



# The Sphere Project

*Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards  
in Humanitarian Response*

## Annual Report 2016

This report covers activities carried out by the Sphere Project between 1 January and 31 December 2016 and includes related governance, financial and administrative summaries. It also includes highlights of the important work being done by the global community of humanitarian practitioners using Sphere to expand commitments and capacities to deliver quality and accountability in humanitarian response.

**SphereProject.org**

Sphere Project c/o NRC  
1-3, Rue de Varembe  
1202 Geneva | Switzerland

# Executive Summary

The most significant development of 2016 was the establishment of Sphere as a non-profit association, transitioning from its history as a hosted project under the IFRC and later ICVA. Some 20 years after the inception of the Sphere idea, this coming of age reflects the sustained relevance of Sphere for a humanitarian sector that continues to evolve and expand to meet growing and diverse needs.

The new Sphere organisation was constituted in Geneva on 28 September and began to fully function independently from 1 January 2017. The creation of a General Assembly, elected Executive Board and Officers, with a Secretariat led by an Executive Director implies significant changes in governance which will be addressed by the interim Board before the first General Assembly in early 2018.

Sphere continued to pursue the development of a robust and inclusive network of humanitarian practitioners. Through 47 country focal points and one regional partner, the Sphere network was active in 44 countries, representing an overall growth of more than 25 per cent from the previous year.

The revision of the Sphere Handbook began with a series of surveys and scoping exercises. The revision process builds on the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit as well as on research conducted by partners, which identified several drivers of change in humanitarian response. The timeliness of the revision was confirmed as was a shift to more cash-based response, increasing attention to urban contexts, improved practice in accountability and more diverse humanitarian actors.

Consultations on the revision of the Sphere standards and Handbook will continue in 2017, with the fourth edition of the Sphere Handbook scheduled for publication in 2018, coinciding with its 20th anniversary.

A series of interim resources and guidance facilitated the work of Sphere practitioners with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability, pending its full integration into the Sphere Handbook in 2018: the English version of the Handbook began to be shipped along with a folder containing the CHS; a new training module



The worldwide Sphere community continued to conduct capacity-building activities throughout the year. Some 26 workshops and six training of trainers courses in 16 countries were reported to the Sphere office. Considering that each course involves an average of 20 participants, some 640 humanitarian practitioners participated in Sphere training activities during the year.

focused on how to use the CHS in association with the Humanitarian Charter, sectoral standards and Protection Principles; and a revised version of the Sphere Handbook in Action e-learning course included the CHS.

A new one-hour e-learning course for managers supports strategic leadership on quality and accountability.

Sphere participated in the World Humanitarian Summit in May. In Istanbul, Sphere continued advocating for a common framework of quality standards, a common operational language and a comprehensive global framework for humanitarian policy and practice.

The formalisation of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) resulted in clear outcomes in 2016,

## Sphere network

with a shared identity and early work on a smart-phone application to support aid workers' access to and use of the standards. During the year, two HSP members carried out a revision of their standards. The full involvement of other HSP members contributed to building greater coherence among the standards.

Sphere's comprehensive communications supported the organisation's strategic goals, reaching an ever-growing audience, from social media followers to website users to newsletter subscribers. Research found a high level of reader satisfaction among newsletter subscribers.

A comprehensive budget and work plan aligned with the Sphere 2020 strategy and Board-endorsed priorities guided both fundraising and management. The secretariat maintains a small staff of six members, with generous support from an increasingly diverse group of donors.

**The establishment of a robust and inclusive network of Sphere practitioners will allow humanitarian actors and first responders to develop greater capacity to put humanitarian principles and standards into practice (Sphere 2020, Strategic Priority 1).**

The total number of active Sphere focal points increased by 25% in 2016 through active outreach and engagement with potential partners. The growing number of volunteer advocates and field-based actors continues to support the potential and influence of the Sphere Network.

More extensive work with focal points and trainers was highlighted as a key recommendation in a report commissioned to explore Sphere's future. The report considered Sphere's ability to build a more robust network that optimises field-based experience, capacity-building and global advocacy on quality and accountability.

The Sphere office developed plans to engage the focal points more strategically through its revised Network and Focal Points policies, as well as in the future governance of Sphere as it develops as a member-based organisation.



Sphere continued to pursue the development of a robust and inclusive network of humanitarian practitioners. Photo: First-ever Sphere training of trainers in Iran (May 2016).

The 2017-2018 Handbook revision process will give focal points an important opportunity to galvanise contributions from their own national and local partners, build up their own networks, and influence the future of the Sphere standards.

At the end of the year, the Sphere network consisted of 47 Sphere country focal points and one regional partner (Community World Service Asia) and covered 44 countries.

The following organisations became Sphere focal points in 2016: Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA; Brazil); Bureau d'Information, Formations, Echanges et Recherche pour le Développement (DRC); Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group (IAAWG; Ethiopia); Marie Mimose Jeune (Haiti); Sheikh Taher Azzawi Charity Organisation (Libya); Croissant Rouge marocain (Morocco); Illiassou Adamou (Niger); Office Africain pour le Développement et la Coopération (Senegal); Hamza Hamwie (MENA region); Ukraine NGO Forum; and World Vision International (Vietnam).

