![Sphere logo]

Global Focal Points Forum

Building our Community of Purpose

Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok, 7– 9 November 2017

Co-hosted with Sphere regional partner Community World Service Asia (CWSA)

![Community World Service Asia logo — peace resilience dignity]

From left to right, back row: Marie Mimose Jeune; Wassila Mansouri; Hannah Kwon; Almudena Montoliú; Axel Schmidt; Gawher Nayeem Wahra; Mamadou N'diaye; Raman Kumar, Tristan Hale; Christine Knudsen; Subhashis Roy; Benson Maina; Roderick Valones; Zeynep Sanduvac; Rizwan Iqbal; Dániel Solymári.

Front row: Chris Wong; Carol Wong; Shama Mall; Magdalena Medrano Velasco; Martin Villarroel Garcia; Daniel Arteaga; Moges Jemaneh; Ruba Siddique

Background

Over the last several years, Sphere has been actively working to strengthen the country-based focal points network which now covers nearly 50 countries worldwide. In collaboration with its regional partner, Community World Service Asia (CWSA), Sphere hosted the first-ever Global Focal Points Forum from 7 to 9 November 2017 at the Ambassador Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. This 3-day meeting was the opportunity to review contributions to the Sphere Handbook second draft, formulate proposals for a longer-term Sphere Network strategy, and explore ways of ensuring more sustained engagement between and among the network partners.

Participation

An invitation to take part in the meeting was sent to all Sphere focal points, representing 52 organisations and individuals. The invitation was extended to several Sphere trainers who have demonstrated continuous involvement with the Sphere secretariat.

The meeting was attended by 20 Sphere focal points and trainers from across Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America. The complete list of participants can be found at the end of this report (Annex III).

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the 3-day meeting was to explore new ways of working together, with a stronger focus on structural collaboration and mutual support, both between the Sphere secretariat and Sphere focal points, and amongst focal points.

The objectives were defined as follow:

- ❖ Share experiences and explore possibilities for Sphere advocacy, promotion and collaboration among Sphere focal points.
- ❖ Identify concrete and practical ideas on how to sustain, animate, and grow the Sphere Focal Point network.
- ❖ Create opportunities for networking and exchange Sphere focal points' experiences across organisations, contexts and continents.
- ❖ Review the Sphere Handbook (Draft 2) process and content. Discuss next steps and launch in 2018.
- ❖ Review Sphere's new training and learning approach.

CONTENTS

DAY 1 – Setting a shared direction

1.1. Welcome, opening remarks and self-introduction

Ms. Christine Knudsen, Sphere Executive Director, and Mr. Marvin Parvez, CWSA Regional Representative, opened the *Sphere Global Focal Points Forum* and welcomed participants.

After all participant introduced themselves, the Sphere director walked through the 3-day agenda, highlighting key expectations expressed by participants, and presented the forum objectives.

Axel Schmidt, Marie Mimose Jeune and Rizwan Iqbal introduce themselves to the group.

1.1.2. CWSA: 10 years of regional work

Shama Mall, CWSA Deputy Director, introduced her organisation's regional work on Quality & Accountability (Q&A) over the past ten years. She spoke at length about CWSA partners and progress made on Q&A, including challenges and key achievements so far.

CWSA works with provincial level national disaster management authorities in Pakistan. Although the uptake within government departments is slow, there is a genuine interest to learn more about Quality and Accountability (Q&A). Contextualization according to needs and proper implementation are constantly being looked at. However, it was stressed the difficulty in quantifying and measuring impact, specifically with governments which are not monolithic/unified.

1.2. Presentation on Sphere's current work and updates

This session was led by the Sphere director with the purpose of providing an update on the most recent developments regarding Sphere.

1.2.1. Sphere Handbook revision

The Sphere director gave an overview of the Sphere Handbook revision and the comprehensiveness of its latest draft. The first phase of the revision process has been the most inclusive in Sphere's history. Sphere together with its partners analysed 2,500 comments and inputs received from over 1,200 participants who took part in consultation events across 40 countries. Between July and September, Sphere worked with authors to review and integrate the rich feedback and recommendations into the second draft. A

second phase of consultation took place during October. New feedback and comments on Draft 2 are currently being looked at, so the final version can be developed in early 2018.

1.2.2. New tools and approaches

The new Sphere proposition is to engage with practitioners and users of the standards in a more dynamic way. The invitation will be to <u>Learn</u> about standards, <u>Act</u> and use the standards in content, and <u>Share</u> experience and learning with others. Sphere focuses on training and advocacy to support the implementation of the minimum standards, but it represents much more than just a Handbook. Sphere must foster (virtual) communities where individuals can share their successes and failures, and learn from each other by doing so.

