



Humanitarian standards for life with dignity

Sphere is a global community that defines, promotes and applies humanitarian principles and minimum standards to ensure lifesaving, protective and accountable response to crisis.

The Sphere Handbook is a guide for people affected by crisis, volunteers, and aid workers in front-line roles, as well as humanitarian organisations, community groups, trainers, donors, policy makers, academics, UN agencies, government actors and others.

Our vision is that crisis-affected people actively participate in decisions and actions which impact them; have what they need to survive and recover with dignity; and are resilient to future crises.

spherestandards.org

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Training team and participants of a Sphere workshop in Przemyśl, Poland, 23-25 May 2023. © FIHM

A message from our Director



The Influence of Sphere

I hope you will enjoy reading the following stories from across Sphere's network, which represent just a fraction of our collective work.

Not long after joining Sphere, I met one of my predecessors who demanded of me: *"Why? Why is Sphere still going? Why bother?"* Taken aback, I did not have a strong enough response at the time. In previous roles as an aid worker, I had always packed the Handbook along with my toothbrush as an essential item. Sphere for me was, and still is, a given requiring no

justification. In hindsight, I would respond that Sphere is necessary because the dignity of each person affected by humanitarian crises is of the utmost importance. Our collective humanity demands us to make sure the Handbook is in the heads and hands of those who are trying their best to be accountable to, and uphold the human rights of, those most in need of assistance. The outlook for quality in humanitarian action is bleak, and so Sphere and our ability to influence positive change is needed now more than ever.

The Humanitarian Charter calls us to uphold the freedom, equality, and dignity of every individual. But the ability to sanction perpetrators of crimes against humanity and abuses of human rights is wearing ever thinner. Responding to these unstable times, we as humanitarians are questioning our fundamental principles, and keep repeating the

mantra louder and more frequently that the system is not fit for purpose.

I believe that in the face of spiralling disorder, climate chaos and increased conflict, clear and relevant principles and standards are vital. The Sphere and HSP Handbooks were written and are revised by thousands of experts from across the sector. They are relevant and applicable in all contexts including Gaza, Haiti, Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and Yemen. Indeed, severe humanitarian crises are the reason why Sphere exists.

We cannot discard human rights as the foundation of dignity in our work, as people affected by crisis should never have to expect or accept substandard quality assistance. Retaining this foundation will be the continuing influence of Sphere.

William Anderson

1. Annual priorities

Sphere's priorities and associated key objectives, which are aligned with the mid-term review of its 2021-2025 Strategy, are:

A. The Sphere Handbook

- People responding to crisis decrease morbidity and mortality by basing decisions and actions on the principles and minimum standards in the Sphere Handbook;
 - The Sphere Handbook provides a 'common language' which enables greater accountability, efficiency and coordination.
-

B. Strategic Partnerships

- People responding to crisis have streamlined access to all humanitarian standards appropriate to their context and stage of response;
- The Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) is a leading authority on humanitarian standards.

C. Policy & Advocacy

- Humanitarian principles and quality and accountability standards are embedded in the policies and practices of organisations and authorities at all levels, from local to international.
-

D. Champions Network

- Sphere standards are locally driven, ensuring their application supports sustainable humanitarian outcomes;
 - Local and national actors are strengthened through their ownership and use of globally recognised humanitarian standards.
-



Environmental responsibility

Sphere is committed to calculating its CO₂ emissions baseline during 2024 and reporting on this information in our next annual report.

Sphere resources published in 2023

- **NEW: Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Climate Resilience in Humanitarian Action: A Sphere Unpacked Guide** (in English)
- **NEW: Using Sphere standards in urban contexts training pack** (in English)
- **NEW: Sphere Short Workshop Pack 2023** (in English plus an **abridged version in Ukrainian**)
- **NEW: How to use the Sphere Handbook** self-paced online course (in English, Ukrainian and Spanish)
- **LOCALISED: Sphere online training package** (into **Arabic**)
- **LOCALISED: Sphere Handbook Activity Cards** (into Portuguese)
- **TRANSLATED: The Sphere Handbook** (into **Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak** and **Romanian**)
- **TRANSLATED: Sphere in Context and for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (CAMEL)** (into **Spanish**)
- **TRANSLATED: HSP website** (into **Arabic, French** and **Spanish**)

Find all these and more on the **Resources page of the Sphere website**



Photorealistic mock-ups of the Polish, Slovak, Romanian and Ukrainian handbooks.

2. Progress on annual priorities

A. The Sphere Handbook

To increase awareness and effective use of the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards.

- i) Handbook translations initiated by the Sphere global community are an indicator of the continued relevance and demand for Sphere standards. At the end of 2023, the 2018 Sphere Handbook is available in 24 languages with a further nine in progress.
- ii) Sphere supported its trainer and focal point networks to deliver Sphere Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes in **Indonesia, Poland, Nepal, Thailand, Canada, Japan** and **Ethiopia**.
- iii) Working with the German Red Cross, Sphere completed development of a new training package, **Using Sphere standards in urban contexts**. This was **piloted in-person in Albania in May, launched online in July**, and delivered online in December.
- iv) Sphere released a new training package, **Sphere Short Workshop Pack 2023**, including guides for 2-hour, half-day, 1-day and 3-day in-person workshops; and 1x3-hour and 2x2-hour guides for online workshops. This includes scenarios based on Ukraine. The guides are available in English with the **2x2-hour online guide also available in Ukrainian**.
- v) Sphere released a localised Spanish version of the *How to use the Sphere Handbook* eLearning course ahead of the upcoming Spanish MOOC (Massive Open Online Learning Course). With over 3,500 registrations, the Spanish MOOC in early 2024 is set to be the largest Sphere training event ever.
- vi) Sphere's focal point in Brazil, **FIHM**, translated the **Sphere Handbook Activity Cards** into Portuguese; the first translation of this product.
- vii) The Sphere network submitted 139 Sphere-related events to the **Sphere Calendar**, demonstrating the power of the network to autonomously disseminate Sphere standards around the world.
- viii) Working with partners in Haiti and Germany, Sphere created **a new case study video** – the third of the **Sphere in Action series** – demonstrating how Sphere WASH standards helped to improve livelihoods of communities supported by Arbeiter-Samariter Bund (ASB) in Haiti. The video is filmed in French and English and is also available with Arabic or Spanish captions from **Sphere's YouTube channel**.
- ix) Sphere continued its partnership with the Universities of Portsmouth and Coventry in the UK, delivering two workshops for students participating in the annual SIMEX disaster simulation exercise.

Sphere Ukraine response

Sphere's **Programme for Ukraine and Eastern Europe** ran from July 2022 to June 2023. The programme objectives were: 1) translating the Sphere Handbook into Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian and Slovak; 2) growing the Sphere network in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Moldova; and 3) organising pilot workshops in each of these five countries.

During the second half of the programme, in 2023, Sphere completed the translations. Following eight training events in 2022, a further eleven took place in 2023, including three online events in Ukrainian.



Photo: Sphere Coordinator for Ukraine and Eastern Europe, Daria Pistriak, facilitates a Sphere workshop in Žilina, Slovak Republic, February 2023. © Sphere

Sphere developed a new introductory self-paced online course called *How to use the Sphere Handbook* and translated this into Ukrainian, along with the **learning platform user interface**.

The new training materials developed for the Ukraine were packaged as the **Sphere Short Workshop Pack 2023**, including guides and supports for trainers in English and Ukrainian.

Caritas Moldova and **SDI/ASSR** (Slovak Republic) joined Sphere's focal point network 2022. In 2023, Sphere completed its objective of 5 new focal points in Ukraine and neighbouring countries by welcoming **Tvoja Opора** for Ukraine, **Save the Children/HLA** for Poland and **World Vision** for Romania.

Sphere printed 2,500 copies of the Sphere Handbook in the new languages and shipped them to its new focal points, including 1,000 Ukrainian books to Tvoja Opора.

Sphere's programme culminated with a **Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop in Poland** in June hosted by Sphere's new country focal point, and supported by Sphere's focal point for Brazil/Portugal, **FIHM**.

In October, Sphere's Learning and Events Manager presented Sphere's Eastern Europe program at a 3-day 'Engine 2: Lessons Learnt from the Ukraine response' workshop organized by Save the Children/HLA.

2. Progress on annual priorities

B. Strategic Partnerships

To align and promote cross-sectoral humanitarian minimum standards.