## Sphere focal points (2016)

### **Afghanistan**

- Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)

### **Argentina**

- ADRA Argentina (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)

### **Australia**

- RedR Australia

### **Bangladesh**

- Sphere Community Bangladesh (SCB)

### **Bolivia**

- Grupo Esfera Bolivia

### **Brazil**

- ADRA Brasil (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)

### **Cambodia**

- Partnership for Development in Kampuchea (Padek)

### **Chile**

- UNDP - Programa de Reducción del Riesgo de Desastres

### **China**

- Collaborating Centre for Oxford University and CUHK for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response
- Oxfam Hong Kong

### **Colombia**

- Visión Mundial Colombia

### **Congo, Democratic Republic of the**

- Bureau d'Information, Formations, Echanges et Recherche pour le Développement (BIFERD)
- Caritas Congo

### **Ecuador**

- Secretaría de Gestión de Riesgos (SGR)

### **Egypt**

- Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERC)

### **El Salvador**

- Grupo Esfera El Salvador

### **Ethiopia**

- Inter-Agency Accountability Working Group (IAAWG-E)

### **France**

- Institut Bioforce

### **Guatemala**

- Erwin Garzona (Sphere trainer)

### **Haiti**

- Marie Mimose Jeune (Sphere trainer)

### **Honduras**

- Lourdes Victoria Ardon Moncada (Sphere trainer)

### **Hungary**

- Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

### **India**

- Sphere India

### **Indonesia**

- Indonesian Society for Disaster Management (MPBI)

### **Iran**

- International Consortium for Refugees in Iran (ICRI)

### **Italy**

- Agenzia Italiana per la Risposta alle Emergenze (AGIRE)

### **Japan**

- Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation (JANIC)

### **Kenya**

- Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Disaster Preparedness for East and Central Africa

### **Korea, Republic of**

- NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC)

### **Kyrgyzstan**

- ICCO Cooperation

### **Lebanon**

- The Lebanese Organisation of Studies and Training (LOST)

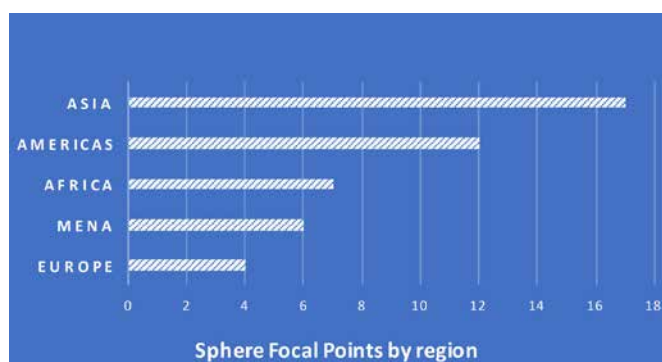
### **Libya**

- Sheikh Taher Azzawi Charity Organisation (STACO)

### **Morocco**

- Croissant Rouge marocain

## Training and advocacy



**The collective ability of the Sphere network to carry out training and advocacy will be strengthened, targeting first responders, traditional and new humanitarian actors, international systems as well as local and national authorities (Sphere 2020, Strategic Priority 2).**

### Training

During 2016, the Sphere office focused primarily on refreshing existing training, creating complementary courses, and preparing the ground for development of a new suite of tools which will accompany the revised standards.

As a complement to the comprehensive training package developed in 2015, the Sphere office released a new **training module introducing the Core Humanitarian Standard** (CHS) on Quality and Accountability in January 2016. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, the module was designed for humanitarians with previous knowledge of the Sphere standards and particularly the Core Standards. It focuses on how to use the CHS in association with the Humanitarian Charter, Sphere sectoral minimum standards and Protection Principles.

The CHS is a voluntary standard that describes the core elements of a principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian response. The outcome of a collaborative process, it draws on and replaces the Sphere Handbook Core Standards, the 2010 HAP Standard, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice and the quality reference framework of the COMPAS method developed by Groupe URD.

The CHS will be fully integrated into the Sphere Handbook 2018 edition. Until then, specific tools (including this new module) are helping Sphere practitioners to make the transition from Sphere Core Standards to the CHS.

