**Adopting the Sphere approach**

“Conforming to the Sphere standards does not mean implementing all key actions or meeting all key indicators of all standards. The degree to which an organisation can meet the standards will depend on a range of factors, some of which are beyond their control.” *(Sphere Handbook, page 8)*

It is an uncomfortable truth that no humanitarian programme will ever result in all the standards being met for all affected people. The best humanitarian programmes improve conditions for affected populations without negative consequences for other people and the environment.

So, what *do* you have to do to conform to Sphere? We prefer to think in terms of **adopting the Sphere approach**, which means taking the following four actions **and being guided by the Sphere Handbook as you do so**.

1. **Always strive to do the best you can with the resources you have available.**

A picture containing text, ground, person, outdoor

Description automatically generated

A high-quality and accountable programme brings about improvements against standards which are evidenced by improved indicator readings.

Remember that “high-quality” means **effective**, **efficient** and **appropriate**. Limited resources should be allocated **based on need**.

Assessment and analysis using indicators will help you prioritise activities.

*Revise* [***Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 1***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_002) *(page 54) and* [***CHS Commitment 2***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_003) *(page 56).*

1. **Explain what your programme achieved, what you learned and what still needs to be done.**

A group of people looking at a paper

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

“If the Sphere standards cannot be met for all or some groups from the affected population, investigate why, and explain the gaps, as well as what needs to change.”

Sphere standards and indicators provide an internationally recognised framework to explain and quantify the impacts of your programme and the remaining gaps. A large part of organisational learning should come from people’s feedback and complaints that have been addressed.

*Revise* [***Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 4***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_005) *(page 63),* [***CHS Commitment 5***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_006) *(page 66) and* [***CHS Commitment 7***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_008) *(page 73).*

1. **Advocate for more action and more resources.**

A person speaking into a microphone

Description automatically generated

“We will continue to advocate that states and other parties meet their moral and legal obligations towards affected populations.”

*Revise* [***Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 2***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_003) *(page 56),* [***CHS Commitment 5***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_006) *(page 66) and* [***CHS Commitment 8***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005_002_009) *(page 76).*

1. **Ensure that affected populations actively participate at all stages of your programme.**

A picture containing person, tree, outdoor, group

Description automatically generated

“We offer our services in the belief that the affected population is at the centre of humanitarian action, and recognise that their active participation is essential to providing assistance in ways that best meet their needs, including those of vulnerable and socially excluded people.”

*Revise* [***Core Humanitarian Standard Commitments 1 to 5***](https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch005) *(pages 52 to 84).*