A conversation regarding the current revision process uncovered an appetite for information on the journey of Sphere; the changes that have occurred both in the Handbook and the association.

An on-line 'Interactive Handbook' will accompany the 2018 edition, where people will be able to add comments next to the text. Following approval, comments will be viewable by other members of the Sphere community. This will be a very good way of improving the Sphere Handbook offering and keeping it alive.

1.2.3. Partnerships and a growing network

Sphere is moving towards a community of purpose rather than practice. To achieve its objectives, Sphere works in close collaboration with an extensive network of regional partners, Sphere trainers and country focal points. Today, it consists of a growing network of global practitioners, and various organizations using and adhering to the Sphere values and standards.

In April 2016, the Sphere office invited humanitarians to take an online survey on their use of the Sphere Handbook[1]. Over 2,800 users in 149 countries responded to the survey, with more than 40% of them working in countries with ongoing humanitarian crises. Responses suggest that more and more different kind of actors are coming on board and adopting the Sphere approach, which indicates the large outreach of the Sphere community of committed practitioners.

The Humanitarian Standards Partnership[2] (HSP) aims to efficiently support those in need of help and humanitarian assistance. To achieve this, the HSP works to improve links between standards, increase cross-references and eliminate inconsistencies. In this regard, the new HSP App was introduced to participants. The app includes minimum standards guide assistance in nine crucial areas of humanitarian response: water supply and sanitation, food

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[1] Full report can be read on http://www.sphereproject.org/news/how-humanitarian-workers-use-the-sphere-handbook/

[2] HSP members include the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (The Alliance); Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP); Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE); Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards Project (LEGS); Small Enterprise Education and Promotion Network (SEEP) and Sphere.

security and nutrition, shelter and settlements, health action, education, child protection, livestock, economic recovery and market analysis. This is a highly accessible and efficient way of accessing all the humanitarian standards at once and working across standards based on the user's needs.

1.2.4. Transition to a membership-based NGO

Sphere has grown up from a project to an independent NGO. This means that the Sphere office, together with the global Sphere practitioners network, including the focal point community, could start reflecting on different roles and responsibilities as it develops a broader and longer-term vision for principled and accountable humanitarian work. The Sphere structure is now being changed; considerations in terms of criteria for membership and participation in the governance of Sphere are currently underway.

A short questionnaire was handed out to all participants for them to give the Sphere secretariat feedback on membership criteria and expected benefits.

1.3. Handbook revision, getting to final and review of draft 2

This session aimed at presenting the main changes being introduced in draft 2 of the 2018 Sphere Handbook.

Sphere aims at making the upcoming edition more user-friendly, less complex and with less redundant text. This means including data that will help understanding and use of the standards in context, grounded in humanitarian principles, universal rights, and quality in assistance and protection.

The introduction has been completely revised. The new edition incorporates an annex of "delivering through markets" which covers supply chain management and cash-based assistance. (Note that not every minimum standard can be met using cash transfers.)

The shelter and settlement chapter has also been revised with stronger inclusion of tenure rights and environmental considerations, as well as a move from non-food items to household items to support dignity in living spaces.

New WASH standards linking to disease outbreaks and nutrition have been proposed, along with a new standard around palliative care in the Health chapter.

The four protection principles that were introduced in the 2011 edition have been proposed to focus on three areas, which is under discussion and may be reviewed.

1.3.1. Group work on inclusion of cash and review of Introduction "What is Sphere"

Participants were split into groups to reflect on the Introduction, 'What is Sphere' and cash transfers aspects. A summary of the feedback given by participants during plenary discussions is attached at the end of the report (Annex I).

DAY 2 – Learning from the Focal Point experience

2.1. Using Sphere in context: Three case studies on contextualizing Sphere standards in practice

Prior to the forum, participants were invited to prepare a short case study to present their work of promoting, contextualizing and using Sphere standards in their respective country or context. Six case studies were presented. They highlight results, good practice, and lessons learned

2.1.1. Gaza

Presentation made by Zeynep Munevver Sanduvac — focal Point in Turkey and Sphere trainer.

Zeynep Munevver Sanduvac gave an overview of the long-standing humanitarian crisis prevailing in the Gaza strip, and how, together with Sphere training participants, they have successfully contextualized the Sphere Minimum Standards in WASH[3]. She drew comparisons between the two minimum humanitarian standards and the reality of Gaza, reflecting on how quantities and approaches needed to be adapted. She recommended that there should be a common approach to delivering humanitarian work in similar cities.