The Sphere office refreshed the highly successful Sphere Handbook in Action e-learning course to include the Core Humanitarian Standard. Available in English, Spanish, French and Arabic, the course is now mobile-friendly. Through real-life scenarios, it helps

#### Myanmar

- Radanar Ayar Association

#### Nepal

- Sphere Nepal / Disaster Preparedness Network (DPNet) Nepal

#### Niger

- Illiassou Adamou (Sphere trainer)

#### Pakistan

- Community World Service Asia (Regional focal point)

#### Philippines

- Lutheran World Relief (LWR) / Alliance of Sphere Advocates in the Philippines (ASAP)

#### Senegal

- Office Africain pour le Développement et la Coopération (OFADEC)

#### Sri Lanka

- Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)

#### Turkey

- Mavi Kalem Social Assistance & Charity Association
- Turkish Red Crescent Society
- Hamza Hamwie (Arabic-speaking Sphere trainer; Focal point for the MENA region)

#### Ukraine

- Ukraine NGO Forum

#### United States

- InterAction

#### Venezuela

- Alejandro Castañeda (Sphere trainer)

#### Vietnam

- World Vision International

#### Zimbabwe

- Christian Care National Office

learners to get acquainted with the Handbook's core messages and understand how to use it in a holistic manner. It explores key aspects of humanitarian work like accountability to affected populations, needs assessment, impartiality, keeping populations safe from harm and looking after oneself as a humanitarian worker.

The Sphere office and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) jointly developed a one-hour Sphere for Managers e-learning course. The course provides a snapshot of the benefits of applying the Sphere standards and guidance on how to integrate the Sphere approach within humanitarian organisations. It is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish and is hosted on the HLA learning platform (kaya). The course targets senior managers involved in humanitarian action and working for organisations of all sizes, both national and international, as well as governmental agencies, but should benefit anyone interested in getting a quick overview and refresher on Sphere.

Sphere partnered with the CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, IECAH (Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria) and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) to develop a two-hour Introduction to the Core Humanitarian Standard e-learning course. The course introduces the CHS content and format and links it to other sections of the Sphere Handbook. The course includes four scenarios and covers the history of the CHS, its structure, scope and underlying principles as well as its links with the Sphere technical standards. It also outlines the responsibilities of humanitarian workers and organisations as well as how individuals and organisations can apply the CHS. The course is available in English and French, with an Arabic version scheduled for 2017.

The Sphere office maintained and updated the online trainer directory which, by the end of the year, included some 80 trainers. The worldwide Sphere community continued to conduct capacity-building activities throughout the year. Some 26 workshops and six training of trainers courses in 16 countries were reported to the Sphere office. Considering that each course involves an average of 20 participants, some 640 humanitarian practitioners participated in Sphere training activities during the year.



An example of capacity-building activities carried out by the Sphere community throughout the year: In the wake of Hurricane Matthew, a "short-notice, teaser training" on Sphere standards took place in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in October 2016.

The Sphere office gave presentations on the Sphere standards to several academic institutions, including: Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH), London School of Economics, University of Tübingen Summer School, Institute of Humanitarian Studies of the University of Aix-en-Provence and the Spring School of the Network on Humanitarian Action (NOHA).

## Advocacy

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) was a key gathering for the entire humanitarian community, bringing together some 9000 world leaders, community groups, and frontline responders in May. It was also significant opportunity for Sphere to advocate for a common framework of quality standards, a shared operational language and a comprehensive global framework for humanitarian policy and practice.

In its submission to the WHS, Sphere stated that the Sphere Handbook offers an integrated and comprehensive approach to humanitarian action. This approach lays out "the 'why' (Principles and the Humanitarian Charter), the 'how' (CHS/Core Standards and Protection Principles) and the 'what' (technical standards)" of humanitarian response. It also includes "a call to monitor performance within this framework



and share results widely". The submission suggested that Sphere standards be "the basis for inter-operable planning, programming, monitoring and accountability against which the broadest community of practitioners can measure their achievements, gaps, progress and – importantly – the quality and consistency of assistance provided in saving lives together".

Sphere, the CHS Alliance and Groupe URD co-organised a well-attended side event on the theme: "It's not enough to do things right, the right things have to be done". Stephan Schønemann, Director for Humanitarian Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Arno Wicki, Deputy Head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid opened the discussion. The panel included Amina Labarakwe, a community member from Baringo County in Kenya, Alejandro Maldonado, Executive Secretary of Guatemala's National Coordination for Disaster Reduction, François Grünwald, Executive Director of Groupe URD and Lise Grande, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. They discussed the main challenges faced by the humanitarian sector to provide quality and accountability and make sure that affected communities are at the centre of their work.

Alejandro Maldonado explained how the Government of Guatemala had committed itself to integrate the Sphere standards into their disaster management policies. The standards help the government to be more accountable, transparent and better equipped to fight corruption as well as to plan for future events and decide what goods should be pre-positioned.

Lise Grande called for the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Sphere standards to be a key tool for ensuring that the accountability agenda is at the centre of the humanitarian sector's collective efforts. She suggested concrete ways in which Humanitarian Coordinators and Country Teams as well as Central Emergency Response Funds can use the CHS and Sphere to achieve this goal.

The Sphere Director Christine Knudsen was a panellist in a separate WHS side event organised by the IASC Reference Group for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas (MHCUA). Knudsen spoke on settlement-based approaches in urban crisis. She also made an on-the-record intervention at a round table on humanitarian principles, making the point that minimum standards are the concrete translation into practice of humanitarian rights and international humanitarian law.

