

The Core Humanitarian Standard and Sphere: FAQs

1. What is the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)?

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a voluntary code that describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and quality humanitarian action.

It sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response may use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. Communities and people affected by disaster or conflict may use the Commitments to hold these organisations to account.

The Commitments are supported by Quality Criteria that indicate how humanitarian actors need to work in order to meet them. Key Actions describe what humanitarian workers need to do in order to deliver on the Commitments. Organisational Responsibilities describe processes, policies and systems humanitarian organisations need to have in place to support their staff.

2. Where does the CHS come from?

The CHS is the result of a collaborative process involving the *Groupe URD (Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement)*, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project.

It draws together key elements of several existing humanitarian standards and commitments including the Red Cross/Red Crescent and NGO Code of Conduct, the Sphere Handbook Core Standards and the Humanitarian Charter, the 2010 HAP Standard, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice and the Quality COMPAS method developed by *Groupe URD*.

3. How is the CHS going to be used by humanitarian practitioners and organisations?

The CHS will replace the 2010 HAP Standard, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice and the Core Standards section of the Sphere Handbook. It will also be integrated into the Quality COMPAS reference framework.

In order to make the CHS fully operational, a set of indicators and guidance notes are being developed and tested in 2015.

4. What is the added value of the CHS?

By combining four existing sets of standards, the CHS makes an important contribution to coherence and coordination in the humanitarian sector. The CHS will be promoted as a key coordination tool to assess, carry out, monitor and evaluate humanitarian work. It will also be a useful tool for donors who want to ensure that their contributions are used well.

5. Is the CHS first and foremost a tool for certification of humanitarian organisations?

No. The CHS is a voluntary code that humanitarian organisations may use to align their internal procedures. However, the CHS has been designed in such a way that organisations may use it, if they so wish, to self-assess and/or undertake external verification of their performance. Specific indicators are being developed for this purpose.

The CHS can also be used as a reference framework for an external certification scheme like the one being proposed by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR).

6. What's the relation between the CHS and the Sphere standards?

The Sphere Project Board endorsed the CHS in November 2014. The Board intends to integrate the CHS fully into the Sphere Handbook, substituting it for the Handbook's six Core Standards.

The Sphere Core Standards will remain in place until the CHS key indicators and guidance notes, which are being developed and tested in 2015, are ready for use by field workers.

The CHS will not change or replace Sphere's Humanitarian Charter, Protection Principles or the minimum standards pertaining to the Handbook's four technical chapters (WASH; Food security and nutrition; Shelter, settlement and non-food items; Health action).

7. How different or similar are the CHS and the Sphere Core Standards?

As the CHS draws on the Sphere Core Standards among other sources, the two sets of standards share a fundamentally similar approach to quality and accountability. However, a number of differences – new elements contributed by the CHS, differences of emphasis – set them apart.

The Sphere Project office has published a short comparative analysis between the two sets of standards:

The Core Humanitarian Standard and the Sphere Core Standards: Analysis and Comparison

(available at SphereProject.org/resources). Meant as interim guidance for Sphere practitioners as they begin bringing the CHS into their work, the publication is available in English, French and Spanish. An Arabic version will be ready soon.

8. Will humanitarian workers who are used to working with the six Sphere Core Standards find it difficult to use the CHS?

No. The Sphere Core Standards have been effectively reflected in the CHS. Users of the Sphere Handbook will find it relatively easy to integrate the CHS' new elements.

The short comparative analysis between the two sets of standards mentioned above should help humanitarian professionals acquainted with Sphere Core Standards to navigate the CHS.

9. How is the CHS reflected in the current Sphere training resources and tools?

The recently published **Sphere Training Package 2015** is based on the current Sphere Handbook while referring to the CHS in some of its modules. The short comparative analysis between the two sets of standards mentioned above will enable trainers to easily adapt training modules in order to incorporate CHS elements according to their specific needs.

The two "Sphere unpacked" guides (**Sphere for Assessments** and **Sphere for Monitoring and Evaluation**) will be updated in early 2016 to reflect the CHS structure. The content will remain largely the same.

There are no plans for a revision of the **Sphere Handbook in Action** e-learning course at this time. As explained above, knowledge of – and skills built on – the Sphere Core Standards are easily transferable to working with the CHS. A revision of the e-learning course will be considered as users begin integrating the CHS into their work.

10. Is the Sphere Handbook going to be updated? If so, when?

The Sphere Board decided to fully integrate the CHS into the Sphere Handbook. Concrete plans to do so are being developed. This process will take several steps and reach completion with the next revision of the Sphere Handbook.

For additional information, please visit **SphereProject.org**