Esfera en la Práctica 2024

Training Report

Sphere in Practice Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in Spanish

25 January to 7 March 2024

Report written by Aninia Nadig (Lead Trainer), with contributions from Amanda Moraes (Network and Membership Manager, Sphere) and Felicity Fallon (Head of Learning and Events, Sphere), April 2024

Content

Introduction

The Spanish Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) *Esfera en la Práctica (Sphere in Practice)* was the third Sphere in Practice MOOC in as many years, and the first one carried out in Spanish. As for the French MOOC (2022), it was organised in collaboration between Sphere and RedR. Sphere was responsible for the content, while RedR put in place the learning platform, provided technical support to participants and provided technical hosting of the weekly Zoom webinars.

In terms of numbers of participants, the course beat all previous records:

- 3604 participants enrolled

- The weekly webinars started with a participation of over 1,100 in the first two webinars, gradually moving down, with around 600 during the last webinar

- 872 participants (24%) completed the course completely

- 463 (13%) completed the course partially
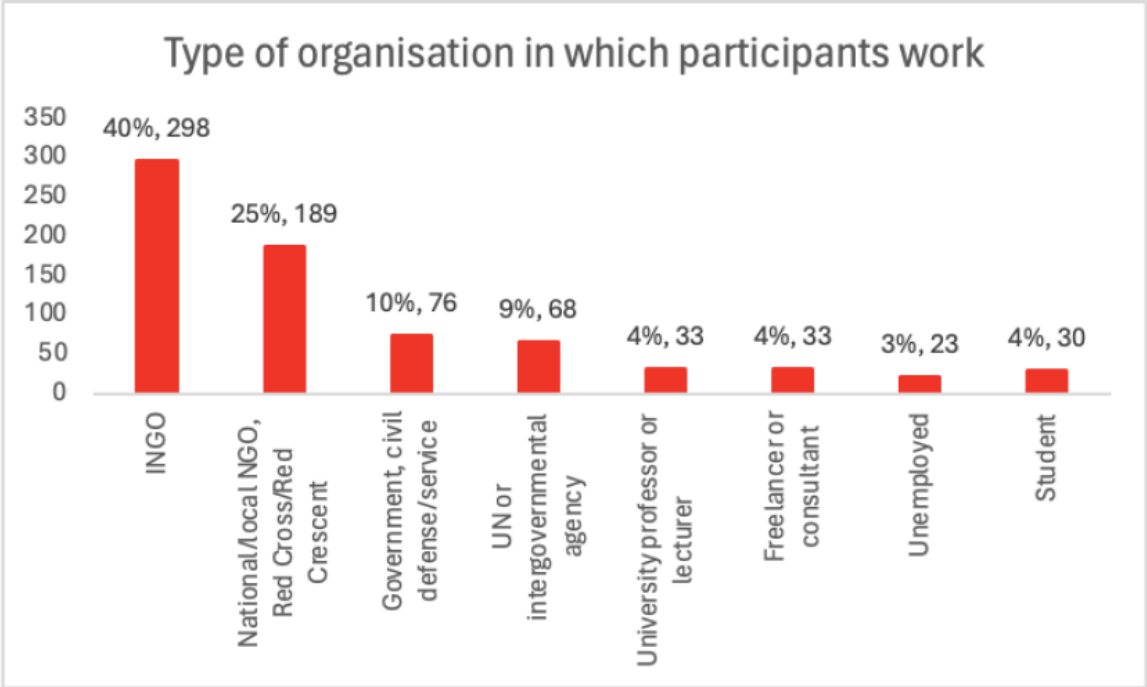
- 2269 (63%) signed up but never started the course.