2.1.2. Chile

Presentation by Almudena Montoliú — focal point in Chile (UNDP)

Almudena Montoliú gave an overview of Chile's profile, one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Since the 2010 tsunami, Chile's National Bureau for Emergencies (ONEMI) has worked to strengthen its emergency response capacity. With the technical support of UNDP and in coordination with 20 public institutions, the Government of Chile successfully adapted the indicators for the Sphere minimum standards in water and sanitation (WASH), shelter, and food security and nutrition. Some 35 "Standards for Emergency Response", tailored to the Chilean context were integrated into national disaster response system.[4]

2.1.3. CWSA Regional

Presentation by Rizwan Iqbal — focal point in Pakistan (CWSA) and Roy Subhashis, Technical Adviser with Lutheran World Relief (LWR)

Lutheran World Relief and Community World Service Asia started collaborating in 2009. The two organisations have worked together during deployment in the Philippines and Nepal and have experience on contextualization of training materials and approaches.

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[3] This training was arranged by Oxfam for its staff in Gaza (October 2017)

[4] The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) collaborated with local and national authorities to introduce the Sphere Handbook as a core reference tool for first emergency responders, while also providing standards training to more than 200 civil servants from governmental agencies.

In 2015, a Sphere Joint Mini Audit Tool & Guide was developed in partnership with CWSA, LWR, and KCOC. It has guided both agencies in supporting the needs of humanitarian practitioners in the region[5]. On contextualization of the Sphere standards, it was explained how the Sphere Standards were contextualized by CWSA during its deployment across five countries. For instance, in Japan, although the minimum standards were being met, there were problems with the implementation part of the process. Discussing challenges, he highlighted the challenge of measuring impact of interventions on quality and accountability. He placed emphasis on the importance of orienting staff on the code of conduct and standards prior to starting emergency response. Other challenges include monopolies held by 'big players' in large scale emergencies who were not supportive of local agencies taking the lead in promoting Q&A; lack of resources/funding; and making Q&A a priority for organizations and staff who were newly entering the humanitarian and development sector.

2.2. Challenges and learning: Three case studies on using Sphere with government authorities for policy changes

2.2.1. India

Presentation by Raman Kumar — focal point in India (Sphere India)

Raman Kumar highlighted a whole host of events which were conducted by Sphere India in collaboration with the Indian government. Sphere India held six in-person consultations for the handbook revision; organised an NDMA committee for the development of minimum standards; and facilitated the development of a modal district disaster management plan for the Madhu Bani district of Bihar, which was mandated by the DM Act of India. The emergency response plan of DDMP extensively used standards as objectives and key actions were contextualized as possible activities by different line departments and other stakeholders. The process was then replicated in 38 districts of Bihar. These were used to develop and contextualize a framework of minimum standards for SAARC countries and was done in collaboration with SDMC, UNHCR and Sphere India who coordinated with the NDMA, the Government of India, and other technical experts.

Despite all the progress, the work of Sphere India has been delayed due to structural changes and regional inter-government politics, such as the merger of SDMC, Climate Centre and Energy Centre, as well as constant changes in leadership, merging of different organisations, availability of data and resources, and inability of reach joint consensus.

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[5] The Audit Tool and Quick Guide aims to help practitioners conduct reviews to gauge the extent to which humanitarian programmes comply with humanitarian standards. It was jointly developed by CWSA, Lutheran World Relief, Korean NGO Council for overseas cooperation and independent consultant Uma Narayaran. It can be downloaded from the Sphere website http://www.sphereproject.org/blog/how-to-conduct-a-sphere-mini-audit/

2.2.2. Philippines

Presentation by Roderick Valones – Focal point in Philippines (ASAP/Lutheran World Relief)

In 2012, Lutheran World Relief created a network called ASAP (*Alliance for Sphere Advocates in the Philippines*) to promote and advocate for humanitarian quality and accountability with the government and other key stakeholders towards policy changes. Although ASAP focuses more on getting humanitarian responders using Sphere Standards, it has however managed to build a good working relationship with government agencies (e.g. the National Disaster Risk Management Council). Until Lutheran World Relief initiated the promotion of Sphere in 2011, Q&A standards were not mainstreamed among Philippines humanitarian agencies, nor at government level. In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, the Sphere audit tool kit provided empirical data on the needs of Q&A in Philippines and has proved to be an excellent basis to influence ASAP advocacy work with government, CSOs, private sector, and other humanitarian stakeholders. A key outcome of ASAP's work is a harmonized set of standards, the *Philippines Humanitarian Standards* designed for uptake at policy level so that all stakeholders, including the Government, could take ownership of Sphere.

2.2.3. Bolivia

Presentation by Martin Villarroel Garcia and Magdalena Medrano Velasco – focal points in Bolivia and Sphere trainers (Grupo ESFERA Bolivia)

Martin Villarroel and Magdalena Medrano explained how Grupo ESFERA Bolivia uses Sphere for Capacity Building and Training activities across 16 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. 410 trainers from 16 countries attended 20 Sphere ToTs, and 516 people were trained in 14 Sphere workshops in 12 countries. Both shared specific cases from Bolivia, Paraguay and Nicaragua. In Bolivia, Sphere standards were adapted to respond to national floods. Magdalena Medrano shared how they have adapted Sphere Standards to national policies in Paraguay, which involved conducting TOTs for training of government technicians, NGOs, and municipalities, organized by the National Emergency Secretariat and NGOs. Sphere standards were applied in DANA (Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis) in coordination with the national disaster management authority.

