

Module 1 - An introduction to Sphere

Trainers' Notes

Module 1 is designed to:

- raise awareness of the Sphere project
- introduce the Sphere handbook as a practical tool in humanitarian work
- enable participants to reflect on the potential contribution that the handbook can make
- improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian work.

You can use Module 1 in two ways:

- stand alone training seminar (half a day). *When time is limited there is also a 30 minute Executive Briefing presentation: see Module 1 Executive Briefing on the CD.*
- introduction to a longer workshop (half a day).

Please:

- review these materials carefully
- adapt them to meet the needs of your audience.
- See Part 1: Trainers' Guide for guidance on maximising the impact of your training.

Review the Module 1 background note:

- read it to become familiar with the core content and issues relating to this module
- consider if you want to send or email it to participants for them to read as preparation for your workshop
- consider if you want to give it to participants after the workshop as a reference guide

Use this training material for:

- all the trainers' notes relating to Module 1
- a toolkit of optional exercises and handouts which you may want to build into your training programme.

Review the slides for this module:

- use 'Module 1 slides' on the CD
- see print-outs in the Part 1: Trainer's Guide - PowerPoints

CONTENTS

	Use	Page
<u>Session 1:</u>		5
What is Sphere, and why is it important?	Enable participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss current trends or events that are impacting on our understanding of 'humanitarianism' • describe why the Sphere Project is important • describe the structure and process of the Sphere Project • describe the basic structure of the Sphere handbook • describe the difference between Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes. 	
90 minutes		
<u>Session 2</u>		19
How does the Sphere handbook work, and why use it?	Enable participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss how the Sphere handbook can be applied in humanitarian work • highlight the use of the Sphere handbook in mitigating the effects of organisational or mandate bias • debate the challenges and opportunities arising from the Sphere handbook • discuss the lessons learned from the experience of agencies that have used Sphere • describe actions that can be taken to participate in the Sphere process. 	
90 minutes		

Total time for sessions 1 and 2 = about 3 hours

Optional toolkit

In addition to the two 90 minute sessions, there are 5 optional activities. These enable you to use the modules flexibly to meet the specific needs of your audience. Review these activities to see how you can build them into your training programme to enhance impact and retention. Further optional exercises are available in other modules and on-line at: www.sphereproject.org

Optional toolkit activities	Use	Page
1: Sphere quiz 19 quiz questions 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enable participants to explore the range of information available from the Sphere handbook introduce session 1 or, assess learning at the end of session 2 	25
2: The Sphere challenge A longer quiz 90-120 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reinforce participants' understanding of the content of the Sphere handbook encourage participants to see how the Sphere handbook can add value in planning activities as a separate session at the end of module 1 at the completion of the entire Sphere workshop as an individual study assignment before a training workshop with small groups over one hour, or with teams competing with each other 	32
3: Timeline of humanitarian events An interactive PowerPoint slide 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> set the Sphere handbook in context raise awareness of key milestones in humanitarian history discuss the contribution the Sphere project has made to humanitarianism, particularly the Humanitarian Charter introduce either session 1 or 2 in Module 1 	37
4: On the spot evaluation exercise Practical exercise applying handbook 15-20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enable participants to distinguish between standards and indicators in a quick and practical way a quick exercise at any time during Module 1 for groups who are new to the language of the Sphere handbook 	39

5: Cross cutting issues Presentation exercise 90 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help people to gain a wider perspective beyond their own specialism • enable participants to incorporate into their work key areas including: the environment; gender considerations; protection strategies; groups of particular vulnerability in disasters: children, older persons, disabled persons, people living with HIV/AIDS 	40
6: In depth-critique of the technical chapters Review of a technical chapter Half a day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enable technical specialists to learn about the standards and think about how they would apply them in their work • encourage participants to think about how well the standards apply in their own situation • use in a formal workshop • use with small groups as an informal learning session 	51
7: The field school Practical application exercise Half a day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make the application of the Sphere handbook clear and concrete in a short time 	52

Module 1

Session 1: What is Sphere and why is it important?

Overview

Learning objectives

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- discuss current trends or events that are impacting on our understanding of 'humanitarianism'
- describe why the Sphere Project is important
- describe the structure and process of the Sphere Project
- describe the basic structure of the Sphere handbook
- describe the difference between Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes

Main messages

politics, funding, competition, growing demand for resources, and our own past failures all influence the way organisations and individuals aim to develop professionalism in the humanitarian sector
the humanitarian context always remains an essential factor when planning humanitarian responses
there are hundreds of organisations and people who have contributed to the Sphere Project and the content of the Sphere handbook

the Sphere Project is a process, the output of which is the Sphere handbook

the Sphere handbook, when used intelligently, can contribute to improving the effectiveness of humanitarian organisations

there is logic to the structure of the handbook that makes it clear and easy to use

the Humanitarian Charter is a statement of values for humanitarian organisations,
based on existing international legal instruments

Minimum Standards (MS) build on the Humanitarian Charter and are

universal goals for helping people achieve the right to life with dignity

key indicators are observable signals that the Minimum Standards have been achieved and serve as **tools**. These are intended to be universal. However, there may be certain situations where specific indicators may not be appropriate, or met. Where this happens, it is important to explain why the indicator has not been used or achieved

guidance notes assist when applying and adapting key indicators, and provide additional information

Timing ⌚ **90 minutes.**

Method Presentation/lecture / Brainstorm / Individual exercise

Resources needed Laptop / data projector / screen / flipchart and pens

Visual aid PowerPoint slides / Small size "post-it" notes

Preparation

Ensure that every participant has a Sphere handbook and if possible, ensure that they have read it before taking part in this session.

There are some differences between the 2000 and 2004 editions of the handbook. Please design your session according to which edition you are using in the workshop.

Read the background note for Module 1.

Prepare for visual aids as described in 'Part 1: Trainer's Guide'.

Session 1: What is Sphere and why is it important?

Time	Activity
5	1: Introduction
15-20	2: Brainstorm on context
10	3: Discussion on trends and the need for the Sphere project
10	4: Presentation and discussion on what is the Sphere project
20	5: What is the Sphere handbook?
10	6: Presentation on the Humanitarian Charter
15	7: Presentation and discussion on Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes
5	8: Conclusion
90	TOTAL TIME

You can find copies of all the slides in this Module in the PowerPoint section at the back of Part 1: Trainers' Guide.

Activity 1: Introduction

5 mins

- ☐ Show slide: 'Title slide: Module 1'
- Keep this slide on screen while people arrive and settle in for the session

- ☐ Show slide: 'Learning objectives'

Explain the objectives for the session:

- to discuss our understanding of "humanitarianism"
- to describe why the Sphere project handbook is important
- to describe the Sphere project handbook's structure and progress
- to describe the Sphere project handbook's structure
- to describe the difference between
 - Minimum Standards
 - key indicators
 - guidance notes

Activity 2: Brainstorm on context

15-20 mins

- ☐ Show slide: 'Context and content'.

You may want to keep these contrasting images on screen during this activity.

Explain that:

there are challenges driven by external factors

for example increased globalisation, increased demands for humanitarian organisations

to be held accountable for their actions, and competition for decreasing funds.

Next, explain that:

there are also challenges driven by internal factors, for example forming partnerships and increasing decentralisation.

Next, explain that:

conditions out in the field also present major challenges, including increased complexity from the number of actors, stakeholders and partners involved.

Next, explain that:

teams also face the challenges of working in complex political situations, including links between funding and the donor's political agenda, and abuse of humanitarian resources

Summarise by explaining that:

the humanitarian community faces great change as it deals with more and more complexity this is just one way of identifying and categorising the factors that are driving change in humanitarian organisations, but participants may have other views

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

On a flipchart write the following decades with space next to them:

1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s

Ask:

"What were the major disasters or emergencies in these decades
How did they influence humanitarianism?"

⌚ Allow up to 1 minute for each decade – 5 minutes in total.

If you want to give examples, the following may help:

1960s, the Biafran civil war, leading to the formation of MSF (solidarity replacing neutrality)

1970s, Cambodia (huge refugee flood from East to West)

1980s Ethiopian famine (raising global awareness of humanitarian action through the massive impact of the media)

1990s post-genocide in Rwanda, demonstrating the scope and complexity of the challenges facing humanitarians (dilemma of feeding those who participated in genocide)

2000s the 'war on terrorism' has made the environment even more dangerous for humanitarians, and the 'West Africa Sex scandal' has led to Codes of Conducts and raised the importance of standards (politicisation of the very word 'humanitarianism')

Ensure that the group understands the following points:

- humanitarianism has widened from a purely charitable "philanthropy" to include a rights-based approach
- advocacy with governments has been more common in recent times
- conflicts are chronic in some developing countries; and climate change has created more natural disasters
- principles are needed to distinguish humanitarian work from the military and politics

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

Brainstorm with participants:

- What issues or challenges are humanitarian organisations faced with today?
- Write key words from the discussions on a flip chart

Examples might include:

- the need for improved **individual skills** and capabilities in complex environments
- **funding** for low-profile disasters
- **co-ordination** between agencies in a disaster

⌚ Allow up to 3 minutes.

When the group has identified a range of key issues or challenges, in the time remaining, ask the following question:

which of these challenges could be addressed by using common operational principles and standards?

Activity 3: Discussion on trends and the need for the Sphere Project

5 mins

Ask participants:

What are the local trends that you can see in humanitarian action?

Write a few of the ideas on a new flip chart

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'Tools to put principles and values into action.'

