



An Introduction to Sphere

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**‘If something is
worth doing then
it is worth doing
badly.’**

G K Chesterton (1874-1936)

What is Sphere?

- In 1997, a group of humanitarian non-governmental organisations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements aimed to improve the quality of their actions during disaster response and to be held accountable for them.
- The Sphere Handbook (now in its 4th Edition, published in late 2018) sets clear benchmarks for what actions can be considered to be 'humanitarian'.

Defines humanitarian response as one which is concerned with the basic RIGHTS of populations affected by disasters and conflicts.

What is Sphere?

PRINCIPLES + FOUNDATIONS



Humanitarian
Charter



Protection
Principles



Core
Humanitarian
Standard



Water Supply,
Sanitation and
Hygiene
Promotion



Food Security
and Nutrition



Shelter and
Settlement



Health

STANDARDS

The Principles Grounding Sphere

- The **Humanitarian Charter** provides the ethical and legal backdrop founded on the principle of **HUMANITY** and the **HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE**, these include:
 - The **right** to life with dignity.
 - The **right** to receive humanitarian assistance.
 - The **right** to protection and security.



Sphere

Humanitarian Charter Principles



- These include:
 - Protection of civilians in armed conflict:
 - The principle of **distinction** between civilians and combatants, and between civilian objects and military objectives;
 - The principles of **proportionality** in the use of force and **precaution** in attack;
 - The duty to **refrain** from the use of weapons that are **indiscriminate** or that, by their nature, cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering; and
 - The duty to **permit** impartial relief to be provided.
 - The right to seek asylum or sanctuary.
 - *Non-refoulement* (no return of refugees, or IDPs to place of persecution; and no return of anyone facing torture)



Protection Principles

“Protection is concerned with the **safety, dignity** and **rights** of people affected by disaster or armed conflict.”

Page 36. Sphere Handbook (4th Edition)

Definition of ‘Protection’:

“... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international refugee law).”

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)



Humanitarian Charter



Protection Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Enhance people's safety, dignity and rights and avoid exposing them to further harm

PRINCIPLE 2

Ensure people's access to impartial assistance, according to need and without discrimination

PRINCIPLE 3

Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation

PRINCIPLE 4

Help people to claim their rights



The Four Protection Principles

1. Enhance the safety, dignity and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm.
2. Ensure people's access to assistance according to need and without discrimination.
3. Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation.
4. Help people claim their rights.

The Legal Foundation to Sphere

International
Human Rights
Law

International
Humanitarian
Law

International
Refugee Law

National
Constitutions



Sources of Refugee Law

- Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951)
- Protocol on the Status of Refugees (1967)
- OAU (Organisation of African Unity Convention (1969)
- Cartagena Declaration (1984)