- i)** Sphere continued to lead and coordinate the **Humanitarian Standards Partnership** (HSP), convening regular meetings with partners and promoting collaboration, including an in-person meeting at HNPW.
- ii)** Sphere worked with the HSP to complete a study of donor commitments to integrating humanitarian standards in their own work, and the degree to which working with standards is a requirement for their funding applicants. Work was also completed on the best-practices document for development and revision of humanitarian standards.
- iii)** Sphere released French, Spanish and Arabic versions of the **HSP website** which was released in English in late 2022. A successful marketing campaign for the French version attracted over 3,000 new visitors.
- iv)** Sphere supported and attended the global launch of the third edition of the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) handbook. The **Interactive Handbook** (IH) was upgraded to support, for the first time, multiple editions of the same handbook, and a new LEGS online course was onboarded to the **HSP Learning Management System**.
- v)** With nine additions during the year, at the end of 2023 the IH hosts 44 documents: **Sphere** in 15 languages; Minimum Standards for Camp Management (**MSCM**) in six languages; Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (**MERS**), Child Protection Minimum Standards (**CPMS**), Livestock Emergency Guidelines (**LEGS**) 3rd (2023) edition, and Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities (**HIS**) in four languages each; and Minimum Standard for Market Analysis (**MISMA**), LEGS – 2nd (2014) edition, Minimum Standards for Education (**INEE**), Standards for Crop-related Livelihoods in Emergencies (**SEADS**), and two Mapped themes in English.
- vi)** Sphere completed development of a greatly improved search function for the IH which can handle searches combining two or more concepts, e.g., 'climate children', and returns results ordered by relevance.
- vii)** Sphere implemented a small but notable enhancement to the IH whereby simple URLs, for instance handbook.hspstandards.org/legs, redirect to the latest version of the corresponding handbook (LEGS) in the language of the browser (if that language is available). This is a first step to making the Interactive Handbook 'aware' of its users and adapting the content displayed accordingly.

viii) With Artificial Intelligence (AI) now a major disruptor in the humanitarian sector, Sphere has been researching AI solutions/platforms and reaching out to other interested parties within and outside the sector. Sphere built a prototype of a Sphere chatbot on OpenAI GPT-3.5 using a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) approach which uses the Interactive Handbook's search webservice for retrieval.

ix) Sphere added a Ukrainian interface to the HSP LMS to coincide with the Ukrainian version of the *How to use the Sphere Handbook* online course. The platform now hosts 15 courses including translated/localised versions. Sphere also resolved all 43 issues associated with the LMS interface identified in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) audit conducted in December 2021.

x) As one of the three copyright holders of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), Sphere continued to work with Groupe URD and CHS Alliance to manage the revision process. Sphere attended regular Steering Committee, Management Group and Communications meetings; worked on and translated drafts; contributed actively to workshops in Geneva and Bangkok; and supported the design of new CHS digital and print materials.

Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS) now hosted by Sphere

The MERS, founded in 2007 through funding from USAID and originally coordinated by The SEEP Network, provides Minimum Standards, Key Indicators, Key Actions, Guidance and resources for market-aware humanitarian programming and market systems development (MSD) in emergency contexts.

In response to the SEEP Network's closure in 2021, the MERS Advisory Committee took decisive action to sustain these critical standards. The selection process identified Sphere as the best new host for the MERS, aligning with Sphere's commitment to humanitarian standards, stewardship of the **HSP**, and expansive reach in the global humanitarian assistance community. **Learn more about MERS and the new MERS hosting arrangements.**



2. Progress on annual priorities

C. Policy & Advocacy

To advocate for greater commitment to quality and accountability in humanitarian policy and practice.

- i)** An earlier unpacked guide, **Sphere in Context and for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning** (CAMEL), was released in Spanish.
- ii)** In consultation with its members and focal points, the Sphere team elaborated a Theory of Change which was subsequently approved by the Board. A team of designers was selected who will create physical and digital version of the ToC for public dissemination.
- iii)** Sphere continued to disseminate information, resources and materials on humanitarian standards and to advocate for their application globally. Sphere remains committed to producing most of its content in at least English, French, Spanish and Arabic, and encouraging and supporting the Sphere network to produce further translations and localised materials.
- iv)** Sphere added 15 articles to its news feed of which the most popular – read over 1,500 times during the year – was related to the launch of Sphere’s Nature-based Solutions guide.
- v)** Sphere continued to promote resources and events online and engage directly

with the network through social media platforms: Facebook, X, LinkedIn and YouTube. 2023 saw the emergence of a new community-run **Ukrainian language Sphere Facebook page** which joins the well-established **Sphere in Arabic** (10,000+ followers) Facebook page.

vi) Sphere added 33 public videos to YouTube during 2023 – comprising 11 new items plus translations – which between them attracted over 3,700 views. The most popular items were recordings of the 25 years of Sphere and NbS launch events which both took place during HNPW. In total, Sphere’s YouTube channel had 41,900 views during the year.

vii) Sphere ran nine mail campaigns during the year and continues to attract a impressive 14 new subscribers each day to maintain a level of around 100,000 with turnover of 5%.

viii) Sphere staff and Governing Board members were invited to present, join panel discussions, facilitate workshops or otherwise represent Sphere and the HSP at various events including with Van Hall Larenstein University, Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, IFRC Urban Collaboration Platform, Caritas Internationalis General Assembly, Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA), European Humanitarian Forum, ECOSOC, Groupe URD, ALNAP, CWSA, ICVA Annual Conference, ICVA’s coordination meeting

with the Sudan INGO Forum mission, OCHA, CALP Network, IFRC-hosted Nature-based Solutions event, H2H General Assembly, Elrha, ECHO's Humanitarian Forum, and the CCCM, Shelter, Food Security and Health Global Clusters.

ix) Sphere worked with several focal points to design and promote a new survey 'How do you use the Sphere Handbook?' in eleven languages. Analysis of the results in 2024 will help Sphere to understand its global impact and prioritise activities.

x) Sphere practitioners shared their success stories, including from Bolivia, Ukraine and Argentina, where Sphere's new focal point, **Fundación delALTO**, worked with indigenous communities of the Argentine Gran Chaco to help them exercise their rights and contribute their ancestral knowledge to disaster risk management.

Further testimonial evidence of the impacts of Sphere is presented in the **Sphere Network Updates** section on page 20.

xi) Sphere commissioned a study, *How do Institutional Donors and UN Agencies Reference Humanitarian Standards?* The findings confirm that most institutional donors recommend or encourage adherence to Sphere, HSP and/or other humanitarian standards.

Launch of Sphere's new Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Guide

Developed by Sphere, **IFRC**, **IUCN** and **FEBA**, with the support of **SOMN** and informed by the contributions from the **PEDRR**, **EHAN** and **Sphere focal points** networks, the first **Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience in Humanitarian Action: a Sphere Unpacked Guide** was launched in May.

The IUCN defines Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits".

Sphere's new guide is groundbreaking because it is written for humanitarians; complementing information already in the Sphere Handbook and offering practical guidance on how to integrate NbS into humanitarian programmes. Look out for further roll-out of this important book during 2024 and beyond. **Learn more about the NbS guide.**



2. Progress on annual priorities

D. Champions Network

To inspire and support local ownership of humanitarian standards.

i) Sphere welcomed a record-breaking ten new focal points during 2023 – in Taiwan (**Taiwan Aid**), Ukraine (**Tvoja Opora**), the Philippines (**DRRNetPhils**) Poland (**Save the Children/HLA**), Bolivia (**APGRB**), Sri Lanka (**MFCB**), Mauritius (**180 Degree**), Romania (**World Vision**), Argentina (**Fundación delALTO**) and Spain (**Asociación de Voluntariado GEA**) – to its growing global network.

ii) Sphere organisational membership expanded with seven new member organisations including **Nabd Development and Evolution Organization (NDEO)** in Yemen, **Abs Development Organization for Woman and Child (ADO)** in Yemen, and **Pak Mission Society (PMS)** in Pakistan. Sphere had 42 individual members in 2023.

iii) **Fourteen new trainers** – from Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, Indonesia, Portugal, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom – were welcomed to the community of **listed Sphere trainers**.

iv) Sphere's new Network and Membership Manager conducted individual interviews with existing focal point organizations to better understand their needs and

expectations. As a result, work started on a Sphere Welcome Pack, and a new **Intellectual Property page** was added to the Sphere website.

v) Sphere continued to support local ownership of standards by providing grants, guidance and technical assistance to locally led focal point activities, including:

- Sphere ToT, webinar and **launch of the Bahasa Indonesian version** of the 2018 Sphere Handbook with **MPBI** (also see **Sphere capacity building reaches over 1,000 people in Indonesia** on page 24).
- Translation of the Handbook into Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian by **Sphere's focal point in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, to be completed in 2024.

vi) In addition, Sphere supported focal point representatives from Colombia, Nepal and Brazil to attend the **HNPW in Geneva** and CHS revision steering and writing group meetings.

vii) Sphere continued to enable international cooperation around humanitarian standards by establishing a new regional partner in Europe and maintaining strong partnerships with its partners in Africa and Asia.