Satisfaction levels were extremely high. 750 participants completed an end-of-course survey, where 99% rated the MOOC as "excellent", "very good" or "good".
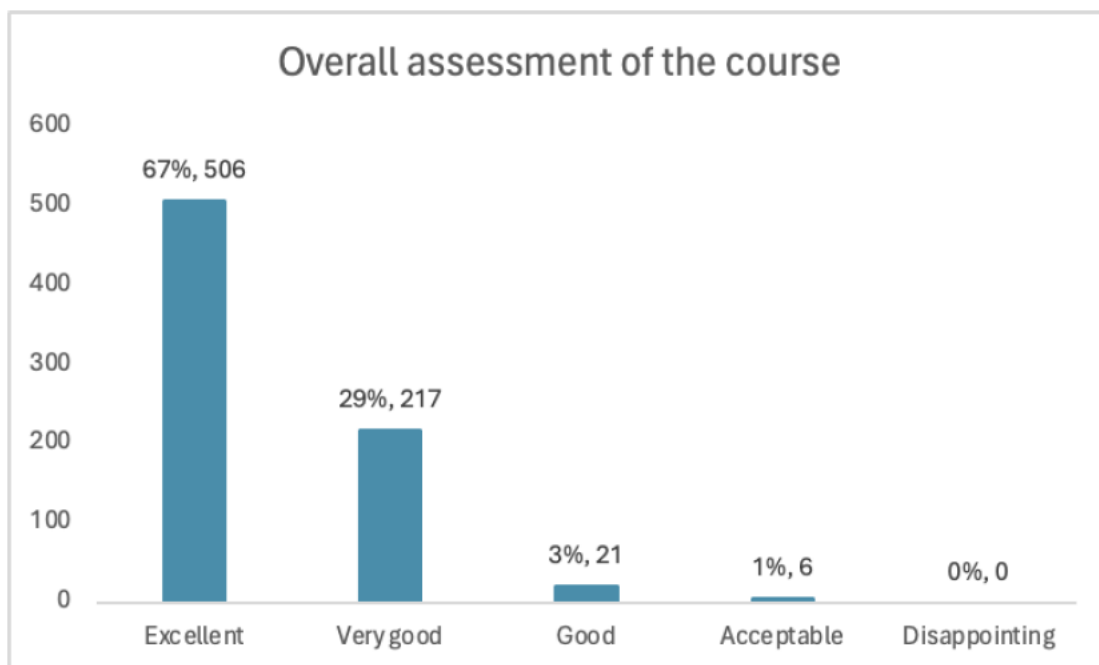
The following image, displayed during the 25 January welcome session, represents the geographic spread of the people signed up by mid-January 2024 and shows the enormous interest the course generated.

¿De dónde vienen Vds?

Mexico
282

2
119   1
78 37
74 11
30
23   Venez...
Colo... 317
5
Peru
352   Brazil
105

Paraguay, Guyana, Suiza, Senegal, Francia, Alemania, Países Bajos, Siria, Canadá, Italia, República Democrática del Congo, Angola, Cuba, Australia, Haití, Argelia, Finlandia, Israel, Grecia, Singapur, Austria, Suecia, Líbano, Ucrania, Chipre, Palestina, Moldavia, Mozambique

Bolivia
41

Argentina   9
68
65

Esfera

Colombia	672
Venezuela	518
Ecuador	487
Perú	353
México	283
España	111
Brasil	105
Guatemala	79
El Salvador	75
Argentina	72
Chile	66
Bolivia	45
Honduras	38
Costa Rica	31
República Dominican	20
Panamá	18
Estados Unidos	13
Portugal	12
Nicaragua	12
Uruguay	9

Participants worked in a range of organisations, with 40% coming from INGOs, 25% from national or local NGOs, and 10% from government/civil defense.

Type of organisation in which participants work

Category	Value
INGO	40%, 298
National/local NGO, Red Cross/Red Crescent	25%, 189
Government, civil defense/service	10%, 76
UN or intergovernmental agency	9%, 68
University professor or lecturer	4%, 33
Freelancer or consultant	4%, 33
Unemployed	3%, 23
Student	4%, 30

Following the MOOC, participants envisaged using Sphere predominantly for project implementation, but also strategy, project design and evaluation.

How will you use Sphere?	
Project implementation	77%
Development of strategies and project design	75%
Evaluations and analysis	63%
MEAL	62%

While the MOOC was undoubtedly a great success for Sphere, the higher-than-expected number of participants posed challenges to the course organisers. These are listed further down under Training Team Reflections on the collaboration with RedR.

Objective and scope of the MOOC

The objective of the MOOC was to introduce Sphere to as many people as possible.

The scope was to provide a mix of self-paced individual learning, group learning in the weekly webinars and discussion fora – the two latter to ensure that the global course content be rooted in LAC's regional realities.

