

sphere unpacked

# **Sphere for Monitoring and Evaluation**



**The Sphere Project**

*Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards  
in Humanitarian Response*

# The ‘Sphere unpacked’ guides

The ‘Sphere unpacked’ series discusses the use of the Sphere standards in specific situations.

‘Sphere for Monitoring and Evaluation’ together with ‘Sphere for Assessments’ explains how to integrate key elements of Sphere’s people-centred approach into the humanitarian programme cycle. These guides indicate the relevant parts of the Sphere Handbook at different moments of the response process and should therefore be used together with the Handbook.

Both ‘Sphere unpacked’ guides are compatible in spirit with the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Programme Cycle guidance. They are particularly relevant for IASC’s ‘needs assessment and analysis’, ‘implementation and monitoring’ and ‘operational review and evaluation’.

This guidance assumes a basic level of understanding of both monitoring and evaluation processes, and access to the Sphere Handbook. It is intended to complement rather than replace agency-specific and sector-specific monitoring and evaluation guidance and to promote an understanding of the added value that Sphere can bring to programme implementation.

## The Core Humanitarian Standard

The ‘Sphere unpacked’ guides currently refer to the Sphere Core Standards. In 2016, they will be revised to reflect the Core Humanitarian Standard which will replace the Sphere Core Standards. These changes will not affect the actual content of the guides, since the Core Humanitarian Standard reflects Sphere’s approach (see also Appendix 5).

## Author

Ben Mountfield

## Acknowledgements

Daniel Arteaga, Francesca Bonino, John Borton, Scott Chaplowe, Hana Crowe, Astrid de Valon, David Goetghebuer, Richard Garfield, Scott Green, Saul Guerrero, Maria Kiani, Tzvetomira Laub, David Loquercio, Albert Maipisi, Warner Passanisi, Minja Peuschel, Nicolas Rost, Fiamma Rupp, Elias Sagmeister, Claudia Schneider, Diána Szász, William Wallis, Alexandra Warner, Cathy Watson, Andy Wheatley, Gavin Wood, Kelly Wooster.

## Terminology

This guidance uses the term **results monitoring** to cover results at all levels: outputs, outcomes and even impact. Evaluations are often concerned with results as well, specifically at the levels of outcome and impact.

Although the word ‘indicator’ is used in a variety of ways, there is a useful distinction to be made between the **metric** – the thing we actually measure – and a performance target, objective or ambition.



Sphere for Assessments. Published by the Sphere Project in Geneva. Feb. 2015. [SphereProject.org](http://SphereProject.org)  
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License.

# Contents

Who is this guide for?	4
The Sphere Handbook	5
What do we mean by 'monitoring' and 'evaluation'?	8
What can Sphere contribute to monitoring and evaluation?	12
Placing Sphere in context	14
Participatory mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation	18
Monitoring and evaluating processes and performance	20
Monitoring the results of our interventions	24
Adapting the project in response to monitoring	27
Evaluation	31
Sphere and the DAC criteria	33
Reflection and learning	34
Appendix 1: Choosing the right indicators	36
Appendix 2: Seasonality, reference values and baselines	38
Appendix 3: The indicator tracking table	39
Appendix 4: Sphere and the DAC Criteria	40
Appendix 5: Comparison between the Sphere Core Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard	46
References, sources and further reading	47

## Tables and boxes

Figure 1: The relationships between the components of the Sphere Handbook	5
Figure 2: Monitoring context, processes and results	8
Table 1: Using the Sphere Handbook at different points in a typical evaluation process	10
Figure 3: Monitoring and evaluation through the results chain	11
Figure 4: Two applications of the Sphere Handbook to monitoring and evaluation processes	12
Box: Monitoring and evaluation in other humanitarian standards handbooks	16
Table 2: Key Indicators from Core Standard 5	17
Table 3: Qualitative and quantitative process indicators within Sphere	20
Table 4: Example of an accountability indicator within Sphere	21
Table 5: Key indicators associated with Core Standard 6: Aid worker performance	23
Table 6: Qualitative and quantitative results indicators within Sphere	24
Table 7: Quantitative targets described in Sphere Guidance notes	25
Table 8: Sphere key indicators tracking the context of an intervention	28
Table 9: Some Sphere key indicators are explicit about recognising differences between groups	29
Table 10: Some Sphere key indicators are explicit about cross-cutting themes	30
Figure 5: Applying the DAC criteria through the results chain	33
Figure 6: Reference and baseline values of an indicator that changes with the seasons	38
Table 11: Quick Location Guide for the Core Standards in the CHS	47

## Who is this guide for?

Sphere for Monitoring and Evaluation will be relevant and useful for the following groups and individuals:

Stakeholder Group	This guidance will help with
<b>Needs assessment teams</b>	Selecting indicators for needs-assessment that are compliant with Sphere, that may work across agencies operating in the same sector and that will remain relevant throughout the rest of the programme cycle.
<b>People responsible for programme design</b>	Selecting robust, high value indicators that cover all aspects of programme implementation and results and relating them to the Sphere standards.
<b>Programme managers</b>	Ensuring that programmes properly contextualise the Sphere standards and that progress towards meeting them can be effectively measured in all areas.
<b>People commissioning an evaluation</b>	<p>Understanding how Sphere can be used in designing an evaluation process to provide an appropriate benchmark for assessing the quality of humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>Considering how this can be done in situations where Sphere was not explicitly referenced in the project design and reporting.</p>
<b>People running and working in programmes being evaluated</b>	<p>Understanding the expectations related to the Sphere Standards, and how they can be applied to programming.</p> <p>Maintaining a flexible approach to programme design and implementation; ensuring that good records are kept of decision-making processes and that the monitoring framework is sufficient.</p> <p>Being ready to support and make time for evaluation and other reflective practices.</p>
<b>People undertaking the evaluation</b>	<p>Understanding the varied ways in which Sphere Standards can be used to inform evaluation processes and the value of using a globally recognised set of benchmarks.</p> <p>Appreciating the linkages between the Sphere Standards and the DAC criteria.</p>
<b>People and groups working on lessons' learning</b>	Building on strong and justified M&E information which can be used for global and joint lessons' learning processes in the sector

# The Sphere Handbook

The Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, explains and lists what needs to be in place in four life-saving sectors so that a population affected by disaster or conflict can survive and recover with dignity. Because the way to achieve standards and indicators varies according to context, the Sphere Handbook provides guidance on globally applicable aspects of humanitarian aid.

**Figure 1: The relationships between the components of the Sphere Handbook**



**Core Standards and minimum standards:** These are qualitative in nature and specify the minimum levels to be attained in humanitarian response across four technical areas. They always need to be understood within the context of the emergency.

**Key Actions:** These are suggested activities and inputs to help meet the standards.

**Key indicators:** These are ‘signals’ that show whether a standard has been attained. They provide a way of measuring and communicating the processes and results of Key Actions. The key indicators relate directly to the minimum standard, not to the Key Action.

If the required key indicators and actions cannot be met, the resulting adverse implications for the affected population should be appraised and appropriate mitigating actions taken.

The key indicators are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative statements that describe a performance target. A group of these together outline the expectations to be met to achieve each Core Standard and each minimum standard. In many cases, the specific metric – the aspect to be measured – is only implied in the Handbook, although some are described in detail in the Appendices.

**Guidance notes:** These include specific points to consider when applying the minimum standards, Key Actions and key indicators in different situations. They provide guidance on tackling practical difficulties, benchmarks or advice on priority issues. They may also include critical issues relating to the standards, actions or indicators and describe dilemmas, controversies or gaps in current knowledge.

## The Humanitarian Charter

The Sphere Handbook has a number of parts, each of which contributes in different ways to this guidance. The Humanitarian Charter is the cornerstone of the Handbook and provides the ethical and legal backdrop for humanitarian action. The 12 clauses of the Humanitarian Charter may even serve as a people-centred alternative to the commonly-used DAC<sup>1</sup> criteria as a framework for evaluation.

The Humanitarian Charter provides an alternative, unique and globally recognised framework for the evaluation of humanitarian action.

## The Protection Principles

The Protection Principles provide a framework to ensure that the rights articulated in the charter can be achieved and describe how humanitarian agencies can contribute to the protection of those faced with the threat of violence or coercion. Again, these are factors that could and should be included in both monitoring and evaluation processes. Measuring the degree to which these principles have been observed during a humanitarian response can be challenging, but guidance is available.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that humanitarian actions – which aim to improve one aspect of the lives of people affected by a disaster – can worsen another aspect. To minimise this, all humanitarian agencies should be guided by the Protection Principles, even if they do not have a specific protection mandate or capacity.

The four basic protection principles are as follows:

- Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions
- Ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination
- Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion
- Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse.

Monitoring the degree to which these principles are applied is difficult and participatory approaches can be helpful to achieve this. If issues are identified, they can often be addressed by adapting the programme approach. See page 18 for more on Sphere's participatory approach to monitoring.

### Protection considerations in WASH programmes in Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake

Agencies working in camps in Port-au-Prince quickly discovered that protection concerns cut across technical sectors. It was difficult to find locations within crowded camps to place latrines – which needed vehicle access several times a day. But latrines placed at the edge of the camp in the dark were a real concern, especially for women. Various approaches, including providing lighting, redesigning the camp layout and alternate systems ('peepoo' bags) were tested to reduce this risk.

<sup>1</sup> The seven criteria proposed by the Development Assistance (Committee DAC) of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development are discussed in detail at the end of this guide and in Appendix 4.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see [www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir/indicators](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir/indicators) and use the tools to show indicators related to Protection and guidance on protection mainstreaming on the Global Protection Cluster website. ALNAP will publish a scoping paper on protection-specific challenges in humanitarian evaluation and additional guidance should follow in 2015.

## The Core Standards, and Core Standard 5

There are six **Core Standards**, which are essential standards that are shared by all sectors. They provide a single reference point for approaches and mostly relate to **agency processes**. An evaluation process could examine performance against any (or all) of the Core Standards. Core Standard 5: **performance, transparency and learning** is explicitly associated with the functions of evaluation and monitoring and their role in supporting transparency and improving the quality of responses. This Standard is explored in more detail below, starting on page 17 and the eight associated Key Actions provide the structure for the middle section of this guidance.

The Sphere Handbook is explicit about the importance of considering **cross-cutting themes** throughout the programme cycle, and the evaluation process should include these aspects as appropriate to the context. In particular, evaluation of humanitarian action should consider the gender-specific aspects of design, implementation and outcomes. This process is far easier if assessment and monitoring data has been disaggregated for age and gender from the start.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Mazurana, D., Benelli, P., Gupta, H., & Walker, P. (2011), *Sex and Age Matter*. Tufts University, USA.