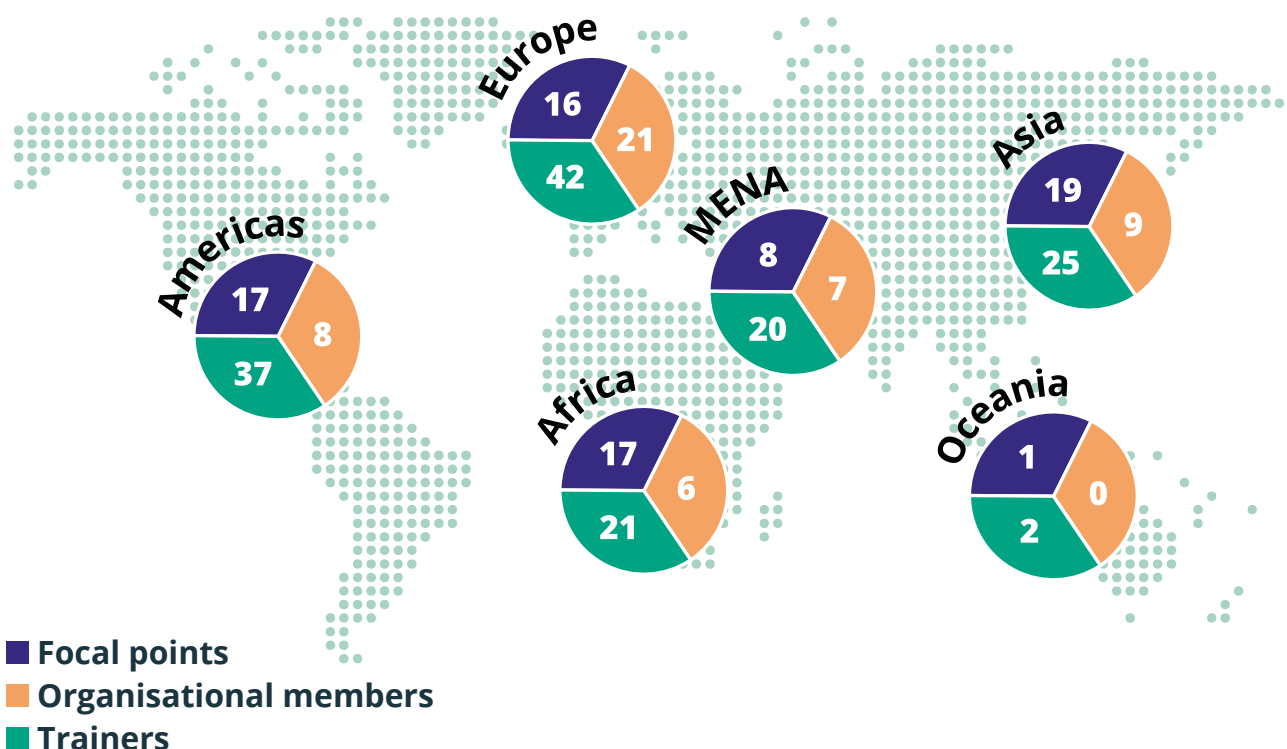
- **Europe:** See **New regional partner for South-Eastern Europe** on page 14 to learn about DPPI SEE. Save the Children, acting through their **HLA Eastern Europe Regional Centre**, are also commended for bringing together focal

points and trainers in Ukraine and other countries neighbouring Ukraine (see **Sphere Ukraine response** on page 7).

- **Africa:** Sphere supported the second development phase of the **Africa Humanitarian Standards Network** (AHSN), an initiative led by Sphere and **INEE** focal points in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Niger and Zimbabwe. The AHSN network brings together humanitarians from across Africa to share learning, conduct research and further build Sphere and **Humanitarian Standards Partnership** (HSP) networks in the continent.
- **Asia:** Sphere supported a Sphere Training of Trainers (ToT) event in Bangkok – alongside a CHS revision

consultation, a Safeguarding workshop and a regional focal point gathering – with Sphere regional partner, **CWSA** (see **Updates from Sphere’s regional partner in Asia Pacific** on page 28).

viii) Sphere hosted several online meetings including a 6-month catch-up for French MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) graduates, an experience-sharing event titled **Integrating Humanitarian Standards into Disaster Simulation Exercises**, and two Town Hall sessions – one for members and one for focal points – to update the network and provide a space for interaction. Two different AI technologies for live machine interpretation were tested during the Town Halls.



New regional partner for South-Eastern Europe

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe (**DPPI SEE**) is an initiative owned by ten national civil protection authorities which aim to collaborate on regional approaches to disaster management. DPPI SEE was established in the year 2000 and has been strengthening regional cooperation in disaster management through various types of capacity development activities ever since.

Prior to DPPI SEE's recognition in 2023 as a Sphere regional partner, the organisation partnered with the Sphere office between 2019 and 2022 to deliver a **Sphere ToT programme for South-**

Eastern Europe which included six online and in-person events.

In October 2023, DPPI SEE delivered an ambitious full-scale disaster simulation exercise called **DPPI FLEX 2023** involving ten countries, which was supported and attended by Sphere's Learning & Events Manager as well as trainers and other focal point representatives acting as participants, trainers and observers.

Read the transcript of an interview with Vlatko Jovanovski, Head of DPPI SEE Secretariat: **Civil protection meets humanitarian standards: DPPI SEE's journey to becoming Sphere's regional partner for South-Eastern Europe.**



DPPI FLEX 2023 participants, managers and observers. © Felicity Fallon

Key events

Sphere actively participated at OCHA's **Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks (HNPW)** to advocate for quality and accountability in humanitarian action. In addition to running a stall in the exhibition area, Sphere hosted two events and was involved as panellists in another two. Sphere's **25-years of Sphere** in-person event (with 100 participants), and the hybrid **launch of Sphere's new Nature-based solutions unpacked guide** (250 participants) were two of the best-attended events of HNPW 2023. Sphere continued to support the participation of national and local organisations in global policy making processes by inviting focal point representatives from Colombia and Nepal to HNPW. Sphere held in-person Governing Board and HSP meetings on the fringes of this event.

Sphere attended **AidEx** (in Geneva for the first time, previously in Brussels) as an exhibitor, sharing a stand with the University of Algarve Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences – which offers Sphere courses in English and Portuguese. This first venture for Sphere's participation at AidEx was a great networking success. The event is an effective and efficient way to increase visibility of the Sphere network and discuss in-person with public and private sector actors with an interest in humanitarian action.

The **Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA)** is a Berlin-based think tank which engages in independent analysis, initiates



Sphere Board Member Mel (Mercy Malaysia), Focal Point representative Tooba (CWSA) and Trainer Aydée at Sphere's stall in the HNPW exhibition area.



Ana Pinto de Oliveira and Tristan Hale at Aidex 2023. © Sphere

debates, and spreads the word about humanitarian action and principles. Sphere's Head of Communications and Learning Services was invited to represent Sphere at CHA's annual conference, *Tackling power imbalances in humanitarian action – with technology and locally led management?!*, and was a panellist for the closing takeaways and reaction round (see **conference review**).

3. Reflections and insights

5.1. Sphere in Turkey: During the final months of 2023, Sphere and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRC) agreed a new partnership to promote Sphere in Turkey. Under this agreement, IFRC/TRC will recruit a Sphere Senior Officer based in Ankara to manage and implement the project. The programme will be managed by TRC and the Sphere Geneva office contracted to provide technical assistance.

Against the backdrop of a continuing sector-wide inability to attain Grand Bargain commitments around localisation (see *no increase in direct funding to local actors*¹), Sphere is excited about the partnership model of this programme in which 90% of resource allocation decisions will be made in Ankara, and the ambitious set of deliverables will no doubt be one of Sphere's highlights of 2024.

5.2. Chronic crises: Ukraine (refer to **Sphere Ukraine response** on page 7) continued to capture significant political attention; and earthquakes in Syria and Turkey and events in Gaza were also widely reported. In view of these high-profile crises, the Sphere secretariat continues to attempt to divide its attention and resources more equally, and is reminded of violence, poverty and displacement in Burkina Faso; and

the LAC migrant and refugee crisis, to mention just two examples, by our dedicated members, focal points and trainers around the globe.

5.3. Speaking up for human rights: On 12th October, only four days after the start of the war in Gaza, Sphere issued a press release of our collective shock: *"Sphere condemns the mass killings, summary executions, hostage taking and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including the wanton destruction of health and medical facilities and schools. We call upon all sides for restraint, to stop the slaughter and the ongoing grave breaches of international law. To seek peaceful resolution through action that prevents or alleviates human suffering, there must be no further attacks against civilians nor people who are there to assist vulnerable people, including humanitarian workers and UN peacekeepers."*

5.4. Academia outreach: As of the end of 2023, a group of three masters' students at the Geneva Graduate Institute are undertaking an applied research project in partnership with Sphere into 'How can we ensure that the next generation of humanitarians complete their studies with a sound knowledge of humanitarian principles and standards, and how to

¹ **Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report 2023**, Metcalfe-Hough, V. et. al., 13 June 2023

apply them?'. Based on their work and the recommendations in their report, Sphere expects to significantly deepen its collaboration with academic institutions in the upcoming year.

A key takeaway from 2023 is that Sphere is not only taught in Humanitarian and Development faculties. *“As engineers and scientists, we know there is a lot we can do to help the humanitarian sector, whether that’s through new programming, partnerships or practical solutions,”*² explained Dr. Jane Goodyer, Dean of Lassonde School of Engineering, Canada. As noted in the **AidEx** section on page 15, Sphere is also taught in the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Algarve.

While the student consultants will focus on connecting with universities offering humanitarian degree programmes, it will be interesting to discover in which other contexts students are being introduced to Sphere and the humanitarian sector.

5.5. Strong network growth: 2023 was a strong year for growth and engagement of the focal point network. Evidence of engagement includes the high number of **ToT events organised by the network**, and other locally led activities presented

in the **Sphere Network Updates** section from page 20. The high growth is partly attributable to the dedicated outreach activities of Sphere’s Network and Membership Manager and is also evidence of continuing strong demand for and interest in Sphere resources.

With support from the Sphere office, Sphere’s focal point in Niger, Adamou Iliassou, delivered a full **ToT programme in Burkina Faso in 2020**. At that time, there were no listed Sphere trainers in Burkina Faso. Today, there are five, and between them they submitted eight Sphere training events to the Sphere Calendar during 2023 bringing the total number of **recorded events in Burkina Faso** to over 25. With the continued support, encouragement and enablement of the Sphere office, we look forward to recording how the eight ToTs in 2023 translate into 10s of new trainers, 100s of workshops, and 1,000s of people trained over the next few years.