Sphere became involved in Listen Learn Act, an 18-month project carried out by DanChurchAid and Save the Children Denmark. The project aims to explore how well humanitarian agencies are connecting with the people whom they try to help. It uses a method called "ground truthing," pioneered by the UK-based NGO Keystone Accountability. The

#### Sphere workshops were conducted in

- Bolivia
- Chile
- Kenya
- Nicaragua
- Nigeria
- Paraguay
- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- Turkey
- Vanuatu

#### Training of trainers courses were conducted in

- Afghanistan
- Canada
- Ecuador
- Iran
- Thailand
- Ukraine



# Sphere for Managers

How to Champion Sphere approach in your Organisation



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method involves the systematic surveys of affected communities to assess how humanitarians are performing against the CHS, identifying the gaps and how these can be filled.

The Listen Learn Act project is piloting the approach in four countries. It asks people affected by humanitarian emergencies a few questions, but asks them again every few months to provide a kind of “heartbeat” or vital sign of the assessed programmes. Agencies can thus monitor if and how they’re meeting people’s basic expectations. What agencies learn should help them assist those affected by disaster or conflict on their own terms and in a way that supports their own capacities.

The Sphere office continued its involvement in relevant Inter-Agency Standing Committee work streams, including the Task Team for Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (IASC / AAP-PSEA). In this area, it contributed to further promote the AAP/PSEA Helpdesk, whose purpose is to share information and best practice on issues related to accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse with staff of humanitarian agencies who need technical advice. Sphere staff shared input with the Niger Accountability Task Force work plan for 2016 and increased its

participation in the Protection Mainstreaming Task Team. In addition, Sphere staff also participated in the IASC Indicators Registry meeting of the year, which discussed the need for improved support materials and further consolidation, where possible, between the indicators and Sphere.

During the year, Sphere Director Christine Knudsen represented Sphere at several international events. Her interventions included:

- Presentation at a public meeting on emergency preparedness and response organised by the UN (Geneva, March);
- Moderating a panel on standards in urban contexts at the InterAction Forum (Washington, D.C., April);
- Presentation to Aktion Deutschland Hilft and Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe and meeting with representatives of the German government (Bonn, September);
- Participation at the Forum Espace Humanitaire (Annecy, October);
- Presentation at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Baltimore, October).
- Panellist in a Core Humanitarian Standard learning event (Geneva, November);



## Sphere Standards

**A revision of the Sphere Handbook will offer the opportunity to sharpen the relevance and usability of Sphere standards by consolidating their evidence base and aligning them with innovative best practice in the sector (Sphere 2020, Strategic Priority 3).**

With a new edition of the **Sphere Handbook** scheduled for publication in 2018, this year was focused significantly on preparatory work, research and planning to frame the revision of the standards conceptually and to launch public consultations in 2017.

Over 2,800 users in 149 countries responded to an **online survey of Handbook users** carried out in four languages in early 2016. More than 40% of them were working in countries with ongoing humanitarian crises or situations of concern.

Nine out of ten users found the Handbook extremely or very useful and six out of ten were ready to contribute to the upcoming revision. Three-quarters of the responses came from users who had worked with the Handbook within the past six months, which suggested both relevance and freshness of insights.

More than two-thirds of users refer to the Handbook during humanitarian response, with nearly as many (60 percent) using it in preparedness. The majority of practitioners use it to guide needs assessment as well as programme design and monitoring and evaluation, with capacity-building running a close second.

A diverse user base includes people working for international NGOs, national and local NGOs, Red Cross / Red Crescent societies, government, civil defence and other national service providers as well as UN and intergovernmental agencies. Nearly a third of the responses were from people with less than five years of experience and more than half from people with less than ten years.

The Handbook revision builds on several **drivers of change in humanitarian response**. These include the growing role of cash and changes in operating contexts, with most of the world's population now living in cities and a variety of new actors entering the sector.



Sphere became involved in Listen Learn Act, an 18-month project aimed to explore how well humanitarian agencies are connecting with the people whom they try to help. Photo: A focus group discussion in Makaisingh, Gorka District, Nepal.

- Participation in Action Against Hunger's Nutrition + Evidence conference (Paris, November);
- Participation in the first face-to-face meeting of the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative Board (Geneva, December);
- Panellist at the Human Rights Council's 9th Forum on Minority Issues (Geneva, December).

Sphere staff participated in several consultations and conferences, including:

- An inception meeting for the Humanitarian to Humanitarian network during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (Geneva, February);
- Two meetings of the "Quality and Accountability Group," an informal information-sharing and collaboration platform (Geneva, March; London, September);
- A panel on the use of standards at the International Humanitarian Studies Conference (Addis Ababa, March).

The need to make the next Handbook and related tools accessible across multiple platforms called for serious attention. The revision is also the opportunity to fully integrate the harmonised Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability into its architecture beyond the current references and guidance on its application.

Different components of the Handbook will require varied degrees of review and revision. For example, whilst the Humanitarian Charter will remain unchanged, other Sphere foundational chapters (e.g., Protection Principles and Core Standards/CHS) will be revised. Links between these and the sectoral standards will also be strengthened.

