

Better AI Prompting for Humanitarian Professionals

A 5-Minute Guide to Getting More from ChatGPT, Claude & Other AI Tools

The Problem

Most humanitarian professionals get generic, unhelpful responses from AI because they ask vague questions like "Help me write a donor report" or "Analyze this data."

The Solution: The CARE Framework

C - Context

Give the AI your specific situation.

❌ **Bad:** "Write a project proposal" ✅ **Good:** "I'm a Program Manager at an INGO writing a 6-month emergency response proposal for flood-affected communities in Bangladesh. Target audience: EU humanitarian funding."

A - Audience

Specify who will read or use this.

❌ **Bad:** "Make this sound professional" ✅ **Good:** "Write this for EU donor officials who need technical details but prefer concise, evidence-based language. They're familiar with humanitarian standards."

R - Role

Tell the AI what expert perspective to take.

❌ **Bad:** "Help me with this budget" ✅ **Good:** "Act as an experienced humanitarian finance manager who understands both donor compliance and field realities. Review this budget for..."

E - Examples & Format

Show the AI what you want.

❌ **Bad:** "Write an update" ✅ **Good:** "Write a weekly situation update in this format: [paste example]. Include 3 key developments, 2 challenges, 1 request for support."

Pro Tips

1. Be Specific About Constraints

- "Keep to 500 words maximum"
- "Use language accessible to community volunteers"
- "Must comply with Sphere standards"
- "Consider low-bandwidth internet environment"

2. Ask for Alternatives

- "Give me 3 different approaches to this problem"
- "What would this look like for a small vs. large organization?"
- "How would this change in an acute emergency vs. development setting?"

3. Iterate and Refine

- Start broad, then ask for specifics
- "Make this more technical" or "Simplify for field staff"
- "Add more specific examples from refugee settings"

4. Use Follow-up Questions

- "What questions should I be asking that I haven't thought of?"
- "What could go wrong with this approach?"
- "How would [specific stakeholder group] react to this?"

Common Mistakes to Avoid

✗ **"Write me a donor proposal"**: too vague and too wide with just one prompt ✓ **"Help me outline a 3-year education proposal for Syrian refugees in Jordan, targeting ECHO funding"**

✗ **"Analyze this spreadsheet"**: no guidance on the data or how to analyze it ✓ **"Analyze this beneficiary feedback data to identify the top 3 service gaps"**

✗ **"Make this better"**: no direction and no context ✓ **"Revise this email to be more diplomatic while still conveying urgency about the security situation"**

Remember

AI is a thinking partner, not a replacement for your humanitarian expertise. Use it to:

- **Draft faster** (then edit with your knowledge)
- **Explore options** (then decide with your judgment)
- **Organize thoughts** (then add your field insights)

Your experience in the field is irreplaceable. AI just helps you communicate and analyze more efficiently.

Need more help? Connect with Impact Node for AI training tailored to humanitarian contexts.

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