation for having dignity which one cannot give up and everyone must respect this ability. She argues that it is not possible that Kant's concept of dignity could lead to human rights for all because:

*"[...] only those human beings who are morally self-legislative, who can distinguish what is morally right from what is morally wrong, have dignity, and therefore indirectly human rights. This reasoning would exclude huge numbers of human beings from the relevant realm, small children to begin with, but at an extreme, everybody who is asleep."*  
(Schroeder, 2012, s. 330)

If we are supposed to only take into account those who are able to reason and who are awake, then yes, a lot of people would be excluded from having dignity and human rights. She also mentions patients who are in a vegetative state as not being persons with reason and therefore unable to know right from wrong and thus have dignity. She believes that this brings about a Kantian cul-de-sac meaning that because everyone is not able to reason and be self-legislative and therefore have dignity such as Kant believed it, then it is not possible to attribute dignity to human rights for all. These people will find themselves in a dead-end street so to speak from which they cannot return. However, I disagree because I believe that every human being whether healthy or in a vegetative state, awake or asleep, child or old, criminal or not, possess dignity by simple virtue of being a human being and therefore also human rights – not because a human being is able to reason or know morally right from morally wrong. Who are we to judge who has dignity and human rights and who has not?

The final reason for separating dignity from human rights has to do with lack of concept of dignity. Schroeder believes that dignity has at least 5 different and distinct meanings which can be divided into two categories here highlighted in italic, *inviolable dignity* such as the traditional Catholic dignity (religious) and the Kantian dignity (reason) and *aspirational dignity* such as aristocratic dignity (rank), comportment dignity (demeanour) and meritorious dignity (virtue) (2012, s. 332).

She does not believe that any of these different meanings can act as the foundation for human rights and thereby accord human rights to all human beings. Any one of them would somehow exclude a group of people from having dignity for example those who are not religious, those who cannot reason, those who do not have a high rank in society, those who do not know how to behave and those who do not possess virtue or a sense of self-worth. I also do not believe that any of them can act as the foundation for dignity as I believe that dignity is something that every human being has inherently without any condition for having it other than being human just as I believe that human rights are rights that every human being has also solely on the basis of being human.

Ultimately, I am not in any way able to agree with Doris Schroeder in all her efforts to separate dignity and human rights. She tries to separate them by saying that dignity does not justify human rights; that Kant's concept of dignity as being only for human beings who can distinguish between morally right and morally wrong would lead to an exclusion of many people and therefore cannot be used as foundation for human rights for all; and that due to the categories that one can put dignity into, it is not possible to connect dignity with human rights for all. In all these efforts, there is a condition for dignity being connected to human rights; however, I do not believe that any conditions are necessary in order for a human being to have dignity and human rights other than the one of being human.

Where one person wants to separate human rights from dignity; another wants to look at different ways of grounding dignity with human rights. In his article "*Human Dignity in the Theory of Human Rights: Nothing But a Phrase?*" (2013), Charles R. Beitz looks into how the idea of dignity occurs in a variety of senses. He begins by looking at four different "strands" made by Michael Rosen in his book about dignity "*Dignity: Its History and Meaning*" from 2012. Rosen believes that each of these strands is connected to an idea of human dignity. First strand is about dignity as a rank or a status. Throughout history, it has been believed that people who hold a high social rank or a public office were to be considered dignities and even today, we use this when in a courtroom by showing respect for the dignity of the judge. The second strand is about saying that dignity is a value or a kind of value. He uses Kant as the example of this strand because Kant believed that human beings are the only ones capable of having dignity as they are able to follow moral law as also described here above in the section about separating dignity and human rights. The third strand concerns behaving in a dignified manner. A way of regarding this strand as a virtue applicable to all human beings is when a person conducts self-control when he tries to overcome suffering. Meaning that one is able to keep calm and composed in a situation which may inflict suffering. The fourth and final strand is about deserving respectful treatment of a person's dignified character. Here

Rosen distinguishes between “respect-as-observance” and “respect-as-respectfulness”. The two are also connected, because deserving respect for one’s status as a human being should lead to showing respect. The example given is that of humiliation.