5.6. Towards nominal membership fees: At their meeting on 28 April, the Sphere Governing Board agreed in principle to pursue a target of nominal or signatory-only membership fees only by 2027. Membership fees accounted for 16.4% of revenue in 2023, so new funding

² **Lassonde hosts Humanitarian Response Network of Canada’s Triannual Meeting and Sphere Training**, 21 September 2023

3. Reflections and insights

sources must be secured to replace this income. Sphere started moving towards this target already by significantly reducing membership fees in 2021.

Sphere is, and always has been, a positive force for levelling-up within the sector by providing a set of standards that is **accessible to everyone**. The Sphere Project was initially governed by and financially dependent on its founding members but has incrementally diversified its funding sources, and has welcomed national and local organisations to its board since 2018. A complete separation of membership and revenue is the desired and logical destination after 30 years of travel.

5.7. Rights, knowledge and experience:

Sphere's highly open-source approach with its focus on dissemination among national and local organisations for a levelling-up effect is not without its challenges.

It is more difficult to reach and engage with tens of thousands of local and national organisations compared to

a few hundred international ones. Challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, and mistrust of, or disinterest in, concepts and ideas originating from the Global North.

The guidance in the Sphere Handbook is based on three pillars: rights, evidence and experience. But despite the Geneva Conventions being signed by 196 states, in some contexts human rights are viewed as a top-down 'Western' construct which can cause resistance to Sphere if mentioned as foundational.

In places where Human Rights are mistrusted or disregarded, Sphere must maintain the credibility of its Handbook as a distillation of the knowledge and experience gained by front-line aid workers throughout the world. And while the standards themselves are globally agreed and applicable, Sphere should increase its efforts – including by using modern/emerging technologies where appropriate – to gather, collate and disseminate context-specific guidance, especially where impediments exist.

Sphere in numbers

During 2023 there were:



139,595 visitors to the Sphere and HSP websites



44,318 consultations of the Interactive Handbook



38,705 downloads from the Sphere website



41,900 views on the Sphere YouTube channel



6,549 new registrations on the learning platform



5,298 Sphere Handbooks shipped by our publisher



139 Sphere-related events added to the Sphere Calendar



82 accessibility issues resolved on Sphere platforms

As of 31st December 2023, Sphere has:



100,105 Sphere newsletter subscribers



44,023 social media followers



32,946 installs of the HSP App



145 listed trainers



78 focal points and regional partners



51 full members



44 documents on the Interactive Handbook



9 partners in the Humanitarian Standards Partnership

4. Sphere Network Updates

Sections 1, 2 and 3 present the activities in which the Sphere Geneva-based team played an active supporting or enabling role. Because of the open-source and organic nature of the Sphere movement, Sphere-related activities are mostly community-led with minimal assistance from the Sphere office.

Stories and updates from the network are always welcome.

For the following section, members and focal points were invited to submit a Sphere-related achievement or a summary of their activities during the year. This handful of submissions is by no means an exhaustive account of global Sphere activities but presents some of the kinds of Sphere-related activities happening around the world every day.

Africa

First Sphere ToT in Ethiopia well received

The collaborative initiative of the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia (SOS CVE), and the IOM-led Accountability to the Affected Population Working Group (AAP-WG) in Ethiopia organised eight Sphere training events between October and December 2023: an

online launch, five in-person workshops in Adama and Addis Ababa, a pre-ToT webinar, and a Sphere ToT in Adama.

91 people from 33 organisations, including UN agencies and international and national NGOs, participated in the five workshops which were focused on holistic application of Sphere including PSEAH and the CHS.

14 people (5 female) were selected from these 91 participants to attend what we believe to be the first Sphere ToT in Ethiopia, from 11 to 15 December.

"[The Sphere ToT] was perhaps one of its kind from several international and local training events I have attended. It was well planned, organized, and delivered wonderfully. That really kept the participants awake and demanded them to engage positively", one ToT participant noted.

The workshops were facilitated by Dr Amha Ermias and administered by Mr Ayenew Bekele (Country Coordinator, DRA) and Mr Melkamzemed Wudassie (National Programme Officer – M&E, IOM). Early feedback from participants indicates that they have already started applying the learning in their programmes, by promoting quality and ensuring accountability to the affected population.

From Dr Amha Ermias, Sphere trainer and multi-disciplinary humanitarian and development specialist

Sphere ToT Graduates in Ethiopia, December 2023. © SEGEL Consult



Collage of gifted Sphere Handbooks in Yaoundé. © Josiane Naoussi

The Sphere Handbook multiplier effect in Cameroon and Chad

Sphere ran a French language **Sphere MOOC during 2022**. Two volunteers from among the participants stepped forward to facilitate the live feedback session. To say thank you, we sent each of them a box of 20 Sphere

Handbooks. What happened next far exceeded any reasonable expectations from this simple gesture.

In Cameroon, Josiane Naoussi, an intern with Plan International Cameroon, offered her Handbooks to staff of several NGO and UN agency offices in Yaoundé, including one organisation that subsequently ordered another 200

4. Sphere Network Updates

Handbooks to support staff training. Samuel BEKAYO sent us this message and photo from Chad.

“Dear colleagues, I hope you're doing well. Thank you [for the Handbooks]. I hope that you continue this noble mission: to share this useful knowledge which saves the lives of people affected by different crises – and to keep this information up to date. Courage!

“For my part, I am doing well. I would like to share with you this photo of the Sphere

workshop I held with my partners. It was a great moment of sharing with many NGO representatives who had heard about Sphere standards but did not fully understand them. According to their recommendations, I must repeat the same session involving all the field staff!

“Thank you for sowing this knowledge which will spread very quickly and usefully.”

From Samuel BEKAYO, Senior Programme Assistant, UNHCR, and Sphere MOOC volunteer facilitator



Photo: Sphere workshop in Chad. © Samuel BEKAYO

Asia

Sphere standards in action in Bangladesh

In June 2022, northeastern Bangladesh experienced severe flooding, impacting over 7.2 million people due to heavy rainfall in India's Cherrapunji region. With 94% of Sunamganj and 84% of Sylhet underwater, the disaster resulted in a substantial \$230.8 million losses, affecting crops, animals, and essential infrastructure.

Responding promptly to this crisis, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) initiated a focused plan to aid **300,000 affected individuals**, in collaboration with the IFRC. Their approach integrated immediate relief with long-term recovery, guided by Sphere principles and guidelines.

In the critical **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion (WASH)** sector, BDRCS's response adhered meticulously to Sphere standards. Over 175,000 litres of safe drinking water were distributed, 303 water sources disinfected, and 13 tube-wells installed to mitigate waterborne diseases. The construction of 1,300 emergency toilets and a comprehensive hygiene promotion effort reaching 150,000 people underscored their commitment to Sphere's preventive measures against outbreaks.

BDRCS volunteer in Companiganj, Sylhet providing PFA service to flood affected people. © IFRC, BDRCS



Addressing **food security**, BDRCS distributed essential supplies to over 164,000 individuals, demonstrating a commitment to Sphere's core emphasis on ensuring access to sufficient food during emergencies.

In the **health** sector, BDRCS prioritized well-being, offering emergency medical assistance, psychosocial support, and contributing to the renovation of a crucial *Mother and Child Health Center* all in line with Sphere guidelines.

Shelter provision was a central focus of BDRCS' response. Tarpaulins were swiftly distributed to 16,000 individuals, emergency shelter toolkits provided to 1,500 households, and conditional cash grants facilitated repairs for 1,200 households. These actions, aligning with Sphere's standards for safe and dignified housing, addressed immediate needs while laying the groundwork for long-term recovery.

From Md Mehedi Hasan, Sphere trainer and focal point representative for **Sphere Community Bangladesh (SCB)**

4. Sphere Network Updates

Sphere capacity building reaches over 1,000 people in Indonesia

The Indonesian Society for Disaster Management, or Masyarakat Penanggulangan Bencana Indonesia (MPBI), Sphere's focal point in Indonesia, undertook a series of initiatives to strengthen humanitarian response in Indonesia through the promotion and application of the Sphere Handbook.

These efforts address the critical need for continuous capacity building among humanitarian workers and volunteers.

1. Sphere Contextualising and Development of the Sphere Road Map for Indonesia Workshop (Dec 2022), uniting 41 participants from 20 organisations, followed by translation and localisation of Sphere training materials (Dec 2022 to Mar 2023) by a taskforce formed during the workshop.



Sphere workshop in Indonesia. © MPBI

2. Sphere Awareness Webinar Series

(Nov 2022 to Jan 2023): Following the earthquake in Cianjur in November 2022, MPBI worked with ten other humanitarian organisations to organise a series of webinars introducing the Sphere Handbook. Focus topics included shelter, WASH, PSEAH, menstrual health management, education in emergencies, and the CHS. Each session attracted over 100 participants, and recordings were viewed over 2,000 times.

3. Sphere Handbook Launch Bahasa Indonesia version

(Feb 2023): MPBI officially launched the Bahasa Indonesia version of the 2018 edition of the Sphere Handbook, featuring distinguished speakers and panellists from government agencies, NGOs and UN bodies as well as the ED of Sphere and members of Sphere's Governing Board. The online launch, attended by over 160 people, focused on collaborative approaches to disaster management and humanitarian action.