Lessons learned, and challenges drawn from the presentations:
- Achieving Sphere ownership by governments, including institutionalization at all levels, remains challenging.
- Incorporating international standards in national emergency response systems can be a long and time-consuming process which requires commitment from all actors.
- "The standards are working for us and not us working for the Standards".
- The demand for Sphere trainings and orientation is high and many focal point organisations lack the financial resource to conduct regular training/capacity building programs.

2.3. Key Issues and Concerns

Participants further engaged in a plenary discussion around key issues and concerns identified in the case studies: How do we achieve continuity when governments may change during the adaption/adoption process? How do we approach governments when the human rights entry point doesn't work?

Contextualisation

Adaptation and contextualization of Sphere Standards are still considered as the biggest challenges in implementing Sphere. It was stressed that there are significant risks of dropping below minimum standards when trying to adapt Sphere indicators. A participant pointed out that World Food Program standards should remain the minimums, while participants agreed that minimum standards and indicators may be modified and adapted given the needs of the situation.

As an example, Sphere India found that 15L/day was not enough for the Indian people, therefore the indicator was set at 18L /day while food nutrition standards were raised to 2400Kcal. Thus, it supports the idea that every minimum standard needs to be put into context and indicators/minimum quantities based on a rational assessment of how affected populations in the region live and do things.

Affected communities

Participants generally agreed that more could and should be done at the community level to ensure a greater people-centred response. Equally importantly, affected populations must have their say not only when it comes to their needs, but also for the contextualization of indicators. People who are affected by disasters know better their needs, therefore they must be involved at early stages of the humanitarian response, i.e. during needs assessment and project design stages. This however requires effective advocacy and communications.

Working with governments

Having Sphere Standards incorporated into national legislations does not necessarily guarantee proper implementation, however, it helps to institutionalize them. Knowing the legal frameworks of one's own working country is important. While taking a rights-based approach towards promoting standards is essential, working with governments that lack commitment towards beneficiaries can be challenging. However, it is easier for local actors to use this approach.

Private sector

Engaging the private sector in promoting Sphere Standards in humanitarian response was discussed at length. Based on her experience with the private sector in delivering provisions during emergency, a participant stated that the private sector was certainly also in need of minimum Standards. According to her, engaging with private sector will help them to reach their accountability targets. One common question

was whether the private sector should be allowed to be a part of the board of Sphere members. While it has its pros and cons, the private sector is not driven by humanitarian principles, but rather by economic interests for intervening and providing humanitarian action. Nevertheless, they have a lot of financial resources that can be capitalized upon.

2.4. Problem Solving in context: An introduction to Design Thinking

An interactive exercise was presented as a way to introduce design thinking as a methodology and approach to problem solving. It is an approach used by designers to solve complex problems, and find desirable solutions for end-users. During a mini-design challenge, participants working in pairs were asked to use a process to suggest ways to improve their partner's commute. The process is inherently human-centred, getting close to the user to see where their frustrations lie and to understand how their lives and experiences could be better and more fulfilling. The approach is directed at creating value and solving problems by encouraging fast feedback from actual users before spending too much time, effort and money on any one idea.

This session was facilitated by Tristan Hale, Sphere Training manager. Focal points were arranged in pairs of two and asked to visualize their commute with a diagram or a drawing. This was to be based on their commute logistics, what they wish could be different, what they enjoy, and what gets in their way. They were asked to focus on ideas for their partner and work collaboratively to develop a few ideas that might improve the commute for them. Participants were then asked to make something visual or physical to help them better imagine the possibilities and the pitfalls of their solution. Each pair then shared their solutions with another pair to invite feedback on their ideas, and to find out what their group finds exciting about their ideas, and how they would change or improve them.

Raman Kumar shares an out-of-the-box idea with his group

2.4.1. Feedback and plenary discussion

Participants were asked to reflect on how this approach could be used to support humanitarian standards, and used alongside the Handbook to encourage participatory design and problem-solving.

Participants agreed that as humanitarians, this approach could help them think more deeply about the issues faced by affected populations. Participants believed the experience helped them step outside of their traditional boxes and use visual thinking, creativity and innovation to explore possible solutions. Participants felt that it helped them question their assumptions and what they thought they already knew.

The nature of problems faced by affected populations and the humanitarian actors who assist them are very diverse, so any tool would need to be flexible to be widely adopted.