The MOOC – Blended learning

The self-paced online modules

Sphere in practice consists of five self-paced online modules, and is available to anyone at any time on Sphere's own Learning Management System (LMS). For the MOOC, however, these five modules were combined with two more learning activities, making the MOOC a blended learning experience. These activities were:

The discussion fora

Weekly discussion questions were posted on the day of the webinar or the following day. After a bit of initial difficulties channeling the discussions, people started engaging, with around 40-50 posts each week, some very detailed and well-thought-through.

The forum questions always related to a theme to be discussed the following week. The Sphere trainer sometimes produced a word cloud from the contributions and the lead trainer then used those, plus key aspects of the forum contributions, to introduce/discuss the themes introduced in the forum.

During the first two weeks, anyone who posted something in the Forum created thus a new discussion thread. The organisers felt that this dispersed the discussions too much, since most threads only had one or two contributors. Also, participants received an email for each posted message, which was overwhelming. The following weeks, the fora were limited to 2 discussion threads per week, one with the question, and one for people to exchange.

The level of engagement in the forum decreased throughout the weeks. This trend can be linked to a number of reasons 1) the participants feel that their input was not sufficiently incorporated into the webinars; 2) the lack of interactions from the lead and Sphere trainer in those spaces; 3) the accumulation of work obligations with the modules homework – not seeing engagement in the forum as a priority; 4) the disengagement with the Moodle platform as a whole.

The weekly webinars

The second interactive part of the course consisted of seven webinars, each held on Thursdays between 5pm and 6:30pm CET and lasting 90 minutes (except for 1-hour welcome webinar). This schedule was established considering the European location of the lead trainer, the Sphere trainer, and the technical support team. The late afternoon CET allowed all participants to join during the day, even those with an 8h time difference. However, participants suggested that setting the webinars during late-afternoon LAC time would have made participation easier, as it would have allowed them to join outside of their work hours.

The lead trainer invited one or two guest speakers each week who provided regional context and practical examples of working with the Sphere standards. The idea was to cover each week one broad theme related to the module they had been working on, and one thematic chapter from the Sphere Handbook. The lead trainer did her best to match the themes with the modules, but various changes in speakers (either because they were not able to commit at the last minute or had to change week) meant that the match was not always given. But this did not prevent the participants from appreciating these guest contributions.

While in earlier MOOCs, participants were able to actively engage, the nature of the Zoom Webinar setting meant that the facilitators never saw or heard the participants, and that they were only able to interact through the Q&A function. Furthermore, the half-hour breakout room discussion of earlier MOOCs was not possible. Therefore, the webinar duration went – almost naturally – from 1h to 90 minutes.

From webinar 2 onwards, the organisers produced follow-up emails which were sent 1 or 2 days after the webinar and which contained the links to the recording and to any

other documents mentioned in the webinar. These emails also included answers to questions that were not addressed during the webinars.

25 January: Welcome and general introduction to the learning platform

The general information was well received. The introduction to the learning platform was challenging as the technical officer could not communicate well in Spanish. As a result, participants left the meeting still unsure about how to navigate in the Moodle platform. Many of the straightforward technical challenges later reported by the participants, e.g., <how to deal with emergent windows>, could have been addressed in that opportunity.

As a request from Sphere to address this 'navigating Moodle' shortfall, RedR produced a short video, which was later shared with the participants.

The Sphere trainer views the first webinar as a lost opportunity. The momentum of the MOOC could have been leveraged to introduce fundamental Sphere concepts. Some participants never returned, resulting in them leaving the session without gaining any knowledge from it, despite attending the inaugural webinar.

1 February: Module 1: Introduction to Sphere
Guest speaker: Aydée Marín on the CHS

The lead trainer chose to take ample time to present Sphere, the structure of the Handbook and Standards and Sphere's coherent approach. While this detailed information was appreciated, the lead trainer mismanaged the time, which meant that the guest speaker, Aydée Marín, while able to interact in discussions during the webinar, had no time to make her prepared presentation. That was later recorded and shared with participants.

Recording important topics that could not be covered in the live session and later sharing the videos with participants is an interesting resource. However, it is no substitute for live interaction with specialists. For instance, despite Aydée's video having covered the planned content, the learning experience could have been richer when combined with the audience's questions answered live.

8 February: Module 12: Drought in Abudi
Guest speakers: Diego Prado on cash-based programming and Ivonne Ascensio on Health

The lead trainer's session covered Human rights, Bidirectional communication, Participation and capacity building, and PSEA. The two invitees covered cash-based programming for people on the move (Diego) and in health settings (Ivonne). Both contributions were very interesting.