4. Working in collaboration with Rumah Zakat, University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre (MDMC), and others, **MPBI delivered several other Sphere workshops**, including three basic trainings and ToTs in Bandung City in February and Yogyakarta in July.

Overall, these initiatives reflect a concerted effort to embed Sphere standards within Indonesia's humanitarian landscape, ensuring a more coordinated, effective, and accountable response to disasters.

From Dr Avianto Amri (Mr),
Disaster Management Specialist
and Sphere trainer

Advancing locally led inclusive humanitarian response: ASB Sphere-driven initiatives in Indonesia and Timor-Leste

In 2023, the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) Regional Country Office in Indonesia continued its efforts to enhance inclusive preparedness and humanitarian response at the local level. ASB promotes the non-discrimination principle as stated in the Humanitarian Charter and focuses on building the capacities of national and local humanitarian actors, including Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). The localisation of Sphere into the local context was integrated across ASB projects to promote and generate knowledge related to Sphere with a focus on disability inclusivity. ASB presented Sphere through various strategies and activities.

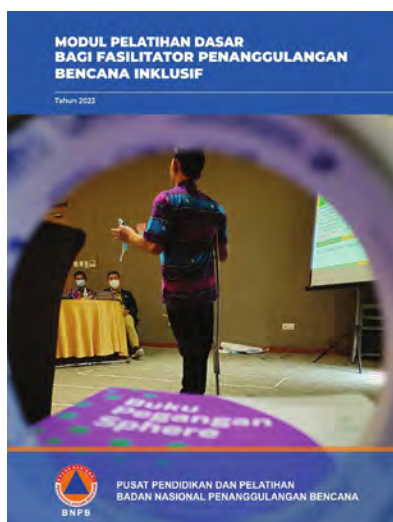
4. Sphere Network Updates

Supported by the Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Network and the German Federal Foreign Office in **Indonesia:**

1. Consultative translation of the **Humanitarian Inclusion Standards** (HIS) – an HSP standard – and the IASC Guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action into Bahasa Indonesia, complementing the Sphere Handbook translation previously completed by MPBI.

2. Integration of Sphere and HIS into the national curriculum and training

module for facilitators of inclusive disaster management, in collaboration with the Indonesia NDMA Training Center, and NGO and DPO representatives. The development and testing of these products created opportunities for collaboration between persons with disabilities and humanitarian actors. The new module was promoted during Indonesia's national DRR commemoration in October in a training event attended by 20 participants (8 female) including 8 persons with disabilities. One of the trainers was a person with disability.



Left to right: Sphere, HIS, and IASC guidelines in Bahasa version are used during training on inclusive WASH for local DPOs and OPDs. ©ASB 2023; A person with a disability facilitates a training on Sphere and HIS for NGO and OPD representatives – on the cover of a Basic Training for Inclusive DM Facilitators training guide. ©ASB 2023; A female participant reads from the Sphere Handbook during training for Inclusive Disaster Response facilitators as part of Indonesia's national DRR month. ©ASB 2023

3. ASB conducted trainings on inclusive WASH response, including humanitarian ethics and Sphere principles, for local OPDs and NGOs across Indonesia between April and November. Additionally, this initiative aimed to test the Emergency Response Team (ERT) training plan and media for use in capacity building during disaster and crisis situations. There were 40 participants of which 14 were female and 32 were persons with disabilities.

with disabilities, represented the Autoridade Protesaun Civil (APC) and AHP focal points: World Vision, Plan International, Oxfam, and RHTO.

From Ary Ananta (Mas Anang), Sphere trainer and WASH Advisor for ASB Global Program (a member of Aktion Deutschland Hilft which is a Sphere member and focal point for Germany)

Supported by OXFAM and the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) under the Disaster Ready Project in **Timor-Leste**:

1. Sphere and HIS ToT programme for local partners of AHP members in June: ASB organized interactive and participatory face-to-face 4-day Sphere and HIS training for trainers (24 participants of which 6 female and 5 persons with disabilities).

Training of Trainers in Tokyo refreshes the national Sphere trainer community

Sphere's focal point in Japan, the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), regularly provides Sphere training for humanitarian and disaster responders. However, with fewer than a dozen active trainers involved in workshops and other advocacy activities, there was a need to bring in more individuals to facilitate more training events and broaden the scope of our outreach activities.

2. Graduates were offered further mentoring and went on to facilitate training for local government and NGO staff. Notably, Orlando do Carmo de Araujo from World Vision, Noé Gaspar Tilman from Mata Dalan Institute (MDI), and Fresilda Nofina Maia from RHTO, promptly put their new knowledge into practice during in a 2-day Sphere and HIS workshop for government representatives in the Tetum language on 19 and 20 June in Dili. 23 participants, including 4 persons

Sponsored by Japan Platform and with advice from the Sphere secretariat, we implemented a 4-day in-person ToT in Tokyo from 5 to 8 December 2023, facilitated by experienced trainers Go Igarashi (Program Manager, CWS Japan), Nahoko Harada (Professor, Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Science and

4. Sphere Network Updates



ToT participants in Tokyo. © JANIC

Engineering in Health Systems, Okayama University) and June Okanoya (President, Japan First Aid Society).

In this first in-person training effort since COVID-19, we took advantage of online (self-paced and real-time) and face-to-face training approaches to enable fourteen busy participants to complete a rich, hybrid ToT program.

Feedback from ToT participants was very positive, particularly in respect to their devoted training team, and for the real-life experience element: Under the mentorship of the ToT facilitators, participants took part in presenting and facilitating group work sessions during 2-day Sphere introductory workshops which were being held in parallel.

To support the next steps of these new trainers, individual and group mentoring will continue in 2024 with the financial support of the Japan Quality and Accountability Network (JQAN).

By actively nurturing and enabling our community of Sphere trainers, capacities will be strengthened, leading to better quality and more accountable response work towards people and communities affected by crisis.

From Sawako Matsuo, Sphere trainer and focal point representative (JANIC)

Updates from Sphere's regional partner in Asia-Pacific

Community World Service Asia (CWSA), acting in its two capacities as Sphere focal point for Pakistan and Sphere regional partner for Asia, conducted many Sphere-related activities during 2023, including:

- **Sphere ToT in Bangkok:** Facilitated by Sphere trainer Uma Narayan with support from Tristan Hale (Sphere) and Nazanin Kazemi (focal point representative). 24 participants of 13 different nationalities represented 18 organisations, including many Sphere focal points in Asia.
- **Humanitarian standards training for local NGOs,** including Sphere and **Minimum Standard for Market Analysis** (MISMA) content.
- **Sphere training for government actors in Afghanistan:** Following recent humanitarian disasters, including devastating earthquakes

and flash flooding, humanitarian sector actors and their government counterparts recognised a need for greater uptake of humanitarian principles and standards to enable effective, efficient and quality response.

Working with **ACBAR** (Sphere’s focal point in Afghanistan), CWSA offered Sphere training for 110 staff (all men) of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ADNMA). As female humanitarian workers are so vital to the sector, there is a pressing need to include them. Additionally, this session highlighted the need for further hands-on training on Sphere standards, that we are planning to address in the coming year.



Bangkok Sphere ToT graduates with members of the training and management teams. © CWSA

4. Sphere Network Updates

- **Translation of Sphere resources**, notably the **What are humanitarian standards?** and **What is the Sphere Handbook?** animated videos into Urdu and Sindhi, which proved invaluable during Sphere training sessions with local humanitarian practitioners. Participants consistently expressed their appreciation for the content, emphasising its effectiveness in enhancing their understanding of Sphere. CWSA also distributed around 200 copies of the Dari Sphere Handbook (which we translated in 2022) to our local staff.

- **‘Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Response’ social media campaign:** Over three months, CWSA prepared and localised Sphere Handbook content for people involved in humanitarian assistance at fieldlevel – reaching over 3 Million people on Facebook!

- **Asia-Pacific Sphere focal point quarterly meetings:** CWSA maintained quarterly online meetings to share best practice and discuss important issues, including working with government actors, engaging with youth, collaboration with academia, and the development of community-friendly tools. In the Q3 call, **Mercy Malaysia** shared their methodology for, and successful outcomes of, Peer to Peer (P2P) Learning Circles.

- **Application of Sphere:** In designing and implementing programmes, CWSA always consults the relevant sections of the Sphere Handbook and other HSP handbooks, as appropriate.

For example, when designing CWSA dignity kits for distribution in Pakistan and Afghanistan, our starting point was the WASH chapter of the Sphere Handbook, contextualised by considering various factors including relevance, cultural sensitivities, environment, quantity, utility, sustainability and population characteristics (e.g., women and girls per household). Following an initial distribution in Sindh, we collected feedback which we used to further improve the kit for this region.

Working with social mobilizers in Afghanistan, we were able to conduct focus group discussions with women to ensure our kit was appropriate.