# What do we mean by ‘monitoring’ and ‘evaluation’?

## Monitoring

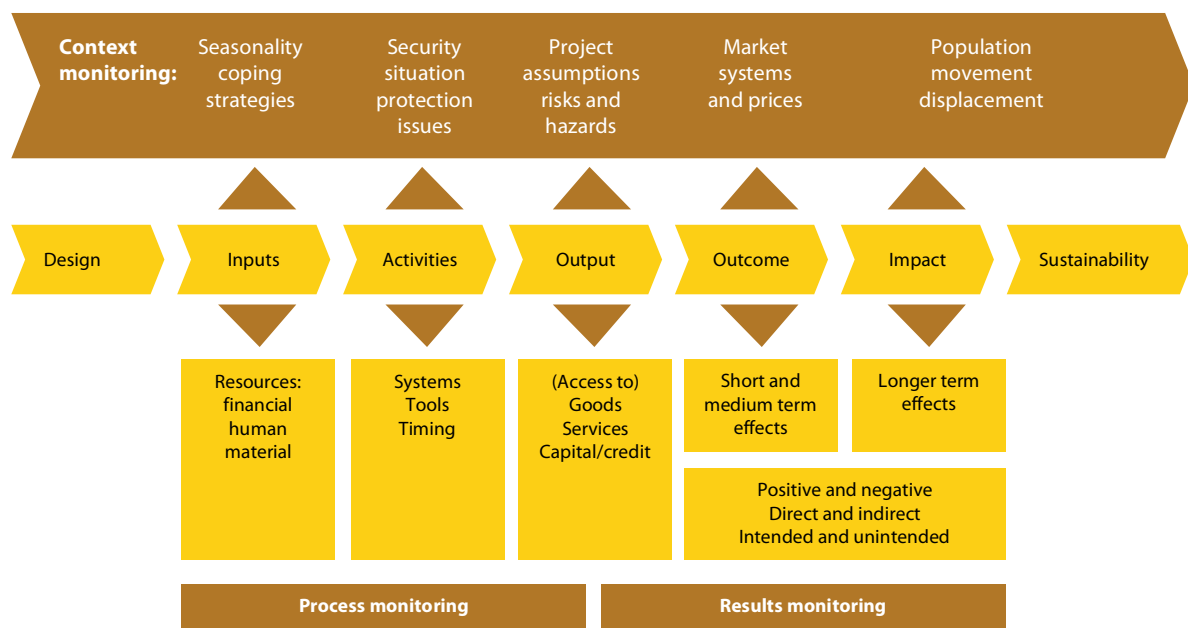
Monitoring compares intentions with results. It measures progress against project objectives and the influence of the programme on people and the context as well as tracking the systems and processes of the implementing agency. Monitoring information guides project revisions, verifies targeting criteria and confirms that aid is reaching the people intended. It should be disaggregated for different groups: women, men, boys and girls and other groupings as appropriate. It enables decision-makers to respond to community feedback and identify emerging problems and trends.

Monitoring has a range of purposes, but the critical one is this: better outcomes for disaster-affected populations. This means that management processes should be explicitly designed to consider and respond to monitoring data.

This guide considers three different areas in which humanitarian action is monitored: the context in which it takes place, the activities and processes undertaken and the results that these activities have on the disaster-affected population.

The diagram below places a chain of processes and events running from left to right across the centre and organises these three broad types of monitoring around it.

**Figure 2: Monitoring context, processes and results**





## Evaluation

According to the OECD<sup>4</sup>, evaluation is:

*A systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.*

ALNAP<sup>5</sup> recently refined this definition:

*A systematic and objective examination of humanitarian action, intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability.*

There are many variations of evaluation, but the ALNAP definition brings them together under two broad purposes: accountability and learning. Some evaluations try to combine these together, while others focus on one or the other.

Evaluations can be internal or external, but they always seek to be systematic, objective and credible. They can explore the project design, its relevance, the implementation of activities, internal and external relationships and coordination, the projects' outputs, outcomes and impact, or some combination of these areas.

The scope and methodology of an evaluation is normally agreed in advance and set out in the **terms of reference (TOR)**. The TOR usually set out a number of research questions which can be refined by the evaluators through an **inception report**. The evaluation then seeks to answer these questions on the basis of the evidence that emerges during the evaluation.<sup>6</sup> Often these questions will be further broken down into a number of sub-questions.

In humanitarian action, evaluations can take place at various times. The most common are:

- **Real-Time Evaluation:** An evaluation undertaken soon after the operation begins which aims to provide feedback to operational managers in real time and to ensure that the operation is 'on track'.
- **Mid-Term Evaluation:** An evaluation process that takes place around the middle of the planned operational period. Mid-term evaluations tend to be used in larger or longer responses.
- **Final Evaluation:** A final evaluation takes place at the end of the implementation period or after the operation has closed. These evaluations are often used to capture learning and identify gap areas that can inform future programming and evaluations.

Every humanitarian evaluation is different and no single diagram or process map can successfully describe all of them. The diagram below represents a fairly typical process for an external evaluation towards the end of a humanitarian action.<sup>7</sup> It is not intended to be prescriptive or universal: a participatory evaluation, for example, would follow a very different path.

---

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2002) – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development /DAC – Development Assistance Committee

<sup>5</sup> ALNAP (2013), *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action*, Pilot guide, London, UK

<sup>6</sup> For example, see ALNAP (2014), *Insufficient evidence?* London, UK

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed consideration of evaluation processes, see <http://betterevaluation.org/plan>

**Table 1: Using the Sphere Handbook at different points in a typical evaluation process**

Output	Activities	Application of Sphere Handbook
	Identify the need for an evaluation; clarify the main purpose; identify stakeholders.	Consider the use of the Core Standards or the Protection Principles as the guiding framework for the evaluation.
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	Outline key questions and preferred methodology.	Use Sphere Core Standards and Minimum Standards as an explicit reference point against which to set key questions.
	Identify external evaluator.	Consider an evaluator with proven experience in the application of Sphere.
	Refine key questions and scope.	Use Key Actions and Guidance notes to inform the development of sub-questions.
<b>Inception report</b>	Describe and justify methodology. Outline sub-questions. Propose report structure.	Use Key Actions and Guidance notes to inform the development of sub-questions and data collection tools.
	Collect and analyse data.	
<b>Draft report</b>	Present draft report.	Reference Sphere Standards in the framing of findings.
	Respond to draft findings.	
	Revise findings based on stakeholder feedback.	
<b>Final report</b>	Present final report: observations, findings and recommendations.	Use Sphere Standards to frame and ground the recommendations, where appropriate.
<b>Publication</b>	Independent report and agency response published together.	

## Where monitoring and evaluation overlap

The words **monitoring** and **evaluation** are used together so often that it can be hard to remember that they are quite separate processes.

Monitoring is usually continuous – or at least periodic and frequent – and internal and is largely concerned with activities and their immediate results as it is with systems and processes. Evaluation tends to be an episodic – and often external – assessment of performance and can look at the whole of the results chain from inputs to sustainability.

Having said that, there are areas in which monitoring and evaluation overlap, in particular during programme design and implementation. The set targets and monitored progress will later be evaluated (see the chapter on Evaluation).

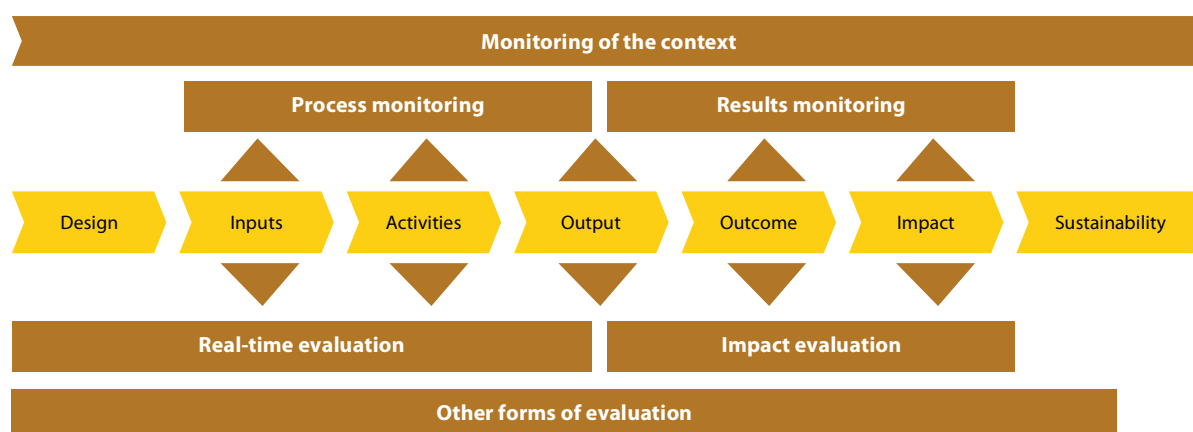
Both monitoring and evaluation use **indicators** as essential tools to measure change. It is extremely helpful if:

- Some indicators can be used all the way through the programme cycle in monitoring and in evaluation: evaluation often builds on monitoring and uses monitoring data and reports as source material
- Those indicators are internationally accepted and standardised
- Different actors working within the same operation can agree on adopting common indicators.

So even though evaluation is often an external process happening towards the end of an operation, it needs to be planned for from the beginning of the response process.

The processes of monitoring and evaluation are much easier if the foundations have been laid during the needs assessment phase and during programme design. Evaluation processes can be facilitated if they can be built on a solid monitoring basis and evaluations should be built into project design from the beginning so as to contribute effectively to learning and accountability.

**Figure 3: Monitoring and evaluation through the results chain**



## The MEAL approach

Humanitarian agencies are increasingly thinking more holistically about this part of their work, and many now bring four linked disciplines together, combining accountability and learning with monitoring and evaluation and creating a unit or department often called MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning).

The Sphere Handbook, while not mentioning this approach explicitly, is entirely consistent with it: Core Standard 5 covers performance, transparency and learning.

# What can Sphere contribute to monitoring and evaluation?

In addition to the guidance that relates specifically to technical sectors, Sphere provides valuable benchmarks for the whole programme cycle, and these can be especially valuable in situations where the agency does not have internal targets or standard operating procedures.

Sphere also adds value through its emphasis on a rights-based and participatory approach. As an articulation of humanitarian principles in practice and as part of efforts to improve quality and accountability, the approach described in the Handbook should be incorporated as much as possible throughout the humanitarian programme cycle.

Sphere provides two quite distinct types of guidance on monitoring and evaluating humanitarian action:

- Internal aspects and processes, such as programming processes, systems, capacities and performance
- External aspects, such as the degree to which technical humanitarian standards are met.

**Figure 4: Two applications of the Sphere Handbook to monitoring and evaluation processes**



## Sphere and monitoring

The Sphere Handbook can be used to support monitoring throughout the project cycle: needs assessment, response option analysis, design, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is valuable guidance throughout the Handbook that relates to monitoring, and all parts of the Handbook have monitoring activities associated with them.