As the speakers took considerably more time than foreseen, the lead trainer chose not to cover PSEA that day.

One speaker never showed, which is why the lead trainer reached out to CaLP's representative in the HSP to find a speaker on cash-based assistance in LAC. CaLP was extremely helpful in identifying Diego. Furthermore, while Nutrition would have been the logical Sectoral chapter here, the speaker was not able to join, so we switched week with the Health contributor.

15 February: Module 3: Refugees in Hazba
Guest speakers: Rodrigo Romero on government responses using Sphere and Diany Romo on nutrition

The session was dense in content but went well. Both guest speakers were highly appreciated and their contributions relevant to putting Sphere into practice.

Trainers need to ensure that guest speakers have an adequate environment to talk in. For instance, one of the panelists was in an open-plan office. His headset was not of sufficient quality to cancel outside noise (e.g., colleagues talking, people walking, bathroom noises). These combined resulted in a noise-polluted intervention, which was disturbing for the audience and distracting from the actual content. The lead trainer chose not to cover assessment, and group it with other themes covered in the MOOC and in the CAMEL guide[1] – at the end of the course, she produced a short video introducing the CAMEL to the participants.

22 February: Module 4: Tsunami in Balmec
Guest speaker: Ricardo Treno on shelter

The session went very well, for both speakers and participants, who were as active as always, posting many questions in the Q&A.

Three particularities worth mentioning:

- The Sphere trainer was not able to join, so we had support from Sphere trainer and focal point for Spain Gabriel Paredes, who then ended up joining all remaining online events, which was both very nice and hugely helpful. Sincere thanks to Gabriel.

- One speaker did not show up, which meant that the plan to have two presentations around shelter (one with focus on geographic changes around people on the move, and one on changes in time in a settlement) did not work

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[1] The CAMEL refers to the guide "Sphere in Context and for Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning".

out. However, having one speaker worked well as there was more time for discussion.

- At the end of the session, we ended a couple of minutes early and ran a pre-recorded video of a discussion with Alejandro Castañeda, Sphere trainer for Colombia, on inclusion and humanitarian innovation. Around 300 people stayed until the end of that discussion. The link to the recording was shared in the weekly follow-up email.

29 February: Module 5: Epidemic in Equalio
Guest speakers: Erwin Garzona (Climate Change Adaptation) and Beatriz Corral (Sphere for indigenous communities)

This last session had two very different but complementary guest speakers, in that both work with indigenous communities but covered different subjects.

Erwin joined only 2 days earlier, since the speaker covering WASH was not able to join due to a family emergency. Instead of trying to find a WASH specialist in such short time, the trainer chose to look for a speaker from Central America, since that sub-region had not been covered at all in the previous sessions. She then briefly covered the WASH chapter in her own presentation.

7 March: Feedback session, facilitated by course participants

As in earlier MOOCs, the feedback session was voluntary. It was run by two course participants: Pilar Chavez and Ronimar Costa dos Santos and lasted 90 minutes. Most of the time there were around 220 participants in the room, briefly going up to 230, later dropping somewhat. The session was not recorded, notes were taken. Based on these notes, the main feedback points are noted below, under Participants' feedback on the webinars.

Next steps:

As this was a MOOC, there were no individual action plans. However, Sphere plans a 6-months-after check-in webinar, together with the lead trainer.

Training methods, evaluation and learning

Training methods and techniques

Due to the setup of *Zoom Webinars,* training techniques were limited to presentations/monologues, Zoom polls and answering questions from the Q&A. The weekly follow-up emails became the solution to the fact that people were not able to click on links shared in the Chat by the organisers.

Participants' feedback on the webinars

Weekly webinar feedback

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the webinars on a weekly basis, and on a scale from 1 (not at all interesting) to 5 (very interesting). The feedback is consistently mostly positive, reflecting the success or challenges of the webinar sessions, with the 1-February session being the least successful. The training team and the participants settled into the routine, learned from mistakes, and perhaps the more enthusiastic participants were the ones staying on until the end.

Appreciation for guest speakers was the biggest plus, also for a clear structure of the course.

Problems raised were similar to those brought up in the feedback session. They concerned the platform, time management during the webinars at the beginning, and insufficient presence by trainers or other experts in the discussion fora.