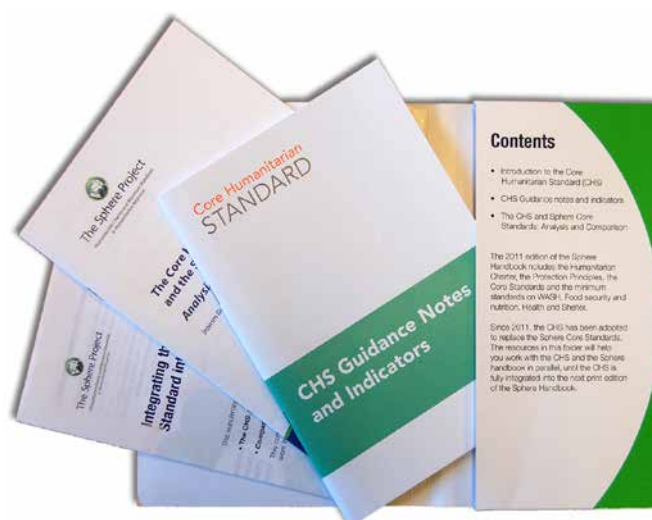
The revision process, open and consultative, will rally the global humanitarian community to reflect on how it can face new challenges in new ways, building on what brings its members together.

Two pieces of research were carried out and published as **preparations for the revision of the standards**. One of them, **Using the Sphere Standards in Urban Settings**, reflects the realisation that humanitarian response in urban situations is substantially different from that in rural situations; and that the number and scale of urban humanitarian responses will continue to grow as more of the world's population move to towns and cities.

The guide has two parts: a narrative with numerous case studies exploring various urban contexts and ways to adapt global standards; and a checklist guiding practitioners in their choice of standards and adaptation of the supporting indicators and actions.

The publication is available in four languages as part of 'Sphere unpacked,' a series of guides to apply Sphere standards in humanitarian programmes. It was piloted during the first quarter of 2016 and revised later in the year in the light of comments and testing in the field.

The discussion paper **Sphere standards in national humanitarian response**, available in four languages, is also part of the preparatory work for the Handbook revision. It seeks to lay the groundwork for a constructive dialogue in support of the contextualisation and adoption of international standards in national contexts. While contextualisation often takes place on a case-by-case basis during an emergency response, Sphere considers that a national exercise to adapt and contextualise standards can



The Sphere Handbook is shipping with the Core Humanitarian Standard and a document that helps practitioners navigate between the CHS and Sphere Core Standards.

best take place in a participatory and thorough manner ahead of an emergency.

It includes recommendations for humanitarian professionals who advocate with national disaster management authorities to adopt standards at national level. The paper contains case studies from Argentina, Chile, China, Ecuador and Japan as well as a list of 13 countries that have adopted policies and guidelines that explicitly refer to international humanitarian standards such as Sphere.

**As additional preparation for the revision process**, Sphere worked with the London School of Economics and Political Science to review how Sphere's Shelter and Settlements standards were adapted in the responses to the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the 2015 Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu and the 2015 floods in Malawi. Contextualising humanitarian standards remains a challenge for practitioners, understanding how to adapt indicators for meaningful application with partners and within a specific operation.

The three case studies found evidence of a holistic approach that used the Handbook's technical standards chapters in conjunction with the foundational chapters of the Charter, CHS and Protection Principles. However, it also revealed a knowledge gap between management and front-line staff, the latter being best placed to

## How humanitarian practitioners use the Sphere Handbook?

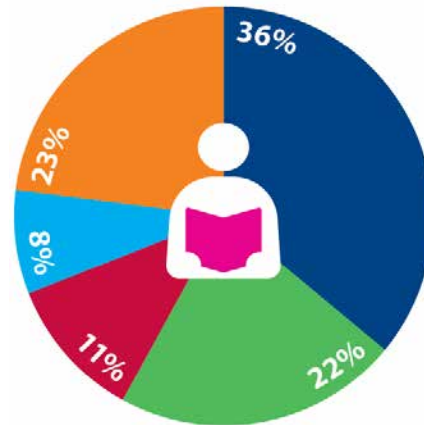


### When is it used?

Most use it to guide assessment, design, delivery and evaluation.

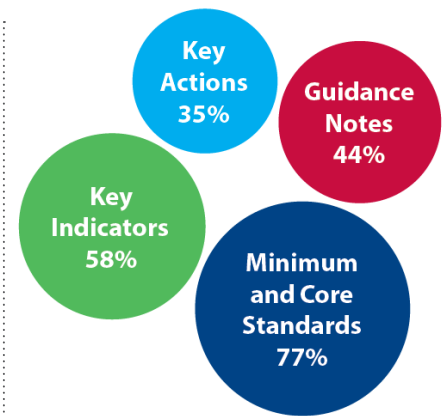
Capacity-building and training run a close second.

Other uses are policy development, negotiations, advocacy, and research.