Explain that:

- now that we've focused on the trends and challenges we face, we are going to look at the role of the Sphere handbook

Explain that:

the Sphere handbook **is one way** to translate humanitarian principles and values into practical action

this is the structure for the 2004 edition

the handbook is divided into seven main sections

- after the introduction, there is the Humanitarian Charter, followed by five technical chapters which flow from it.

the technical chapters start with a chapter on standards that are common to all sectors

Explain that the common standards include:

- common processes around the project cycle such as initial assessment, targeting, monitoring and evaluation
- participation
- aid worker competencies and responsibilities and supervision, management and support required.

Explain that:

- the technical chapters offer tools to apply the values and principles of the Humanitarian Charter in the basic life-sustaining sectors

These sectors are:

- Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion
- Food Security, Nutrition and Food Aid

- Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items
- Health Services.
- the sectoral standards and indicators in the Sphere handbook represent those where a consensus was reached in the humanitarian community
- they do not represent the complete range of technical standards in existence.

Next, explain that:

- each chapter contains a number of Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes.

we will look at these in more detail later.

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide 'Why is the Sphere handbook needed?'

This is a build slide. First, explain that:

- given the type and scale of the challenges humanitarian organisations face, we're going to look now at why the Sphere Handbook is needed
- Non Governmental Organisations continue to be concerned about quality of humanitarian support and the accountability of humanitarian organisations.

Next, explain that practices that have been carried out in the past are no longer enough, because:

- of the increasing complexity of disasters
- the increasing numbers of disasters
- the changes facing the humanitarian community
- the increasing diversity in the humanitarian community
- the increasing complexity of the organisations involved, operating with different measures of success.

Finally, explain that:

- hard lessons were learned from the Rwanda situation in 1994 explored in the Multi-Donor Evaluation
- this evaluation concluded that there were many "unnecessary deaths" from poor NGO performance, and that NGOs "needed to get their house in order"
- Sphere is one result from this challenge.

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

Activity 4: Presentation and discussion on what is the Sphere Project

10 mins

☐ Show slide: 'Extensive consultation'.

To introduce the slide, explain that:

- in response to this need for change, the Sphere Project was created as an open and collaborative initiative to improve the quality and accountability of disaster response
- it aims to help people in disasters to achieve their rights in an effective and accountable way.

Explain that:

- from the start, the Sphere Project focused on involving practitioners
- never before has there been such extensive and broad-based consultation in the humanitarian community
- the people who participated in writing the Sphere handbook came from national and international NGOs, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent and academic institutions
- thousands of individuals from over 400 organisations representing 80 countries participated in various aspects of the Sphere Project, from developing the handbook through to piloting and training.

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'Sphere process'.

This slide builds using the following points. First, explain that:

in response to the challenges facing the humanitarian community, the Sphere Project took the following steps:

- made the argument for the universal right to assistance based on international law
- gained agreement from NGO's on core principles and key actions needed
- brought together and won agreement on standards for programmes to address disasters
- achieved consensus within the humanitarian community on the technical standards which humanitarian programmes should achieve

☐ Show slide: 'Main project activities'.

This slide builds using the following points.**Explain that:****The Sphere project operates with a small office and activities include:**

- raising awareness of the Sphere handbook in the humanitarian community
- distributing the handbook and other tools
- coordinating technical revisions to the handbook
- producing and running training on how to apply the handbook
- offering support to agencies

⌚ Allow up to 1 minute.

☐ Show slide: 'Management and funding'.

This slide builds using the following points. Explain that:

- the Sphere project has a broad base of support in terms of its management and funding
- members include the following

- the 7 NGO networks that make up the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) along with the ICRC and IFRC

InterAction

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations In Cooperation in Emergencies)

ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies)

there's support from many countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and the United States
there's support from **ECHO**, the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission

⌚ Allow up to 1 minute.

To explore the main points of this presentation, in the time remaining, lead a group discussion. The following questions may help to prompt and guide the discussion.

- Does anyone work in an organisation that is on the Management Committee of the Sphere Project?
- Does anyone belong to a pilot agency?
- Has anyone personally contributed to the process?
- Has anyone participated in a previous training event?
- Note and draw attention to the number of affiliations that exist in the group.

Remind the group that:

- the Sphere handbook is based on wide consultation
- you can contact the web site or the project offices to find out more about how you can participate.

Activity 5: What is the Sphere handbook?

20 mins

☐ Show slide: 'Sphere handbook'.

Keep this slide on screen during this activity as a reminder, or write on to a flipchart the sections of the book which the participants will need to find.

This is a build slide. You can choose to:

- show at once all the items you want the group to look for
- reveal it step by step through the activity, asking the group to search for one section after another

Explain that:

- the first output from the Sphere Project is the Sphere handbook
- now we're going to look at the handbook, and become more familiar with its structure and contents


Hand out post-it notes to each participant.

Explain that:


- in order to find your way around the handbook to the sections you need most, it is useful to mark these with post-it notes
There are some differences between the 2000 and 2004 editions of the handbook.
Please design your exercise according to which edition you are using in the workshop

Whenever you see a page reference to the handbook:

- the first reference will be to the 2000 edition
- the second reference will be to the 2004 edition

 Show slide What Sphere says about monitoring and evaluating
Monitoring
Evaluation
See Sphere Handbook page 25/37

Ask participants to:
find the monitoring Minimum Standards in their sector chapter and read them out.

 Allow 5 minutes.

Briefly review the exercise against the learning objectives.


Show how you have marked your own copy of the handbook with post-it notes.

Ask participants to take their Sphere handbook and mark some key sections with post-it notes.

Explain that the key sections for the 2004 edition are shown on the slide and include:

- the introduction / What is Sphere?
- the Humanitarian Charter
- standards common to all sectors
- the diagram for each technical chapter
- the NGO RC/RC Code of Conduct
- the index

Ask the group to shout out page numbers for the key sections as they work through the exercise.

 Allow up to 15 minutes for them to mark relevant sections with post-its.

In the time remaining, ask participants to choose one technical sector as the chapter most useful to them and mark each of the Minimum Standards and the annexes

If there is time, ask participants to find their favourite Minimum Standard or key indicator in the chapter of their choice and read it out to the others

Activity 6: Presentation on the Humanitarian Charter

10 mins

☐ Show slide: 'The Humanitarian Charter: Sections'.

Explain that these are the main sections of the Humanitarian Charter.

This is a build slide. First, explain that:

- there is an overall commitment to promote the observance of fundamental humanitarian principles and an appreciation of our own ethical obligations

Next, explain that:

- the Humanitarian Charter lays down a statement of humanitarian principles

Next, explain that:

- it helps define roles, duties and responsibilities

Next, explain that:

- it outlines a commitment to achieve the Minimum Standards consistently

Finally, explain that:

- it acknowledges that our fundamental accountability is to those we want to help

⌚ Allow up to 1 minute.

Ask participants to open their handbook and find the main sections that are referred to.

Challenge participants to find a Minimum Standard (not a key indicator) that is NOT universal in their handbook

⌚ Allow up to 5 minutes.

Emphasise that the Minimum Standards provide a strong framework of goals underpinning the humanitarian activities covered in the handbook

☐ In the time remaining, show slide: 'Humanitarian Charter: informed by international law.'

This is a build slide. First, explain that:

- the Humanitarian Charter is informed by and based in key international laws
- the following three examples show how the Humanitarian Charter relates to significant pieces of legislation

in this first example, the right to life with dignity, this is built into a range of international laws including the following:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- civil and political, economic and social covenants
- the Geneva Conventions
- Convention against torture
- Rights of the Child

Next, explain that:

- the Humanitarian Charter also upholds the principle of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants
- this is underpinned by the Geneva Conventions and the Rights of the Child

Finally, explain that:

- the Humanitarian Charter also describes the principle of non-refoulement, helping to ensure that refugees are not sent back to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened
- this is underpinned by the Convention on the Status of Refugees, and the Conventions against Torture and the Rights of the Child


Activity 7: Presentation and discussion on Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes

15 mins

☐ Show slide: 'What is a Minimum Standard?'

This is a build slide. First, explain that:


- this is an example of a Minimum Standard about nutrition
 - a Minimum Standard in the Sphere handbook summarises the minimum level in humanitarian assistance in relation to the area covered by the standard
 - in the example the minimum acceptable standard for nutrient supply is that the population's nutritional needs are met
-
- Ask participants to look up the definition of a Minimum Standard at the start of a technical chapter.
 - confirm this by clicking for the final build in the slide, showing the definition of a Minimum Standard

 Allow up to 3 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'What are key indicators?'

This is a build slide. First, explain that:


- this is an example of a set of key indicators taken from nutrition section
 - key indicators are like signals showing whether or not a standard has been achieved
 - they give you a way to measure the impact of what programmes have achieved
 - they enable you to communicate the impact or result of programmes, as well as the processes used
 - they may be quantitative, focusing on numbers, such as ensuring that 17% of the population's total energy is provided by fat
 - or they may be qualitative, such as ensuring that storage is safe and clean, protecting food commodities from damage and loss, and making sure that the food is culturally appropriate
-
- Ask participants to look up the definition of a key indicator at the start of a technical chapter.
 - confirm this by clicking for the final build in the slide, showing the definition of a key indicator

 Allow up to 3 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'What are guidance notes?'

This is a build slide. First, explain that:

- this is an example of guidance note taken from the food aid chapter
- guidance notes are used to share best practice and experience, talk about how to deal with controversial areas, and help you to use the indicators effectively in your own context
- confirm this by clicking for the final build in the slide, showing the description of the purpose of guidance notes


 Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'Standards, indicators and guidance notes'.

Explain that:

- now we're going to look at how all these parts work together by looking at examples from the handbook
- as we saw earlier, the nutrition notes a qualitative level
- the key indicators give us a way to see whether or not the standard is being achieved, for example whether data are split by gender and age
- the guidance notes outline further supporting information and underlying issues

Ask them to find specific examples that they find useful in their own work.