Beitz believes it is important that status or rank is defined, if we are to recognize it and respect it. However, he also notes that the idea of dignity as value or worth may have greater impact on human rights than the idea of dignity as a status (2013, s. 275). I agree that dignity in the sense of value or worth should have more power than status as status is not an equal matter. With regard to dignified behaviour and respect-as-observance and respect-as-respectfulness, I agree that a dignified behaviour can be when one is keeping cool in situations that otherwise is putting one in an undignified place, especially if the suffering is done to oneself. However, I really think that this depends on the situation and therefore is difficult to generalize. I do not think that there is anything undignified by a person who is suffering that he also feels sorry for himself, if it then only helps him to overcome the suffering and the situation, so he may come out of it with dignity. Otherwise, it may tend to be more of a pride issue where he does not want to show his suffering and that he feels sorry for himself, but then I think we are entering something which may lead to the difference between men and women, and this was not the intention for this thesis, although it too is an interesting subject. Dignity is also about pride in oneself, but I cannot see that admitting hardship to oneself is being undignified. As for the respect-as-observance and the respect-as-respectfulness, the first one is more about respecting a person’s rights and the other one is about treating with respect. I am not sure that I see the great difference between the two, as behaving respectfully applies both to respecting rights as well as treating someone with respect in my opinion.

From wanting to separate dignity and human rights to grounding dignity with human rights to believing that the human dignity that underlies the human rights standards therefore needs a “*particular type of “liberal” regime*” (Howard & Donnelly, 1986, s. 801). In their article “*Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Political Regimes*” (1986), Howard & Donnelly argue that there are a lot of people who confuse human rights with human dignity and that the international human rights are based on a distinct conception of dignity. They believe that:

*“Human rights are a particular social practice that aims to realize a distinctive substantive conception of human dignity”* (Howard & Donnelly, 1986, s. 802)

meaning that they believe that human rights and dignity belong together. They also argue the importance of the state treating each person as a moral and political equal and that liberty,

particularly personal liberty, is highly required, if liberty is to bring about dignity within equal concern and respect. The inherent dignity in every individual must be respected by the state and it must show an active concern. Human rights are the embodiment of the minimum standards of political treatment and as such imply that there is a particular conception of the relation between the human being and its community and the state. But Howard & Donnelly argue that the modern state at that time poses a serious threat to human dignity because it can easily deny equal concern and respect, and therefore it becomes even more important to keep the human rights as an instrument that realizes equal concern and respect for all. With regard to the liberal view point, they believe that the individual can be separated from the community and also be specially valued as a distinctive individual and therefore must be treated with equal concern and respect. The liberal thinks that human dignity is part of a life in which a person enjoys a full range of human rights while being an equal and also autonomous member of society. But with a growing power of a modern state, in time it became essential to articulate the rights that a person can claim against the state and so human rights would make the basic form of the relationship between the modern and new individual and the modern and new state. They argue that human rights controlled by individuals are prior to and also above the state and that they can be used against the state if necessary (1986, s. 803-804).

Howard & Donnelly thinks there is a perfect fit between liberalism and the human rights as it is essential that an individual is recognized as a moral and legal person who then requires personal rights in order to be treated with equal concern and respect. This equal concern and respect also demand that all of the human rights are acted upon and respected by the state, meaning that there is food, health care, work, freedom of speech and education and so on for the people. They believe that the connection between human rights and liberalism runs so deep that it can be used to evaluate any regime's achievement and legitimacy (1986, s. 805-806). I agree that each individual must be respected by the state and he must have his rights and dignity respected, but I also believe that it is important to have solidarity in a society in order to keep it together and not let it become a society of egotistical individuals. If one is so absorbed by getting his own rights and dignity respected, that he does not pay attention to his community, then he may find himself left outside of that community that was actually going to assist him in his efforts to be respected.