This guidance does not set out an 'approved list' of indicators for each technical sector although work is underway within the global clusters to achieve this aim.<sup>8</sup> Rather, it aims to support the effective use of the Sphere Handbook in selecting indicators and designing monitoring systems for humanitarian response generally. Likewise, agencies often have their own tools and formats for monitoring, and therefore this document does not attempt to suggest a standardised version – but some guidance for tracking indicators and targets is included in Appendix 3: The indicator tracking table.

<sup>8</sup> See: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir)

## Sphere and evaluation

Besides general and agency-specific guidance to 'frame' a humanitarian evaluation, the Sphere Handbook is a key resource, especially for projects that seek to demonstrate an adherence to the Sphere Minimum Standards. The Handbook provides specific guidance on evaluation and many benchmarks against which evaluation can take place.

The adaptability of the Sphere indicators means that they are useful regardless of the given evaluation methodology. Sphere for Evaluation is not a guide on how to carry out an evaluation, but on how to incorporate the Sphere standards and indicators into the methodology used by your organisation.

Accordingly, this guidance does not make any recommendation about specific evaluation methodology.

Using indicators that are based on Sphere brings advantages: the minimum standards are globally agreed and using standardised indicators improves comparability between projects.

## Placing Sphere in context

Social norms and people's expectations vary from one location to another and each emergency has unique constraints, consequences and opportunities. Therefore, understanding the context of any emergency intervention is critical to its success. The context itself must be monitored and programme assumptions that relate to the context should be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Sphere minimum standards are designed to apply in any environment. The key indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, also apply in all situations, but may need to be considered in light of the local context.

Depending on the situation, agencies may choose to set a **target value** for a specific quantitative indicator **above** or **below** the level suggested by Sphere.

Key indicators may be adapted to the context when:<sup>9</sup>

- The organisation has a sound understanding of the context before and after a disaster and has analysed the impact of the context on capacities and vulnerabilities of the affected population.
- Adapting the Sphere indicator would help bring the affected community back to their normal way of living and promote life with dignity.
- Adapting the indicator would not cause harm to the beneficiaries

Such adaptation would normally have been agreed prior to the disaster on the basis of the context and norms of the area. The adapted target is **informed by** the Sphere minimum standard, but has been revised on the basis of the context – considering the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental background.

Adapting indicators must be done with consideration and care, taking the Key Actions and Guidance notes into account and maintaining the spirit of the minimum standard. The indicators were developed to mark the moment in which an affected population can survive in stable and dignified conditions. Where an agency or cluster sets an adapted target in this way, this should be clearly explained and justified. Efforts must be made to work towards meeting the indicators and to mitigate any negative effects on the affected population.

See also: *Sphere Handbook: 'What is Sphere'*, p9

**Collecting accurate baseline and reference information** is a critical part of the needs assessment process. Without such information, it is extremely difficult to monitor results. See *Sphere for Assessments* for more information on selecting indicators and collecting baseline information.

When tracking the changes in an indicator, you can compare it to the 'normal' value for the indicator (known as the reference value) and you can also compare it to the situation immediately after the disaster – and before the intervention: the baseline value. Sometimes the reference value varies through the seasons and a good understanding of this kind of variation is an important part of the context analysis (see also Appendix 2: Seasonality, baselines and reference values for seasonal indicators).

Two specific contexts are worth highlighting (See *Sphere Handbook: 'What is Sphere'*, p9):

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from the video: *Humanitarian Standards in Context – Training Notes*, The Sphere Project, 2013

- **When the host population's living conditions are below the Sphere minimum standards**, meeting the standards would provide the displaced with a higher level than the host community and this could cause tension between the two groups. In this situation, the agency may choose to adapt the target value to a slightly lower level, in accordance with the protection principles, to reduce this risk. It may also be appropriate to provide some support to the host community. Any adaptation of targets should be clearly explained and justified.
- **When the needs far outweigh the resources available** to meet the Sphere indicators, it may be better at the outset to provide everybody with a basic level of assistance rather than fully meeting the indicators for a small proportion of the affected population. At the same time, efforts should be made to advocate, identify new partners, raise additional funds and increase the level of provision accordingly.

We should never avoid making an effort to help, even when resources are inadequate. The risk of 'not meeting the indicators' is far less important than the risk of doing nothing.

### **Contextualised WASH indicators**

One example of adapting WASH indicators is given by the Somalia WASH Cluster. In 2012, the Cluster suggested – and carefully justified – recommended targets that were below the Sphere indicator of 15 litres / person/ day for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, accompanying the Water Supply Standard 1: Access and Water Quantity.

See Wash Cluster Somalia (2012), *Guide to WASH Cluster Strategy and Standards – also known as Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)*.

## Monitoring and evaluation in other humanitarian standards handbooks

Monitoring and evaluation guidance can be found in various handbooks and guidelines. Of those, the four Sphere Companion Standards are of particular relevance here, as they were developed in a Sphere-like manner and structured the same way. They are thus very compatible with the Sphere Handbook and with each other. Thus this guide also has relevance for the sectors covered by those standards and their guidance can be valuable for Sphere.

The four Companion Standards handbooks cover essentially two broad areas: children (protection and education) and livelihoods (livestock management and economic recovery). Some specificities pertaining to each particular handbook are highlighted here.

**Child protection** and **education** are included in the Sphere Handbook as cross-cutting themes and supported by the Sphere Protection Principles.

- The **Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)** provide a structure for agency specific and inter-agency monitoring of the child protection situation and response on an ongoing basis. Situation monitoring is addressed in detail in Standard 6: 'Child Protection Monitoring'. Response monitoring is usually structured around Standards 7-14: 'Standards to Address Child Protection Needs'. Programme monitoring usually takes place at the agency level. All the standards may contribute to development of a programme monitoring framework. [CPWG.net/minimum-standards](http://CPWG.net/minimum-standards)
- The **INEE Minimum Standards for Education (INEE MS)** share global standards on monitoring and evaluating education programmes and policies that range through all phases of emergency response from prevention to long-term development (see INEE Analysis Standards 3 and 4). Key Actions and Guidance notes address which stakeholders to involve in M&E, education management information systems (EMIS), monitoring learners, evaluating education response activities, capacity-building through evaluation and sharing evaluation findings and lessons learned to inform future work. [INEEsite.org](http://INEEsite.org)

**Livelihoods:** All monitoring and evaluation should take livelihoods issues of the disaster-affected communities into account as much as possible. Sphere's guidance on livelihoods (essentially in the Food security chapter) is enhanced by guidance found in the MERS and LEGS handbooks. Both help assess key elements of disaster-affected communities' livelihoods, which should be a key component of humanitarian response.

- The **Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS)** provide detailed guidance on monitoring and evaluating livestock-based emergency responses. Linking with the Sphere Core Standards, LEGS Core Standard 6 focuses on monitoring, evaluation and livelihoods impact and emphasises the importance of establishing participatory M&E systems early in the project cycle. Chapter 3 includes references for participatory methodologies. Each technical chapter of LEGS includes an M and E checklist, divided into process and impact indicators. The LEGS Project has also developed a short on-line training tool for monitoring and evaluating livestock-based emergency interventions. [Livestock-Emergency.net](http://Livestock-Emergency.net)
- **Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)** Assessment and Analysis Standards enable and guide users with continuous and ongoing analysis of market dynamics and livelihoods strategies of affected populations for ongoing programme monitoring, evaluation and dissemination of results. They provide guidance for designing household and market mapping, looking at institutions and governance, power dynamics, gender and key market infrastructure. Timing guidelines emphasise the importance of seasonal calendars, labour trends and ongoing assessment updates to respond to rapidly changing environments. [SEEPnetwork.org/MERS](http://SEEPnetwork.org/MERS)



## Overview of key indicators associated with Core Standard 5

***The performance of humanitarian agencies is continually examined and communicated to stakeholders; projects are adapted in response to performance.***

Core Standard 5 applies across all sectors and to all humanitarian response situations. It relates specifically to monitoring, reflection and communication. It has five supporting indicators, which are outlined and explained in the table below.

**Table 2: Key Indicators from Core Standard 5**

Key indicator (Core Standard 5)	Explanation – based on the Guidance notes
Programmes are adapted in response to monitoring and learning information. <i>See below: Adapting the project in response to monitoring – page 27</i>	The primary purpose of monitoring is to maintain and improve the quality of the response. For this to happen effectively, the agency must be monitoring the right things, and it must have a mechanism in place that allows a prompt and appropriate reaction to adverse monitoring findings or new opportunities arising.
Monitoring and evaluation sources include the views of a representative number of people targeted by the response as well as the host community if different. <i>See below: Participatory mechanisms – page 18</i>	Humanitarian action affects different groups and individuals in different ways. Effective monitoring needs to consider the impacts – intentional and unintentional, positive and negative – on the target population as well as on those not directly targeted, including the host population if appropriate. The data should be disaggregated for age and gender as a minimum and may need to be further broken down depending on the targeting criteria, the type of response and the context.
Accurate, updated, non-confidential progress information is shared with the people targeted by the response and relevant local authorities and other humanitarian agencies on a regular basis. <i>See below: Participatory mechanisms – page 18</i>	Agencies should be transparent with their stakeholders in terms of the processes and the outcomes of their action. Openness and communication about monitoring increases accountability to the affected population. Monitoring carried out by the population itself further enhances transparency and the quality and ownership of the information. Clarity about the intended use and users of the data should determine what is collected and how it is presented.
Performance is regularly monitored in relation to all Sphere Core and relevant technical minimum standards (and related global or agency performance standards) and the main results shared with key stakeholders. <i>See below: Monitoring processes and performance – page 20, and Monitoring the results of our interventions – page 24</i>	Agency performance is not confined to measuring the extent of its programme achievements. It covers the agencies' overall function – the progress with respect to aspects such as its relationships with other organisations and adherence to humanitarian good practice, codes and principles and efficiency of its management systems.
Agencies consistently conduct an objective evaluation or learning review of a major humanitarian response in accordance with recognised standards of evaluation practice. <i>See below: Evaluation, page 31 and Reflection and learning – page 34</i>	Programme evaluations are typically carried out at the end of a response, while 'real-time' evaluations and learning reviews may be carried out at any time. Evaluation and learning processes lead to changes in policy and practice. Evaluations are carried out by independent staff external to the project implementation team; they may be internal or external to the agency.

Core Standard 5 has eight Key Actions which provide the structure for the sections that follow.

# Participatory mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation

***Core Standard 5, Key Action 1: Establish systematic but simple, timely and participatory mechanisms to monitor progress towards all relevant Sphere standards and the programme's stated principles, outputs and activities.***

This Key Action describes the achievement of Sphere standards as an appropriate target for humanitarian interventions, and requires tools and procedures to be used in a systematic manner to monitor the progress towards this goal. The tools should be simple, which means that the data should be easy to collect and relevant and the monitoring process cost-effective. There is no need to monitor everything if a small number of critical indicators tell you what you need to know.

## Participatory approaches to monitoring (see also Core Standard 1)

Participatory approaches to monitoring involve a cross-section of the affected population as well as other stakeholders. The participants should include men and women of all ages as well as boys and girls. This can be done in a wide range of ways. Community representatives can set the indicators and targets, collect the information themselves, take photographs, conduct surveys. They can collect information on what has been done, what has been received and by whom and the changes it has made.