 Allow up to 5 minutes.

Activity 8: Conclusion


5 mins

Bring this session to a close by running through a summary.

☐ Show slide: 'In conclusion: Change'. This slide builds using the following points.

Explain that:

- crises continue, bringing new challenges for the humanitarian community
- there's been rapid and chaotic growth in the number of organisations, stakeholders and partners in humanitarian activities, and each of these has their own specific agenda
- there are many pressures on humanitarians to more effectively define, coordinate and account for humanitarian support
- Sphere's approach is an inter-agency process to clarify the humanitarian basis for action


 Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'In conclusion: Tools'.

This slide builds using the following points. Explain that:

- the Sphere handbook pulls together some of the tools needed to turn concepts into action
- the Humanitarian Charter provides a framework to turn the appreciation of rights into protection of those rights

- the standards offer measures which humanitarians can hope and strive to achieve, and give organisations a basis on which to plan and measure progress
- the key indicators provide signals to assess whether the standards have been met
- the guidance notes help us to ensure that we apply indicators in appropriate ways

 Allow up to 2 minutes.

In the time remaining, clarify any issues that have arisen, and use a parking lot to capture more complex questions requiring debate. For example, record these issues on a flipchart, and say that they will be discussed later in the training

Explain that:

- the next session will illustrate how the Sphere handbook works in practice and consider the value it can offer the humanitarian community

Ask participants to think how the Sphere handbook might be useful in their work.

☐ Show slide: 'Break' if you are taking a break at this point.

Module 1

Session 2: How does the Sphere handbook work, and why use it?

Overview

Learning objectives

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

Discuss how the Sphere handbook can be applied in humanitarian work

Highlight the use of the Sphere handbook in mitigating the effects of organisational or mandate bias

Debate the challenges and opportunities arising from the Sphere handbook

Discuss the lessons learned from the experience of agencies that have used Sphere

Describe actions that can be taken to participate in the Sphere process

Main messages

- The Humanitarian Charter, Minimum Standards, and key indicators are useful throughout the humanitarian project cycle, and present opportunities for organisations to build capacity in a number of areas.
- the proper use of the Sphere handbook requires a thorough humanitarian contextual analysis.
- one of the benefits of using standards is that it reduces bias in assessments, leading to improved quality
- use of the Sphere handbook in the field has contributed greatly to the Sphere process

Timing ⌚ 90 minutes.

Method Presentation/lecture / Brainstorm / Group exercise

Resources needed Laptop / data projector / screen / flipchart and pens

Visual aid PowerPoint slides

Preparation

Prepare for visual aids as described in Part 1: Trainers' Guide, Maximising Learning.

Find a small number of volunteer participants who have used the Sphere handbook in their work. Ask them to prepare a short talk on a specific application of the Sphere handbook or the approach taken by their agency and lessons learned from the experience.

If there is no one in the group able to make such a presentation, then download the most recent and relevant case studies from the Project website (www.sphereproject.org under 'Sphere in Practice').

Session 2: How does the Sphere handbook work, and why use it?

Time	Activity
5	1: Introduction
15	2: Brainstorm how the Sphere handbook can improve effectiveness
40	3: Small group discussion on challenges and opportunities
25	4: Experience and evidence generated to date
5	5: Conclusion
90	TOTAL TIME

Activity 1: Introduction

5 mins


☐ Show title slide: 'Module 1: Session 2'.

Keep this slide on screen while people arrive and settle in for the session after the break.

☐ Show slide: 'Learning objectives'.

Explain the objectives for the session:

- to discuss how the Sphere handbook can be applied in humanitarian work
- to explore the Sphere handbook's role in helping to minimise the effects of organisational or mandate bias
- to debate the challenges and opportunities of using the Sphere handbook
- to discuss the lessons learned from the experience of agencies that have used the Sphere handbook and from the piloting process
- to describe actions that can be taken to participate in the Sphere process

 Allow up to 5 minutes.

Activity 2: Brainstorm on how the Sphere handbook might be used

5 mins

Explain that:

- the Sphere handbook has many interpretations, but its primary purpose is as a practical tool

Ask:

- how do you think individuals and agencies might use it in humanitarian work?
- brainstorm possible applications of the Sphere handbook

- write the answers on a flip chart. If necessary prompt the group with suggestions, for example the uses mentioned on the slides used next in this activity
- try to group the answers into project cycle applications, or other, wider opportunities

⌚ Allow up to 10 minutes.

Explain that:

- now we're going to draw on the experience of other organisations to see how they use the handbook
- as you work through the next three slides, highlight any uses not already identified by the group

☐ Show slide: 'Applications'.

This slide builds using the following points.

Explain that the Sphere handbook is an important technical reference tool, because:

- it can help you to measure performance
- it can help you to identify resources needed, rationalise them, and allocate resources to where they will have the best effect
- it is an international reference, now used worldwide, and translated into more than 20 languages
- it is an important tool to build into training programmes
- it offers guidance on how to become involved in humanitarian activities in an effective and systematic way

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ In the time remaining, show slide: 'Applications: project cycle'.

This slide builds using the following points. Explain that:

- the Sphere handbook is useful throughout the project cycle
- for example, it can help practitioners to take into account the most important issues when assessing what needs to be done in a crisis (checklists)
- during problem analysis it offers a framework to help you consider the issues and areas you need to address in the crisis (standards)
- during programme planning it helps you to identify the actions you need to take, and helps you to allocate resources effectively (indicators)
- it also helps you to monitor the impact of your work by giving you a clear set of measures
- and finally, it helps you to evaluate your programme systematically

⌚ Allow up to 2 minutes.

Activity 3: Small group discussion on challenges and opportunities **40 mins**

☐ Show slide: 'Challenges and opportunities'.

You may want to keep this up on screen during this activity as a reminder of the instructions for the participants.

Ask the participants to work in small teams of five or six.

Give each team two or three of the applications that the group suggested in Activity 2 in the brainstorm on possible applications for the Sphere handbook.

Ensure that between the teams the most important applications will be covered by the group.


Ask the teams to reflect critically on the set of applications that they have been given.

Ask each team to consider the Sphere handbook and applications assigned to their group from three perspectives

- challenges, risks or constraints
- opportunities or benefits
- strategies to minimise the challenges, risks or constraints and maximise the opportunities or benefits


Explain that they will be asked to discuss their conclusions with the rest of the group.

Circulate through the groups and answer questions that arise

 Allow up to 20 minutes.

Bring the group back together.

Ask each team to explain their conclusions to the group. To keep it simple and short, please ask them to speak rather than using flipcharts or presenting formally

 Allow up to a total 10 minutes for all the teams to present.

- when each team has given their conclusions, in the time remaining, open up the discussion to the whole group. It may help to keep on display the flipchart of applications the group identified in Activity 2

This activity is extremely important. Please:

- give participants time to consider the implications of the Humanitarian Charter and the Minimum Standards
- ensure that the group gives equal weight to the concerns and benefits

Ask:

- 'do you think the Sphere handbook is useful?'
- 'do you have any outstanding questions at this time?'

Activity 4: Experience and evidence generated to date

25 mins

Preparation

Find individuals before this session and prompt them to think about how they have used the Sphere handbook in their work, and be prepared to talk about it for a minute or two.


Exercise

Ask:

- 'has anyone here used the Sphere handbook in their work?'
- 'can you summarise what you did, and what you learned from the experience?'

Alternatively:

- read out a short summary of examples from the website
- refer to the examples in the general information brochure available from the Sphere office

 Allow up to 10 minutes.

Once the group has given two or three examples, in the time remaining, lead a short discussion on the rationale behind the Sphere Project. Aim to draw out the following point:

- if individuals use the handbook, agency effectiveness will improve, which will improve the lives of those affected by disasters

Mention the challenges of attributing evidence. Ask:

'How will we know if the lives of people affected by disasters are improved by the application of the Sphere handbook?'

Explain that:

- the Sphere handbook is continuously being improved, on the basis of field experience and user's feedback


Activity 5: Conclusion

5 mins

☐ Show slide: 'What Sphere represents.'

This slide builds using the following points. Explain that:


- Sphere represents the belief that populations affected by conflict and calamity have a right to support
- Sphere demonstrates a commitment towards a measurable level of competence and delivery
- the handbook brings together global experience into a practical tool
- the handbook helps the humanitarian community to meet the challenges for increased accountability and quality

 Allow up to 2 minutes.

☐ Show slide: 'www.sphereproject.org'.

Explain that the Sphere Project offers a range of resources and support online including the following:

- the Sphere handbook in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, and Arabic
- Training Materials and Trainer's Guide (also for sale)
- ways to institutionalise the programme, building it into your work
- communication, including annual reports, and newsletters
- Encourage people to visit the website for further information and ways of networking with others who are applying Sphere

 Allow up to 2 minutes.

If you have time, you can close this session by asking participants to give one word or phrase that summarises their feelings about Sphere. Go around the room, taking ideas from volunteers.

Optional Exercise 1: The Sphere quiz about 40 mins

Description

This is a multiple choice quiz of 19 questions

Each question has a page reference and can lead to a discussion

It is suitable for groups with no prior knowledge of the Sphere handbook,
or as a part of a workshop introducing the Sphere handbook

You can use this activity to:

- enable participants to explore the range of information available from the Sphere handbook
- introduce session 1
- assess learning at the end of session 2

Preparation

- photocopy the quiz question page and answer sheet for all the participants

Explain that:

- the aim of this quiz is to identify key information available from the Sphere handbook
- give out a copy of the quiz to each participant
- ask participants to complete the quiz on their own

Explain that:

- they have up to 20 minutes to complete the quiz

When the most of the participants have completed the quiz, ask a volunteer to read out the first question and their answer

Ask the group for agreement or different views. If some discussion occurs, or you feel the question illustrates the important types of information available in the handbook:

- give the page reference and ask participants to look up the answer
- Repeat for each question, and use your judgement on when to open up discussion

Explain that:

- this quiz illustrates the range of issues raised by the Sphere handbook, and the types of technical information that can be found in the book over time. It is a good idea to read the whole handbook to get a complete picture

The Sphere quiz

Handout (4 pages)

Please answer the following questions by marking the choice(s) you think give the best answer to the question. In some cases, there may be more than one correct option.