The feedback from participants highlighted the importance of being able to empathize with their partner's problem, and of accepting the lack of clarity that exists at the beginning of the process. One participant noted that the process could allow multi-disciplinary teams to break out of their respective fields to leverage their collective wisdom, experiences and expertise, which would help to further build creative solutions and responses.

Participants embraced the idea of using the Global Forum to present a new methodology that they could bring into their own work. Notably, several trainers in the group were interested to incorporate a design challenge into their own workshops in the future.

2.5. Tools and services for using the standards

Sphere trainer, Axel Schmidt, led an interactive 'bus stop' session to gather suggestions and feedback around 3 key areas related to Sphere's Learning and Training Strategy.

Dániel Solymári 'plays back' the ideas generated at one of the bus stops

2.5.1. Short-format Sphere workshops

The short-format Sphere workshop lasts between 3 hours and 1 day, and can potentially be organized very quickly in the field in response to a sudden-onset disaster.

The idea—already piloted a few times—was greatly appreciated, and the name *Sphere Orientation* was suggested and supported. Some benefits of this kind of course are to create a common understanding, develop a common language and framework around a specific operation and situation, and to prevent relatively inexperienced people from making common mistakes. Materials should be easy to read (the Spanish 'Child Friendly Handbook' was mentioned), and should not require electricity (i.e. no PPT). A possible barrier is the lack of buy-in by decision makers to support this kind of initiative.

2.5.2. Learning and community building technologies

The proposal on gamification for Sphere Trainers (i.e. awarding badges for workshops delivered and other tasks) met a warm response. The Insider Forum (online forum) was widely supported as an effective way to share experiences and lessons learned, and to foster a sense of ownership within the community. A well-supported suggestion was to give the lead to different FPs/trainers to moderate certain sections/topics. It was noted that any such forum requires strong management/moderation skills. Regional and global webinars were also supported as future activities.

2.5.3. Traditional Sphere training materials

Sphere e-learnings are a valued part of the Sphere training offering. Learners can follow the courses in their own time, and highly value the certificate of completion. Possible limitations are that they are available in only 4 languages, and the case studies are not regional. Lack of internet connectivity is cited as a barrier, and the lack of interactive learning is a problem for some. The current e-learning courses (Sphere Handbook in Action and Sphere for Managers) are too detailed or too general for most beginners. USB sticks are preferred to CDs for off-line ready versions.

The Sphere Training Package (from 2015) is appreciated. The materials can be contextualized, but a lack of examples and scenarios was also noted. The package will require updating in 2018. Many modules have PPT files, so a PC and projector are required to deliver training. 'Ready-made' materials for white-board delivery would be useful. There was a strong interest in games and simulations on using Sphere, and in video use cases.

2.5.4. Feedback on e-learnings and workshop training package

Participants then moved to a session on Training of Trainer (ToT) workshops, led by Tristan Hale.

A key question was whether Sphere TOTs should be put on hold until the new version of the handbook is launched or if they should be conducted on the present version? Participants

thought that TOTs should not come to a halt and should continue[6]. After the launch of the new edition of the 2018 Sphere Handbook, a module on "what is new" would be needed for trainers so that they can include this information on the updated Sphere standards.

Various organizations committed to conduct TOTs after the launch of the new edition of the Sphere handbook, and there will also be a need to retrain trainers and practitioners. It was emphasized that those who have already attended a TOT can just focus on what has changed in the new edition of the handbook. Community World Service Asia (CWSA) committed to conduct TOTs at the regional and national levels after the launch. Sphere will provide "What's New" materials to support those already familiar with the 2011 edition.

Focal points suggested that they will require a detailed account of the differences between the 2011 and 2018 versions before they conduct trainings in their respective countries and regions. They thought that since the new Sphere handbook has considerable changes since the 2011 edition, the TOT training material needs to incorporate all those changes and add some level of contextualisation and localisation of the material to make it more relevant for the trainers.

Participants asked whether Sphere could support focal points in fundraising to conduct TOTs on the revised edition in various regions.

Moving the discussion beyond TOTs, concerns were expressed regarding the new membership structure (the details of which are not yet determined) about categorizing organizations based on their ability to pay membership fees, as it will exclude many organizations with the possibility of creating a hierarchy within the Sphere focal points and the distribution of its resources. Currently, those organizations that are promoting Sphere are doing it voluntarily, so creating a membership system could also affect the spirit of volunteerism amongst organizations.

2.5.5. Sphere, Age and Disability Inclusion Workshop Teaser

Axel closed day 2 with a "teaser" (which he delivered without speaking) for upcoming 'Sphere, Age and Disability Inclusion' workshops he will facilitate in Bangladesh. Inclusion means that workshops are cofacilitated and attended by persons with disabilities, and the material focuses on how to be accountable to persons with disabilities in the affected and host populations in response design.