Participatory approaches often provide a broader perspective than top-down external approaches and they can build ownership and empower participants. In particular, participatory approaches will help to identify the contributions and capacities that affected populations bring to their own recovery. Some work may need to be done to align the indicators identified through participatory approaches with Sphere indicators.

## Participation and evaluation

Participation is one of the touchstones of Sphere and participatory practices can be successfully applied to evaluation. Many evaluations seek the perspectives of programme beneficiaries and some actively consider the experiences of non-beneficiaries too. But there is much more to participatory evaluation than this: if the participatory approach is adopted early enough in the process, it is possible to **include the population affected by the disaster in the design of the evaluation itself**, for example by ensuring that their perspectives contribute to setting the key questions addressed and the ways in which information is collected and triangulated.

Participatory evaluation is a specialised field in itself with its own literature. It is not a very common practice within evaluations of humanitarian action. But participatory approaches can be adopted relatively easily and add a valuable perspective and foundation to both evaluation process and findings.<sup>10</sup>

Several of the Key Actions within CS1 specifically address issues of two-way communication with the affected population, which is a key element contributing to accountability.

---

<sup>10</sup> For example, see the following ALNAP method note on participatory evaluation: [www.alnap.org/resource/19163](http://www.alnap.org/resource/19163)

There is an overlap here between impact monitoring and evaluation. The third Guidance note under Core Standard 5 states:

*The affected people are the best judges of changes in their lives; hence outcome and impact assessment must include people's feedback, open-ended listening and other participatory qualitative approaches, as well as quantitative approaches.*

It is also possible to evaluate the quality of participatory processes within the project itself, as described within Core Standard 1. These could be explored through evaluation questions or sub-questions such as:

- ➔ In what ways were the affected population involved in the various phases of the response: in needs assessment, in setting priorities, in selecting appropriate response mechanisms, in targeting, in monitoring processes and results?
- ➔ Did effective and safe feedback mechanisms exist for the affected population? Did the population use them and if not, why not? What changes were made to the programme as a result of such feedback?

# Monitoring and evaluating processes and performance

## ***Core Standard 5, Key Action 2: Establish basic mechanisms for monitoring the agency's overall performance with respect to its management and quality control systems.***

Process monitoring tells us how well (how effectively, how quickly, how efficiently) we are doing things. It says nothing about whether those are the right things to be doing or the effects those activities have on people.

Process monitoring includes all of the actions, systems and processes the agency uses to deliver its programme ranging, among others, from Human Resources, communications, accountability processes, data collection and logistics to distribution and financial systems (see also Core Standard 5 Guidance note 2). The systems an organisation uses will impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the outputs, and monitoring these processes provides an opportunity to identify problems and opportunities early and respond to them.

This approach is often applied to individual agencies or responses, but can also operate at an inter-agency level. For example, work has been undertaken to look at and improve the efficiency of the cluster process.<sup>11</sup>

Process indicators can be qualitative or quantitative.

***Table 3: Qualitative and quantitative process indicators within Sphere***

	Example of a qualitative process indicator	Example of a quantitative process indicator
<b>HB page</b>	305-306	188-189
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Health systems standard 5: Health information management</b> The design and delivery of health services are guided by the collection, analysis, interpretation and utilisation of relevant public health data.	<b>Food security – food transfers standard 4: Supply chain management (SCM)</b> Commodities and associated costs are well managed using impartial, transparent and responsive systems.
<b>Key Indicator</b>	<b>Key indicator 3</b> The lead agency produces a regular overall health information report, including analysis and interpretation of epidemiological data as well as a report on the coverage and utilisation of the health services.	<b>Key indicator 4 (in part)</b> SCM reporting shows the number and proportion of SCM staff trained.
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	The existence of a report meeting the specifications described and shared appropriately with stakeholders.	Number of SCM staff at each level trained in the appropriate parts of the SCM system.  Total number of SCM staff at each level.

<sup>11</sup> See IASC (2012), *Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level*

## Distributions and the provision of services

If a programme has a component of distribution, this will require a range of processes ranging from specification and tendering to contracting, taking delivery, quality control, storage and distribution. Each of these stages involves numerous additional processes. All of them involve the collection of management information that serves a range of purposes from supply chain management to audit.

Once the distribution is completed, it is also important to check that the goods actually reached the household safely and completely, and that they are being used as intended and not, for example, resold. This requires monitoring at the point of distribution and at the household level.

In addition to physical commodities, humanitarian agencies also provide other services such as health care, psychosocial support, hygiene promotion and other information. Such activities also need to be monitored at the point of delivery, and should also be monitored at the community or household level to explore disaggregated levels of access to services, levels of take-up and the effects of such service provision on different members of the community and the household.

Each of the **technical chapters of the Sphere Handbook** makes references to distributions, and they highlight the wide range of factors that need to be considered when planning distributions. Many of these considerations will also need to be monitored.

## Accountability processes (see also Core Standard1)

In this context, accountability is taken to mean accountability **to those affected by a disaster**. This is a core approach within the Sphere Standards and includes the provision of project-related information to the affected population and ensuring that they have a safe and effective mechanism to provide project managers with feedback on the project or complain about it.

Accountability processes should be monitored. The indicators will vary depending on the mechanisms being used. For example, if a ‘suggestions box’ is provided at the project site, the numbers and types of suggestions – including complaints – can be logged as well as the agency’s responses to them. This information can then be shared with the community along with other project communication.

**Table 4: Example of an accountability indicator within Sphere**

<b>HB page</b>	254-256
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Shelter and settlement standard 2: Settlement planning</b> The planning of return, host or temporary communal settlements enables the safe and secure use of accommodation and essential services by the affected population.
<b>Key Indicator</b>	<b>Key indicator 1</b> Through agreed planning processes, all shelter-assisted populations are consulted on and agree to the location of their shelter or covered area and access to essential services.
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	Number and type of consultation processes and the proportion of the affected population able to access such consultations.

The Core Humanitarian Standard refers to accountability. See also the website of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP) for detailed guidance on compliance issues.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The Core Humanitarian Standard refers to both accountability and compliance issues. See [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org) and [www.hapinternational.org](http://www.hapinternational.org)

**Communicating project achievements** is another important aspect of accountability. This can be done through reports to community representatives, through the media, through community meetings and through non-verbal tools which are locally and culturally appropriate such as ‘thermometer’ or ‘dashboard’ signboards showing levels of success against key targets.

### **Using SMS to enhance beneficiary accountability: Danish Refugee Council in Somalia**

The Danish Refugee Council has introduced a powerful tool for beneficiary feedback in Somalia. For the cost of a local SMS message, anybody can send a message relating to DRC’s humanitarian aid – praise or complaint. The messages are translated into English and placed – uncensored – on a public webpage, with findings also shared by Twitter, Facebook and on a blog. The names and numbers of those submitting the feedback are kept strictly confidential.

This allows a safe mechanism for people to complain about services and the opportunity to deal with problems as they arise. The process is two-way, with a reply being sent to the beneficiary once the complaint has been investigated.

See DRC (2012) *SMS Highlights*

## **Complaints mechanisms**

A key aspect of accountability is a complaints mechanism, which must be safe, able to identify priority issues and act swiftly upon them. The provision of such mechanisms is included within the Key Actions associated with Core Standard 1. Guidance note 6 as well as Commitment 5 of the Core Humanitarian Standard address complaints directly.<sup>13</sup>

An evaluation should look at the systems in place for complaints and feedback handling as well as at the changes to the programme that have come about as a result of it. Evaluation questions could ask:

- ➔ Was an effective, safe and responsive system in place to handle complaints from the affected population (and not just programme beneficiaries)?
- ➔ What changes came about as a result of the complaints and feedback received?

## **Human Resources and staff issues**

Core Standard 6 considers aid worker performance.<sup>14</sup> It states:

*Humanitarian agencies provide appropriate management, supervisory and psychosocial support, enabling aid workers to have the knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes to plan and implement an effective humanitarian response with humanity and respect.*

These are management responsibilities that can be monitored, for example with the following indicators:

<sup>13</sup> [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org)

<sup>14</sup> See in particular People In Aid: [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org) and [www.corehumanitarianstandard.org](http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org)

**Table 5: Key indicators associated with Core Standard 6: Aid worker performance**

Key indicator	Implied metrics – to be measured
Staff and volunteers' performance reviews indicate adequate competency levels in relation to their knowledge, skills, behaviour attitudes and the responsibilities described in their job descriptions.	Frequency of (and triggers for) performance reviews. Findings of performance reviews.
Aid workers who breach codes of conduct prohibiting corrupt and abusive behaviour are formally disciplined.	Numbers and records of breaches and responses.
The principles, or similar, of the <i>People In Aid Code of Good Practice</i> <sup>15</sup> are reflected in the agency's policy and practice.	Existence of appropriate and compliant policy documents. No evidence of non-compliance.
The incidence of aid workers' illness, injury and stress-related health issues remains stable or decreases over the course of the disaster response.	Frequency of stress-related illness amongst staff, possibly disaggregated by location and role.

This is also important territory for evaluations to consider. Indeed, whole evaluations can focus simply on this area. More common, though, are evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ Were the staff (and volunteers) sufficient in number, and properly trained and supported to deliver the planned response?

<sup>15</sup> [www.peopleinaid.org/code/](http://www.peopleinaid.org/code/)

# Monitoring the results of our interventions

## **Core Standard 5, Key Action 3: Monitor the outcomes and, where possible, the early impact of a humanitarian response on the affected and wider populations.**

In order to monitor the results of a project:

- You need to measure a **change** in an indicator, and
- It must be possible to **attribute** this change to the project activities, in part or in full.

This implies that you must know the initial value of the indicator and that the programme logic is sufficiently robust for you to be confident that the change observed has been caused, to some degree, by the programme intervention. It also requires that you can have confidence in the quality of the data you have collected.

Note that it may not be appropriate to try to measure the **impact** of an intervention in the early stages of a humanitarian response, especially in sudden-onset emergencies. In other situations, it may be appropriate. Efforts should always be made to measure **outcomes**, however.

One important aspect of monitoring results is to monitor the levels of satisfaction amongst the target population, partner organisations and other stakeholders. This provides important additional perspectives rather than seeing everything from the viewpoint of the project implementers. This aspect can be linked with other accountability processes.

The qualitative Sphere minimum standards often include some quantitative guidance or targets within the Guidance notes or within the appendices to each Handbook chapter. Indicators of results can be expressed in qualitative or quantitative terms.

