



The 2018 Sphere Handbook: From human rights to humanitarian practice

Geneva, 6 November 2018 - Over the last decade, the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has continued to increase, making it vital to unlock the fullest potential of every actor to save lives and uphold the rights of people affected by crises.

Sphere contributes to this shared commitment by working as a catalyst to develop the best available standards and concrete guidance to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action.

Christine Knudsen, Executive Director of Sphere, said:

"The Sphere Handbook is grounded in the expertise of a diverse community of practitioners. It is field tested, practical and actionable. Built on shared principles and commitments, the Handbook sets out agreed minimum standards which translate the rights to water, shelter, food and health into clear and measurable actions."

The 2018 Sphere Handbook is the result of a far-reaching and inclusive consultation process. It is informed by evidence, research, and established field practice, with inputs from a diverse community of practitioners from all regions and backgrounds, including affected communities as first responders.

The Sphere Handbook was first developed twenty years ago, as one of the first initiatives to improve quality and accountability in humanitarian action.

"The standards have been regularly updated over the two decades to ensure they remain fit for purpose in a changing world. The foundation of the work, however, remains steady: all people affected by crisis have the right to assistance, the right to life with dignity, the right to protection and security, and the right to fully participate in decisions related to their own recovery," said Ms. Knudsen.

The Sphere Handbook provides a comprehensive framework to guide anybody working in humanitarian action to understand fundamental principles, protection, technical standards of quality and measurable indicators. Sphere creates this framework to ensure accountability to the people we serve, as well as to partners, colleagues, and those who provide resources for this important work.

Notes to the editors

- Sphere is launching the new edition of its flagship publication, the Sphere Handbook, on November 6. The Handbook will be available on the day of the launch on **spherestandards.org/handbook-2018**.
- Among the improvements of the new edition, readers will find a stronger focus on the role of local authorities and communities as actors of their own recovery. Guidance on context analysis to apply the standards has also been strengthened. New standards have also been developed, informed by recent practice and learning, on WASH and healthcare settings in disease outbreaks, security of tenure in shelter and settlement, and palliative care in health. Different ways to deliver or enable assistance, including cash-based assistance, are also integrated into the Handbook.
- The launch of the Handbook and this anniversary will be celebrated during [a special event](#) taking place on 6 November in Geneva, Switzerland. The event will be live streamed on Sphere's Facebook page (see below).
- The new Sphere Handbook is the result of what has been the most inclusive and far-reaching [consultation process](#) in our history, with events held in 40 countries and 450 organisations contributing to the revision.
- For more information, visit **spherestandards.org/handbook-2018** and follow the **#SphereHandbook** hashtag on Sphere's social networks:
 - [Facebook.com/sphereNGO](https://facebook.com/sphereNGO)
 - [Twitter.com/sperePRO](https://twitter.com/sperePRO)

Contacts

Barbara Sartore, Communications Manager

barbara.sartore@spherestandards.org

+41 22 552 3676

Romain Benicchio, Director of Communications

romain.benicchio@spherestandards.org

+41 22 552 3676



Sphere Handbook 2018

Questions and Answers

November 2018

What is Sphere?

- **Sphere at 20:** What started as a project by a few committed individuals 20 years ago is now a community of purpose with broad ownership and shared principles. Sphere was created in 1997 by a group of humanitarian organisations to improve the quality of their own humanitarian response and to be accountable for their actions. The Sphere Handbook is the oldest initiative in the field of humanitarian standards. It has become an essential reference for a growing community of practitioners working in humanitarian action around the globe.
- **Sphere is based on rights and principles:** Sphere's approach is based on rights: We recognize that people have the right to assistance, the right to life with dignity, the right to protection and security, and the right to fully participate in decisions related to their recovery.

What is the Sphere Handbook?

- **The Sphere Handbook provides a framework for accountability:** The Sphere Handbook provides an agreed framework for accountability through its standards, indicators and guidelines. Sphere is first and foremost about accountability to the people we serve, as well as to partners, colleagues, and those who provide resources for this important work.
- **The Sphere Handbook is principled, up to date and practical:** When supporting people affected by a crisis, disaster or complex emergency, it is vital to have the world's most up to date thinking and practice available to enable you to do the right thing at the right time. The Sphere Handbook translates principles and rights into practice. It sets out agreed minimum standards which translate the right to water or the right to food into practical and measurable actions. The handbook is field tested and regularly updated to ensure it remains fit for purpose in a changing world.

- **The Handbook is the result of broad consultations:** The new Sphere Handbook is the result of what has been the most inclusive and far-reaching consultation process in our history, with events held in 40 countries and 188 organisations contributing online.

What is new in the 2018 Handbook?

- **Focus on people:** Sphere has always put people at the centre of humanitarian action, recognising that their active engagement is essential to ensure assistance meets people's needs and supports them in their recovery. The 2018 Handbook focuses even more on strengthening community engagement and measuring the quality of a programme through this engagement.
- **Support to local Action:** Supporting and enhancing local ownership of response and recovery is a key approach in all four technical chapters. Successful interventions in health, nutrition, hygiene promotion, livelihoods support and shelter depend on working with, and through, national, local and community structures.
- **Context sensitive programming:** The 2018 Handbook is even more focused on contextualising the standards to apply them to their full potential. A new flow chart supports analysis and decision-making in context.
- **New standards and guidance:** Humanitarian experience, learning and evidence have contributed new elements to this edition:
 - A restructured Shelter and Settlement chapter, including security of tenure and explicitly considering long-term displacement.
 - A new section on using cash-based assistance and supply chain management.
 - A new standard on WASH in healthcare settings, highlighting the role of communities and facilities in disease outbreaks.
 - A new standard on sexual violence and clinical management of rape, highlighting the critical role of prevention, treatment and support.
 - A new standard on palliative care, reflecting changes in global demographics, protracted displacement, non-communicable disease prevalence and protracted settings.
- **Improved standards, indicators and guidance notes:** The standards are reformatted to better respond to users' needs and working in context.
 - Standards are more consistently outcome-oriented.
 - Key actions now include sub-actions and examples.
 - Key indicators now provide measurable aspects of progress to achieve the standard.
 - Guidance notes support actions and indicators with more information and links to related standards.