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[6] Participants were requested to be very cautious and transparent while using the second draft for trainings purposes as drastic changes may still be introduced to the draft itself.

DAY 3 – Next Steps and Building our Network Together

3.1. Defining the focal point role

This session enabled participants to explore new ways of collaborating with each other to strengthen the Sphere network, and how the Sphere secretariat could support their efforts.

3.1.1. The view from Geneva – The view from the field

Wassila Mansouri, Sphere Networking and Outreach officer, facilitated the first morning session. She started with an overview presentation of the focal points network.

Asia forms 38% of the focal points network, followed by the Americas (26%), which suggest that in those two regions the Sphere network is quite robust and connected. Conversely, Sphere has historically been under-represented in both the Middle East (12%) and sub-Saharan African regions and to some extent in Europe (10%). As such, the Sphere secretariat will continue to actively reach out to those regions, and continue to identify potential new focal point organisations wherever possible. Increasing the knowledge and implementation of Sphere standards in MENA and Africa is crucial since most of the humanitarian crisis are taking place in those part of the world.

Sphere focal points network is characterized by a wide range of actors who represent international and national NGOs, Academia, networks, UN agencies, independent Sphere trainers and membership organisations[7]. It is worth noting that the Sphere Focal point in Ecuador is a governmental agency (Secretariat of Risks Management).

Over the years, the relationship between Sphere focal points and the Sphere office has proved to be a productive one. Country focal points have been promoting the Sphere Handbook not only on a voluntary basis but have also put tremendous dedication and efforts in doing so. The Sphere secretariat is very grateful for the work achieved by focal points and wishes it could provide them with further tools and support in the future.

Finally, it was stressed the importance of sharing on a regular basis an updated workplan of planned Sphere activities (every year or every two years). As for now, 1/3 of focal points do not have an updated workplan in the Sphere focal point database. Participants were strongly encouraged to share a detailed action plan with the Sphere secretariat by the beginning of 2018. A new Sphere website will be launched next year, which will give further visibility to the focal points community.

The view from the field

Dániel Solymári, Sphere focal point in Hungary with the *Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta* shared his experience with Sphere.

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[7] The complete list of Sphere country focal points can be found in the online database: http://www.sphereproject.org/community/focal-points/focal-points/

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Dániel Solymári highlighted the support his charity has received from the Sphere secretariat and how the relationship has been vital in making their humanitarian work more effective. He stressed the need of getting the 2018 Sphere Handbook translated into Hungarian, given the little uptake of Sphere principles among Hungarian humanitarian NGOs. Having the new edition of the Sphere Handbook translated into the local language will encourage humanitarian workers to understand and use the Sphere standards, while providing quality response. The need for Handbook translations into European languages is a result of the large number of displaced people crossing into Europe.

A participant from Germany argued that despite his country being a developed country, responders were highly disorganized in providing first assistance to refugees, and Germany could have learnt more from other countries like Pakistan or India. Although European countries are industrialized nations, they still do not feel the necessity of adopting Sphere Standards, an approach which appears to be wrong. There is a crucial need to advocate in Europe for the application of Sphere Standards, particularly in the context of the current refugee crisis.

3.1.2. What does good collaboration between Focal Points and the Secretariat look like?

During this session, participants were invited to brainstorm ideas to strengthen the collaboration between focal points and the Sphere secretariat as well as the collaboration among focal points working in the same region. Feedback and Recommendations made to the Sphere secretariat are outlined below:

Improved communication

Participants generally agreed that there should be more support from Geneva to country focal points. More specifically, they wish to receive more information regarding Sphere events and activities taking place around the globe, and to get updated on newly recognised Sphere partners and focal points. Likewise, they would like to be further consulted when the Sphere secretariat identifies potential new focal points in their respective county or region. It was emphasized that developing better communication channels and a sense of trust will empower the Sphere network.

New tools and approach

Ideas and new tools that the Sphere office could develop to further strengthen the network were discussed, such as having detailed guidance on how to work with governments. Other ideas included Sphere best practice labs (to see how Sphere is put into practice), advocacy/learning for senior leadership, uptake of sphere with governmental organisations, TOTs on the new Sphere Handbook, and contextualization guidance materials. It was conceded that a wealth of knowledge and experience already exists amongst focal points, so enabling sharing of this information could be more effective that a top-down approach.

It was suggested that Sphere develop global projects involving the focal points. This would help increase the Sphere outreach beyond the country level.