**Table 6: Qualitative and quantitative results indicators within Sphere**

	Example of a qualitative indicator of results	Example of a quantitative indicator of results
<b>HB page</b>	103	165
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Water supply standard 3: Water facilities</b> People have adequate facilities to collect, store and use sufficient quantities of water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene and to ensure that drinking water remains safe until it is consumed.	<b>Management of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies standard 1: Moderate acute malnutrition</b> Moderate acute malnutrition is addressed.
<b>Key indicator</b>	Water collection and storage containers have narrow necks and/or covers for buckets or other safe means of storage for safe drawing and handling and are demonstrably used (see Guidance note 1).	More than 90 per cent of the target population is within less than one day's return walk (including time for treatment) of the programme site for dry ration supplementary feeding programmes and no more than one hour's walk for on-site supplementary feeding programmes (see Guidance note 2).
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	Type and design of water containers at the household level. Method of water storage. Use of water containers and other storage systems.	Distance from target population's homes to feeding centres. Proportion of target population below target distance.



**Table 7: Quantitative targets described in Sphere Guidance notes**

<b>HB page</b>	180 – 181
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Food Security – Food Transfers standard 1: general nutrition requirements</b> Ensure that the nutritional needs of the disaster-affected population, including those most at risk, are met.
<b>Key indicator</b>	There is adequate access to a range of foods including a staple (cereal or tuber), pulses (or animal products) and fat sources that together meet nutritional requirements (see Guidance notes 2–3, 5).
<b>Guidance note 2 (part)</b>	<b>Nutritional requirements and ration planning:</b> The following estimates for a population’s minimum requirements should be used for planning general rations, with the figures adjusted for each population as described in Appendix 6: Nutrition requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2100 kcals/person/day</li> <li>• 10% of total energy provided by protein</li> <li>• 17% of total energy provided by fat</li> <li>• Adequate micronutrient intake.</li> </ul>

## Unintended effects

The Humanitarian Charter is explicit that humanitarian actions may have complex consequences and that some of these will be unintended, adverse, or both. Clause 9 of the Charter states:

*We are aware that attempts to provide humanitarian assistance may sometimes have unintended adverse effects. In collaboration with affected communities and authorities, we aim to minimise any negative effects of humanitarian action on the local community or on the environment.*

Similarly, Protection Principle 1 is about **avoiding exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions**.

Unintended results can be positive or negative and affect either beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries. Monitoring systems need to consider these possibilities and management systems need to be willing to recognise and respond to them.

### Unintended results

An international medical NGO, as part of a Roll Back Malaria initiative, created a programme to reduce the incidence of malaria for internally displaced persons in Guinea. Having conducted a needs assessment, the team prioritised areas most affected by malaria and designed a project that involved distribution of mosquito nets accompanied by training on the causes of malaria and correct usage of the nets. The monitoring team, by visiting recipient households, discovered that several families had used their mosquito nets to make wedding veils and dresses. Even though the family members knew the causes of malaria and the correct usage of bed nets, they prioritised using the material as clothing for special occasions.

In Gaza, the use of cash grants as an alternative to food distributions was reported – by male and female beneficiaries alike – to have reduced levels of tension in the household and to have contributed to a reduction in domestic violence. This was not a planned outcome of the programme and was only discovered in focus groups during the evaluation.

## Agency contributions and totals – also after distribution

The Sphere Minimum standards relate to the situation of the affected population, not to the contribution made by the agency alone. Therefore, it is important to monitor the actual availability of distributed food and commodities at the household level after the distributions. Recording only the amount provided by the agency (even if the agency is providing 100%) makes a number of potentially inaccurate assumptions, including:

- That the food provided is being consumed by the community members it was intended for, and
- That the community is not contributing anything to its own food consumption.

For example, if a community has sufficient resources to meet 30% of its food needs according to the minimum standards and the humanitarian community provides the remaining 70%, then the minimum standard is likely to be met. The appropriate contribution is for the humanitarian agency to **bridge the gap** between the community's own resources and the minimum standard. The Sphere video *Sphere in Context: Bringing Humanitarian Standards to Life* shows how parents contribute to a school feeding programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Similarly, if 40% of an affected population have their needs for non-food items met by one agency and 60% by another agency, the minimum standards will be achieved.

In monitoring and evaluation processes, questions around the ultimate use of distributed assets and rations should be asked as a regular practice for all distributions in order to understand what happened with the goods and if they did actually reach the intended beneficiaries (See for example the Food transfers standard 6 on Food use).

### Monitoring the use of commodities / rations after distribution

In Zimbabwe during the 2008 cholera outbreak, chlorine tablets were distributed to people for treating water, in severely affected areas such as the Budiriro high-density suburb in Harare. However, it was discovered through post-distribution monitoring that people were not using the tablets, citing the change it brought to the taste and smell of the water, and that other people in the area were collecting them from beneficiaries and using them for washing clothes.

# Adapting the project in response to monitoring

**Core Standard 5, Key Action 4: Establish systematic mechanisms for adapting programme strategies in response to monitoring data, changing needs and an evolving context.**

## Responding to monitoring data

Monitoring data is management information – that is, timely and well-organised information that can be used to inform management decisions.

Key Action 4 directs agencies to establish systematic mechanisms for adapting programme strategies in response to monitoring data. It is not sufficient to collect information: efforts must be made to understand it and, where appropriate, respond. It is a waste of resources and a missed opportunity to collect data if there are no processes or commitment to act upon it.

The timing of data collection and analysis may be critical in understanding changes caused by the project or by changes in the context and reacting appropriately. For this reason, it is important to consider the frequency with which each indicator is measured. A monitoring plan and an indicator tracking table can make this process easier: see Appendix 3 for further details.

Indicators will often only suggest that a programme is not delivering as expected. They may not explain why not. Further research or analysis might be necessary prior to taking a decision.

In addition to monitoring the progress, the **relevance of the programme** should also be monitored (see Core Standard 5, Guidance note 4). Changes in context can alter the relevance of an intervention. Participatory approaches are probably the best way to monitor changes to a programme's relevance.

### Responding to monitoring data

After the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, a local NGO responded by providing livelihoods support in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Through monitoring, the organisation identified that many male heads of household were lost in the earthquake leaving women in a position to assume financial responsibility for their families for the first time. The monitoring team also observed that women were often left out of assistance and decision-making processes in the traditionally male-dominated society.

The project team responded by creating cash-for-work opportunities for men and women. They took a phased approach that included raising awareness of rights of the whole community and ensuring that all eligible individuals had appropriate training and support to participate. The team monitored the project's progress and the acceptance of the community at every stage to ensure that the goals were reached in a culturally appropriate manner.

See this example in the video '*Sphere in context: Bringing humanitarian standards to life*'

## Monitoring context

The logic that underpins a programme intervention is context-specific. It is important to monitor the context and be aware that any changes in context may have implications on the programme activities.

- **Security and risks:** A well-designed programme is based on a solid understanding of the context. It includes a robust risk analysis and assumptions that have been made accordingly. This risk analysis provides a good starting point for ongoing monitoring of the context.
- **Coping:** People affected by a disaster find ways to cope with the changed situation. Some coping strategies have negative consequences. Monitoring people's coping strategies can provide valuable information about changes to context as well as the outcomes of your intervention.<sup>16</sup>
- **Markets:** All humanitarian activities providing cash, goods or services will have an impact on local market systems. While these impacts will normally be positive for the target group of the intervention, they may have less positive impacts for other actors such as food producers or traders. The impact of humanitarian interventions on market systems and prices should be monitored and agencies must be willing to change approaches in order to minimise these negative impacts.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 8: Sphere Key indicators tracking the context of an intervention**

HB page	65-66	208-210
<b>Core Standard / Minimum standard</b>	<b>Core Standard 4: Design and response</b> The humanitarian response meets the assessed needs of the disaster-affected population in relation to context, the risks faced and the capacity of the affected people and state to cope and recover.	<b>Food security – livelihoods standard 2: Income and employment</b> Where income generation and employment are feasible livelihood strategies, women and men have equal access to appropriate income-earning opportunities.
<b>Key indicator</b>	Programme designs are revised to reflect changes in the context, risks and people's needs and capacities.	Responses providing employment opportunities are equally available to women and men and do not negatively affect the local market or negatively impact on normal livelihood activities (see Guidance note 7).
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	Critical aspects of context are monitored at an appropriate frequency. Needs, capacities and coping strategies are monitored at an appropriate frequency. Changes in programme design, implementation modality are tracked.	Proportion of men and women accessing income generation opportunities. Changes in commodity prices during intervention period, compared to norms. Impact of intervention on [other] normal livelihood activities.

<sup>16</sup> See Protection Principle 4, p43, and Food Security and Nutrition, Livelihoods standard 3, p211, as well as Appendix 1, pp 214-215.

<sup>17</sup> See *Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) Toolkit for one approach to market mapping during emergencies*: [emma-toolkit.org](http://emma-toolkit.org)

## Changing needs: monitoring cross-cutting themes

Cross-cutting themes in humanitarian action focus on particular areas of concern in disaster response and address individual, group or general vulnerability issues. The Sphere Handbook identifies eight such themes, which fall into two broad groupings: Specific needs or considerations and external factors.

**Specific needs or considerations: Children, Gender, People living with HIV and AIDS, Older people, Persons with disabilities.** Depending on the context and the type of intervention, monitoring data should be disaggregated for these groups. As an absolute minimum, assessment and monitoring data should be sufficiently detailed to allow disaggregation by age and gender, as outlined in Core Standard 3.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 9: Some Sphere key indicators are explicit about recognising differences between groups**

HB page	107	271
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Excreta disposal standard 2: Appropriate and adequate toilet facilities.</b> People have adequate, appropriate and acceptable toilet facilities, sufficiently close to their dwellings to allow rapid, safe and secure access at all times, day and night.	<b>Non-food items standard 2: Clothing and bedding</b> The disaster-affected population has sufficient clothing, blankets and bedding to ensure their personal comfort, dignity, health and well-being.
<b>Key indicator</b>	Toilets are appropriately designed, built and located to meet the following requirements [only one shown]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They can be used safely by all sections of the population, including children, older people, pregnant women and persons with disabilities (see Guidance note 1).</li> </ul>	All women, girls, men and boys have at least two full sets of clothing in the correct size that are appropriate to the culture, season and climate (see Guidance notes 1–5).
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	Appropriate design of toilets. Disaggregated data on use.	Availability and number of sets of appropriate clothing.
<b>Disaggregation required</b>	Age, gender, disability.	Gender and age.

Cross-cutting themes relating to external factors: disaster risk reduction including climate change issues, the environment and psycho-social support. These should be monitored where appropriate to the context or the programme intervention. Such monitoring is sometimes explicitly described in the minimum standards, but this is not always the case:

<sup>18</sup> The degree of disaggregation by age varies with the context and the nature of the indicator. There is no common set of age breakdowns that applies across all sectors and in all situations. For example (see page 341), for specific health indicators, standard values may include: 0-11 months; 1-4 years, 5-14 years; 15-49 years; 50-59 years; 60-69 years; 70-79 years; 80+ years.