Weekly satisfaction rates for the webinars

RedR collected weekly satisfaction feedback on the webinars. Participants rated the webinars on a scale from 1 (Not at all interesting) to 5 (Very interesting).

	5	4	3	2	1
1 February	227	126	45	9	2
8 February	164	69	24	7	1
15 February	131	59	18	4	0
22 February	125	45	8	1	0
29 February	144	36	13	1	1
Total	**791**	**335**	**108**	**22**	**5**

The same information is represented below in pie chart format as a total of all feedback for the five webinars.
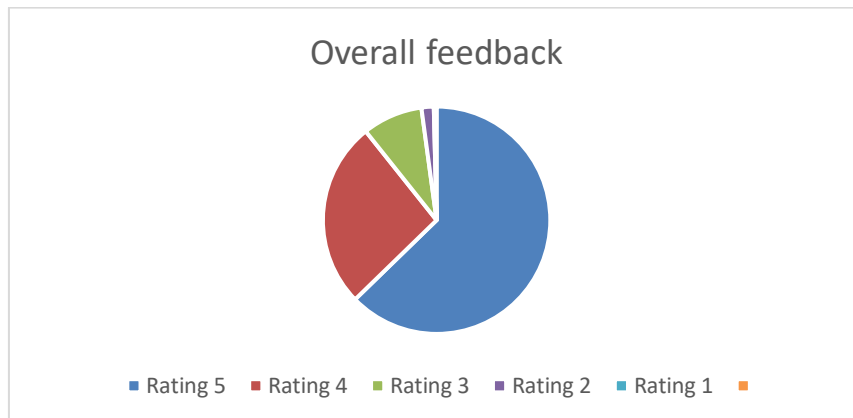
7 March feedback from participants

The Feedback session was run by two course participants: Pilar Chavez and Ronimar Costa dos Santos. It lasted 90 minutes. Most of the time there were around 220 participants in the room, briefly going up to 230, later dropping somewhat. The session was not recorded, notes were taken.

Appreciated:

- The online modules based on real life examples, appreciated the videos and links to the relevant parts of the HB
- The guest speakers. Were mentioned specifically:
    - Diego Prado, speaking on cash-based programming in situations of people on the move (8 February),
    - Rodrigo Romero, speaking on Ecuador's risk management processes integrating Sphere (15 February),
    - Ricardo Treno speaking on the evolution over time of a shelter programme (22 February) and
    - Beatriz Corral speaking about the importance of the values of the Humanitarian Charter for working with indigenous groups (29 February)
- Showing that Sphere is much more than just four technical chapters

Points of improvement

- The Moodle platform. Not sufficiently good introduction to using it, insufficient support throughout the course
- Not enough possibilities to exchange among themselves.
- Not enough group work in the platform
- Webinars should be scheduled for end of day

- General point: Not enough materials about Sphere in Spanish. The modules in Sphere in Practice not based at all on LAC examples. Great to learn about the rest of the world, but the balance should shift.

Suggestions (for Sphere but also for themselves and their group):

- More possibilities to exchange, including group work
- Use the energy from the MOOC and do something with it!
- Help the group stay in touch? Keep the WhatsApp group or migrate to Telegram where there is no 1000-persons limit
- Work more with national governments
- Create
  - a repository for case studies (LAC and global)
  - a LAC Community of Knowledge/CoP.
  - a "banco de testimonios". A testimony repository. Link to case study repository, maybe "testimonies" are less formal, but still worth capturing.
- Consider Sphere as a kind of "archetype" through which to study cross-cutting themes
- Facilitate that country focal points can meet course participants. Beneficial for both sides. Can form working groups – possibly follow-up Sphere trainings, ToTs etc. Share the list of country focal points with the participants (again)
- Develop a Sphere course for children and young people. Give them pathways to grow, use an inter-generational lens and value the opinions of children and young people.
- Include the opinions of affected persons

Training team reflections and learnings

Lead trainer

Providing some information in different formats, in particular short videos, is a good way to contribute without taking time from the webinars.

Did not dare sufficiently to **not** follow the ppts that were provided. It would be better to pick only one theme, provide reflections that go beyond the module, preferably personal experiences and thoughts, and then hand over to the 2 speakers.