Then Howard and Donnelly turn to look at traditional societies which they describe as communal, based on status and governed by traditions. In these kinds of societies, it is impossible to imagine a person being entitled to equal concern and respect just because he is a human being. Mostly, they have a hierarchy based on age, sex or other privileges or duties. They depend very much on the

social roles that each one has in their society and so they do not separate man from society. A person's worth is defined by his role in the community and his dignity forms part of the duty he performs for the community. Howard & Donnelly believe that defending a traditional society is to reject a society that is based on equal, inalienable personal rights and favour a society based on status alone. I would think that a lot of the humanitarian responses go to sites where the traditional society is practised in some form or another. I agree with Howard & Donnelly that supporting a traditional society is to turn your back on your human rights because they are not part of this society at all, but from another point of view, the traditional societies may not have been able to transform into modern societies in which they could afford to grant each individual personal human rights and respect for them at the same time. This might have led to the downfall of the traditional society as the social structure of the community might not have survived this transformation. It is too easy to just turn your back on something that you do not quite understand or fully grasp.

In summary, this chapter was about dignity, human rights and humanity and how they are perceived in different ways. The Kantian way of thinking of dignity is about not merely treating a person as a means, but as an end in himself. This means that a person is to meet his fellow man with respect and dignity for who he is, because dignity is something that lies within a person. The inherent dignity that Kant spoke about can also be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where it is mentioned in both the preamble and the very first article. Deriving from Latin and meaning worth and value, dignity was believed to be a concept that could be accepted in both Western and non-Western countries and refer to every human being without having any kind of religious reference whatsoever. But apart from inherent dignity, there is also achieved dignity which must be seen in connection with human rights in order to have a sense of purpose. A person can by the use of his human rights achieve human dignity meaning that he can achieve a dignified life. How he chooses to achieve this is entirely up to him, but it does to some degree require an active participation in society. Dignity has also been deemed to be such an important concept that it in fact has been included into the constitution in many countries around the world and therefore is part of a legal instrument. Humanity is another concept that is often seen in the company of dignity. In order to preserve humanity and thereby dignity, it is important when responding to a humanitarian disaster or a conflict, that we do not pay too closely attention to who is friend or perceived enemy as long as the assistance reaches those in need in the first place. Where dignity can be left out of it, it is however difficult to separate humanity from political relations because the state is supposed to protect its citizens. Another separation that some want to make is the one between human rights

and dignity and three reasons are given to separate them. The first is justification in which it is stated that it is no longer possible to see dignity as a self-evident truth deriving from religion, because so many people are non-believers. Human rights are self-evident truths because their justification can be found in the legislation. The second is the Kantian cul-de-sac in which the limitation that Kant brought about because of his belief that every human being possesses inherent dignity only because he is able to reason and know morally right from morally wrong, excludes a lot of people. Therefore it is not possible to attribute dignity to human rights for all. The third and final reason is the lack of concept of dignity which is believed to be the reason why it cannot act as the foundation for human rights and therefore it is not possible for all human beings to have human rights. From separating dignity and human rights to grounding dignity with human rights, four different strands were presented as being connected to the idea of human dignity. Rank or status, value, behaviour and deserving respectful treatment are the four strands presented and they all connect to human dignity to some degree, although further definition of status is needed in order to recognize it and respect it. The final piece about dignity in this chapter is about a need for a liberal regime if human dignity is to underlie the human rights standards. This is about how the state must respect the inherent dignity in each individual and that the human rights are the embodiment of minimum standards of political treatment. But there is a treat in that the state can easily deny equal concern and respect for its citizens and this makes the human rights even more important. The liberal thinking makes the society one of individuals in which each one demands equal concern and respect, but solidarity might be an appropriate thing in order not to let anyone fall out of society. In the end traditional societies are described as being societies that do not respect equal concern for all and believe in individual inalienable rights. They are rather based on hierarchies and status and are often the kind of society that the humanitarian response team would meet. Traditional societies are not that easily turned around into liberal societies.

## **Dignity in humanitarian response**

In this chapter I will combine the Sphere Project and my knowledge on dignity, humanity and human rights in order to see how dignity can be such a key factor in the Handbook and how it is expressed and also if it would even make sense to have the Handbook without dignity as a focal point.

As mentioned on page 9 in the chapter about the Sphere Project in this thesis, two core beliefs form the base for the entire Sphere Project. The first one is that anyone affected by disaster or conflict has a right to life with dignity and therefore also a right to assistance. The second is that everything should be done to alleviate human suffering that has come about as a result of disaster or conflict. And on top of these core beliefs, another core philosophy is the inclusion of the affected populations in the consultative process during a humanitarian response. The Sphere Project aims at establishing humanitarian response in a rights-based and participatory approach and the Sphere Handbook is an expression of this.