1 A humanitarian organisation must meet the Minimum Standards to be accountable.

- A TRUE
- B FALSE

2 The Sphere handbook is intended only for refugee camps.

- A TRUE
- B FALSE

3 The Sphere handbook was designed only as a tool for technical experts when they evaluate projects.

- A TRUE
- B FALSE

4 Three common principles for humanitarian actors, based in international law are:

- A The need for impartiality, the essence of neutrality and belief in humanity.
- B Proximity in witnessing, independence of humanitarian actors and volunteerism in the act of international solidarity.
- C The right to life with dignity, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and the principle of non-refoulement.

5 According to international law, the key responsibility in providing humanitarian assistance lies with:

- A NGOs.
- B UN agencies.
- C Multinational corporations with investments in the country where a disaster occurs.
- D Sovereign governments or warring parties.

6 Which of the following are examples of protection considerations that humanitarian assistance agencies can incorporate?

- A Especially in crowded settlements, it is vital to consider the security of those using sanitation facilities, in particular women and girls. Latrines that are far from inhabited areas, or which are poorly lit, expose women and girls to additional risk of attack.
- B A clear evacuation plan must be reviewed regularly and considered a living document rather than something static.
- C Gender roles within the social system also need to be taken into account, including cultural practices that contribute to women's nutritional vulnerability.

For example in certain cultures, women eat after everyone else.

7 Which of the following are NOT Minimum Standards?

- A "People have the means to dispose of their domestic waste conveniently and effectively".
- B "No dwelling is more than 15 metres from a refuse container or household refuse pit, or 100 metres from a communal refuse pit".
- C "One 100 litre refuse container is available per 10 families, where domestic refuse is not buried on site".
- D "Most market waste can be treated in the same way as domestic refuse. Slaughter house waste may need special treatment and special facilities to deal with the liquid wastes produced, and to ensure slaughtering is carried out in hygienic conditions".

8 Indicators can be described as:

- A Non-verifiable signals which you can use to monitor the impact of a project or programme.
- B Signals that provide a way of measuring outputs achieved in a final project report.
- C Signals that provide a way of measuring and communicating both the impact and process of programmes.
- D Categories and lists of considerations to take into account in disaster response programmes.

9 "The supply chain is established and includes procurement, documentation, transport, storage and handling from point(s) of origin to final destination(s) or distribution site(s)" is an example of what type of indicator:

- A Qualitative
- B Quantitative

10 Which are the basic, fundamental (root) causes of malnutrition in emergencies?

- A Inadequate food intake and disease.
- B Household food insecurity, social and care environment and public health environment.
- C Potential resources, context, formal/informal infrastructure, family/community resources and control.

11 Micronutrient deficiencies have tremendous public health importance in emergencies. Which deficiency is easily identified through simple clinical examination, and if addressed can efficiently reduce mortality?

- A Vitamin A.
- B Riboflavin.
- C Vitamin C.
- D Calcium.

12 Diarrhoeal diseases and others transmitted by the faecal-oral route are one of the most common causes of death in emergencies. Their transmission is encouraged by:

- A Inadequate curative medical supplies at the early stages of a disaster.
- B Inadequate sanitation, poor hygiene and contaminated water supplies.

C Chronic malnutrition combined with exposure to excessive rainfall.

13 The disaster-affected population has a right to participate in the design and implementation of water supply and sanitation programmes. This can be achieved in different ways, including which of the following:

A Involvement in the assessment team.

B Involvement in decision-making (establishing conditions that allow people to go to the toilet and wash with dignity, comfort and security).

C Disseminating information including cultural and gender factors relating to access and use of facilities.

D Regular polling and discussions to seek views and opinions.

14 When planning a food aid intervention without the benefit of adjustment factors, which should be the planning figure for the daily energy requirements per person?

A 900 Kilo Calories.

B 1500 Kilo Calories.

C 2100 Kilo Calories.

D 2400 Kilo Calories.

15 When purchasing food locally for distribution to a disaster affected population it is essential to monitor the impact of those purchases on:

A Warehouse space.

B The local market prices.

C The numbers of transport companies in the region.

D Road quality.

16 Shelter standards depend on:

A Donor interest in a particular disaster.

B Climate and size of the household.

C Media interest in a particular disaster.

17 When planning a site for a displaced population, what indicator is useful in determining the area of land needed (including all public infrastructure but not land for agricultural purposes).

A 3.5 square metres per person.

B 8 square metres per person.

C 45 square metres per person.

D 18 hectares per person.

18 Excess mortality exists when the crude mortality rate (CMR) exceeds the prevailing mortality rate of the surrounding population in an emergency setting. What figure (in developing countries) indicates a rule of thumb for excess mortality (and thus a definition of an emergency)?

A 25 deaths per 10,000 persons per week.

-
- B 1 death per 10,000 persons per day.
-
- C 5 deaths per 10,000 persons per day.
-
- D 0.6 deaths per 10,000 persons per day.
-

19 Severe dehydration due to cholera can be managed with intravenous treatment, and mild dehydration due to cholera with what easily produced substance?

- A Antibiotics.
-
- B ORT.
-
- C Lime and water.
-
- D EPI.
-

**When you are given the answer guide, please mark your quiz,
and record here the number of questions you answered correctly:**

_____ out of 19.

Answer guide: The Sphere quiz

1. B

This statement is false, and a common misconception.

The Sphere Minimum Standards and key indicators provide a benchmark against which to measure the progress of humanitarian responses, and agencies can advocate for resources, for example, to fill measurable gaps.

Accountability is not only about achieving standards but also about transparency and considering how to fill gaps.

2. B

This is false. The Sphere handbook is a useful programming tool in a variety of situations and in a variety of programme activities.

3. B.

The handbook is designed to be a general reference tool for the humanitarian system.

4. C

Page 7/17 – Humanitarian Charter. The others come from MSF and the Red Cross movement respectively.

5. D

Page 8/18 – Humanitarian Charter, Role and Responsibility 2.1 outlines clearly what is written in various international legal instruments.

6. A and C

A is on page 39/75 – (guidance note 9/2 from the excreta disposal standards)

C is on page 80/159 - (guidance note 7/1 from the nutritional assessment standard).

7.

- **A is the Minimum Standard**
- **B and C are key indicators**
- **D is one of the guidance notes.**

See page 46/83 in the Water / Sanitation Chapter. It is crucial to understand the difference between Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes. Minimum standards are qualitative in nature.

• C

Page 274/22 – The Sphere handbook contains a variety of indicators.

90% of the key indicators in the Sphere handbook are qualitative and only 10% are quantitative.

• A

10. C

Page 76 /136 – the UNICEF conceptual model is an example of an analytical framework – this is the only analytical tool presented in the handbook, but is illustrative of how to organise information from an assessment to properly determine basic, or underlying causes. Although all the answers are causes of malnutrition, C represents the basic causes.

11. A

Page 109/140 – Guidance note 3/6 shows that Vitamin A is an inexpensive and powerful supplement with significant public health impact. An example of the rich information in the guidance notes of the handbook.

12 B

Page 18/**56** – The importance of watsan (water and sanitation) in emergencies para 1 is an example of the introductory material that is available in each technical chapter. This information is useful for people to determine priorities and work in multi-sector projects or co-ordinate with other agencies.

13. ALL of them

Page 29/**28** – Guidance notes are examples of ways that participation can be achieved in water and sanitation programmes. Participation is important not only in running the programme but is essential for people who are affected by disasters to achieve their rights.

14 C

Page 148/**189** – Guidance note 1/**appendix 7**. Note this is a planning figure for initial calculations only. Guidance notes go further to illustrate how this figure would be modified to meet the needs of specific groups.

2400 Kcal is a planning figure from ICRC which allows for an extra 300Kcal to be provided as supplementary rations in the case of moderate malnutrition.

15 B

Page 156/**131** – Key indicator 2/**3**. An example of an indicator of good practice in ensuring that unintended negative effects do not occur from an intervention.

16 B

Page 190/**219** – Guidance note 2/**1**, another example of lessons learned from the recent history of humanitarian responses.

17 C

Page 204/**216** – indicator 1/**3**. This is a planning figure, and includes all public infrastructure such as schools, drainage, markets etc.

Settlements for displaced persons are planned for the long term, although we all hope they will be closed as soon as possible!

18 B

Page 222/**260** – footnote 1/**guidance note 3**. Again this is a rule of thumb only. To be more accurate, the post-disaster CMR is compared to the pre-disaster CMR. Pre-disaster mortality rates will differ from country to country, and from age group to age group.

19 B

Page 246/**282**, Guidance note 9/**3**. Oral Rehydration Therapy consisting of 1 part salt: 4 parts sugar in one clean litre of water. You can also get packages of ORT in any medical kit.

Optional Exercise 2: The Sphere challenge about 90-120 mins

Description

This is a written answer exercise

Questions range from simple to moderately advanced (some require calculators, others require both technical knowledge and the familiarity to find necessary information in the handbook).