### Who uses it?

- International NGOs
- National/Local NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent
- Government, civil defence and national service providers
- UN and intergovernmental agencies
- Other



### What elements are used the most?

contextualise the standards to the realities on the ground. The study recommended more focused guidance as well as timely and efficient training for frontline workers. The authors also suggested that the next edition of the Handbook should stress the need for contextualisation even further so that the topic might be better understood by practitioners.

The Sphere Handbook 2018 edition will fully **integrate the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)**. In the interim, a new step into that direction was already taken in 2016. As of 1 September, all orders of the English version of the Handbook are shipped with an integrated package containing the CHS Commitments, Guidance Notes and Indicators plus a document that helps practitioners navigate between the harmonised CHS and Sphere Core Standards.

**Four new language versions of the Handbook** were published by the Sphere community in 2016. The Thai Red Cross Society together with the Southeast Asia Regional Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Ministry of Public Health translated the Handbook into **Thai**. The Italian Agency for Emergency Response (AGIRE) published the Handbook in **Italian**. The Rev Marian and Dr Roman

Curkowskyj Foundation translated it into **Ukrainian**. And the Turkish Red Crescent Society with support from the Sphere country focal point Zeynep Türkmen were responsible for the **Turkish** translation.

Some 5,000 copies of the Handbook (both as hard copies and in eBook format) were sold in 2016. The Handbook's PDF versions (all 29 language versions included) were downloaded nearly 15,400 times from the website.

Some 91,000 users accessed the online version of the handbook (SphereHandbook.org) in 2016, an increase of 3.6% compared to the previous year.

### By the end of 2016, the Handbook was available in 29 language versions

- Armenian
- Bangla
- Braille (English)
- Chinese (Simplified)
- English
- Farsi
- French
- German
- Haitian Creole
- Indonesian
- Italian
- Japanese
- Khmer
- Korean
- Kyrgyz
- Myanmar
- Nepali
- Russian
- Sinhala
- Slovenian
- Spanish
- Tajik
- Tamil
- Thai
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Urdu
- Vietnamese

# Humanitarian Standards Partnership

**The progressive formalisation of a global standards partnership will improve coordinated action, allowing humanitarian standards to better influence humanitarian response, building greater ownership by individuals, communities and organisations (Sphere 2020, Strategic Priority 4).**

The Humanitarian Standards Partnership, (HSP) continued to see progress in building a collective approach to humanitarian standards with a focus on practitioners and user-friendly access.

HSP members developed common high-level messages for the **World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul** in coordination with the CHS Alliance. In addition, Sphere and the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Project ran a joint information booth at the Summit.

HSP members developed a **logo and visual tag** to quickly show the family of standards which are working together for a more coherent approach to support the application of humanitarian standards in practice. As revisions of standards continue within the partnership, this tag will be the hallmark of inter-linked standards.

HSP members began work on a **smartphone application** that will facilitate practitioners' access to and use of humanitarian standards. The joint standards app, to be released in the third quarter of 2017, is designed for smartphones and tablets and will work on phones using iOS, Android, and Windows operating systems. It will provide on- and off-line access to different sets of standards, as well as easy movement across them. Field practitioners working in disaster zones with limited or no connectivity will find the app a useful tool supporting their work. Over a thousand pages of content will be easily navigated, providing access to users seeking specific references, with cross-referencing between sections and standards and a search feature. The app will provide content in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, with scope to include other languages. It will enable easy updating of content as key standards are revised.

The HSP published a **case study on the complementary use** of two sets of humanitarian



The new logo of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership will be the hallmark of inter-linked standards.

standards. The study focuses on an education programme in Ethiopia in which Sphere and the Minimum Standards for Education were used to address the needs of South Sudanese refugees.

The Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS), a standards partner, began their revision process at a write-shop hosted by the SEEP Network in Washington, D.C. in January 2016.

The revision process involved the updating and rewriting of MERS core, assessment and technical standards, aligning with other HSP partner standards and the foundational components of Sphere including the CHS. It included a consultative process that drew regional input from practitioners in the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, West Africa and Asia-Pacific. More than 175 practitioners and leading experts contributed to the new MERS. They represent over 90 organisations worldwide, including national and international NGOs, UN agencies,

## Humanitarian Standards Partnership members

- **Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action** (Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action)
- **Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards** (LEGS Network)
- **Minimum Economic Recovery Standards** (SEEP Network)
- **Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery** (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies)
- **Minimum Standard for Market Analysis** (Cash Learning Partnership).

## Communication

**Sphere develops and deepens trustful relationships with key constituencies through fresh and innovative communications in support of its strategic priorities and resource mobilisation (Sphere 2020, Supporting Priority).**

Sphere continued to reach a growing audience through its email-based communications work. By the end of the year, the Sphere **monthly electronic newsletter**, which is published in English, French and Spanish, reached 42,200 subscribers (all language versions combined). This figure represents a nearly 12% growth compared to the previous year.

The Sphere office undertook two **audience research** projects to study the preferences and level of satisfaction of newsletter subscribers.