“The Sphere Handbook provides well-structured guidance for all of us involved in emergency response. The standards set clear benchmarks, enabling us to assess and improve the quality of our interventions, contributing to a higher standard of humanitarian assistance in a particular context.” Huma Rani, Program Coordinator, Emergencies, CWSA

From Zunaira Shams, Communications, Visibility & Marketing Lead, CWSA

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

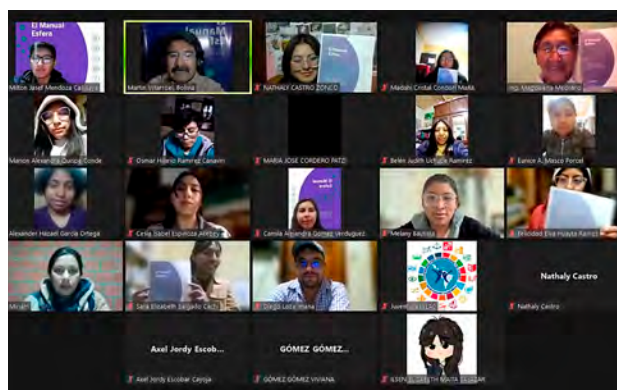
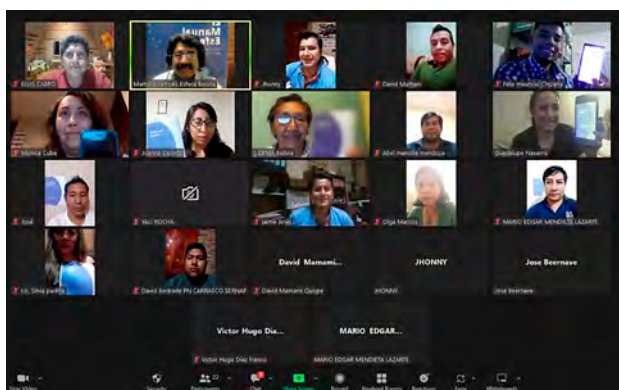
Young humanitarians in Bolivia apply Sphere philosophy in their daily actions

Events in 2022 commemorating 25 years of Sphere and 20 years of Sphere in LAC motivated young people in Bolivia to update and share their knowledge of Sphere. Members of the Scout Movement and Youth for LAC Bolivia Chapter volunteers disseminated information to help people prepare for and respond to disasters, notably foods and fires.

April: 30 leaders from 20 Cochabamba scout groups participated in Sphere training and subsequently passed this learning on to children and young people as part of their volunteer training.

June: 70 volunteers from the Youth for LAC Bolivia Chapter participated in an online Sphere course with a focus on Health, including Sphere principles and technical standards, and linked to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Good Health and well-being.

August: Sphere workshop – supported by the Center for Humanitarian Action Studies (CEAH) – for 21 participants representing Save the Children, UNICEF, Red Helmets – FTH, Plan International, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz Red Cross societies, SAR FAB, SAR Bolivia Oruro and the Regional Autonomous Government of the Gran Chaco Villa Montes: organisations which disseminate the Sphere Standards within their organisations and in the communities where they operate every day.



Representatives of scout groups receive training in spreading the Sphere philosophy among young people. © Sphere Network Bolivia

4. Sphere Network Updates

August: Sphere workshop for 32 participants representing the Municipal Governments of Villa Tunari, Shinahota, Puerto Villarroel, Entre Ríos, Ivirgarzama, Chimoré and Colcapirhua; the Regional Autonomous Governments of Villa Montes, Carapari and Yacuiba; the National Service of Protected Areas of Carrasco and Aguazague; GEOS; Practical Action; and Fundación Manos de Vida.

In facilitating these workshops, we are grateful for the support of: José Martin Villarroel from the “Panda Scout Group”, Willams Zavaleta Quiroz from Save the Children International Office Bolivia, and Richard Arana Rodríguez, from the IOM Bolivia Office. We look forward to continuing our advocacy, coordination, training and dissemination activities in 2024 and beyond.

From Martin Villarroel Garcia and Magdalena Medrano Velasco, Sphere trainers and focal point representatives (Sphere Network Bolivia, Cochabamba)

Sphere’s Humanitarian Charter recognised in Disaster Risk Management Legislation in Ecuador

Dedicated advocacy efforts over several months have finally borne fruit: Ecuador’s Organic Law on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management now refers to the

Humanitarian Charter in Article 5 Section 3, which reads as follows (translated from Spanish):

Humanitarian assistance: Defined as institutional action aimed at protecting life and basic subsistence conditions of people who have suffered the impacts of adverse events, and that are executed according to the standards established by the entity rector of comprehensive disaster risk management. Humanitarian assistance will operate while the direct effects of the event on people last. It will be equitable and will maintain neutrality and impartiality. International humanitarian assistance will be framed in the precepts of the Humanitarian Charter.

This historic achievement is extremely important and timely as Ecuador is increasingly affected by climate-rated disasters, including torrential rains, floods, landslides, forest fires and earthquakes.

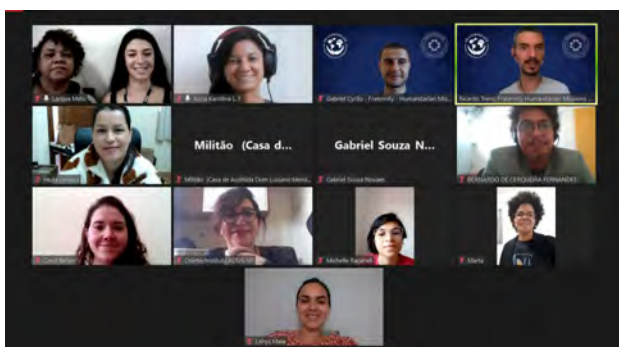
From Daniel Arteaga Galarza, Sphere trainer and advocate, Ecuador

Fraternity – International Humanitarian Missions (FIHM) training around the World

FIHM is Sphere’s focal point organisation for both **Brazil** and **Portugal**. We are a non-profit civil society organisation based

in Brazil with an international scope. Here are the Sphere workshops we delivered in 2023.

ADUS: 6-hour course for the **ADUS Institute for Refugee Reintegration**, their partners (social and municipal workers involved with the reception, protection and inclusion of refugees), and Welcome Home "Dom Luciano" in Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo, Brazil, focused on the foundation chapters of the Sphere Handbook.



Online participants of an FIHM Sphere course for ADUS. © FIHM



Online participants of an FIHM Sphere course for Caritas Brazil. © FIHM

Caritas Brazil: Workers with experience in humanitarian and social situations were able to broaden their knowledge through the content of the Handbook and apply it to their fields of action. The course covered all chapters of the Sphere Handbook plus a session on Sphere in urban scenarios.

ESEPF: The Education Course in Emergencies and Humanitarian Responses was implemented by FIHM in partnership with the *Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti – ESEPF* (Portugal) and in collaboration with the *Centro Universitário Frassinetti do Recife – UNIFAFIRE* (Brazil) and the *Escola de Magistério Santa Doroteia do Lobito* (Angola). The Sphere Standards were taught during the initial sessions of this 2-month course as an important element to understand the humanitarian system architecture within the ever-increasing complexities of the sector.

University of Geneva: FIHM were invited to contribute to an online extension course for humanitarian workers working in different humanitarian response contexts around the world. The training focused on exchanging experiences on the progress and challenges faced by organizations in giving accountability to, and enabling the participation of, affected populations.

4. Sphere Network Updates



Gabriel Cyrilo (FIHM) presents during an online course for the University of Geneva. © FIHM

Gabriel Cyrilo, a humanitarian aid volunteer with FIHM, presented the activities carried out by the Indigenous Cultural and Training Centre (CCFI), through the Continuing Training and Development Program (PFCD), which encourages the preservation of culture

and the socio-economic inclusion of indigenous peoples from Venezuela, Guyana and national ethnic groups.

New listed trainers: Following their involvement with the workshops and ToT in Poland, Ricardo Treno (FIHM core volunteer team) and Gabriel Godoy Cyrilo (FIHM Humanitarian Aid team member) became listed Sphere trainers in 2023.

Poland: As part of Sphere’s Programme for Ukraine and Eastern Europe, in collaboration with the Sphere office and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (an initiative of Save the Children), FIHM facilitated two Sphere workshops (Przemyśl and Warsaw) and one Sphere ToT (Warsaw) in Poland between February and June 2023.



Participants of the Sphere ToT in Warsaw, Poland, 19-23 June 2023, show their certificates of completion. © FIHM

Refresher courses: FIHM promoted Sphere refresher courses for organisations affiliated with Fraternity – International Humanitarian Federation (FIHF) and their partners. These courses included simulations, and exchanges of ideas and experiences of applying Sphere Standards in their contexts.



Sphere refresher training with Comunidade-Luz Figueira, Brazil. © FIHM

25 years of Sphere: FIHM was invited to present at Sphere’s 25 year anniversary panel session at HNPW 2023. As one of the first humanitarian actors to deliver humanitarian assistance to Venezuelan migrants and refugees, FIHM shared its experience and how it has been applying the Sphere Standards in the Roraima Humanitarian Missions as well in its other humanitarian interventions worldwide.

From Ricardo, FIHM core volunteer team, Portugal

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Sphere knowledge proves invaluable during Turkey Syria earthquake response

The iHH Humanitarian Relief

Foundation, based in Turkey, is actively involved in projects addressing food security and livelihoods; protection; and shelter and non-food item (NFI) needs. iHH is strongly committed to promoting and disseminating Sphere Minimum Standards. After conducting many Sphere workshops over the last ten years, iHH decided to organize a Sphere ToT (in October 2022) to create a pool of trainers within iHH to extend Sphere Standards training to broader audiences both internally and externally.

Our investment in Sphere training activities had a critical impact in our response to the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in February 2023. 19 graduates of our 2022 ToT with senior responsibility in different departments of IHH took part in the response, paving the way for Sphere approaches to be reflected in our field-level operations. Thus, it became possible to orientate both partners and iHH field staff in accordance with Sphere Standards during the intervention.