All the answers can be found in the handbook, or the handbook can be used as the basis for constructing an answer

Groups or individuals can complete the challenge

You can opt to reduce the time required by deciding which questions to choose for your participants

Some questions also can lead to wider discussions on related issues

You can use this activity to:

- reinforce participants' understanding of the content of the Sphere handbook
- encourage participants to see how the Sphere handbook can add value in planning activities

You may want to use this activity:

- as a separate session at the end of module 1
- at the completion of the entire Sphere workshop
- as an individual study assignment before a training workshop
- with small groups over one hour, or with teams competing with each other

Preparation

Photocopy the quiz questions and answers for all participants

Decide how you want to run this activity, and if you want to shorten it, select which questions you want the group to answer

Exercise

Give participants the handout: 'The Sphere challenge'

When they have completed their answers, call the group back together and give them the handout: 'Answer guide: The Sphere challenge'

Review the answers with the group

Use your judgement on questions to explore in follow up discussions, and for answers to more detailed questions

Optional Exercise 2: The Sphere challenge

Handout (2 pages)

You will need a Sphere handbook in order to answer the questions in this challenge.

You may also need a calculator.

- 1 What are the two core beliefs on which the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards are based?
- 2 List four legal instruments that inform the Humanitarian Charter.
- 3 List six sources of information for initial assessments in a disaster.
- 4 How many of the Minimum Standards are quantitative?
- 5 What three recommendations are made to donor governments in the Code of Conduct?
- 6 What are the initial planning estimates for a distributed food basket?
- 7 What factors should be considered when designing housing (shelter) for people in cold climates?
- 8 What is the formula for Crude Mortality Rate?
- 9 If 20 people died in the period from Sunday to Tuesday, 80 people died from Wednesday to Saturday, out of a total estimated population of 14,000, what is the CMR?
- 10 What are the steps to take when an outbreak of a communicable disease occurs?
- 11 Name four ways to ensure that gender issues are considered in disaster assessments.
- 12 Find five examples from the water supply and sanitation chapter on how to protect the rights of people affected by disaster.
- 13 You are participating in a disaster preparedness meeting with various stakeholders.
The nutrition sector is an important part of the risk map of your geographic area, as the population are mostly subsistence farmers on marginal land.
You want to divide up the meeting agenda into main categories to make it easier to discuss. What are they?
- 14 You are a recruiter for a humanitarian agency, and must hire several new staff to work on a food aid programme.
List five areas of experience that would be useful qualifications in candidates.
- 15 In disasters where shelter is a sector of priority, name different possible scenarios of shelter needs.
- 16 You are conducting a media interview, as a representative of your agency and its response operations in a particular disaster. Use language from the Humanitarian Charter and Code of Conduct to help construct your answers to the following questions:
 - Humanitarian aid has problems in co-ordination doesn't it? Who is responsible for co-ordination?
 - What do humanitarian agencies stand for?
 - To whom are humanitarian agencies accountable?

-
- Are humanitarian agencies trustworthy? After all, some are known to be promoting political causes, and others donating funds to terrorist organisations
-

- 17** You work for an NGO, and have submitted a proposal for a shelter programme. You are working in a post-conflict, AIDS-impacted cold-climate country, where houses are being rehabilitated. How would you justify to the donor that in this situation, shelter needs to average 4.5 square metres coverage per person (i.e. the higher range of the relevant key indicator)?
-
- 18** A major population displacement has been caused by a war. You work for a national government ministry (the duty holder in this instance), and have been the co-ordinator of the humanitarian response operation that has built a temporary camp for IDPs. This has involved various government departments, local NGOs, United Nations operational agencies, international NGOs and a well organised and effective system of beneficiary leadership. Because of a very high CMR when the camp was first opened, you have been using "health of the population" as the main goal for all of the agencies operational in your area of responsibility. List 8 indicators that will show that your co-ordinated humanitarian response operation is effective, and that until such time as those indicators have been met, the camp should be treated as an emergency situation.

Answer guide: The Sphere challenge

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Introduction page one: "...first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering that arises out of conflict and calamity, and second, that those affected by a disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance". |
| 2 | Page 10/ 20 : under sources. |
| 3 | Page 23/ 32 : Guidance note 6: Initial assessment has an extensive list. |
| 4 | A review will reveal that none of the Minimum Standards are quantitative. |
| 5 | Annex 2 of the Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief lists three recommendations. |
| 6 | Page 121/ 138 : 2100 Kcal/day; 10-12% total energy provided by protein; 17% of total energy provided from fat; adequate micronutrient intake through fresh or fortified foods. |
| 7 | Page 191/ 223 : insulated shelter needs to be combined with sufficient clothing, blankets, bedding, space heating and calorific intake. |
| 8 | 225/ 301 , Guidance note 1. |
| 9 | Answer = 10.2 |

Calculating Crude Mortality Rates based on the data in question 9

Total the deaths for a given number of days
 $20+80 = 100$

Divide the total by the number of days over which data were gathered - this gives the average number of deaths per day.
 $100/7\text{days} = 14.28$

Divide this number by the size of the affected population.
 $14.28/14,000 = 1.02$

Multiply by 10,000 for a daily Crude Mortality Rate.
 $1.02 \times 10,000 = 10.20$

- | | |
|----|---|
| 10 | Page 243/ 281 : control of communicable diseases standard |
| 11 | Examples (2000 edition): Water chapter pages 21-22; Nutrition chapter page 77; Food chapter page 136-138; Shelter chapter page 180-181; Health chapter page 224-225. Examples (2004 edition): Common Standards chapter pages 28, 30, 36 and 38 |
| 12 | Pages 18, 22, 25, 27, 34, 35 and 39 / 56, 70, 73 and 75 |
| 13 | Nutrition chapter: General nutritional support to the population and nutritional support to those suffering from malnutrition. Further sub-division into the standards is also possible. |
| 14 | Page 163/ 40 (Food Aid Chapter, Human Resource Capacity and Training Standard 1 / Common Standard 7). Answer = most of the key indicators for this standard can be framed in terms of experiential qualifications.
Examples: aware of gender issues; assessment and programme design (for the a |

-
- particular responsibility level); resource management; safe stewardship; ability to advise members of the affected population on the safe and appropriate use and preparation of foods; the application of targeted feeding protocols
-
- 15** Shelter chapter: (a) people stay at home; (b) people are displaced and stay in host communities (note: more prevalent in urban situations or in industrialised countries, and could include mass shelter scenarios); (c) people are displaced and stay in clusters (that are separate from pre-existing human settlements)
-
- 16** (1) Code of Conduct, Annex I, point 4 – national governments; The Humanitarian Charter section 2 – humanitarian NGOs fill gaps when the duty holders are unable or unwilling to fulfil rights of citizens
 (2) Introduction, paragraph 1; The Humanitarian Charter, section 1 Principles
 (3) The Humanitarian Charter, section 3 Minimum Standards; The Code of Conduct point 9
 (4) From the Code of Conduct: true humanitarian organisations follow this code and are therefore independent, impartial, accountable, non-political and are motivated by alleviating human suffering.
-
- 17** Page 190-191/**219-220**: people spend more time indoors in cold climates, moreover the proportion of children and elderly is likely to be high due to the mortality from AIDS – another reason why the beneficiaries would be likely to spend more time indoors.
-
- 18** Health analysis standard 4: health information system monitoring and evaluation, key indicators, page 233/**259**.
-

Optional Exercise 3: Timeline of humanitarian events about 30 mins

Description

Discussion based around a PowerPoint timeline of key milestones in the history of Western humanitarianism

You can use this activity to:

- introduce either session 1 or 2 in Module 1
- set the Sphere handbook in context
- raise awareness of some key milestones in Western humanitarian history and explore other milestones and culture-specific histories
- discuss the contribution the Sphere Project has made to humanitarianism, particularly the Humanitarian Charter

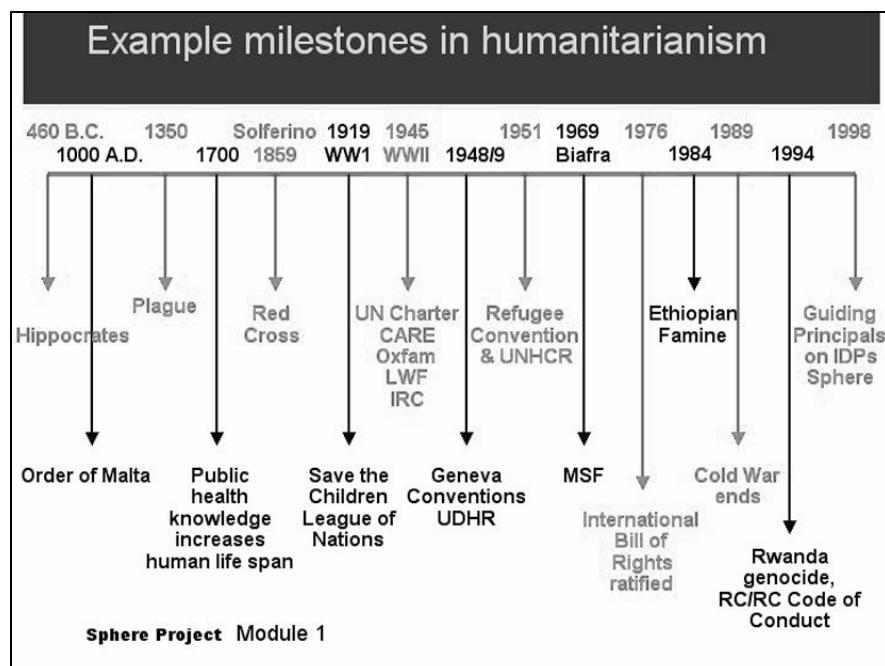
Preparation

Find the slide: 'Example milestones in humanitarianism' in the optional slides at the end of the slide package for Module 1

As this timeline focuses on Western humanitarian history, please try to supplement this exercise with questions and discussion about events that are important to the participants, either in the country where your training is occurring, or within a specific agency


Exercise

☐ Show slide: 'Example milestones in humanitarianism.'



