



## Sphere Focal Points

Sphere is about upholding the dignity and rights of crisis-affected people through principled, accountable and quality humanitarian action.

Sphere was started in 1997 by impassioned aid workers who wanted to improve the level and approach of emergency response. With this goal in mind, they framed the Humanitarian Charter and identified a set of Minimum Standards to be applied contextually in all humanitarian crises.

Initially developed by non-governmental organisations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Sphere resources are primary reference tools for national and international NGOs, UN agencies, governments, donors, the private sector, volunteers, and many others. Today, Sphere is a global network bringing together and empowering practitioners to improve and sustain the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance. Sphere hosts the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP), the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS) and is joint copyright holder of the Core Humanitarian Standard.

Sphere's flagship publication, the Sphere Handbook, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognised set of humanitarian principles and minimum standards.

### Sphere's Global Strategy

*Vision:* Crisis-affected people actively participate in decisions and actions which impact them; have what they need to survive and recover with dignity; and are resilient to future crises.

*Mission:* Sphere defines, promotes and applies humanitarian principles and minimum standards to ensure lifesaving, protective and accountable response to crisis.

Sphere has four priority strategic areas:

#### A. The Sphere Handbook

*Challenges:* Knowledge and application of minimum standards is variable across regions. Organisations compete instead of cooperating. Lessons learned are not sufficiently captured and applied.

*Activities:* Sphere coordinates with technical specialists to review and update the Sphere Handbook ensuring it is appropriate, accessible and available in multiple languages and formats. Sphere trains people how to use the Sphere Handbook to improve humanitarian outcomes.

*Outcomes:* People responding to crisis decrease morbidity and mortality by basing decisions and actions on the principles and minimum standards in the Sphere Handbook. The Sphere Handbook provides a 'common language' which enables greater accountability, efficiency and coordination.

#### B. Strategic Partnerships

*Challenges:* People responding to crisis need easy access to cross-sectoral standards and guidance to ensure quality and accountability. Providers of standards and guidance need to learn from one another and pool resources.

*Activities:* Sphere works in partnership with other standard-setting initiatives and actors to ensure harmonized, simplified standards are the foundation of humanitarian response. Sphere hosts the HSP and supports new and established providers of standards and guidance.

*Outcomes:* People responding to crisis have streamlined access to all humanitarian standards appropriate to their context and stage of response. The Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) is a leading authority on humanitarian standards.

### C. Policy & Advocacy

*Challenges:* Diverse stakeholders in crisis response do not always know or respect humanitarian principles; standards; or international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

*Activities:* Sphere engages with influential groups and forums to shape humanitarian policy and practice. Sphere promotes minimum standards, the principles and the foundations underpinning them.

*Outcomes:* Humanitarian principles and quality and accountability standards are embedded in the policies and practices of organisations and authorities at all levels, from local to international.

### D. Champions Network

*Challenges:* Power imbalances and inequitable partnerships hinder national and local organisations in delivering sustainable, locally led humanitarian response.

*Activities:* Sphere supports and grows a community of practice consisting of all humanitarian standards users, including Sphere members, Focal Points, trainers, and other partners. This community leads local implementation, advocacy, training, and networking initiatives.

*Outcomes:* Sphere standards are locally driven, ensuring their application supports sustainable humanitarian outcomes. Local and national actors are strengthened through their ownership and use of globally recognised humanitarian standards.

## Governance

Sphere's Governing Board oversees the organisation's mission, strategic direction, policies and fiscal integrity. Board members are elected by the General Assembly from Sphere full members and includes co-opted members.

### I. Role, rights, and responsibilities of Sphere country Focal Points

The activities of Sphere country Focal Points vary from country to country, depending on specific humanitarian needs. Some of the most common and effective Focal Points' activities are:

- ✓ Be the point of contact for people and organisations seeking support to implement Sphere;
- ✓ Carry out Sphere trainings, ToT, workshops etc.;
- ✓ Advocate with national authorities for the use of the Sphere standards in their humanitarian and disaster management policies;
- ✓ Interact with the regional Sphere partner (where applicable);
- ✓ Promote the use of the Sphere Handbook with the country-based humanitarian organisations;
- ✓ Translate the Sphere Handbook and materials into local languages;
- ✓ Promote the wider Humanitarian Standards Partnership

- ➔ In line with the open-source nature of the Sphere Handbook; country Focal Points have no exclusive right to carry out Sphere-related activities (for instance trainings).
- ➔ The role of country Focal Point is a voluntary one. Focal Points receive no financial contribution from the Sphere Secretariat, though may discuss financial support and the Secretariat will actively support with for example letters of introduction etc.

Often, there is one Sphere Focal Point per country which will coordinate and encourage coordinated Sphere activities. However, there is no pre-set limitation to the number of country Focal Points. If there are more than one, they are expected to inform each other about their activities. There is no hierarchy among country Focal Points. Rather, they should coordinate their activities – as appropriate – among each other and with the Sphere regional partner (where there is one).

While Sphere country Focal Points are expected to actively exchange information with the Sphere Secretariat, minimum reporting of Sphere activities is required.