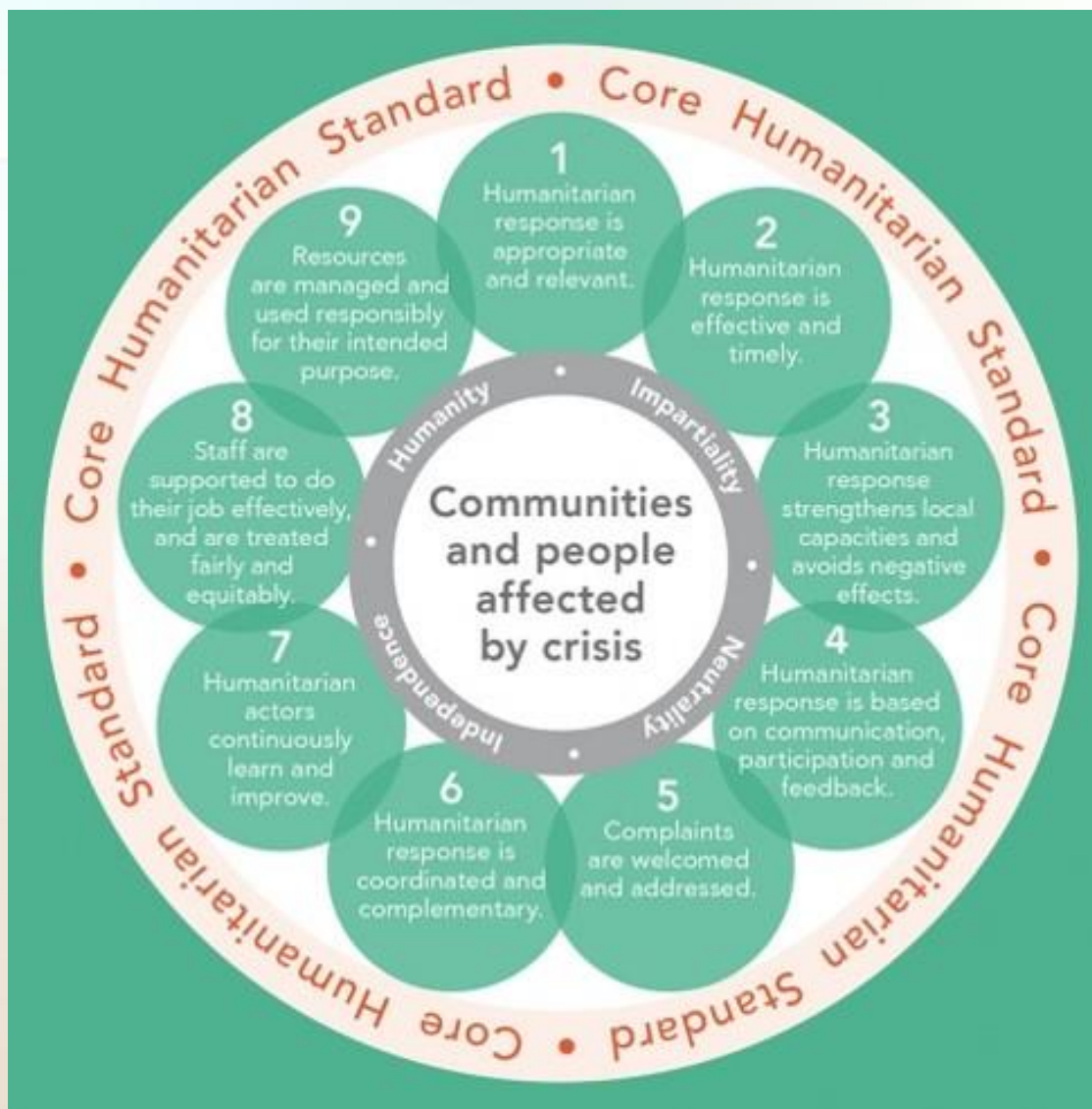
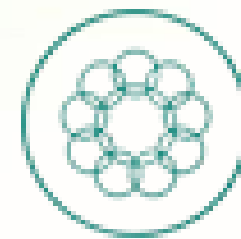


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International Humanitarian Law

- Applies in times of conflict ...but not in peace
- Imposes duties on states and warring parties

Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)



CHS Structure and Components (1)

- **The Nine Commitments**
 - They state what affected communities can expect from organisations and individuals delivering humanitarian assistance.
- **Quality Criteria**
 - They indicate how humanitarian actors need to work in order to meet the Nine Commitments.

CHS Structure and Components (2)