This is a build slide. Click to reveal each milestone one by one.

Explain the significance of each milestone. You may want to refer to the Module 1 background note

 Allow up to 10 minutes.

In the time remaining, lead a discussion on recent milestones and their impact on the direction of humanitarianism. Discuss the events and elicit reactions or further milestones from participants

Ask whether any participants have experience of a specific event, and what it meant to them.

Write these additional events and milestones important to participants on a flipchart

Optional Exercise 4: On the spot evaluation exercise about 15-20 mins

Description

A practical exercise applying the Sphere handbook's standards and key indicators in a real and immediate setting

You can use this activity to:

- enable participants to distinguish the difference between standards and indicators in a quick and practical way

You can use this activity as:

- a quick exercise at any time during Module 1 for groups who are new to the language of the Sphere handbook

Preparation

Check out the toilets at the training venue before carrying out the exercise

If other people need access to the toilets, you may want to get permission from the venue's manager

Make sure that each team has a copy of the Sphere handbook

Exercise

Split the group into small teams

Ask them to find the following standards in the handbook: 'Excretia Disposal standard 1 and 2'.

Explain that:

- now we're going to apply these standards

Ask them to:

- walk around the venue
- evaluate whether or not the venue meets the Minimum Standards

Explain that:

- they have up to 10 minutes to assess the venue
- they should make a note of key indicators to support their decision

In the time remaining, call the group back together to review the activity.

Emphasise the mix of qualitative and quantitative nature of the standards and key indicators

Optional Exercise 5: Cross-cutting issues

90 mins

Description

Team work and group discussion on the incorporation of seven key cross-cutting issues into the Sphere handbook

You can use this activity to:

help people to gain a wider perspective beyond their own specialism

enable participants to incorporate into their work key areas including:

- the environment
- gender considerations
- protection strategies
- groups of particular vulnerability in disasters: children, older persons, disabled persons, people living with HIV/AIDS

Preparation

Photocopy sufficient copies of the handouts

Exercise

Introduce this activity

Explain that:

- the 2004 Sphere handbook takes seven cross-cutting issues into account
- these are summarised in the handouts you will look at in a moment
- it builds these issues into key indicators and guidance notes throughout the technical chapters
- this approach will help humanitarians to address these issues as part of their work

Explain that:

- the handouts were written by the individuals who led the cross-cutting working groups to revise the Sphere handbook in 2003


Divide the group into seven teams of roughly equal size.

You may want to aim to form each team on the basis of a same area of interest, for example disability. Give each participant the complete set of handouts, but ask each team to focus only on the handout that reflects their shared interest.

Ask the teams to:


- read the handouts
- find references in the technical chapters which reflect the considerations on their handout
- the index in the handbook can be helpful

Prepare for a short presentation of no more than two minutes on the key considerations for their cross-cutting issue and the references from the Sphere handbook they were able to find.

 Allow up to 45 minutes.

When the teams have prepared their presentations, call the group back together.

Ask each team in turn to make their presentations, and answer any questions from the group.

 Allow up to 2 minutes per presentation, followed by 1 minute of questions for each team. So, allow about 35 minutes in total for the presentations.

In the time remaining, lead a group discussion on the key issues arising from this exercise

Exercise 5: **Handout 1** (1 page)

Main messages on disability in Sphere training

Take disabled people into account

- There are disabled people in every population, including populations receiving emergency responses
- If disabled people are given very low status in the population, their health and safety will be at risk

Recognise their needs

Most disabled people in emergency conditions need additional support. This is likely to be provided by members of their immediate family. These family members will also need some special allowances in order to support the disabled person, for example:

- priority places in queues
- dwellings close to the disabled person

Take special measures

- Disabled people are extremely disadvantaged when queuing for food. Unless there are special provisions made they can become malnourished as a result. They also need to be within easy reach of the sanitation facilities but protected from the risk of sexual assault

Support disabled young women

- Disabled young women frequently become pregnant outside of any recognised relationship. In these cases the family may not openly acknowledge the pregnancy, but the woman still needs the extra support and rations given to other pregnant women

Address post-traumatic shock illness

- The number of disabled people amongst displaced populations can be lower than expected. This is because many are “left behind”. Many of the disabled people who arrive will have faced the extra trauma of this threat and thus may experience more post-traumatic illness

Address medical needs

- Disabled people will need to be provided with supplies of their standard medication for their existing condition. This is particularly important for people with existing mental health problems, who can become traumatised or anti-social if they miss their medication

Exercise 5: Handout 2 (2 pages)

Main messages on older people in Sphere training¹

Address mobility and isolation issues

- As communities flee, many older people, particularly the housebound, can be left behind without support. Many choose to stay, fearing a long journey or death in a foreign country, and are then vulnerable especially in times of violence. In the physical chaos associated with the early stages of an emergency, older people may be unable to struggle for food and resources, travel long distances or endure even relatively short periods without shelter.
- For older people in emergencies, isolation sharply increases levels of risk. Loss of family, carers and community ties can leave older people without support mechanisms. Abandonment, discrimination and self-exclusion are not uncommon. Older people need to be identified² and their situations assessed as early as possible in an emergency situation.

Identify specific health needs

- Reduced mobility, combined with distances to centralised health systems and water-points, can create significant barriers to older people's access to health services. Considering older people's specific health needs is critical to emergency planning.
- Chronic health, mobility and mental-health problems are factors that heighten vulnerability and make it difficult for older people to support themselves and contribute to the overall relief effort. The feelings of loss, trauma, confusion and fear familiar to all people in emergencies can be more damaging for older people. In regions hit by frequent disasters, famine or conflict, they may have suffered repeated personal loss, physical displacement and dislocation of social structures. They may need special support to recover emotionally and find new roles.

Adapt nutrition programmes

- Emergency food and nutrition programmes need to be adjusted for older people. For example, hard grains can be inedible because of dental or other health problems. Older people must be included in nutritional assessments and programmes.

Consider gender

- Older women tend to be more numerous in refugee populations, but age and gender barriers are more likely to exclude them from decision-making and resources than older men. Social and religious restrictions on women's movement, speech and public exposure can increase their vulnerability during emergencies and need to be considered in all assessments of, and responses to emergencies.

¹ Older people in disasters and humanitarian crises - publication available from HelpAge International hai@helpage.org and can be download from www.helpage.org

² The United Nations definition: those over the age of 60. Local definitions may vary and the affected population should be involved in identifying vulnerable older people.

Recognise the impact of HIV/AIDS

- HIV/AIDS multiplies the problems faced by older people. In communities affected by HIV/AIDS, older people care for those sick from the disease and children orphaned as a result of it. Older people need to be recognised and supported in this role and targeted with appropriate education and information about HIV/AIDS.

Recognise how older people can contribute

- As a result of emergencies, older people can have increased responsibilities for supporting their families, mobilising resources and caring for children, orphans and other dependants. Earlier emergency experience, coping strategies, traditional skills and local environmental knowledge are important in mitigating the impact of emergencies. Older people's abilities and knowledge base should be built on and their needs and contributions included in the response to emergency situations.

Focus on rebuilding livelihoods

- After emergencies, older people can face particular difficulties in accessing land and other scarce resources due to age discrimination or problematic inheritance laws. Exclusion from credit and income-generation programmes is common, and exacerbates their loss of independence, status and dignity. Rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes need to ensure older people have full and equal support in re-building their livelihoods.

Exercise 5: **Handout 3** (1 page)

Main messages on children in Sphere training

Identify and address children's needs

- Children have the right to participate, and are the best able to describe their needs. The most essential component is children's participation in the assessment, design and monitoring of services and even direct involvement in the provision of services. This is feasible and it makes a huge difference

Ensure suitable items are available

- Ensure gender and child-specific Non-Food Items are available, for example baby kits; girls' and boys underwear'. The choice of items should be informed by the local context and views from beneficiaries. A 'one size fits all' type programme does not necessarily meet the real needs, and will not be an effective and good use of resources

Address child protection

Emergency managers and field staff should be expected to meet certain competencies with regard to understanding how to address child protection issues related to:

- sexual exploitation
- extortion
- transactional sex.

The situation can be made worse by insufficient and or late intervention

Exercise 5: **Handout 4** (1 page)

Main messages on HIV/AIDS in Sphere Training

Ensure confidentiality

- people living with HIV/AIDS often suffer from discrimination and therefore confidentiality must be strictly adhered to and protection made available when needed

Establish a framework of support

A useful framework consists of three components:

Prevention, for example:

- Information-Education-Communication (IEC)
- safe blood supply
- universal precautions
- antenatal care services
- Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)

Care and Treatment, for example:

- treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Tuberculosis, and opportunistic infections.

Surveillance, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Implement programme systematically

- programmes should be implemented sequentially according to phase of emergency, for example ensure that basic HIV services such as safe blood, universal precautions, IEC materials, and basic health care are available before implementing VCT programmes

Recognise impact on families and communities

- this debilitating disease not only affects individuals but also their families and communities, as young people in their most productive years, especially women, are disproportionately affected - physically, psychologically and financially

Identify surviving population mix

As the pandemic matures and more people die, the demographic characteristics of the community change, resulting in a disproportionate number of:

- children, including orphans
- older people

these vulnerable groups require special attention and traditional relief programmes may need to be modified accordingly

Recognise the impact on a community's resilience

- the coping mechanisms and resilience of communities with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS are reduced and consequently the threshold for external stressors to cause an emergency may be lowered.
The amount of time a community needs to recover may then be prolonged.