**Table 10: Some Sphere key indicators are explicit about cross-cutting themes**

HB page	265	325
<b>Minimum standard</b>	<b>Shelter and settlement standard 5: Environmental impact</b> Shelter and settlement solutions and the material sourcing and construction techniques used minimise adverse impact on the local natural environment.	<b>Essential health services – sexual and reproductive health standard 1: Reproductive health</b> People have access to the priority reproductive health services of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) at the onset of an emergency and comprehensive RH as the situation stabilises.
<b>Key indicator</b>	The construction processes and sourcing of materials for all shelter solutions demonstrate that adverse impact on the local natural environment has been minimised and/or mitigated (see Guidance note 4).	All health facilities have trained staff, sufficient supplies and equipment for clinical management of rape survivor services based on national or WHO protocols.
<b>Implied metrics – to be measured</b>	Environmental assessment has been carried out. Sources of construction materials. Erosion mitigation measures.	Number and distribution of trained staff. Availability of supplies and equipment.

# Evaluation

**Core Standard 5, Key Action 6: Carry out a final evaluation or other form of objective learning review of the programme, with reference to its stated objectives, principles and agreed minimum standards.**

Ways to use Sphere for process and performance evaluation were presented in an earlier section. Here, we will reiterate the importance of considering evaluation as part of the entire programme cycle.

## Evaluating needs assessments<sup>19</sup>

The Sphere Handbook sets out minimum standards for needs assessment, both in general terms and for technical sectors. If these standards are met and the needs assessment is properly documented, then the task of evaluating the project becomes much easier.

The needs assessment itself is a valid target for evaluation. Core Standard 3, for example, covers the following areas, all of which could be appropriate for exploration through evaluation processes:

- Understanding the context of the disaster and the humanitarian actions
- Effective use of secondary data
- Disaggregation of data collection
- Representative samples and assessments
- Assessing capacity and security issues as well as needs
- Detailed and contextualised baseline
- Coordination and information-sharing

The quality of needs assessment could be studied through evaluation questions such as:

➔ To what degree did the needs assessment accurately reflect the situation on the ground and how was it used to influence decision-making in the early phases of the response?

Needs assessment is the focus of another guide in the Sphere Unpacked series, *Sphere for Assessments*.

## The link between programming and evaluation

Targets will be set during the design phase that will later be used as a benchmark during evaluation: did the project achieve what it intended? If not, why not? Indicators will be identified and progress monitored over time – and this data provides raw material for the evaluation processes.

The Sphere standards describe good practice in setting programme activities and targets and in the design of the monitoring framework. This means that two separate groups of questions, both derived from Sphere, can be used in evaluation processes:

- **Did the designed activities themselves meet the Sphere technical minimum standards?** Evaluation questions might focus on the qualitative standards or on the quantitative measures found in some of the indicators and Guidance notes.

<sup>19</sup> See also *Sphere for Assessments*, [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

- **Were Sphere Core Standards met during the processes of analysing potential response options, design of activities and project delivery?** The evaluation can also consider the internal logic of the response and provide commentary on the quality of the logic model. To evaluate these areas properly, it is essential that good documentation is kept about decision-making throughout the project design phase.

These areas could be studied through evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ What factors were considered in the process of deciding the most appropriate response? How were the various factors weighted? Which options were discarded and why? What can be learned from the quality of the response to influence this decision-making process in the future?
- ➔ Was the risk analysis adequate for the context and the programme? Were the actions put in place to mitigate risk sufficient?

Finally, an evaluation can look at the way in which the project used the monitoring data and how it reacted to unexpected results and events. This relates to Core Standard 5.

## Applying Sphere retrospectively

Is it acceptable to evaluate a programme against the Sphere Standards if they were not explicitly referenced in the programme design?

If the agency has made a general commitment to observe or work towards Sphere Standards, then it is appropriate to use them in evaluation. This commitment might be in policy documents, in agency publications or on its website or in an agreement with a donor.

However, if no such commitment exists, then evaluators can work with the agency to find an appropriate benchmark to use in the evaluation process. Sphere Minimum Standards and the companion standards all provide such a benchmark as they are widely accepted within the humanitarian domain and do not 'belong' to any agency, donor or sector.

If Sphere is used retrospectively in an evaluation, then this should be explicitly clear in the evaluation report.



## Sphere and the DAC criteria

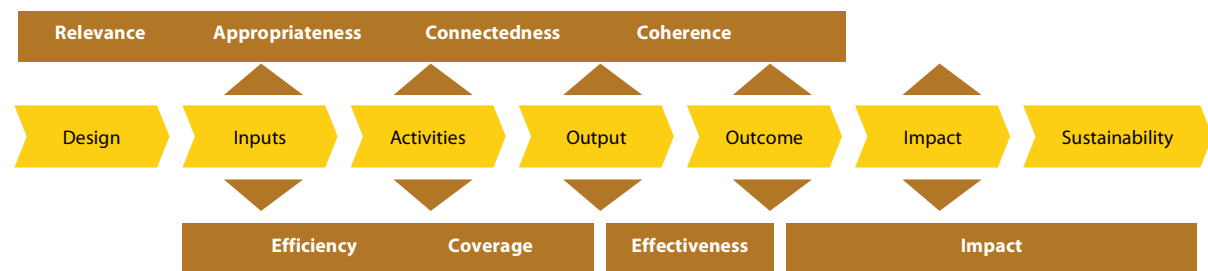
While it is quite possible to design an evaluation process around the Sphere Core Standards, it is more common to use the set of seven criteria generated by the OECD and DAC, themselves referenced in Core Standard 5. Appendix 4 looks at six of these criteria (the criterion of Coherence applies largely to the area of policy) and makes linkages between them and the Sphere Standards.

### The DAC criteria and their role in evaluation

The DAC criteria are widely used as a framework for humanitarian (and development) evaluations, although not every evaluation uses all of the criteria. Some evaluation processes use only two or three as a result of prioritisation or resource constraints.

The DAC criteria can be seen to apply differently to different aspects of the results chain. The following diagram shows the main areas in which the DAC criteria apply – although it is not intended to be prescriptive.

**Figure 5: Applying the DAC criteria through the results chain**



Although the DAC criteria are commonly used within the evaluation of humanitarian action, they provide a rather different lens than that used by participatory approaches and that implied by the Sphere Handbook. That said, there are also strong overlaps.

The technical chapters of Sphere will find their greatest expression within the DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and impact.

The Core Standards and Protection Principles find expression throughout the DAC criteria.

# Reflection and learning

***Core Standard 5, Key Action 5: Conduct periodic reflection and learning exercises throughout the implementation of the response.***

## Opportunities for reflection and learning

Monitoring and evaluation should include systematic opportunities for reflection on the part of the programme team. In emergency response contexts this may be quite a quick exercise, while in recovery situations it may be possible to allocate more time to this.

Sphere indicators can provide a useful framework for some of these reflection sessions. For example, organisations may use Sphere Core Standards to monitor and/or evaluate their own performance, identifying appropriate key indicators to do so. These could be used in a self-assessment exercise. Or participatory approaches could be used and key informants identified to evaluate the organisation's performance. In each case, the reflection process would lead to an action plan.

Opportunities for reflection and learning should be built into programme design. Time spent in self-assessment and reflection is rarely wasted!

## Reflective practices

Core Standard 5 calls upon humanitarian agencies and practitioners to adopt reflective practices and seek to improve the quality of their responses. The term **reflective practice** describes a range of activities designed to support continuous learning and that can be used in humanitarian activities as a real-time check on the quality and relevance of the response.

While external evaluations are one example of reflective practices, in most cases they take place after the activities are finished and mainly seek to influence future responses.

Other reflective practices exist, however, and humanitarian agencies can and should make an active effort to learn, develop and improve practices even at the height of a humanitarian operation. Core Standard 5 outlines a number of such practices: participatory impact assessments, listening exercises, use of quality assurance tools, audits and internal learning and reflection exercises. Others are implied within Core Standard 1, which explores participation. Core Standard 5, Key Actions 7 and 8 propose to 'participate in joint, inter-agency and other collaborative learning initiatives wherever feasible' and to 'share key monitoring findings and, where appropriate, the findings of evaluation and other key learning processes with the affected population, relevant authorities and coordination groups in a timely manner.

Reflective practices can be evaluated with questions such as:

- ➔ What actions were taken during the assessment, design and response phases to ensure that opportunities were created for reflection and learning?
- ➔ To what degree did beneficiary perspectives influence these activities?
- ➔ Were issues thus identified documented and acted upon?

## Learning from monitoring and evaluation

When does a programme “meet Sphere standards”? Evaluation processes can be seen as providing an opportunity to answer this question and to provide an agency with a stamp of approval that Sphere Standards have been ‘met’.

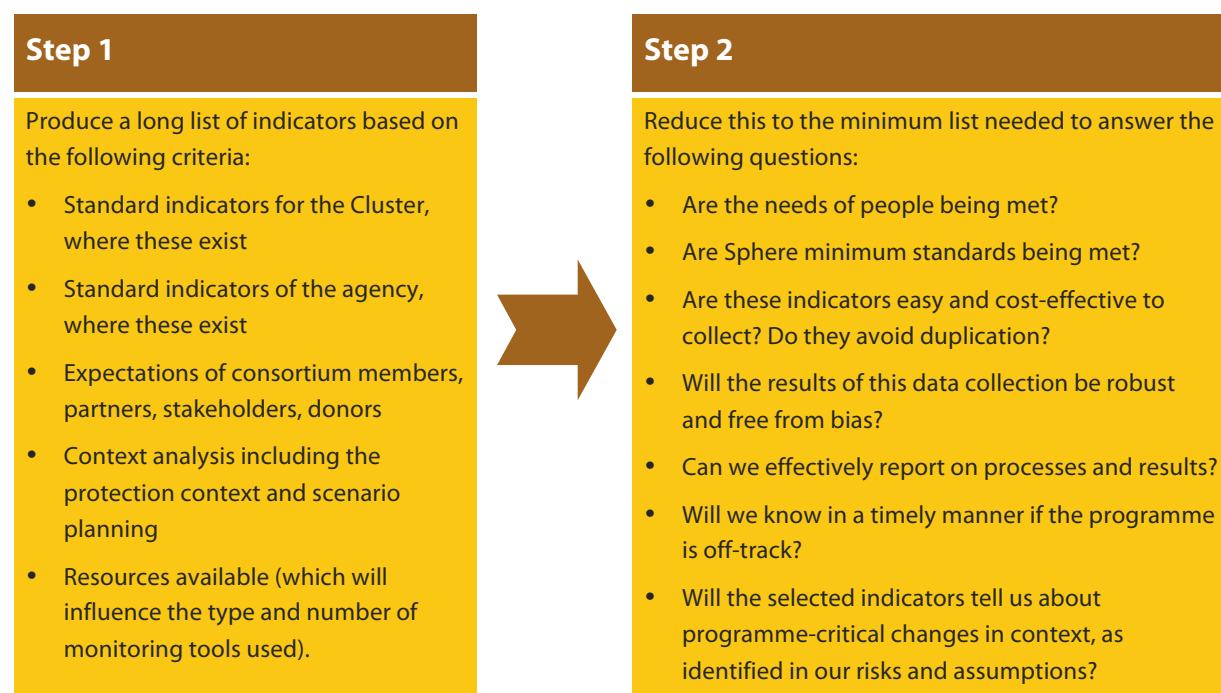
Because each intervention is challenging and different, meeting Sphere standards is not necessarily synonymous with reaching all the related indicators. You will conform to Sphere when you meet adapted indicators or when you work towards Sphere indicators while at the same time explaining the gap (see also page 14: ‘Placing Sphere in Context’).