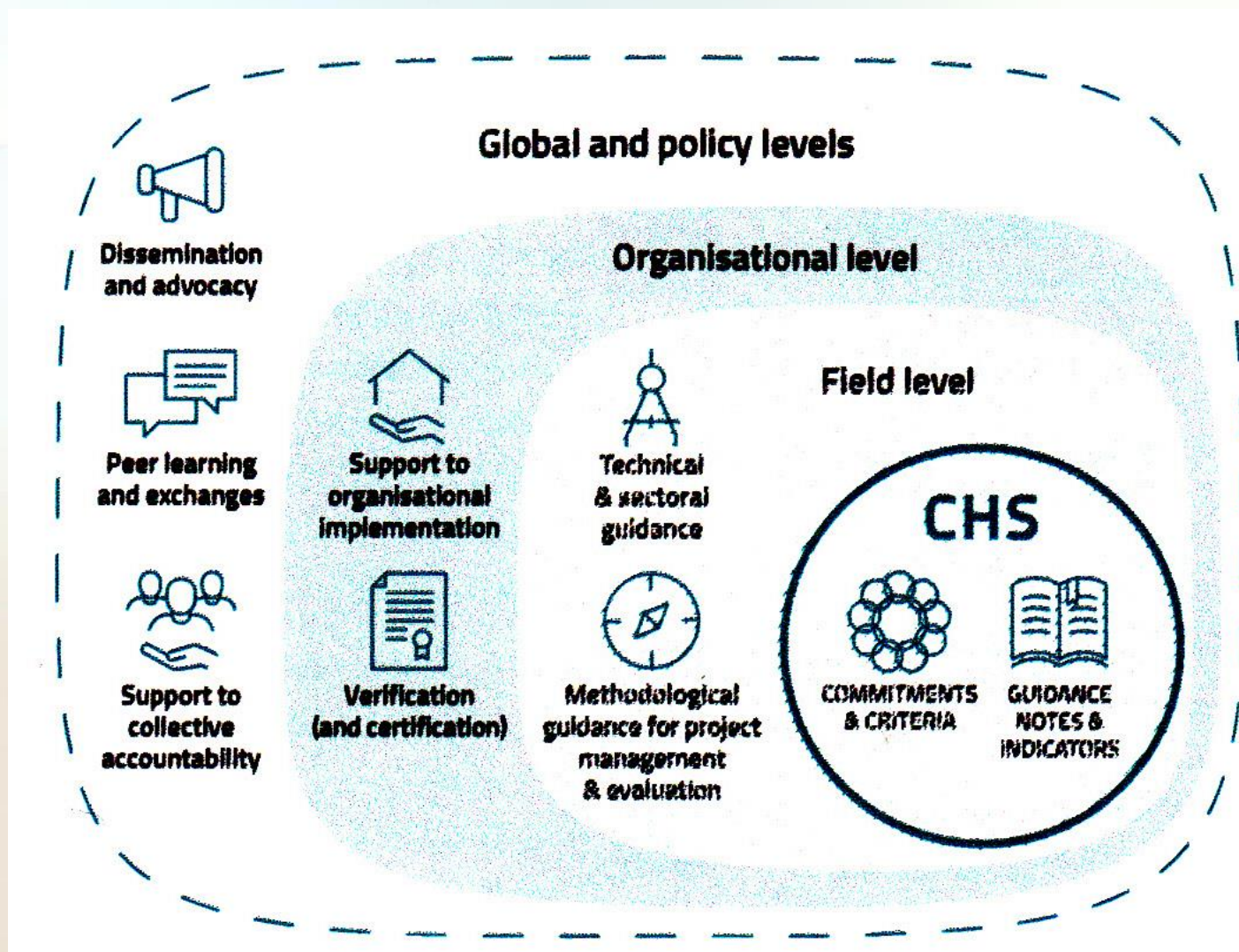
- **Key Actions**

- Describe what humanitarian workers need to do in order to deliver quality programmes in an accountable manner, against each of the nine commitments.

- **Organisational Responsibilities**

- Describe the policies, processes and systems humanitarian organisations need to have in place to support their staff, mapped against the nine commitments.