A survey of English-speaking readers received responses from 106 countries. Countries facing ongoing crises or receiving population inflows because of crises were among the top 20 respondents (e.g., Sudan and South Sudan, Kenya, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq and Nigeria). Responses showed a high level of satisfaction (76% of them rated the usefulness of the content as 'good' or 'excellent'). More than 300 examples of how readers use the newsletter show that the primary application is related to training and education support as well as awareness-raising of Sphere and humanitarian standards globally. Respondents asked for more content focused on practical examples such as case studies or lessons learned in implementing standards in specific operations.

A content analysis of 379 articles published in 56 newsletters over five years explored what types of content are preferred by readers. The study correlated the popularity of the articles with different variables such as placement, theme, illustration, etc. The findings show that learning resources and resources to apply the standards are the most popular type of content.

Two **email campaigns** in March and December targeted Sphere supporters who are not newsletter



Sphere and the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) Project ran a joint information booth at the World Humanitarian Summit. Photo (from left to right): Cathy Watson (LEGS) and Aninia Nadig (Sphere).

research and academia as well as other humanitarian actors. The new MERS Handbook will be launched in early 2017.

The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) also revised its Minimum Requirements for Market Analysis in Emergencies (MiRMA) to strengthen their multi-sector approach and inter-linkages with the Sphere standards. The result is one single assessment standard – the **Minimum Standard for Market Analysis (MiSMA)**. The revision benefited from the close involvement of the Sphere office and the HSP coordinator and will be well reflected as a core element in the Sphere Handbook revision in 2017.

Cassie Dummert was appointed part-time **HSP coordinator** in March. The position is hosted by Sphere and funded collectively by HSP members.

subscribers. The first reached nearly 30,400 practitioners and the second over 35,200.

Sphere's **social media presence** grew steadily throughout the year. The number of Facebook followers rose by 40% to nearly 10,500 by the end of the year; Twitter grew by 36% with 3,530 followers by the end of the year. Sphere's YouTube channel increased its number of subscribers by about 80% to some 670, with the channel having more than 27,600 views (an increase of about 70%).

The centrepiece of Sphere's online communications work continues to be the Sphere **website**, which was regularly updated in three languages (English, French and Spanish) with news stories, blog posts, events, reports on activities and organisational information. There were 150,546 visitors to the website during 2016, a 1.3% increase compared to 2015.

The Sphere office was an **exhibitor** at the InterAction Forum in Washington, D.C., in April as well as at the exhibition fair which ran in parallel to the World Humanitarian Summit. The WHS booth was shared with Sphere standards partners, highlighting the collaboration value of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership. The Sphere staff presence at events and trade fairs proves fruitful as it increases Sphere's visibility among a variety of new publics and allows for lively exchanges with longstanding Sphere practitioners and supporters.



Learning resources and resources to apply the standards are the most popular type of content with Sphere newsletter readers.

## Fundraising & management

**Sphere's funding base is broad and diverse, allowing for the mobilisation of the financial resources required to achieve its strategic priorities (Sphere 2020, Supporting Priority).**

Sphere continued to consolidate its institutional capacity and strengthen its management functions in preparation for its registration as an independent organisation.

A **comprehensive budget and work plan** aligned with the Sphere 2020 strategy and Board-endorsed priorities guided the work of the Sphere Project in 2016. The Project's expenditures totalled CHF 1,083,233, while a modest surplus and 2015 carry-over were assigned to the development of operational reserves and the transition to the Sphere Association in 2017.

The **generous support of donors** who demonstrated strong commitment to Sphere made possible its work throughout the year. In a positive trend, new donor support was secured as well as an increased number of multi-year contributions.

The **Board Finance Committee** met quarterly to review financial statements and updates by the host organisation, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). This helped to ensure a

**At the end of 2016, the Sphere office was composed of six staff members:**

- **Christine Knudsen**, Director
- **Cecilia Furtade**, Training and Promotion Officer
- **Wassila Mansouri**, Networking and Outreach Officer
- **Juan Michel**, Communications Management Senior Officer
- **Aninia Nadig**, Advocacy and Networking Management Senior Officer (80%)
- **Loredana Serban**, Finance and Administration Senior Assistant (80%)

## Sphere Project Board

strong financial position in view of the transition to independent organisational status. It also allowed for more predictable expenditure and an accurate appraisal of fundraising requirements.

### Sphere is deeply grateful for the generous support of the following donors

- **Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration** (PRM), Department of State, United States of America
- **DanChurchAid**, Denmark
- **German Humanitarian Assistance**, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
- **International Development Cooperation** (Danida), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
- **Irish Aid**, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland (grant awarded directly to the Sphere Association)
- **Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance** (OFDA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
- **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

The Sphere Board decided to constitute Sphere as an **independent organisation** at its first regular annual meeting held in London from 27-28 April. This significant move will allow Sphere to be more responsive to a growing and global user base and optimise its contribution and support to the humanitarian community. After 20 years of existence as a hosted project, Sphere will adapt as a user-driven, practitioner-governed organisation. On 5 July, an extraordinary Board meeting confirmed the decision and chose the future location of the new NGO secretariat. Sphere's hosting agreement with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) ended on 31 December 2016.