Sphere provides a yardstick against which to measure performance and outcomes as part of a broader toolkit for performance accountability and learning and as a means to strengthen quality. We must be both thoughtful and ambitious in applying Sphere.

By monitoring, evaluating and learning from the results, you are conforming with Sphere. The key is to understand and act upon response gaps. It is this last point that constitutes active learning.

## Appendix 1: Choosing the right indicators

It is not helpful or cost-effective to try to measure every aspect of programme implementation and impact. Collecting too much data can pull resources away from the project, overload the community and the staff and make it harder to find the critical information. However, selecting the best indicators can be a challenge. The following two-step process may help:



Good practice suggests that in most situations, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators provides the best understanding of the situation.

Participatory approaches may help you to identify the most valuable and informative indicators to use to track the progress of the project. Participatory approaches tend to require higher levels of resourcing and can take more time.

A well-selected indicator can be indicative of the wider situation. It can provide a warning flag that something is going wrong and it can also provide the confidence that things are going to plan.

### Choosing joint indicators

Considerable work has taken place to capture the range of indicators used within each technical sector with an intention to move towards a standard set of indicators wherever possible.<sup>20</sup>

Cluster-wide agreed indicators help to improve quality, coherence and coordination within the sector. In some cases, these indicators are already being linked to Sphere and there is considerable overlap even where the linkages are not made explicit.

Where agencies struggle to agree common indicators in the field, the Sphere Handbook provides a common framework to begin this discussion.

<sup>20</sup> See [www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir)

As a result of effective coordination on issues like common indicators, it is possible to provide cluster-wide reporting or reporting across common approaches such as cash transfers. Such coordination makes demands on resources, so – like monitoring processes themselves – it must be included within programme budgets and justified in terms of the expected outputs.

Agencies can also work together to meet Sphere minimum standards – either by splitting up the affected population and working in different areas or by splitting the intervention up into complementary activities and sharing those out.

## **How to operationalise indicators**

- From what sources will the data be collected?
- Who will collect the data?
- When will it be collected and how frequently?
- How will the data be collected and stored?
- Who will analyse the data?
- How will the data be reported?
- How will management decisions be made based on the monitoring report?

*From Sphere training materials*

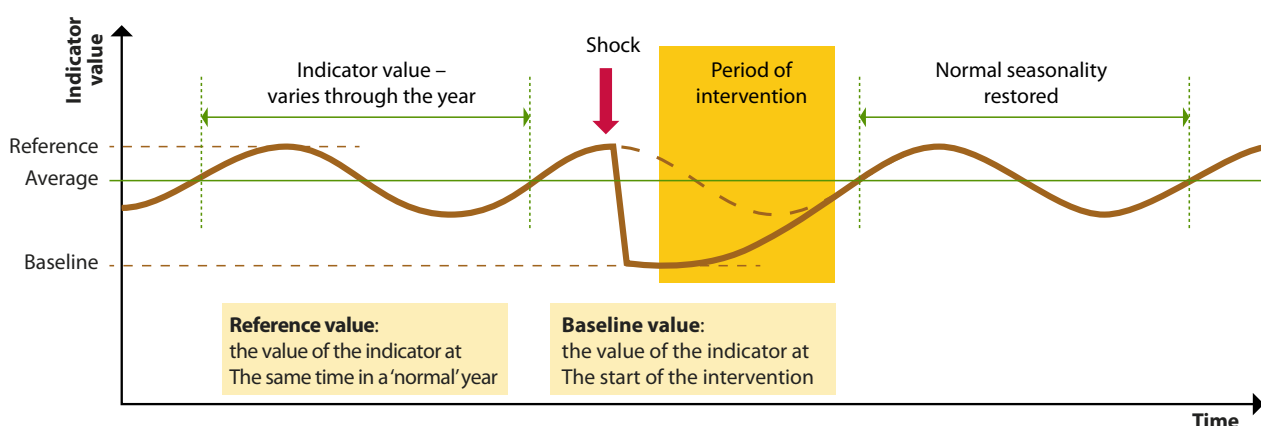
Even well selected indicators may not tell you **why** things are not working out as expected. However, they can provide the trigger needed for further investigation.

## Appendix 2: Seasonality, reference values and baselines

Some indicators are fairly stable over time and others can vary quite dramatically. Sometimes, the variation is seasonal.

For example, the incidence of malaria or diarrhoea can change in rainy and dry seasons. The prices of foodstuffs and crops are often highest just before the harvest time. If you plan to measure indicators like these in an emergency response situation, it is important to consider the normal seasonal variation.

**Figure 6: Reference and baseline values of an indicator that changes with the seasons**



In the simplified example above, the value of an indicator varies in a regular manner every year. In response to an external shock, it drops to a new low. This is the baseline value, and it will be measured during the needs assessment process. Improvements as a result of humanitarian intervention can be measured against this baseline. In this case, the intervention was successful and the indicator returns to its normal pattern after a year.

### Examples from the Sphere Handbook

- p112: Seasonality of disease vector numbers
- p145-6: Seasonality of food supplies, implications for under-nutrition
- p152: Participatory tools, seasonal calendars
- p201-6: Seasonality in market systems
- p256: Seasonality in access and security of sites for settlement

## Appendix 3: The indicator tracking table

The indicator tracking table provides a simple but thorough means to track the changes in the values of important indicators through the life of the programme.

The programme will set performance targets which may take the form of qualitative statements (like the Sphere minimum standards), quantitative targets or a combination of these. Following and interpreting changes in these indicators over time can be a challenge. Using a tracking table can provide structure to the task, make monitoring and reporting more transparent and support the process of making decisions on the basis of monitoring data.

For any one indicator, the following information may be collected or calculated:

- The reference (or normal) value of the indicator (and a source) – a note on the range of the indicator may be appropriate if it varies seasonally
- The baseline value (after the shock and before the intervention) with a date
- The target value for the end of the intervention (with a reference to the Sphere minimum standards where appropriate)
- The target value for the end of each period (daily, weekly, quarterly, monthly) for the duration of the intervention
- The actual value of the indicator at the end of each period (or the number achieved during that period)
- The actual value as a percentage of the target value for that period

Wherever the indicator is a number of people, the values should be disaggregated for age and gender as a minimum.

The indicators can be clustered within the table to reflect the tools by which the data is collected, the components of the programme or to separate context, process and results monitoring.

It is worth investing some time in getting the format right at the start of the programme. This makes subsequent recording, analysis, reporting and decision-making much easier.

Indicator tracking tables will vary between agencies, contexts and sectors. They are usually created in a spreadsheet and can contain many columns, especially where disaggregated data is appropriate. An example is provided below.

Indicator	Reference value	Source	Baseline value	Date	Target value	Sphere Standard

Then each indicator can be tracked over time using a structure similar to this:

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	
Target value:	8	9	10	10	10	
Actual value:	7	8	9	10	10	
Actual as % of target:	87%	89%	90%	100%	100%	

## Appendix 4: Sphere and the DAC Criteria

### DAC Criterion: Relevance/appropriateness

*“Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). Appropriateness is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly.”<sup>21</sup>*

#### How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook

##### Core Standard 1

Core Standard 1 is explicitly concerned with ensuring the appropriateness of humanitarian response from the perspective of the affected population. This could be translated into evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ To what degree did the activities undertaken meet the needs and expectations of the affected population? To what degree were community aspirations actually canvassed?
- ➔ To what degree was disaggregated assessment data available and to what degree did such data enable the design of responses?
- ➔ Did project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have access to a safe and impartial complaints mechanism?

##### Technical standards

The technical standards also speak strongly to the subjects of relevance and appropriateness. Here is one example:

- **WASH standard 1** on Wash programme design and implementation states: *WASH needs of the affected population are met and users are involved in the design, management and maintenance of the facilities where appropriate.* The associated Guidance note says (of health promotion activities): *The assessment should look at resources available to the population as well as local knowledge and practices so that promotional activities are effective, relevant and practical.*

In terms of an evaluation process, this could translate into general or specific evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ To what degree were Sphere technical standards applied during the design phase to ensure the relevance of the response to the affected population? To what degree was this population consulted?
- ➔ To what degree were the capacity, resources and cultural practices of the affected population taken into account in the design of health promotion activities?

<sup>21</sup> This description and the others that follow are drawn from Beck (2006), *Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria*, ALNAP, London, UK).



## Core Standard 4

Core Standard 4 includes a Key Indicator stating that “Programme designs are revised to reflect changes in the context, risks and people’s needs and capacities.” This is further expanded within the Guidance notes:

*Context and vulnerability: Social, political, cultural, economic, conflict and natural environment factors can increase people’s susceptibility to disasters; changes in the context can create newly vulnerable people. Vulnerable people may face a number of factors simultaneously (for example, older people who are members of marginalised ethnic groups). The interplay of personal and contextual factors that heighten risk should be analysed and programmes should be designed to address and mitigate those risks and target the needs of vulnerable people.*

This also links well with the second of the DAC criteria, **connectedness**. Considering the ways in which humanitarian response has responded to contextual changes is an important aspect of evaluation, addressed through evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ What systems were put in place to monitor changes in the external context, the security situation or the nature of vulnerability during the implementation period? What changes were made to activities or methods as the situation changed and evolved?

Clearly, there are links here to the ability of a programme or project to monitor the external changes, context and risk associated with an intervention.

## DAC Criterion: Connectedness

*“Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.”*

### How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook

#### Core Standards 3 and 4

Core Standards 3 and 4 highlight the importance of understanding the context when carrying out needs assessment and planning operations, including ensuring that complex environments and interconnected problems are properly understood. This could be translated into evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ Are the planned activities appropriate, given the history of tension between the various resident groups in the area?
- ➔ Did emergency activities support or undermine the long-term development plan of the local authority?
- ➔ To what degree did immediate response actions support or undermine the potential of medium-term recovery activities?