Support regional networks

A recommendation made by participants from Asia/South Asia is to have the Sphere office further engaged in supporting other regional networks (e.g. Africa, MENA) to become more active, while focal points from such regions may also draw support from Geneva. Participants from Africa felt similarly, and stressed the crucial need to strengthen the Sphere network across their regions, which means rising the number of Sphere focal points. They recommended the Sphere office to dedicate more resources to effectively communicating and working with focal points collectively.

Wherever possible, all countries from one region should come together to organize joint events on Sphere minimum standards, and for the upcoming Handbook launch. This would help spread the Sphere message more efficiently, and strengthen communication and collaboration amongst country focal points.

More focal points gatherings

A reasonable demand for regular focal points meetings was identified. According to many participants, regional events/forums that bring all focal points together such as this global focal points forum would foster a greater sense of community.

3.2. Global priorities and common strategy: 2018 Sphere Handbook launch

Plenary exchange and priorities for support, action, learning, tools and how the Sphere presence can be increased during the 2018 handbook launch were the highlight of this session.

3.2.1. Regional groupings meet

Respective participants from Africa, Latin America and Asia were invited to gather together to discuss and present action plans for the 2018 Handbook launch. Action plans per region are outlined at the end of this report (Annex II).

Regional groups (Africa and Latin America) sit together to discuss plans and find synergies

Asia/south Asia regional group sit together to discuss plans and find synergies

3.2.2. Events, activities and timelines

For the last afternoon session, a Skype call with Geneva was arranged with Barbara Sartore, Sphere Communications manager. The purpose was twofold:

- Get all focal points acquainted with action plans and schedule for the Handbook launch.
- Conduct a brief Q&A session to address any concerns or questions participants may have regarding the Handbook launch.

Barbara opened the session by presenting a general plan of activities. She explained that the copies of the Handbook should be ready by mid-June 2018, so that the launch date could be set between late June and September.

She also suggested that local launch events should be organized in a coordinated manner to ensure a wider audience. This was done during the 2011 Handbook launch, when 35 events were organised at the local level in the two months following the main launch event in New York. It was especially recommended to organize a series of events in key locations such as New Zealand, Africa and India.

Regarding the launch date, participants from Latin America countries proposed to schedule the main event for 19 August 2018, on World Humanitarian Day. However, the Sphere Director remarked that this would be difficult—at least in Europe and North America— where World Humanitarian Day enjoys a strong communications campaign and focuses primarily on humanitarians who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Because of the

different scope of the remembrance and because it falls during a holiday period, Sphere would likely not get the needed coverage in the northern hemisphere.

Participants suggested to make sure the event organization includes live reporting on social media and the dissemination of posters and brochures. Some also suggested to try and contact Google to request a personalized Google "doodle" as part of dissemination activities. All participants were encouraged to start working towards the organization of the Handbook launch as of now.

3.2.3. Tools to be developed and support to roll-out

- Many focal points expressed the desire to receive the final text of the 2018 Handbook before the release date (under embargo), so it can be timely translated into Filipino, Mandarin, Spanish, Urdu and other local languages.

- A "What is new" brochure, summarizing key differences between the 2011 and 2018 Handbook versions, leaflets and flyers with key messages etc.

- A package including an introductory video quoting key stakeholder would be greatly appreciated. Contributions and indications of commitment towards Sphere from IFRC, UN members, government officials (Ecuador FP?), and other regional bodies (ASEAN?) would strongly highlight widespread support for the Sphere standards. Participants felt that having governmental agencies on board would encourage other countries to endorse the Sphere principles. It is agreed, however, that Sphere should always support local efforts and systems.

- Snippets of affected populations and community members could be added to the global video described above. This would send a strong signal that this is a local message – not just one coming from Geneva.

- Showing how Sphere is applied in real life would be very helpful in terms of gaining support and spreading information about the humanitarian work of organisations that are following Sphere standards. Country-wise and region-wise, locals should be involved in the process, so that regional populations are aware of what work is being done to help their own people.

- Radio advertisements disseminating key Sphere messages. It could become a local strategy to boost Sphere amongst the inner circles of communities within a country.

Conclusion

For the first time since the creation of the Sphere network, the Global Focal Points Forum provided the occasion to Sphere focal points and trainers from 16 countries and 4 regions to meet and discuss at length the use of humanitarian standards in widely varied contexts, consider training approaches, and ways to further strengthen the Sphere network.[8]

During the three-day meeting, participants shared good practices and lessons learned, drawing upon their experience implementing humanitarian standards in local contexts. While contextualisation and working with governments are still considered to be the main challenges, it is worth noting that focal points have come a long way and made considerable progress in mainstreaming the Handbook and advocating for the adoption of Sphere principles, resulting in concrete achievements.

Among the activities programmed, participants provided inputs to the second draft of the Sphere Handbook 2018, presented their plans for dissemination and training activities for the upcoming months, and reflected on concrete ideas on how to enhance collaboration both with the Sphere secretariat in Geneva and with Focal Points in other regions. Recommendations will be looked at closely by the Sphere team with respect to provide further support and tools to empower the network.