4. Sphere Network Updates



iHH responders assist affected people near the Turkey Syria border following the devastating earthquakes in February 2023. © iHH

During the response in Turkey and Syria, iHH played an active role in local and international coordination. We assumed the role of co-chair of the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster in Hatay, one of the most affected cities, and engaged with the Turkish Local Humanitarian Forum which represents the majority of Turkish NGOs responding to the earthquake. During coordination efforts, it became clear that NGOs in Turkey were very willing to improve the quality of their

response by observing Sphere Standards.

A few months after the earthquake, we attended OCHA's HNPW event in Geneva where we met Sphere's focal point for Korea, KCOC, and with them started planning another ToT for early 2024; this time an open event welcoming participants from various Turkish NGOs.

From Talha Keskin, International Relations Coordinator, iHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı

North America

Chicago-based programme, finance, grant management and leadership teams orientated on Sphere

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) organized Sphere orientation training for its staff members in June, facilitated by Sphere trainer Subhashis Roy, currently serving at ELCA as an international programme manager for ELCA-Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR).

The thirteen staff of the “Building Resilient Communities” team gathered at the Lutheran Center in Chicago for the 2-day training which aimed to improve application and usage of Sphere in the different programme domains in which ELCA supports its partner organisations and ecumenical partners.

Workshop participants increased their knowledge of the foundational and technical chapters of the Sphere Handbook, as well as principles, rights, and the duties of different stakeholders in humanitarian response. The workshop included a case-study based tabletop exercise looking at community recovery following a crisis.

As part of a continued commitment to further capacity building, one workshop participant, Mr Sean Coffman, was selected to attend the Sphere ToT in Bangkok in October and is now well on his way to becoming one of just a few listed Sphere trainers in the USA.

From Mr Subhashis Roy, Sphere trainer and ELCA Programme Manager



Sphere workshop participants take part in a group activity. © ELCA

4. Sphere Network Updates

Global

Plan International promotes Sphere around the globe

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in Africa and Europe: Through our Global Hub and various country offices, we conducted several activities to strengthen our community engagement and increase accountability.

Working through out Internal Accountability Network, we successfully rolled out the AAP chapter of our Global Programme Manual, including introductions to Sphere and HSP standards, in Somalia, Rwanda and Chad. We conducted high impact training covering AAP including child-friendly complaints and feedback mechanisms in Chad, Rwanda, Somalia, Mozambique, Cambodia and Germany.

We deployed our Global AAP Specialist to support the set up of child-friendly feedback mechanisms in response to the hunger crisis in Somalia and Somaliland; and the cyclone in Zambezia, Mozambique. We also input into the development of an AAP Framework for Plan Somalia which references various HSP standards.

As part of Plan International's Ukraine

Crisis Response, we collaborated with UNICEF and Save the Children on child consultations in Poland, aiming to understand the challenges faced by child refugees and identify opportunities to enhance their wellbeing through their own words and pictures. The consultations, which were guided by humanitarian standards, focused on three closely connected themes: psychosocial health, education, and integration into Polish society³.

Plan International was successfully verified against the Core Humanitarian Standard.



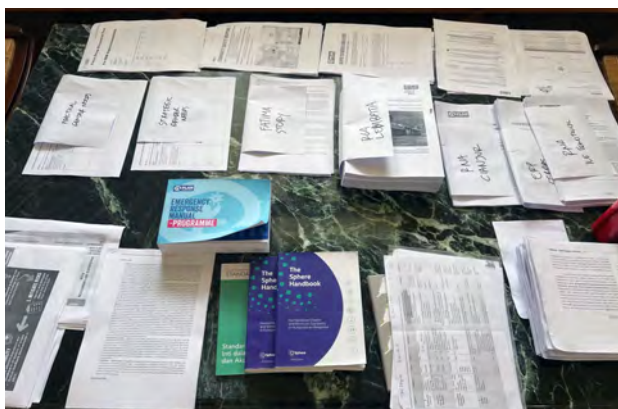
Women in Somaliland. © Plan International

Promoting Sphere standards in capacity development activities in Asia-Pacific:

Plan International Asia-Pacific is committed to promoting Sphere and other humanitarian standards throughout the region, and integrates contextualised scenario-based simulations into many of its capacity development activities.

³ www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/children-poland-share-their-voices-mental-health-education-and-integration-face-war

- **Indonesia:** Gender in Emergencies in February, WASH in Emergencies in March, Communication in Emergencies in May, and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) in September.
- **Pacific Islands:** Emergency Response Team (ERT) training in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in June.
- **Bangladesh:** Humanitarian Leadership Training in November.
- **Nepal:** Ready-to-Respond (R2R) workshop in December. This strategic planning initiative aimed to enhance Plan International Nepal's ability to swiftly assist more girls and young women affected by crises. An integral part of the workshop was the 'Humanitarian 101' session, which involved a comprehensive discussion of the challenges associated with adhering to humanitarian principles and standards.



The Sphere Handbook as a basis for Plan's training simulations. © Plan International

Sphere is presented during the Communication in Emergencies workshop. © Plan International



A story from Bangladesh: The impact of using Sphere standards in humanitarian work: Plan International Bangladesh and its partners delivered assistance to flood affected people in adherence with Sphere standards. Every aspect of the response was meticulously planned, from safeguarding to accessible distribution points. The needs and capacities of vulnerable groups, were at the forefront. Facilities such as breastfeeding corners, women's WASH stations, and separate sitting arrangements were established. Our attention to detail ensured that communities received the support they deserved. Local government representatives played an instrumental role in preventing fraud and corruption by engaging with participants and staff. This story reflects the transformative power of humanitarian response that embraces Sphere standards.

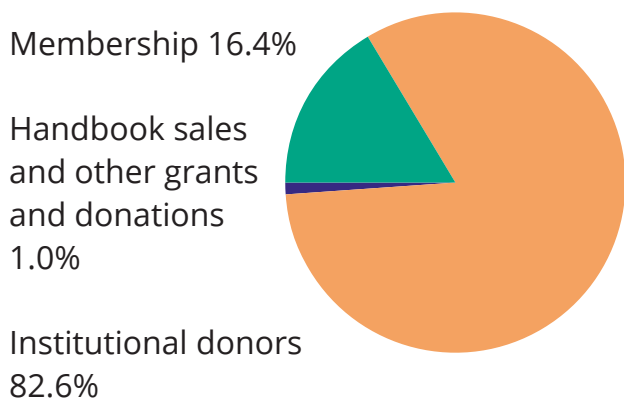
From Stephen James, Angelo Melencio, Mohammad Shazed, and Vanda Lengkong, Head of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) at Plan International Asia-Pacific Region and Sphere board member (Plan International)

Statement of Income and Expenses

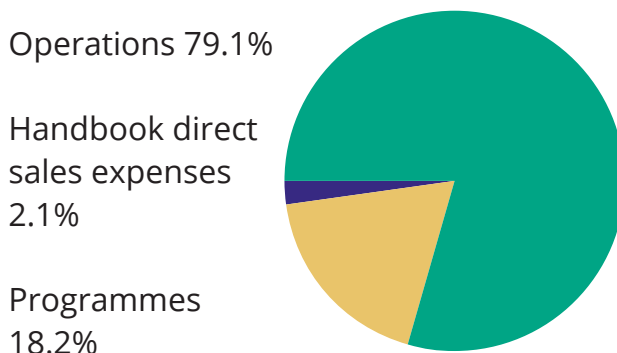
from 01.01.2023 to 31.12.2023
 With comparative year figures
 In Swiss francs

INCOME	2023	2022
Board Contributions and Donations		
Membership Fees	170,880	189,056
Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs - (FDFA)	150,000	150,000
German Ministry of Foreign Affairs		248,522
US Department of State, Bureau of Population and Migration (PRM)	297,448	288,743
USAID - Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA, ex OFDA)	263,152	120,196
Disasters Emergency Committee	128,557	188,197
Aktion Deutschland Hilft	23,911	15,842
Other general grants and donations	7,605	6,000
Total Board Contributions and Donations	1,041,553	1,206,555
Other Income		
Handbook Sales	3,280	4,145
Other Income	3,280	4,145
TOTAL INCOME	1,044,833	1,210,700

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME 2023



PERCENTAGE OF EXPENSES 2023



EXPENSES	2023	2022
Handbook direct sales expenses	-24,746	-18,148
Personnel expenses	-811,970	-851,212
Premises charges	-38,067	-42,736
Administration and office costs	-9,327	-9,134
IT expenses	-28,925	-19,788
Professional fees	-41,265	-52,156
Consultancies & Development fees	-187,020	-240,447
Travel, Representation & Meetings	-18,671	-2,988
Support to focal points	-6,127	
TOTAL EXPENSES	-1,166,118	-1,236,607
NET OPERATING RESULT	-121,285	-25,907
Financial Income	1,949	4,147
Financial Expenses	-4,137	-14,707
NET RESULT BEFORE CHANGES IN RESTRICTED FUNDS	-123,473	-36,467
Allocation to restricted funds	-713,068	-861,499
Use of restricted funds	741,798	806,263
NET RESULT BEFORE ALLOCATIONS	-94,743	-91,703
Allocation to Operational Reserve and specific project balances	-7,605	-6,000
Use of Operational Reserve and specific project balances	29,742	22,426
NET RESULT FOR THE YEAR	-72,606	-75,277