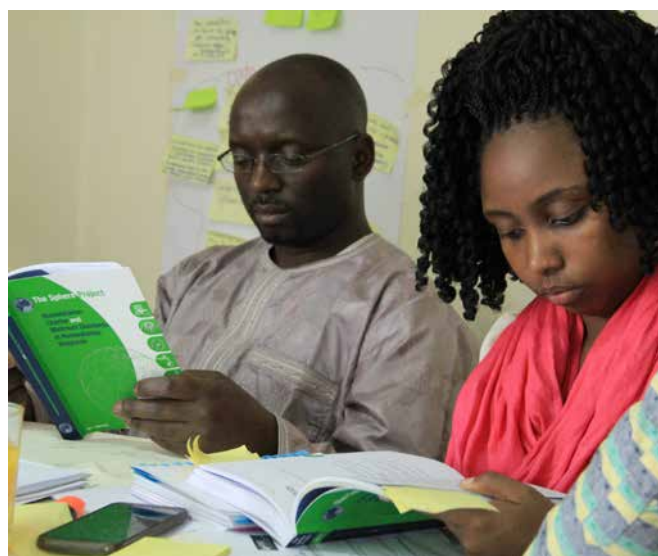
With its new statutes being approved, Sphere was constituted in Geneva as a non-profit association under Swiss law on 28 September. Sphere's governance includes a General Assembly, an Executive Board and a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director. Its founding Officers – Martin McCann (President, RedR/UK), Sarah Kambarami (Vice-President, ACT Alliance) and Julien Schopp (Treasurer, InterAction) – represent a continuation of the Sphere Project Board membership until the first ordinary meeting of the General Assembly in May 2018.



Sphere was constituted as an independent organisation in September. This significant move will allow Sphere to be more responsive to a growing and global user base and optimise its contribution and support to the humanitarian community.

At its April meeting in London, the Sphere Project Board discussed preliminary studies commissioned to lay the ground for the forthcoming **revision of the Sphere Handbook**. The revision addresses issues that have driven change in the sector since 2011 like the growing use of multi-purpose cash transfers and urban preparedness and response. It will also accomplish the full integration of the Core Humanitarian Standard into the Handbook, offer greater support to locally-led action and provide users with new ways to access digital content. The revision process is designed to be globally inclusive. It will help identify not only improved practice and new evidence to inform the revised Standards, but also create opportunities to consider how Sphere can support or anticipate future practitioners' needs in a changing operational environment.

At its second regular annual meeting held in Geneva from 16-17 November, the Sphere Project Board reviewed the **new institutional status and governance structure** of the organisation and provided strategic guidance for the **Sphere Handbook revision**. The Board confirmed Sphere's focus on humanitarian principles and on rapid response while acknowledging that its standards remain relevant for preparedness and for transition planning. The Board stressed the importance of the Humanitarian Charter and the humanitarian principles guiding the standards, but recognised that non-humanitarian actors might also



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take up the standards to provide accountable and high quality assistance in emergencies.

The Sphere Board expresses gratitude to **Simon Eccleshall, Erik Johnson, Unni Krishnan, Pauliina Parhiala, John Plastow, Greg Ramm, Ian Ridley, and Bart Witteveen** who stepped down at different points in time during the year.

### At the end of the year the Sphere Project Board was composed of

- **Nan Buzard**, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
- **David Fisher**, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- **Damaris Frick**, The Salvation Army
- **Anna Garvander**, Lutheran World Federation / Church of Sweden
- **Isabel Gomes**, World Vision International
- **Philippe Guiton**, CARE International
- **Sarah Kambarami**, ACT Alliance
- **Vikrant Mahajan**, Sphere India
- **Martin McCann** (Chair), RedR International
- **Barbara Mineo**, Oxfam International
- **Mamadou Ndiaye**, ICVA / African Office for Development and Cooperation (OFADEC)
- **Mary Pack**, InterAction / International Medical Corps
- Colin Rogers, Plan International
- **Julien Schopp** (Vice Chair), InterAction
- **Karin Settele**, Aktion Deutschland Hilft / Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe (HELP)
- **Maxime Vieille**, Save the Children
- **Jan Weuts**, Caritas Internationalis
- Humanitarian Response Network of Canada





At the end of the year, the Sphere network consisted of 47 Sphere country focal points and one regional partner and covered 44 countries.

**[SphereProject.org](https://SphereProject.org)**

**[SphereHandbook.org](https://SphereHandbook.org)**

**[Facebook.com/SphereNGO](https://Facebook.com/SphereNGO)**

**[Twitter.com/SpherePro](https://Twitter.com/SpherePro)**

**[YouTube.com/TheSphereProject](https://YouTube.com/TheSphereProject)**

**SphereProject.org**

**Sphere Project c/o NRC  
1-3, Rue de Varembe  
1202 Geneva | Switzerland**

Should you have questions or feedback, please contact the Sphere team:  
[info@SphereProject.org](mailto:info@SphereProject.org) | [SphereProject.org/contact-us](https://SphereProject.org/contact-us)