Exercise 5: **Handout 5** (1 page)

Main messages on gender in Sphere training

Recognise impact of gender

- gender relations affect all basic entitlements and human rights, especially during emergencies

Recognise combination with other diversities

- gender cuts across other diversities, for example, class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, etc. For example disabled people are both male and female, but effects of disaster upon disabled women and girls are also constrained by gender relations and attitudes

Recognise marginalisation

- in most societies, if not all, women are marginalised or excluded from decision-making, social and economic rights. Thus during emergencies women and children often do not have access and control of resources to assist in survival. At the same time, they are often obliged to take on additional responsibilities for survival. They also frequently become more vulnerable to gender-based abuse and exploitation

Identify coping strategies

- at the same time that women and children may become increasingly vulnerable, they also have capacities and coping strategies that need to be accessed and supported

Build gender into assessment and planning

- gender analysis is not something that should be added on after the emergency response has started, but rather needs to underpin all assessment and planning

Build gender into decision-making

- programme decisions and responses through all phases should be based on a demonstrated understanding of the conditions of females and males and the different effects of disaster upon them

Exercise 5: **Handout 6** (1 page)

Main messages on the environment in Sphere training

Recognise links between environment and disasters

- there are strong links between the environment and disasters. The environment often contributes to hazards and the disaster's impact, but also the environment is affected by disasters. A disaster can arise from degraded environmental conditions, such as deforestation contributing to landslides

Recognise the disaster's environmental impact

The disaster itself, and/or its consequences such as displaced peoples and relief aid, can have negative impacts upon the environment, for example:

- clearing of forests for firewood
- soil contamination from polluted flood water
- the introduction, through relief aid, of plant species that out-compete indigenous ones

Build environmental issues into planning

- including environmental issues into disaster planning and operations increases the effectiveness of the programmes

Identify impact early

- It is critical but challenging to identify and prioritise the potential negative environmental impacts of a disaster before they actually occur. The Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment (REA) was developed as a 'best practice' to be used specifically in disasters

The REA approach provides a means to:

- quickly identify situations, such as conditions and actions pre-, during and/or post-disaster, which may result in negative impacts on the environment
- prioritise these negative impacts
- suggest interventions to prevent or mitigate these impacts
- gain a better overall understanding of the disaster

Identify links with the Sphere standards

- the linkages between the environment and the disaster are often related to people's basic needs and so they relate to Sphere standards. The REA has strong links to the Sphere standards, particularly as it contributes to improve cross-sector needs assessments with a strong emphasis on participation

Exercise 5: **Handout 7** (1 page)

Main messages for protection in Sphere training

Recognise the need for protection

- the provision of humanitarian assistance often takes place in situations in which human rights have been violated and people are in need of protection

Recognise the humanitarian role in protection

- protection is a concept underlying the provision of humanitarian assistance

Protect through action

- protection can also be captured, to some degree, in concrete measures, which seek to ensure respect for people's rights

Protect through assistance

- in the case of Sphere, as the handbook is primarily about assistance, we try to ensure that assistance is delivered with a "protection mindset." In several places, the handbook refers to protection measures

Protect through the Minimum Standards

- the Sphere handbook is underpinned by human rights. Moreover, the implementation of the Minimum Standards contributes towards the progressive realisation of a number of human rights

Protection through participation

- there is a human right to information and a human right to participate. Therefore it is crucial to ensure that the beneficiary population can fully participate in the design, programming, and implementation of humanitarian assistance

Links between protection and the standards

Example 1: Common Standards (assessment), guidance notes

Sectoral assessments:

- a multi-sectoral assessment may not always be possible in the initial phase of an emergency
- when individual sectoral assessments are carried out, extra attention needs to be paid to linkages with other sectors and to broader contextual and protection issues, in consultation with other actors and agencies
- in other words humanitarian assistance agencies need to be aware of protection issues

Example 2: Food Aid standards, guidance notes

- safe transport and security at distribution sites. Agencies should be alert to diversion of food by the military
- IHL provides that the parties to the conflict shall allow the free and rapid transport of food

Optional Exercise 6: In-depth critique of the technical chapters

Half a day

Description

This is a review activity where technical specialists review a technical chapter and decide whether the content would need to change for their own local situation.

You can use this activity:

- to enable technical specialists to learn about the standards and think about how they would apply the standards in their work
- to encourage participants to think about how well the standards apply in their own situation
- in a formal workshop
- with small groups as an informal learning session

Timing

- the timing will depend on the needs of the audience. However, the more time you can devote to this exercise the more effective it will be. We suggest half a day

Preparation

- ensure that each participant has one copy of the Sphere handbook

Exercise

Ask the group to work in teams of no more than 5 people.


- ask each team to work on one of the four or five technical chapters, ensuring that all chapters are covered by the teams in the group

Ask each team to organise their workplan according to time available:

- for example in a half day session, you may want to allow 2-2.5 hours for this activity

Ask each team to:

- review their chapter
- identify which parts of the chapter would need to be revised according to their local operating context
- plan a short presentation of no more than three minutes outlining the changes they feel would need to be made to their chapter, and why
- when the teams have prepared their presentations, call the group back together
- ask each team to present in turn, and encourage participants to ask questions

 Allow up to 15-30 minutes for the presentations and questions.

in the time remaining, run a group discussion to draw together the conclusions from this activity

if the groups identify quantitative indicators to change, lead a discussion in on whether this is appropriate. The aim is to ensure that there should be very few substantive changes as a result of this exercise

Optional Exercise 7:

The field school

Description

A one-day exercise where aid workers use the Sphere handbook to audit a project

Use this exercise to make the application of the Sphere handbook clear and concrete in a short time

Timing

Approximately 1 day

Preparation

- Choose a project that you are interested in studying and arrange a visit by you and a group of project stakeholders. Get advance permission and involvement from the project beneficiaries and authorities. Ensure that you have enough copies of the Sphere handbook

<h3>Exercise</h3>

Stage one: The afternoon before get ready

- start with a meeting of everyone who will participate in your field school
- ask a staff member to give a short briefing of the project to the group
- divide the group into teams of four. Assign each team a relevant Minimum Standard
- ask each team to discuss and agree 2 key indicators from that Minimum Standard relevant to the project. Discuss what data collection methods to use
- sub-divide the teams into pairs, each taking responsibility for one key indicator. Have each pair plan how they are going to collect data for that key indicator.

Stage two: The next morning project visit

- early in the morning travel to the project site. Ensure that each pair works with a representative from the project beneficiaries. Allow up to four hours for everyone to collect data on their key indicator.

Stage three: Lessons learned meeting

- after a few hours, return to your meeting room to review and analyse data in the original teams of four
- when ready, each team should give a short presentation on whether their Minimum Standard was met. After each presentation, discuss and share knowledge about local project practice. What works? What doesn't work?
- have a good facilitator lead a discussion. Ask: "What is good about this project? How close is this project to meeting the Minimum Standards? Can any action be taken to improve?"
- when all groups have finished, discuss findings, and reflect upon what was learned

Stage four: A wider learning process

- try inviting partner agencies to learn from and contribute to your field school. If your field school has been useful, propose that another project be audited next month.

Module 1

Background Note

You may want to read this:

- **before Module 1 to help you get more from the training**
- **after Module 1 as a reference guide to key points.**

Why is the Sphere Project important now?

Humanitarian challenges today include:

- the ever-increasing complexity of disaster response
- an increasing number of disasters
- an increasing number of humanitarian actors that define success in different ways, depending on who they are accountable to.

For several years there has been concern amongst NGOs with regards to quality and accountability.

Most would agree that the historic practice of humanitarian action is no longer sufficient, and that change must happen.

What is the Sphere Project?

The Sphere Project was created in response to this need for change as an open and collaborative initiative to improve the quality and accountability of disaster response.

It was conceived with the aim of promoting humanitarian action in an effective and accountable way.

The Sphere Project can be viewed as a process that has:

- argued for the universal right of all disaster-affected people to humanitarian assistance
- achieved NGO agreement on core principles and actions
- collected minimum programming standards for disasters from past lessons and experience
- achieved consensus on key technical indicators.

The Sphere handbook is the main output of this process. The process has also contributed to discussion within the humanitarian community on quality and accountability in humanitarian work.

Sphere is a significant process

Sphere is a significant process. Never before has there been such extensive and broad-based consultation in the humanitarian community.

Thousands of individuals, from over 400 organisations representing 80 countries have:

- contributed to the content of the handbook
- translated the handbook into over 20 languages
- participated in training or some other aspect of the process.

These individuals work for national or international NGOs, donors, national governments, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and academic institutions. The Sphere process has endeavoured to be inclusive, transparent, and globally representative.

The project secretariat

The Sphere Project is managed through an office with a small team who work as implementers, managers and facilitators on several tracks of activity, including:

- supporting the Management Committee
- awareness raising and communications
- facilitating the technical revisions of the handbook
- training on how to apply the handbook
- working with agencies who are piloting the handbook in their work.

Management and funding

The project is governed by a Management Committee consisting of broadly representative NGO networks. They include:

- each member of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR)
- two representatives of InterAction
- one observer each from Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) and International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

Donor governments include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

The member agencies of SCHR and InterAction have also contributed funds.

The Humanitarian Charter

The Sphere handbook begins with a Humanitarian Charter that provides some critical reflection on the common values and principles of the humanitarian community.

The Humanitarian Charter contains a commitment to promote the observance of fundamental humanitarian principles and an appreciation of the ethical obligations of humanitarians and their organisations. This reflects a belief in the principle of humanity, the primacy of the humanitarian imperative and the idea that our actions should be governed by that imperative.