The principle of humanity which says that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights is the basic starting point for the Handbook as well as the humanitarian imperative which says that everything should be done to prevent or alleviate any human suffering arisen from disaster or conflict. The right to life with dignity which is mentioned on page 13 in this thesis as one of the first rights that the humanitarian agencies have in mind is also about more than just the physical well-being. The right to a certain standard of living which means having access to adequate water, food, clothing and shelter is also a very essential part of a life with dignity.

But how is dignity expressed throughout the Sphere Handbook? How can dignity be identified in the Protection Principles, Core Standards and Technical chapters? I believe that dignity is inherent in all people, but that it also can be expressed by and in the way that we treat each other with respect, and in no other situation is this more visible than in a humanitarian response situation. If we start by looking at the Protection Principles and in particular the first one, this is about minimizing any harm that may be done as a result of protecting the affected people. Although, the humanitarian agencies try to act according to the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative they may not always be in a position where they can operate without causing some harm to the affected people even though this is definitely not what they want. A humanitarian response may have been activated, but getting to the disaster area may prove even more difficult than first anticipated and delays in delivering aid may occur which then causes harm to the affected people who are not

getting the help they need. This can be felt by the affected people and so it hurts their dignity as they are left helpless or without the needed resources to have a life with dignity. If the affected people are not protected or assisted in a way to protect themselves, then they face a hard time coping with the disaster and the aftermath and this is not alleviating suffering. The second Protection Principle which concerns people's access to impartial assistance, not being denied assistance and receiving assistance without discrimination is also about dignity in the sense that the affected people need the assistance in order to have a life with dignity and if they are denied this, then they are denied their right to life with dignity. The third Protection Principle is about ensuring that the affected people does not become the subject of violent attacks or are subjected to coercion and that they are supported in their own efforts to stay safe and find dignity. Dignity here is expressed in the way the humanitarian agencies provide protection to the affected people and ensure that they are aware that they are not forced to stay or to go somewhere they did not choose themselves. Ensuring their ability to move away from dangerous situations is a way of ensuring that the affected people have a chance of having a life with dignity in that they are supported in protecting themselves. The fourth Protection Principle is enabling the affected people to claim their rights, obtain information and documentation and about providing community-based support to them. When the humanitarian agencies assist the affected people in claiming their rights, a way of showing respect is by having information meetings about how to do this in a language and a manner that they understand. Also, to help them get documents they can use for claiming their rights and show who they are to the authorities and the society also expresses respect for the dignity of the affected people. What could express the most respect for the dignity of the affected people is supporting their cultural and social practices such as burials and ceremonies.

With regard to the Core Standards mentioned on page 20 and onwards in this thesis, they are the practical expression of the principles of the Humanitarian Charter and therefore regarded as fundamental to the rights of people affected by disaster or conflict so they can receive assistance supporting their life with dignity. There are six Core Standards and they are central points that the humanitarian agencies should take into account in a humanitarian response. The first Core Standard concerns people's capacities and strategies to survive with dignity and the fact that this is an integral part of design and approach of the humanitarian response. By using local capacity, involving the affected people and by making sure that there is a well-balanced representation of the affected population present to take part in the humanitarian response, this shows a deep respect for the affected people and their will to survive with dignity. Their willingness to participate and letting them do so is showing respect and honour for their dignity as human beings. Usually, the local



