

Standards of assistance and minimum requirements

The Sphere Project has developed a set of **universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian response** (hereafter “the Sphere standards”) with the aim of ensuring quality and accountability of assistance and protection in line with humanitarian principles. Initiated in 1997 by a group of NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Sphere is now among the main references in the humanitarian field.

Sphere standards derive from the principle of the right to life with dignity and concern four key sectors: a) water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; b) food security and nutrition; c) shelter and settlement and d) health. In cases where the minimum requirements exceed the living conditions of the host community, measures shall be taken to reduce potential tension, for example by extending services to the local community. In some situations, national authorities may establish minimum requirements that are higher than the Sphere standards and shall therefore be taken into account.

At a minimum, **migrant centres shall comply with the following Sphere standards:**

- **1 toilet to 20 people**, located at least 30 meters from water sources. The bottom of the pits shall be shown
- **1 shower to 20 people** (interpretation of Sphere as there is no specific ratio for bathing facilities;
- 20 liters of water available per person per day;
- **Total area of minimum of 30 sq. meters per person** (“Where communal services can be provided by the settlement, the minimum usable surface area should be 30m² for each person.”);
- **Living area of minimum of 3.5 sq. meters per person** (“A covered floor area more than 3.5m² considerations.”).

The configurations of the facilities must ensure the respect of migrants’ rights and facilitate the provision of services. Even though needs vary according to the type of facility, its capacity, the needs

of its beneficiaries and the services it offers, an **ideal layout** should take into account the following guidance:

- **Perimeter:** The building shall preferably be a standalone facility with restricted public access. In order to ensure security, the perimeter should be fenced and only few entrance/exit points left open. Fencing shall be closely coordinated with the local authorities and should not imply any kind of coercion. Beneficiaries shall enjoy freedom of movement, compatibly with the facilities of a closed/detention facility.

- **Communal areas:** migrant centres shall have one or more communal areas where beneficiaries can engage in recreational activities. If possible, eating areas shall be separated from other common spaces, and a shift system established. Recreational areas should be designed to ensure the psychological well-being of the beneficiaries and their families (e.g. sports, games, fans, etc.) and diversion (television, board games, books, etc.). Ideally, part of this space should be open-air.

- **Sleeping areas:** The design and disposition of the rooms should allow proper privacy and respect for personal belongings. Sleeping accommodation shall be separated and a reserved space should be dedicated for families. Rooms must include basic furniture and elements for adequate living conditions must be in place (e.g. no units without windows). For more guidance, see [this entry](#).

- **Spaces for counseling/interviews/consultations/mental health and psychosocial support activities:** A dedicated room or more separate room should be dedicated to the services carried out by IOM staff or implementing partners to facilitate the implementation of activities and guarantee privacy during individual encounters.

- **Infirmary:** If medical assistance is among the services provided by the centre, a dedicated room to be used for health and medical services.

- **Child-friendly spaces:** Indoor and/or outdoor adequate and safe communal spaces shall be foreseen for children. Physical dangers in the facility (holes, open water, etc.) shall be addressed to prevent injuries to children. For more guidance, see [this entry](#).

- **Area for vulnerable beneficiaries:** If relevant to the migrant centre services and targeted beneficiaries, a dedicated space for vulnerable beneficiaries may be foreseen (e.g. a dedicated space for women who just gave birth, or for beneficiaries with specific needs) to offer additional protection to vulnerable beneficiaries, so communication is essential to avoid any perception of discrimination by age, gender and diversity mainstreaming.

- **Sanitation:** If migrant centres are established in an existing building, rehabilitation works shall prioritise the improvement of sanitation to minimum standards. In particular, access to water and water storage are of paramount importance.

- **Storage:** A locked space should be used for storing extra furniture, hygiene kits, cleaning products and other supplies that enables the facility to face situations of emergency or a high influx of beneficiaries. See also [this entry](#) for further details.

- **Personnel office:** IOM staff and/or partners shall have a separate working spaces with the possibility to store their personal and valuable items.

- **Lighting and electricity:** Lighting improves the usability of facilities at night and promotes protection by providing visibility. It should be provided at key locations such as sanitation facilities, entrance/exit locations, main meeting points, dormitories, etc. A generator may be installed in case of power cuts.

References and Tools

- [The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#)
- [Semera Ethiopia Migration Response Center SOPs \(WASH standards, p. 36\)](#)
- [Checklist for the monitoring of standards of assistance and minimum requirements](#)
- [Normes minimales sur l'hébergement d'urgence et les centres de jour pour les Victimes de la Traite des êtres humains au Maroc](#)
- [Normes minimales sur l'application des procédures internationales et nationales concernant l'hébergement d'urgence et les centre](#)

Category

Management of migrant centres