Most of participants committed to launch the 2018 handbook at country and in some instance at regional level (i.e. Asia, Latin America). They were encouraged to further engage with the Sphere secretariat, so they could get the needed support in doing so.

Overall, the enthusiasm and commitment shared by all Focal Points during the meeting demonstrated their strong belief in the value of the Sphere standards and a sense of belonging to an emerging community of purpose.

Evaluation

The evaluation feedback indicates that the Sphere Global Focal Points Forum largely met participants' expectations. Highly rated topics found to be the most relevant include case studies presentations, learning and training discussions, 2018 Handbook launch and regional joint action plans.

It was generally felt that the meeting was significantly valuable and reached its objectives. For many participants, it offered a better understanding of Sphere's future direction and how they could contribute, while a few others emphasised the opportunity to meet with other focal points and start thinking more concretely about regional cooperation.
Lastly, the clear majority was satisfied with the right balance between plenary sessions and group work. Participants enjoyed the discussions and had a good exchange and interaction with each other.

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[8] Represented countries were Bangladesh; Bolivia; Chile; China; Ecuador; Ethiopia; Germany; Haiti; Hungary; India; Kenya; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Senegal and Turkey.

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ANNEXES

Annex I: Participants feedback on Draft 2

Group 1 - *What is Sphere?*

A few terms need to be explained with further clarity such as 'minimum', 'life-saving' (as life-saving is understood as an emergency) and 'universal standards' since these terms can be interpreted differently given the context.

Terminology should be more specific. For instance, 'anyone' providing humanitarian aid should be more explicit. In general, language and technical terminology of the handbook need to be looked at. The end-receivers should play an active part in the making of the handbook since they are the ones who are being affected.

Group 2 - *Introduction Chapter*

The introduction chapter should first start with the history of the Sphere movement. This will provide the reader a better understanding of the roots of the movement.

The design, layout and colour of the Handbook are important.

The text boxes should help summarize what is being said.

Gender should be more comprehensive of all genders, including the third gender.

The CHS processes have been duplicated in section 3.3 of the Introduction.

The term 'access' should be clearly defined at the beginning since it is important to the spirit of Sphere. This group focused on the end user whose voices have been side-lined compared to the academic experts who have had more say in the overall process.

The group also advocated for a training on a quick overview of Sphere and its principles, and the standards. The group felt the Introduction chapter fails to highlight the overarching themes.

Group 3 - *Cash Transfers*

References to case studies should be linked to evidence. The cash part should be included with other cross-cutting themes in the handbook. This group called for clarification on the terms used in the chapter since the term 'market' has a different meaning in different contexts.

The conversation focused mostly on cash, which also shows the huge emphasis on cash placed by big donors like ECHO and DFID. These are the same organizations who previously thought cash would be ineffective and would be difficult to account for.

The group shared the idea of making decision-making trees to better demonstrate and simplify the process for humanitarians. The markets annex must consider informal markets. The verification list from the 2011 edition should be kept. The appendix 1 was easy to contextualize, read and summarize. All sections being added should have an appendix.

Annex II: Regional proposals for the 2018 handbook launch

Africa *(Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal)*

Participants from East and West Africa plan to internally launch the handbook for NGOs operating in its regions. They plan to reach out to other countries for the launch.

They are hoping for a balanced support from the Sphere office, meaning they want a customised and tailor-made approach to help the local organisations during trainings.

They need networking and cooperation across the regions, so they can work in a more collaborative manner.

Focal points from this region also suggested to encourage affected communities to be a part of the Sphere board so they can be better represented.

Latin America and Carribean *(Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Haiti)*

Participants from Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador aim to map out all the Sphere focal points in Latin America region to increase communication and build a stronger network.

They wish to translate the meeting report and share it with all sphere focal points in the region as it is important to improve the network and get all focal points involved.

The FPs also plan to launch the 2018 Handbook across Latin American countries on the World Humanitarian Day (August 19).

A database with information about all focal points will be created. At the same time, they want to keep track on people trained by focal points in the last two years.

They aim is to create a new action plan for all the countries in Latin America and work with different universities and institutions to spread the sphere message as far and widely as possible. They wish to conduct webinars and share ideas for the region with all the focal points and continue with the action plan.

Asia/South Asia *(Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Turkey)*

Participants from Asia plan to launch respectively the new Sphere Handbook in each country along with a translation in every Asian language adopting Sphere standards.

They will work on training materials to make available the new handbook material to conduct trainings in the meantime.

They plan to carry out translation of the new Handbook during 2018-2019.

Annex III: List of participants

Name	Country	Focal Point Organisation
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