#### Food security and nutrition assessment standard 1, Guidance note 5

Food security and nutrition assessment standard 1, Guidance note 5 states:

*Food insecurity may be the result of wider macro-economic and structural socio-political factors, including national and international policies, processes or institutions that have an impact on the disaster-affected population's access to nutritionally adequate food and on the degradation of the local environment. This is usually defined as chronic food insecurity, a long-term condition resulting from structural vulnerabilities that may be aggravated by the impact of disaster. Local and regional food security information systems, including famine early warning systems and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, are important mechanisms to analyse information.*

### **Shelter and settlement standard 1: Strategic planning**

This standard highlights the importance of working appropriately with both displaced and resident populations. Guidance note 3 states:

*Hosting by families and communities: Displaced populations who are unable to return to their original homes often prefer to stay with other family members or people with whom they share historical, religious or other ties (see Core Standard 1 on page 55). Assistance for such hosting may include support to expand or adapt an existing host family shelter and facilities to accommodate the displaced household or the provision of an additional separate shelter adjacent to the host family. The resulting increase in population density should be assessed and the demand on social facilities, infrastructure provision and natural resources should be evaluated and mitigated.*

## **DAC Criterion: Coverage**

*"The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are."*

### **How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook**

#### **Protection Principle 2**

Protection Principle 2 requires governments and humanitarian actors to "ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination." The Principle expands this idea by expressing the following expectation:

*People can access humanitarian assistance according to need and without adverse discrimination. Assistance is not withheld from people in need and access for humanitarian agencies is provided as necessary to meet the Sphere standards.*

#### **Protection Principle 4**

Protection Principle 4 requires humanitarian actors to "Assist people to claim the rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse."

#### **Core Standard 4**

Core Standard 4 covers the design and implementation of humanitarian response and it expects that: "The humanitarian response meets the assessed needs of the disaster-affected population in relation to context, the risks faced and the capacity of the affected people and state to cope and recover." One of the Key Actions anticipates that humanitarian actors will:

*Using disaggregated assessment data, analyse the ways in which the disaster has affected different individuals and populations and design the programme to meet their particular needs.*

These standards suggest evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ Did the response target and reach all groups affected by the disaster?
- ➔ What process was used to prioritise needs and responses?

## Technical standards

In many cases, the technical standards echo this expectation. For example, Guidance note 2 of Essential Health Services standard 1 states:

*Access to health services should be based on the principles of equity and impartiality, ensuring equal access according to need without any discrimination. In practice, the location and staffing of health services should be organised to ensure optimal access and coverage. The particular needs of vulnerable people should be addressed when designing health services. Barriers to access may be physical, financial, behavioural and/or cultural as well as communication barriers. Identifying and overcoming such barriers to the access of prioritised health services are essential.*

## DAC Criterion: Efficiency

*“Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output to see whether the most efficient (economically viable) approach has been used.”*

### How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook

#### Core Standard 2

Core Standard 2 (Coordination and Collaboration) outlines how effective coordination improves the efficiency of the combined (multi-agency) response.

#### Core Standard 5

Core Standard 5 considers Performance, Transparency and Learning and states in Guidance note 2: *Agency performance is not confined to measuring the extent of its programme achievements. It covers the agency's overall function – its progress with respect to aspects such as its relationships with other organisations, adherence to humanitarian good practice, codes and principles and the effectiveness and efficiency of its management systems.*

Efficiency is often considered in purely monetary terms, although there are other ways to consider it. Evaluations often seek to explore efficiency through questions such as:

- ➔ Were the financial, human, physical and information resources available utilised efficiently? (e.g. were inputs used in the best way to achieve outcomes and in a cost-effective manner?) If not, why not?
- ➔ Was the assistance provided in a timely manner to meet beneficiary and community needs? Did the integration approach adopted affect the timeliness of delivery? If so, how?
- ➔ Were staffing requirements correctly estimated, and were staff appropriately recruited and deployed?

The ALNAP description of the DAC criteria<sup>22</sup> refers to comparing possible response options, and choosing between them. This process usually uses a number of criteria of which efficiency is just one.

Sphere promotes the same process. For example, the introduction to the section on Food Security (cash and voucher transfers) states:

*The choice of appropriate transfers (food, cash or vouchers) requires a context-specific analysis including cost efficiency, secondary market impacts, the flexibility of the transfer, targeting and risks of insecurity and corruption.*

This translates into evaluation questions such as:

- ➔ What process was put in place to consider the full range of possible options to respond to the needs identified in the needs assessment?
- ➔ What factors were considered in making the selection of the chosen response modality, targeting and scale? Were these factors appropriate and sufficient?

## DAC Criterion: Effectiveness

*“Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criterion of effectiveness is timeliness.”*

### How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook

#### Core Standard 4

Core Standard 4 seeks to: *progressively close the gap between assessed conditions and the Sphere minimum standards, meeting or exceeding Sphere indicators.*

#### Technical standards

The Technical standards are concerned with outlining what these expected results should be. In most cases, these results will have been included within the monitoring framework of the operation and it should be possible to use this to understand the progress towards targets over time.

#### Core Standard 2

Core Standard 2 requires that aid is effectively coordinated. This leads to more general questions such as:

- ➔ To what degree did the action complement, compete with or duplicate the activities of other humanitarian actors?

## DAC Criterion: Impact

*“Impact looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical and environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household).”*

---

<sup>22</sup> ALNAP (2006), *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC Criteria. An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*

At this level it is usually difficult to establish causation and project inputs and activities are usually considered to ‘contribute towards’ the desired impact. The key question asked in impact evaluation is therefore simply “did it work?” This can then be broken down into a range of specific questions. Only two examples from many possible options are provided here:

- ➔ Did the humanitarian action reach all the people it intended to reach?
- ➔ What impact was experienced by the affected population in addition to that planned and anticipated?

This second question relates to the fact that impacts can also be unplanned or negative and that they can affect other groups in addition to the targeted households or community.

### **How this Criterion is reflected in the Sphere Handbook**

#### **Humanitarian Charter, clause 9**

Humanitarian Charter, clause 9 states: *We are aware that attempts to provide humanitarian assistance may sometimes have unintended adverse effects. In collaboration with affected communities and authorities, we aim to minimise any negative effects of humanitarian action on the local community or on the environment.*

#### **Protection Principle 1**

Protection Principle 1 succinctly states: *Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions.*

It may be possible to explore some measure of impact through monitoring data. However, impact is more commonly assessed once the programme is completed, through evaluation processes. Monitoring indicators more usually look at the levels of outputs and outcomes. This implies that evaluations of impact will need to engage directly with the affected population.

The easiest way to demonstrate impact is by comparing the situation before the response with that after the humanitarian action has been completed and trying to understand what has changed and why. To do this for different groups as suggested by the definition requires a disaggregated baseline and this is often not available. In some circumstances, it can be possible to build a retrospective baseline – but this obviously becomes more challenging the more time has passed.

## Appendix 5: Comparison between the Sphere Core Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard

Launched on 12 December 2014, the **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)** describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and quality humanitarian action. The CHS was developed through a 12-month consultation facilitated by HAP International, People In Aid, Groupe URD and the Sphere Project. It draws together key elements of several existing humanitarian standards and commitments including the Red Cross/Red Crescent 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. The Core Humanitarian Standard is a voluntary code which humanitarian organisations may use to align their own internal procedures.

The CHS takes the form of nine commitments and quality criteria, each with associated actions and responsibilities. The nine commitments are:

1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.

*Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant*

2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.

*Humanitarian response is effective and timely*

3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.

*Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects*

4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

*Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback*

5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

*Complaints are welcomed and addressed*

6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.

*Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary*

7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.

*Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.*

8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.

*Staff are supported to do their job effectively and are treated fairly and equitably.*

9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

*Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.*

To facilitate quick location of Sphere Core Standards topics in the CHS, the following table shows for each CHS Commitment where the topics were addressed in the six Core Standards. The darker the shading in a box, the greater the relevance of a Core Standard to that particular CHS Commitment.

**Table 11: Quick Location Guide for the Core Standards in the CHS**

	CS1 People-centred	CS2 Coordination and collaboration	CS3 Assessment	CS4 Design and response	CS5 Performance, transparency, learning	CS6 Aid worker performance	Protection Principles*
CHS 1 – Assessment Appropriate and relevant response							
CHS 2 – Design, implementation Effective and timely response							
CHS 3 – Local capacities Strengthened local capacities and avoidance of negative effects							
CHS 4 – Communication Communication, participation, feedback							
CHS 5 – Complaints mechanisms Complaints welcomed and addressed							
CHS 6 – Coordination Coordinated and complementary response							
CHS 7 – Learning Continuous learning and improvement							
CHS 8 – Staff performance Supported, effective, fairly treated staff							
CHS 9 – Resources Resources responsibly used for intended purposes							

\* Note that the CHS will not replace the Sphere Protection Principles, only the Core Standards; however, it is useful to consider the overlap between the Protection Principles and certain CHS Commitments.

## References, sources and further reading

- Albu (2010), *Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit (EMMA)*. Practical Action Publishing, UK.
- ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action): [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)
- Beck (2006), *Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria*, ALNAP, London, UK.
- Core Humanitarian Standard (2014), *Core Humanitarian Standard*. Geneva, Switzerland.
- Cosgrave and Buchanan Smith (2013), *Evaluating Humanitarian Action, A pilot guide*, ALNAP, London, UK.
- Danish Refugee Council (2012), *SMS Highlights*.
- ECB Project (2007), *The Good Enough Guide: Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies*.
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (2010), *HAP Standard on Accountability and Quality Management*, Geneva, Switzerland.
- IASC Indicator Registry: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir/indicators](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/ir/indicators)
- IASC (2012), *Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level*. Geneva, Switzerland.
- IFRC (2011): *Monitoring and Evaluation Guide*
- INTRAC: [www.intrac.org](http://www.intrac.org)
- Knox Clarke, P., Darcy, J. (2014), *Insufficient evidence? The quality and use of evidence in humanitarian action*. ALNAP, London, UK.
- Managing for Impact Portal (guidance on participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation): [www.managingforimpact.org](http://www.managingforimpact.org)
- Mazurana, D., Benelli, P., Gupta, H., & Walker, P. (2011), *Sex and Age Matter*. Feinstein International Centre, Tufts University, USA.
- OECD/DAC evaluation of development programmes website: [www.oecd.org/development/evaluation](http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation)
- People in Aid (2013) *Code of Good Practice*, People in Aid, London, UK.
- Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J., Scoones, I. (1995), *Participatory Learning and Action*. International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK.
- Quality Compas: [www.compasqualite.org](http://www.compasqualite.org)
- Sphere Project (2011), *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. The Sphere Project, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Sphere Project (2013), *Humanitarian Standards in Context*. Video and video guide. [www.sphereproject.org/resources](http://www.sphereproject.org/resources)
- Sphere Project (2013), *Sphere for Assessments*. The Sphere Project, Geneva, Switzerland
- Wash Cluster Somalia (2012), *Guide to WASH Cluster Strategy and Standards – also known as Strategic Operational Framework (SOF)*.
- World Bank (2014), *Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System*.







**The Sphere Project**

**The Sphere Project c/o ICVA  
26-28, Av. Guiseppe Motta  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland**

**T +41 22 950 9690  
F +41 22 950 9609  
[info@SphereProject.org](mailto:info@SphereProject.org)  
[www.SphereProject.org](http://www.SphereProject.org)**