

Sphere revision

revision@sphereproject.org

1) General Information on the consultation	
Location	<i>Cochrane, London, UK</i>
Date of consultation (please attach agenda)	6 June 2017 – Agenda provided below, please also refer to the attached PDF document
Host organization/individual	Evidence Aid
Sphere focal points involved (if applicable)	<i>N/A</i>
Revision lead authors or Sphere staff involved (if applicable)	<i>N/A</i>
Number of participants (Please attach list below)	<i>10</i>
2) Facilitators and note takers	
Name of facilitator(s), title, and organisation	Jeroen Jansen, Director, Evidence Aid
Name of note taker(s), title, and organisation	Claire Allen, Operations Manager, Evidence Aid
3) Report: Key results and learning points (maximum 10)	
1) Transparency of sources (providing references)	<p>The Sphere Handbook is one of the key documents providing minimum standards, indicators, key activities and thresholds to guide the implementation of humanitarian activities. The Chapter Authors (CA) and Technical Experts (TE) and others, dedicate time and effort to define the content of the Sphere Handbook. In the process of drafting the Sphere Handbook the CA and TE will likely have to balance competing interests and demands, while faced with political considerations. While compiling the minimum standards, indicators and other text the CA and TE probably gather and process large amount of data, information and evidence to ensure the validity of the Sphere Handbook.</p> <p>The main conclusion of this consultation was that the Sphere Handbook would gain significantly and provide added value to the sector by ensuring a high level of transparency on the sources of data, information and evidence used. One small first step towards a more evidence-based approach for the Sphere Handbook, would be the provision of references to support the decisions made in relation to all the minimum standards, indicators (including outcome indicators), key activities, thresholds and supporting text in the Health Action chapter and for the indicators (including outcome indicators), key activities and thresholds that are quantifiable in the other chapters.</p> <p>Often it will not be possible to provide references to robust scientific evidence, such as systematic reviews and randomised control trials, simply because they are not available, and identifying these knowledge gaps is important. Sometimes the information is based on expert opinion, consensus, evaluations, case studies or what is perceived as ‘best’ or ‘good’ practice. Even providing an indication of what kind of source has been used would improve the transparency of the Sphere Handbook and provide guidance for much needed advocacy on research priorities and related funding.</p> <p>Except for the Health Action chapter where full references are essential, The CA and TE could use the following three steps as guidance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the indicator (or outcome indicator), key activity or threshold

	<p>quantifiable?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If yes, what is the source? – Ideally, a complete reference to publically available information would be provided here. If this is not possible the CA or TE could indicate if the information used originates from: previous Sphere Handbooks (indicating version) / affected population consultation / single expert opinion (preferably with name and contact details) / expert consensus (preferably with contact details for person who provided the consensus) / best or good practice / Restricted access information (indicating if it was an evaluation, case study, guideline, fact sheet, policy, report, or other). 3. If the source is not available, there was consensus that the CA or TE should provide a narrative in the footnote explaining the origin of the information. <p>The following initiatives could assist the CA and TE in obtaining information or evidence related to health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO Disease Control in Humanitarian Emergencies - http://www.who.int/diseasecontrol_emergencies/en/ • WHO Humanitarian Health Action - http://www.who.int/hac/en/ • Cochrane Library - http://www.cochranelibrary.com/ • Evidence Aid Resources - http://www.evidenceaid.org/resources/ • MSF Reference Books - http://www.refbooks.msf.org/ • An evidence review of research on health interventions in humanitarian crises, Karl Blanchet and Bayard Roberts, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, October 2015. • Health in Humanitarian Crises, Lancet series, http://www.thelancet.com/series/health-in-humanitarian-crises • WHO Fact Sheets newly updated for 2017 and will be on the web site soon <p>Other interesting sources of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbell Collaboration Library - https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.html • ALNAP Humanitarian Evaluation and Learning Portal (HELP) - http://www.alnap.org/resources/ • 3ie - http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/evidence/ <p>The initiatives and sources provided above are not comprehensive and are only suggestions.</p>
<p>2) Integrating global standards, agreements and frameworks</p>	<p>The Sphere Handbook is one of the key standards within the humanitarian sector, the Sphere Project and the sector itself are part of or contribute to other global frameworks, standards and agreements. The organisations active in the humanitarian sector could greatly benefit from revealing how the Sphere Handbook contributes to these global frameworks, standards and agreements.</p> <p>Although humanitarian needs are increasing the funding available within the sector remains limited. By showing how the minimum standards, indicators, key activities and thresholds in the Sphere Handbook support or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework and the Paris Climate Agreement, humanitarian organisations will enhance their credibility and have an opportunity to extend and diversify their fundraising by applying for funding related to disasters risk reduction and management, sustainable development and climate change.</p>
<p>4) General observations and conclusions (if relevant) – maximum one page please</p>	
<p>The Sphere Handbook provides important guidance for the implementation of humanitarian activities. With every revision, the Sphere Project ensures a very inclusive process to strengthen the knowledge base and include the</p>	

latest developments related to the different chapters. If the humanitarian sector strives for efficiency, effectiveness, value for money and wants to ensure that interventions are beneficial, they need to know what works and what doesn't, they need evidence. Applying an evidence-based approach to humanitarian action, when and where appropriate, has the potential to improve the outcomes and impact, while reducing resource waste. The Sphere Handbook can and should play a key and crucial role in this and lead by example to move the humanitarian sector towards a more evidence-based approach.

An evidence-based approach towards humanitarian action and the Sphere Handbook, does not imply that every decision, activity and standard needs to be substantiated by robust scientific evidence. Expert opinion and other sources of information have a role, but only if deployed in a transparent and structured manner, while applying a clear and appropriate methodology and taking into consideration its relationship to other evidence. Making the Sphere Handbook evidence-based as much as possible, will not happen overnight, but will take several revisions and many years. Implementing the suggestions provided here related to references, would be one important step towards a more evidence-based approach.

Introducing the source for information provided would introduce greater transparency and accountability for the information provided in the Sphere Handbook and therefore ensure greater adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standard. An evidence-based approach strengthens at least four of the 9 commitments, as it contributes to increasing the appropriateness, relevance, timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian response, and by understanding what works and what doesn't it helps avoiding negative effects, while continuous learning gains from improving the evidence-base.

The references will also enable other actors to identify the gaps in knowledge and evidence. Missing or weak references are potentially an indication of gaps in the available evidence. This information is valuable to other organisations, such as Evidence Aid, to target their advocacy for research funding to stimulate and satisfy an increasing demand for evidence. The outcomes of the research will enable the Sphere Project to improve the evidence-base of the Sphere Handbook. In collaboration with research institutes, advocacy organisations and other key organisations, the Sphere Project is well positioned to inform the process of making the humanitarian sector more evidence-based.

5) List of participants

Name	Organisation	Area of expertise	Years of relevant experience	Email address
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Agenda

1. 09:00-09:15 Welcome
2. 09:15-09:30 Opening remarks
3. 09:30-10:00 Introductions
4. 10:00-10:30 Presentation: Review of Evidence Supporting the Sphere Standards, by Dr James Smith, Research Fellow at Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
5. 10:30-10:45 Break
6. 10:45-12:30 How does the last draft compare to the 2011 version?
7. 12:30-13:15 Lunch
8. 13:15-15:30 Identifying the main issues in the use of data, information and evidence.
9. 15:30-15:45 Break
10. 15:45-17:00 Recommendations

See also the attached PDF file