Statement of changes in capital and restricted funds

from 01.01.2023 to 31.12.2023

In Swiss francs

2023	Balance 01.01.23	Allocations	Use/ transfer	Balance 31.12.23
RESTRICTED FUNDS				
US Bureau of Population and Migration (PRM)		297,448	-297,448	
Disaster Emergency Committee	51,137	128,557	-179,694	
USAID - Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)		263,152	-263,152	
Aktion Deutschland Hilft	4,099	23,911	-1,504	26,506
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	55,236	713,068	-741,798	26,506
SPECIFIC PROJECT BALANCES				
Humanitarian Standards Partnership HSP	22,136	7,605	-29,742	
TOTAL SPECIFIC PROJECT BALANCES	22,136	7,605	-29,742	
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS				
General reserve	249,267		-75,277	173,989
Operational reserve	221,151			221,151
Net result of the year	-75,277	-72,605	75,277	-72,605
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	395,141	-72,605		322,535
TOTAL CAPITAL OF THE ORGANISATION	417,277	-65,000	-29,742	322,535

Auditor's opinion

Report of the statutory auditor on the limited statutory examination to the General Meeting of SPHERE ASSOCIATION Geneva

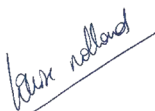
As statutory auditor, we have examined the financial statements (balance sheet, statement of income and expenses, cash flow statement, statement of changes in capital and restricted funds and notes) of SPHERE ASSOCIATION for the year ended 31 December 2023. As permitted by Swiss GAAP FER 21 the information in the performance report is not required to be subject to the statutory auditor's examination.

These financial statements prepared in accordance with Swiss GAAP FER, Swiss law and the association's articles of incorporation are the responsibility of the Association Board. Our responsibility is to perform a limited statutory examination on these financial statements. We confirm that we meet the licensing and independence requirements as stipulated by Swiss law.

We conducted our examination in accordance with the Swiss Standard on the Limited Statutory Examination. This standard requires that we plan and perform a limited statutory examination to identify material misstatements in the financial statements. A limited statutory examination consists primarily of inquiries of association personnel and analytical procedures as well as detailed tests of association documents as considered necessary in the circumstances. However, the testing of operational processes and the internal control system, as well as inquiries and further testing procedures to detect fraud or other legal violations, are not within the scope of this examination.

Based on our limited statutory examination, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial statements do not give a true and fair view of the financial position, the results of operations and the cash flows in accordance with Swiss GAAP FER. Furthermore, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial statements do not comply with Swiss law and the association's articles of incorporation.

PricewaterhouseCoopers SA



Louise Rolland
Licensed audit expert
Auditor in charge



Adéline Todorova

Genève, 1 May 2024

Enclosure:

- Financial statements (balance sheet, statement of income and expenses, cash flow statement, statement of changes in capital and restricted funds and notes)

PricewaterhouseCoopers SA, avenue Giuseppe-Motta 50, case postale, 1211 Genève 2, Switzerland
Téléphone: +41 58 792 91 00, www.pwc.ch

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Management, governance and donors

Sphere Team

Geneva:

Amanda Moraes, *Network and Membership*

Aninia Nadig, *Policy and CHS Revision (February to June)*

Brooke Lauten, *Policy and Impact*

Felicity Fallon, *Learning and Events*

Frédéric Genoud, *Finance and Operations*

Romain Benicchio, *Partnerships*

Tristan Hale, *Communications and Learning Services*

William Anderson, *Executive Director*

Regional:

Daria Pistriak, *Coordinator for Ukraine and Eastern Europe (contractor) (to February)*

Victoria Konunchuk, *Coordinator for Ukraine and Eastern Europe (contractor) (March to May)*

Sphere Governing Board

ACT Alliance (Niall O'Rourke)

Caritas Internationalis (Rita Rhayem, President to September) (Christian Modino Hok from October)

Community World Service Asia (Ayesha Hassan)

Elrha (Jessica Camburn, Vice President from October)

Fast Rural Development Program (Fozia Rajput, Treasurer)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Nelson Castano)

Friar Luciano (Fraternity International Humanitarian Missions, Individual member)

Mercy Malaysia (Normaliza Mohd Nasir)

Christian Modino Hok (CBM Global Disability Inclusion, Individual member to September)

Plan International (Vanda Lengkong)

RedR International (Kirsten Sayers to March) (Natascha Hryckow from April)

Save the Children (Casey Harrity)

Turkish Red Crescent Society (Alper Küçük, Vice President to September and President from October)

World Vision International (Daniel Wanganga)

Financial Partners

Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)*

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

Aktion Deutschland Hilft

Members of Sphere

Humanitarian Standards Partnership (partners)

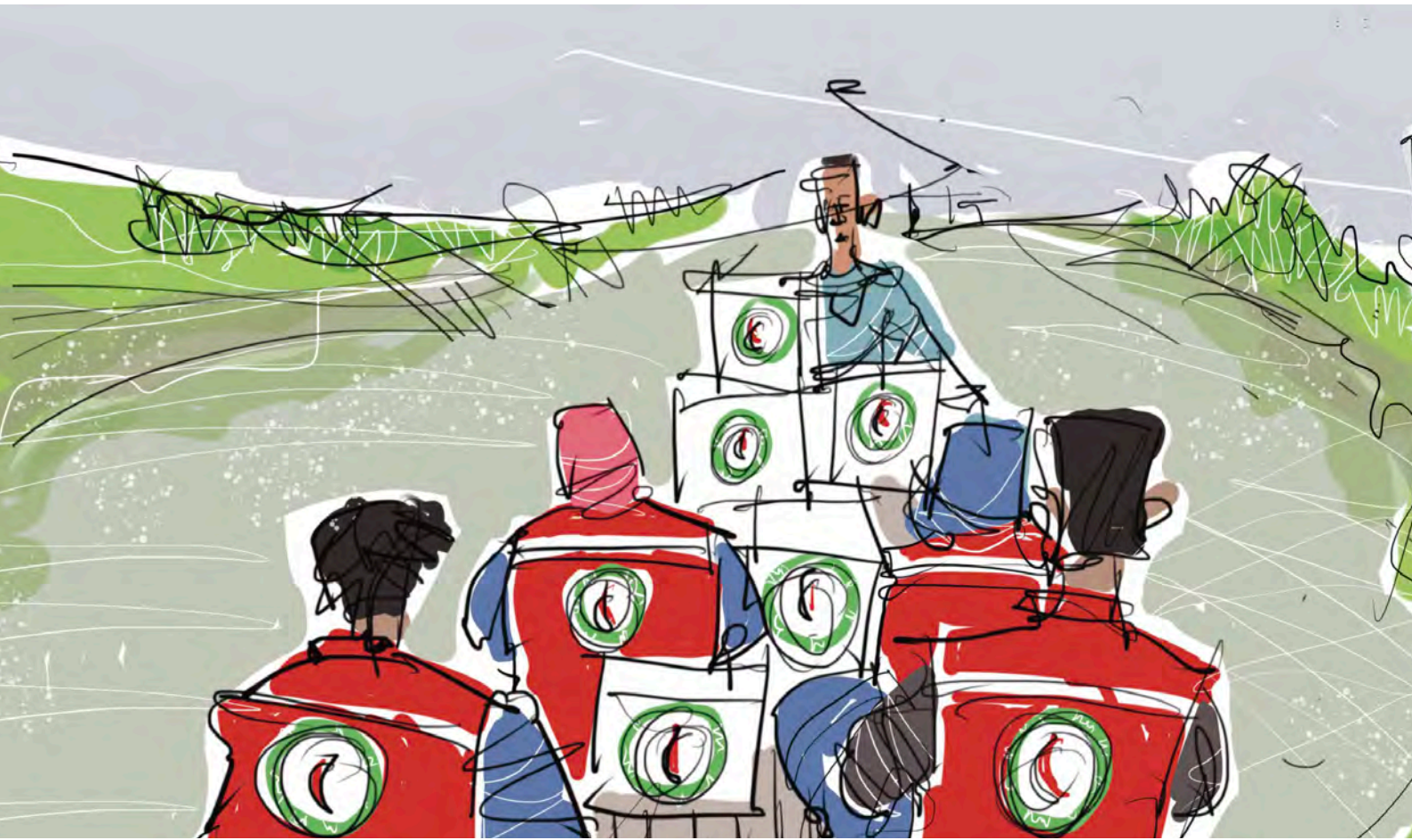
**The DEC grant was provided by a consortium of Emergency Appeals Alliance (EAA) members comprising DEC, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, Swiss Solidarity and Japan Platform, led by DEC.*

Sphere

The Humanitarian Hub
La Voie-Creuse 16
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

Phone: +41 22 522 5911
info@spherestandards.org
www.spherestandards.org

Facebook: @SphereNGO
X: @SpherePro
LinkedIn: @spherestandards
YouTube: TheSphereProject



Amidst one of the most devastating floods in the living memory of the northeastern part of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) volunteers, with the support of IFRC, assisted their communities before, during, and after the disaster struck. Their swift and dedicated humanitarian response extended to even the most inaccessible and heavily affected areas, ensuring timely aid reached those in need.

This illustration is based on two photos provided by BDRCS. On the back cover, BDRCS volunteers and other local people transport relief items by boat on a heavily swollen river in Companiganj, Sylhet. On the front cover, a BDRCS medical team gives medical support to flood affected people in Sylhet.