population is the first to respond to a disaster or conflict, but they can only do so to a certain degree, and their ability to assist their community must be respected and treated accordingly. The second and third Core Standards are about coordination and collaboration between the humanitarian agencies and the local relevant authorities and maximising the efficiency of the humanitarian response and assessing the needs and risks. Initially, the affected people are not directly involved in this coordination and collaboration, but become involved by the sharing of resources in the local community or neighbourhood by the humanitarian agencies and relevant authorities who need to assess the needs of the affected people. The assessment is done so to speak 'behind the scenes' before the effect of it is visible for the affected people, but when they are, then there is an immediate respect for people's lives which is what actually counts in the end for those affected by disaster or conflict. Taking into account the risks that may be to people's lives is to show respect for them. The fourth Core Standard is about the design and response of the humanitarian response that is based on the needs of the affected population. Again, supporting the existing capacity in the affected area has a very high priority and assuring access for the affected people to basic services and security as well as respecting their human rights is the very foundation of life with dignity. How the humanitarian response is designed and implemented, has a powerful effect on the affected people's lives and therefore a huge impact on their dignity. So by showing that the context and the vulnerability of the affected population has been taken into account when designing the humanitarian response is a way of expressing respect. However, the immediate response in the form of early recovery and risk reduction is the first visible expression of respect for people's lives with dignity in which any threats to life are dealt with as quickly as possible. The fifth Core Standard which concerns the performance, transparency and learning of the humanitarian agencies is also very much about showing respect to the affected people. By monitoring the situation and the performance of the humanitarian agencies, and preferably done by the population itself, the agencies show that they have the affected people's best interest at heart as they are looking for ways to improve the humanitarian response so people's lives can be improved. When the affected people can actually see and feel the results of any changes that may come because of the monitoring, then they can feel the respect from the humanitarian agencies involved. The sixth and final Core Standard which is about aid worker performance has a direct impact on the affected people's lives as the aid workers are the ones who are in direct contact with the affected people. Their conduct and behaviour in the situation and towards the people have a huge impact and they are required to have an attitude towards the people that exudes respect for humanity. However, an aid worker is only as good as his agency, and this must show respect for the aid worker by taking care of him, so he can perform and do a good job in ensuring people lives with dignity.

As for the Technical chapters that are mentioned on page 29 and onwards in this thesis, they consist of very basic and tangible things to ensure disaster-affected people live with dignity. All of the practical expressions of the minimum standards set out in the Technical chapters derive from the Humanitarian Charter and are therefore based on the principle of humanity. With regard to the first technical chapter which is about water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH), this is a very basic need for all people, not only disaster-affected people, but in their situation especially water means upholding life with dignity and health. Providing the affected people with water and sanitation facilities and promoting hygiene and giving them access to hygiene items is indeed a very direct way of expressing respect for a human being's dignity. Clean water will keep you alive and preserving humanity is what a humanitarian response is about. However, providing sanitation facilities also is showing respect for people's dignity in that they no longer have to use the great outdoors as toilet in full exposure, but can have privacy in a facility meant for the purpose of sanitation. As for food security and nutrition, this is also a matter of providing something that will keep a disaster-affected population alive. As water so does food keep a person alive and it helps him to be healthy and uphold an active life. Food security is a matter of providing full-time access for people to sufficient and nutritious food, and the safety is reached when a family is able to provide for itself and maintain doing so. But by providing food, it is important to make sure that no harm is done by making the affected people dependent on a food programme, and measure should be taken to make the affected people want to provide for themselves and their community by restoring the possibilities they had before the disaster struck. Cash or voucher programmes set up in order to promote markets that will keep the economy and the dynamics of a society going are also a part of making sure people have dignified lives. Shelter, settlement and non-food items are another part of the humanitarian response which is also very important for life with dignity. Shelter provides protection to the affected people from the climate and is very important for the human dignity in order to sustain family and community life. It helps in the recovery of a disaster. No one would feel worth much if he had to sleep outside every night with nothing to protect him or give him some kind of comfort. Non-food items which are clothing, blankets and bedding materials also give the affected people, and especially in the family context, a way of providing for their family in that they can keep their family warm and comfortable. The final section of the technical chapter concerns health action. In trying to preserve humanity, it is important that there is adequate, effective and safe health care and that it is equal for all. The right to health includes controlling communicable diseases such as malaria; provide service for sexual and reproductive health; handling injuries; providing service for mental health issues and handling the non-communicable diseases such as heart disease and strokes. By taking care of all of these areas within health, the affected people will

feel safe and secure and that they are able to go on living a life with dignity, because there is help if needed. A simple thing as getting that pill that will alleviate suffering is a major thing in a person's life and immediately helps him live a life with dignity.