### **Role and responsibilities of the Sphere Team**

The relationship between the Sphere Secretariat and the Sphere country Focal Point should be wielding mutual benefits. Roles and activities of Sphere country Focal Points will vary greatly from country to country. Therefore, and to maintain the greatest possible flexibility, the Sphere Secretariat may suggest activities, based on previous experiences of Sphere country Focal Points.

The Sphere Secretariat may support Sphere country Focal Points in several areas. This list is neither exhaustive, nor mandatory:

- Support Sphere country Focal Points in advocacy or promotional activities (for example with messaging, content advice, support letters for certain activities to the extent possible)
- Provide tools to support Sphere country Focal Point activities (to be downloaded from the Sphere website)
- Provide advice on Sphere training and learning activities (upon request)
- Involve and inform country Focal Points on global developments regarding Sphere as appropriate
- Promote regional meetings and activities for country Focal Points
- Promote and support the creation of new country Focal Points
- Publish on the Sphere website the list of country Focal Points
- Maintain a country Focal Point mailing list

In turn, by informing the Sphere Secretariat of their activities and needs, the Sphere country Focal Points will help the us improve and expand the range of tools – which helps country Focal Points carry out their activities more effectively and will lead to active uptake of Sphere in emergencies.

Likewise, the Sphere Secretariat may use information provided by country Focal Points in its own global advocacy and promotional work.

### **Who qualifies as a Sphere Focal Point?**

Organisations interested in becoming a Sphere country Focal Point should meet the following criteria:

- Is one of the following: NGOs, Academia, UN agency, network, or umbrella organisation (to ensure continuity)<sup>1</sup>
- The person identified within the Focal Point organisation has an extensive experience in Sphere implementation in the field
- Can demonstrate they regularly carry out or initiate Sphere-related activities
- Have a proven track record of promoting Q&A within the country
- Have the potential to successfully promote Sphere in the country with humanitarian agencies, donor groups, relevant government bodies... etc.
- Be supported by two Sphere member organisations in the country (support letter)
- Can dedicate time to Sphere activities (5-10%)

---

<sup>1</sup>Exceptionally, it can be a listed Sphere trainer (the decision is at the sole discretion of the Sphere secretariat).

## **Sphere Focal Point database**

By being included on the Sphere website along with a specific workplan of Sphere-related activities (to be updated on a yearly basis), the country Focal Point will become publicly accountable to the Sphere community regarding the activities they intend to carry out.

Through validation, the Sphere Secretariat agrees with the workplan activities overall quality and feasibility but will not oversee the activities deriving from this workplan.

Where problems are brought to the Sphere Secretariat's attention, it will intervene to help solve them as appropriate, and it reserves the right to remove a country Focal Point from its website if their activities do not correspond with Sphere's approach.

## **How to apply**

To apply as a country Focal Point, please send us an email stating your interest at [william@spherestandards.org](mailto:william@spherestandards.org), and we will share with you the application form. If your application is accepted by the Sphere Secretariat, contact details and workplan activities will be displayed on the Focal Points webpage.

## **II. Sphere Regional Partner**

A regional partner is an agency or group of agencies chosen by the country Focal Points of that region and with the potential to carry out quality and accountability activities beyond their country limits. Regional partners support national agencies within a defined region in strengthening their Sphere activities and their Q&A activities in general. Sphere regional partners may also coordinate regional Sphere activities and advocacy for Sphere.

A separate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Sphere Secretariat and the regional partner determines the tasks and ensures that the set goals are worked towards from both sides. MoUs are to be reviewed and updated every three years. The MoU is made public on the Sphere website, along with the contact details of the regional partner.

## **III. Sphere Trainers**

The community of Sphere practitioners around the world includes several people with experience in conducting training and learning activities on the Sphere Handbook. The Sphere Secretariat does not evaluate or certify trainers. It is the organizers' responsibility to verify trainers' capacities, quality of work and suitability to their learning needs.

Sphere Trainers' role includes:

- Conduct training and learning activities on the Sphere Handbook.
- Play an active role within the Sphere community (sharing training news and resources, creating training tools, being part of advisory group for Sphere material development)
- Be an ambassador of Q&A

(More info here [Training and Events | Sphere Standards](#).)

## **IV. Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP)**

Sphere and nine other humanitarian standard initiatives formally joined to establish the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP). The aim of the Partnership is to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action across all sectors and a harmonized approach to support user in the application of standards.

The HSP organizes joint training opportunities, research initiatives, and outreach activities. It also runs advocacy activities calling for an increased application of humanitarian standards.

The initiatives which currently compose the HSP are:

1. The Sphere Handbook  
Sphere
2. Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)  
The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
3. Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards  
LEGS
4. Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)  
Sphere
5. Minimum Standards for Education  
Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
6. Minimum Standard for Market Analysis (MISMA)  
Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)
7. Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities  
HelpAge International, Age and Disability Capacity Program
8. Minimum Standards for Camp Management
9. SEADS Guidelines and Standards  
SEADS  
Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster
10. CHS Alliance  
HSP Associate member and co-curator of the Core Humanitarian Standard