Using the Core Humanitarian Standard

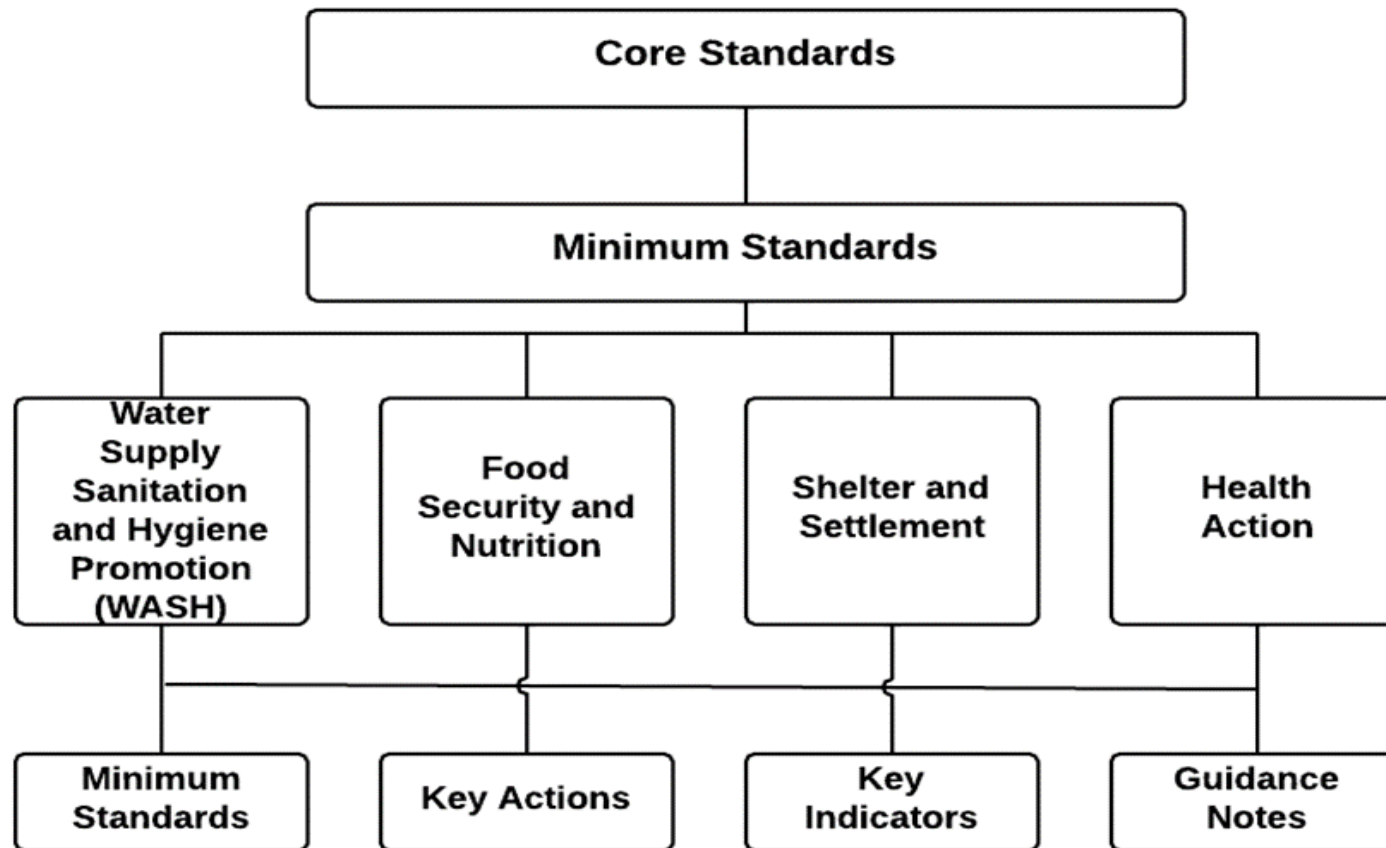


The Four 'Technical' Standards

- Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH)
- Food Security and Nutrition
- Shelter and Settlement
- Health



Minimum Technical Standards



Components of the Standards

- **Minimum standards**
 - Tend to be qualitative
- **Key actions**
 - Suggested activities and inputs to meet the standards
- **Key indicators**
 - 'Signals' to show a standard has been achieved
- **Guidance notes**
 - Advise on practical problem solving, benchmarks and on prioritisation issues
- **Checklists**



Global Humanitarian Standards Partnership – ‘Companion Standards’

- Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)
- Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
- Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Project
- Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network

Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)



- Cash Transfer Programming (CTP)
- Aims to ease cash flow before, during and after disasters.

Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)



- Led by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS):
 - CPMS aims to establish common principles among those working in child protection, to:
 - Establish common principles among those working in child protection
 - Improve the quality of child protection programming
 - Improve accountability within child protection work
 - Provide a synthesis of good practice and learning to date
 - Enable better advocacy and communication on child protection risks, needs and responses

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

INEE

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence
La Red Interagencial para la Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia
Rede Inter-Institucional para a Educação em Situação de Emergência
الشبكة المشتركة لوكالات التعليم في حالات الطوارئ

- INEE is a global network of practitioners and policy-makers working to ensure all persons the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies and post-crisis recovery.
- Minimum Standards for Education Preparedness, Response and Recovery:
 - The INEE Minimum Standards cover all domains of educational response - from access and safety of learners, to the development of curricula and the role of teachers
 - Each of the 19 standards is accompanied by key actions and guidance notes.

Livestock Emergency Guidelines (LEGS)



- 2nd Edition launched February 2015.
- Aim is to provide a set of internationally-agreed standards for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock-focused humanitarian interventions

Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network



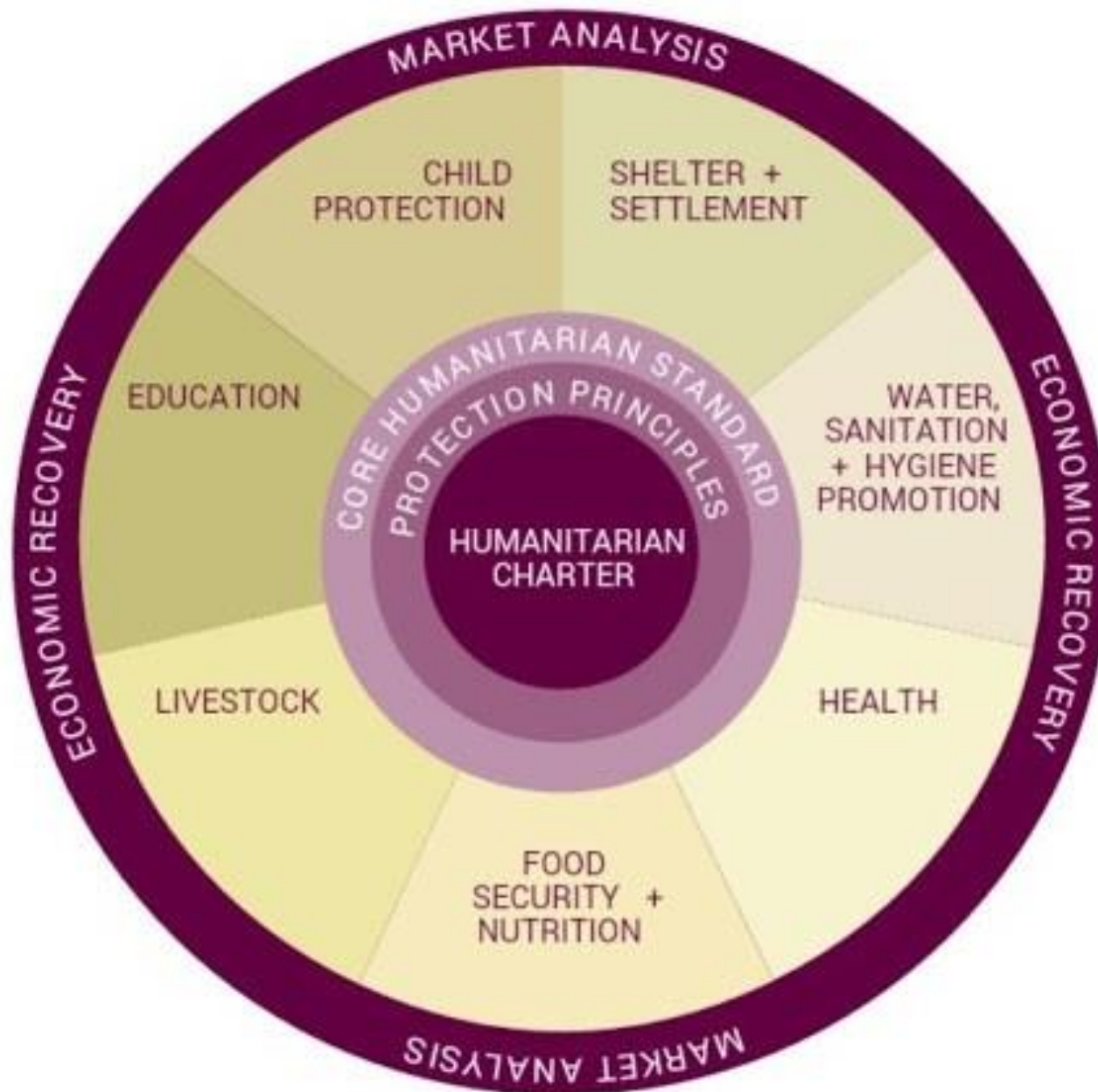
- A non-profit network of over 120 international organisations who believe in the power of micro-enterprise to reduce global poverty.
- Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS):
 - Provide strategies and interventions designed to promote enterprises, employment, and cash flow and asset management among enterprises and livelihoods in environments affected by conflict or disaster.
 - Aims to meet the immediate needs of the population while preparing it for sustainable economic recovery.

Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP)



Draws together the why, how and what of humanitarian work and encompasses:

- The Humanitarian Charter, which provides the ethical and legal backdrop to humanitarian response.
- The Protection Principles, which set out how to protect people from violence, avoid causing harm, ensure access to impartial assistance, and assist with recovery from abuse.
- The Core Humanitarian Standard, which describes the essential elements of accountable, effective and high-quality humanitarian action.
- Minimum standards, which provide universal benchmarks for assistance in shelter, water and sanitation, food security and nutrition, health, education, child protection, livestock, economic recovery and market analysis.



HSP Strategy



- The Humanitarian Standards Partnership represents the power of the sector to harness international law, learning and evidence, and to use it to improve quality and accountability in humanitarian response.
- The Partnership seeks to increase the application of humanitarian standards through:
 - Increased coherence among standards
 - Increased effectiveness of outreach
 - The Partnership is making it easier for humanitarian practitioners to use multiple standards. This is being done through improving cross-referencing in the text; reducing inconsistencies in future revisions; creating better links between resources; and by launching a mobile application.

'Compliance' With Sphere Standards

- The Handbook is a voluntary code and self-regulatory tool for quality and accountability.
- Conforming with Sphere does not mean meeting all the standards and indicators all of the time.
- Accountability to affected communities.

Using the Standards

- **Planning.**
- **Implementation**, as a management tool.
- **Monitoring**, to see that implementation is going as planned, and to see if the plan may need to be amended to meet current and future needs of the population at risk.
- **Evaluation**, to measure the effectiveness of the whole or part of the response.
- **Disaster preparedness and contingency planning**, as the pre-existing vulnerability of a population can be assessed against the standards.
- **Evidence for donors.**
- **Cross-agency coordination.**
- **Advocacy** when negotiating the provision of resources with authorities.

Interpretation and Context

- The security situation.
- The demographics of the population at risk.
- The climate.
- Available resources (especially short-term at the start of an intervention), including finances.
- Physical accessibility to the population at risk.
- Is the location in a rural or urban area?
- What is 'normal' for the population at risk?
- Has the disaster taken place in a developed country, where expectations will be higher?

Historical Criticisms of Sphere

- Objectification of people as ‘beneficiaries’.
- Commodification of people as ‘recipients’.
- ‘Northern’ culture underlying the Standards.
- Each disaster is unique and must be treated as such.
- Perceived as more clinical professional approach.
- Reduces humanitarianism to an assistance ‘business’.



Accessing Sphere and HSP

- Sphere Handbook online:
<https://handbook.spherestandards.org/>
- Download PDF Sphere Handbook via:
<https://spherestandards.org/handbook-translations-preview/>
- Sphere Handbook eBook via:
<https://developmentbookshop.com/the-sphere-handbook-ebook>
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<http://www.humanitarianstandardspartnership.org/>
- HSP App for Mobile Devices



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Questions?