When looking at the different perceptions of dignity and the Sphere Project, I believe that the Sphere Project is in accordance with how the concept of dignity is used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as everything in the Handbook revolves about the fact that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. There is no indication throughout the Handbook that the humanitarian agencies should not have this in mind, as everything principle and standard has dignity as point of departure. And the concept of dignity used is not the one that Kant portrayed where he excluded those who are not able to reason, although he believed that dignity is inherent. Vulnerability is constantly mentioned as being one of the areas that should be paid special attention as people who may not be able to reason may also be the ones who are among the most vulnerable in society. I also do not think that it would be possible to separate dignity from human rights and then still have a relevant Sphere Project as the basis for the entire project is in fact dignity and human rights. The concept of dignity in the Sphere Project is not the inviolable or the aspirational kind of dignity that was mentioned on page 41 in this thesis as the Sphere Project is not seeking to somehow exclude anyone from having a life with dignity. It is also not connected to any kind of status or rank, but to the value of being human and the fact that we by behaving in a dignified manner deserve respectful treatment of our dignified character and also give respectful treatment to others. As for politics and the demand for a liberal regime in order for a state to treat each person as a moral and political equal, this is not a requirement in the Sphere Handbook, and it is not what the Handbook is about. It has no authority to demand this and it also does not concern the political aspects other than making it clear that it is the responsibility of a state to take care of its citizens. In none of the articles or chapters presented on dignity is there the possibility of dignity as an unconditional aspect of human life. I believe that dignity is inherent in every human being just by being a human being and this is also what I perceive in the Sphere Handbook.

To conclude on this chapter, it is fair to say that all of the sections in the Sphere Handbook each have their own ways of providing for a life with dignity, and that dignity indeed is a matter of respect for another human being, no matter in what area of the humanitarian response one is talking about. The Protection Principles and the Core Standards all have their ways of expressing respect for a human being affected by disaster by making sure that certain measures are taken into account and that the affected people are involved as much as possible. It is not only the assistance itself, but also the involvement of the affected people and the sense of dignity that they feel by being included

in the humanitarian response and not left out, that provide a foundation for helping an affected community bounce back from disaster. Every step and everything must be done with respect and by showing it to the affected people without feeling sorry for them and being patronizing. Acknowledgement of the situation and designing a programme that can assist an affected community to get back on its feet as safely and as quickly as possible is showing a lot of respect, but only if local capacities are used and the cultural aspects are taken into account. Dignity is taken into account in every part of the Handbook and it is indeed hard to imagine the Handbook without this. If the users of the Handbook were not asked to pay so much attention to the affected people and their needs and dignity, then it would merely resemble a handbook on a kind of dictatorship and on how to tread on people already lying down. Looking at the different concepts of dignity presented in this thesis, none of them match the concept of dignity presented in the Handbook as they all have some kind of condition attached to the meaning of dignity, and as the Handbook is about providing for all human beings in need, then none of them can be used to describe the concept of dignity.

## Conclusion

In this thesis it was my aim to find out how dignity and the use of the term have evolved throughout time in the humanitarian sense. In order to answer my research question, I presented the Sphere Handbook and all its chapters on Protection Principles, Core Standards and Technical chapters to be able to give an overview and an insight in the humanitarian response manual used by much of the humanitarian world today. I also presented and discussed different articles on dignity and also humanity and human rights that I found suitable to present different views on the term and concept of dignity.

As it was shown in the chapter on the Sphere Project, the focus point of it is dignity and to do a humanitarian response with this mind. Every single chapter and every single practical thing that should be addressed in a humanitarian response was described and made with dignity in mind. Although, it is not detailed down to the very last nail, it has enough details to ensure affected people a life with dignity if the conditions for doing the practical things are there. As it is shown, the Sphere Project takes its point of departure in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights with regard to the concept of dignity and also the human rights and forms a frame for the humanitarian agencies to work within. Acknowledging that one is not able to comply with the principles of the Sphere Handbook is also a way of complying with the Handbook, so it is not as such a matter of doing right or wrong as much as it is a matter of trying or not trying to assist affected people.

In the chapter on dignity, it is shown that dignity is a term that has been discussed throughout time, and that there also exist different opinions on how to understand the term and in which situations one is to be aware of dignity. Although, there are many different opinions and views of the term and concept of dignity, and there have been attempts made to separate dignity from human rights, I find it safe to conclude that the concept of dignity that has remained stable in the humanitarian sense is the one mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as this is one which the Sphere Handbook is based on. To respect another human being completely is to respect his dignity unconditionally.

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