The Humanitarian Charter states key principles, drawing on the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* and relevant parts of international law.

There are three fundamental principles:

- the right to life with dignity is based on international human rights law
- the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is based on the Geneva Conventions
- the principle of non-refoulement is based on international refugee law.

The Humanitarian Charter also:

- clarifies roles and responsibilities of various actors as described in international law
- outlines a commitment to achieving defined levels through the Minimum Standards based on the right to life with dignity
- acknowledges that the fundamental accountability of humanitarian actors is to those people we seek to assist

The common standards

Following the Humanitarian Charter in the 2004 edition of the handbook are eight core “process and people” standards that are relevant to each of the technical chapters that follow (note that in the 2000 edition of the handbook, these standards common to all sectors are found at the beginning of each technical chapter).

These standards outline common processes, such as assessments, response, targeting, monitoring and evaluation. There are also standards for working with people, including participation and aid worker competencies.

The technical chapters

The remaining sections of the Sphere handbook consist of a series of technical chapters that offer tools to apply the values and principles of the Humanitarian Charter in the basic life-sustaining sectors.

Those sectors are:

- water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion
- food security, nutrition and food aid
- shelter, settlement and non-food items
- health services.

The sectoral standards and indicators in the Sphere handbook represent those where a consensus was reached. They do not represent the complete range of technical standards in existence.

Minimum Standards and key indicators

In each technical chapter, tools are provided in the form of Minimum Standards and key indicators. Minimum Standards are universal goals that represent some of the components of a life with dignity for all people.

Key indicators help agencies measure whether or not a standard is being met in practical, observable ways.

There are various types of indicator in the handbook, primarily qualitative and quantitative.

Indicators are tools that we use to measure not just outputs, but also the outcomes and impacts of our programmes, and the processes we use to deliver those programmes. Using measurable indicators to quantify and qualify results is a key element in determining what has been achieved in a disaster response operation.

Indicators:

- facilitate programme design
- help to establish a clear record of the logic behind a programme
- provide a means of measuring quality
- present opportunities for collaborative and transparent projects.

When used appropriately, they not only help in managing information, but also assist in protecting an individual's right to quality services. Indicators are only one tool, but they can be useful in many ways.

Guidance notes and critical issues

- These include specific points to consider when applying the standards and indicators in different situations, guidance on tackling practical difficulties, and advice on priority issues. They may also include critical issues relating to the standards or indicators, and describe dilemmas, controversies or gaps in current knowledge.

How can I apply the Sphere handbook in my work?

A reference for every stage of the disaster response project cycle

The Minimum Standards, key indicators and guidance notes can be used as:

- assessment questions
- benchmarks for analysis
- goals for planning
- targets for monitoring and evaluation.

The Sphere handbook can also be used throughout the disaster management cycle, through preparedness, response, reconstruction, rehabilitation and mitigation.

As a technical reference tool

The Sphere handbook can be used as a technical reference manual to measure the performance of a project or programme, to learn whether various standard processes are present or not.

The quantitative key indicators can be used to check the level of services provided and to ensure that organisations working in the same sector are providing equivalent levels of services to the people affected by the disaster.

The Sphere handbook integrates good practice in the following cross-cutting themes: children, older people, disabled people, gender, protection, HIV/AIDS and the environment.

The technical rationale

Bias is one of the most significant issues in the quality of humanitarian work. Assessments in disasters often suffer from bias or inconsistency. Bias can be mitigated by using internationally agreed indicators.

A second issue is that assessment teams operate under pressure to balance speed with the accuracy of the information collected for assessment. Reference to the indicators and checklists in the Sphere handbook can ensure that key issues are not overlooked.

The Sphere standards and indicators can provide specific guidance on the formulation of objectives for programme planning, which should be based on an assessment and analysis of immediate humanitarian need as well as the broader context. Monitoring and evaluating projects enables strategic changes to be made and facilitates learning and improvements in future performance.

Opportunities for organisations

For a humanitarian organisation, several opportunities to improve quality and performance arise from the Sphere handbook.

The Sphere handbook can:

- assist with organisational self-assessment and improvement
- provide tools for project screening and quality control
- provide a component of human resource performance management
- contribute to a curriculum for a capacity building or training programme
- act as a useful tool for communicating with the public
- help in building an organisational ethos
- inform the design of programme support structures
- be a tool for developing partnerships.

Opportunities for the humanitarian community

The Humanitarian Charter reminds us of the rights of people affected by disaster and the roles and responsibilities of different actors in the humanitarian arena. It can be used, together with the Minimum Standards and key indicators, as an advocacy tool to generate resources or access to disaster-affected populations.

The Sphere handbook represents the basis for a common language between humanitarian organisations. Humanitarian agencies have different goals (for example donor agencies are accountable to a political process and NGOs are accountable to a number of defined stakeholders). The common goals delineated in the Sphere handbook can help overcome systemic constraints to co-ordination.

Why use the Sphere handbook?

Improved performance

Agencies and individuals are beginning to document a positive effect on performance from the application of the Sphere handbook. See the Sphere Project evaluation on the website www.sphereproject.org.

Sphere – a challenge for us all

The existence of the Sphere Project and its experience to date presents some challenging issues, including:

- Countries and their citizens who are affected by disasters must be actively involved in all discussions on humanitarian accountability.
- Humanitarian agencies, in the context of discussions on quality and accountability, must focus on their collective impact.
- The Sphere process has emphasised that we must analyse and understand the humanitarian context thoroughly before making programme decisions.
- The existence of Minimum Standards must encourage and foster capacity-building and participation.
- Time and energy are limited for new initiatives. Sphere must fit into current agency initiatives to mitigate the effects of additional work. The challenge is to place Sphere within individual agency systems so that it has a clear identity and is able to provide in the longer-term. This will require improvement in management practice and priority setting.

In conclusion, Sphere can be seen as a:

- process towards improved effectiveness in the humanitarian sector
- product (the handbook is one product of the Sphere process)
- declaration that populations affected by conflict and calamity have a right to assistance and protection
- transparent and public commitment toward a defined and measurable level of competence and delivery
- distillation of current global knowledge and experience into a practical tool for individuals, their organisations and the humanitarian community
- challenge to all actors in the humanitarian community for increased accountability and quality.

A colour brochure and 10-minute introductory video are available free of charge.

• **For more information, contact:**

• **The Sphere Project**

PO Box 372 / 17 Chemin des Crets / CH-1211 Geneva 19 / Switzerland

• Email: info@sphereproject.org

• Tel: +41 22 730 4501 Fax: +41.22.730.4905 / Website: www.sphereproject.org

Frequently Asked Questions

What is meant by Sphere's reference to dignity?

The principle of the right to life with dignity in the Humanitarian Charter is drawn from the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Life with dignity implies a level beyond provision of basic life-saving assistance, and is a powerful and important principle for the humanitarian system.

Every person has a different perception of what dignity means. Consequently, participation is essential for people to define a programme that helps them achieve their right to life with dignity. The importance of participation of the women and men from the disaster-affected population is emphasised throughout the handbook.

Is the United Nations involved with the Sphere Project?

Many UN technical staff participated in the development of the Minimum Standards and the handbook contains frequent references to WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and OCHA. Additionally, the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has endorsed the handbook and called upon all its members to use the handbook. Sphere standards and indicators are also used in the Inter-agency Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP).

Is Sphere useful if my organisation has limited funds?

Yes – Sphere is useful in two ways for organisations with a limited budget. First, many aspects of the Minimum Standards define good practice without requiring additional expense. Second, the Humanitarian Charter and the Minimum Standards can be used to lobby for funding. They are a powerful advocacy tool, helping to quantify what is needed to enable people to achieve a life with dignity.

We are just a small organisation, what if we can only reach 50% of standards?

Minimum Standards require a range of indicators (quantitative and qualitative) in order to be measured accurately. Some indicators may not be attainable by an organisation in a given context. This does not necessarily mean the organisation is inefficient or irresponsible. The gap should be justified by contextual factors, and used to lobby for additional resources.

Our organisation is government-funded. Will Sphere provide donors with a means of control?

In a context where all NGOs depend on funding and donors increasingly base funding on evaluations of agencies' performance, funding is fraught with political hazard. However, the Sphere Minimum Standards pose no greater opportunity for misuse by donors than any other funding criteria. Ideally the establishment of Sphere Minimum Standards as a coherent and objective set of funding criteria would help displace idiosyncratic or politically-motivated decisions.

What if the Sphere standards are higher than those of the local population?

In countries where vulnerability to disasters is high and/or where there is widespread poverty, humanitarian aid providers may find that local populations live below the Minimum Standards every day. However, the disaster-affected population may initially need more resources to survive as their coping strategies have been severely diminished and their health may be weakened through trauma and a lack of sufficient food or clean water.

Guidance notes throughout the Sphere handbook emphasise:

- that local norms must be part of the analysis before deciding what the assistance levels are
- the protection issues that arise from discrepancies between disaster affected populations and host populations.

Why focus on standards when grave issues such as lack of access to affected populations exist?

The Sphere Project was initiated for the specific purpose of improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian response. Contributors have never imagined that Sphere would address all the problems in humanitarian response. Dedication to enhanced quality does not amount to a panacea. Any attempt to protect people's right to life with dignity through the use of Minimum Standards alone would be insufficient and erroneous.

However, Minimum Standards are a key component of an accountability framework. Although Sphere was never intended to address problems of access to populations subject to political restrictions, it does provide a tool to raise awareness that all populations are entitled to the same services if they are affected by conflict or calamity. Ultimately, the fact that all people in disasters do not have access to a life with dignity, irrespective of why, is the main reason for the existence of Sphere.