Having 2 guest speakers was a good idea because it allowed a broader variety of themes to be covered. However, if this were to be repeated, the contribution of the lead trainer would need to be reviewed and – I suggest – shortened to one or two in-depth themes instead of the range of themes to run through without time to go into depth. Fully integrating the themes covered by the speakers would be good too. This needs longer preparation time, to get their presentations something like a week early.

Learning from the forum: Not enough time to engage actively through questions or comments. The aspect of expert engagement was not fulfilled. Question of time, mostly. Need to understand what this implies resource-wise before promising continued engagement.

Weekly follow-up emails are a good idea, as is a final document with all the links to presentations, videos and documents participants will have come across during the webinars. It seems like something to keep and consult occasionally.

Important to repeat all the things we want them to remember in the last session. Like we usually do. Best to have a short intro to Sphere website in second session (or the welcome session) and again in the last one.

Sphere trainer

The training team and the technical officers for a future MOOC should be mother tongue in the training language.

There is a need for a deeper reflection on participant engagement – if not the forum, what should we be using?

WhatsApp: pros and cons. Whereas WhatsApp connected to the LAC audience and solved RedR's lack of capacity to respond to participants' technical problems it overloaded trainers, who were (and are still being) bombarded with technical queries on their phones at any time and day (weekends, middle of the night, etc.).

Further pre-assessment is needed for choosing the guest speakers. Knowing a theme does not make a person a great speaker.

The inaugural MOOC session should start with Sphere content (basic on the HB), then cover the learning platform (already pre-anticipating common struggles).

Good practices, learning and recommendations

Good practice includes inviting guest speakers and the much appreciated live feedback session. Online discussion fora should be offered again if more actively moderated.

A key learning point is the importance of involving people actively – if not possible during weekly live sessions, then the discussion fora could have been used for more direct discussions. This was made difficult by technology, though, and lack of time from facilitators. Another option is to engage one or two additional Sphere specialists with the specific task to engage in the forum.

Use the very first online session (the best-attended one) to deliver punchy Sphere content – not only technical demonstration of the online learning platform.

Possibly not use Moodle, but rather use Sphere's LMS. Also, WhatsApp seems to be a very effective way of communicating and engaging with participants during the course. Work with Sphere's own Zoom account. Could we get MOOC pathway on LinkedIn Learning? Coursera, etc.? (Platforms that typically require learners to pay for a monthly subscription these days.)

Consider extracting short clips from the live presentations in the webinars to use for future training resources, as well as general Sphere promotion. Short clips could also be extracted from previous English and French MOOCS for similar purposes.

Annexes

Thank you to our guest speakers!

Aydée Marín Pallares, social communicator, journalist and human rights activist. Sphere trainer and focal point for Colombia. Member of the CHS Revision Steering Committee

Diego Prado, CALP, Deputy Regional Representative at CALP for the Americas. Diego.Prado@calpnetwork.org

Ivonne Ascensio, Health and Child Protection specialist, Save the Children Peru ivonne.ascencio@savethechildren.org

Rodrigo Romero, Vice General Secretary of the Secretariat of Risk Management in Ecuador (which is Sphere focal point for Ecuador). rodrigorosero@gmail.com

Diany Romo Gutiérrez, Nurse with humanitarian experience in Colombia, particularly in health and nutrition, and control of epidemics in Latin America.

Ricardo Treno, Humanitarian worker with Fraternidad - Federación Humanitaria Internacional (FFHI). Sphere focal point for Brazil. ricardot@fraterinternacional.org

Beatriz Corral, Founder of Fundación DelALTO, Argentina. Sphere focal point for Argentina. infofundelalto@gmail.com

Erwin Garzona, DRR and Humanitarian Aid programme officer for Jotay , a consortium of various ACT Alliance members. Coordinator of the ACT Forum for Guatemala and Central America. erwin.garzona@jotay.org

Training team

Aninia Nadig, Lead trainer, Independent humanitarian consultant.

Amanda Moraes, Co-facilitator, Network and Membership manager for Sphere.

Weekly Webinar Agendas

Welcome session – 25 January

La agenda de hoy

El equipo de capacitación

Estructura del curso en tres (cuatro) pílares

- Curso en línea "Cómo utilizar el manual Esfera (60 min – recomendado)
- 5 Módulos semanales en línea
- Webinarios en vivo
- Foros de discusión moderados

Agenda del curso y línea de tiempo

- El agenda refleta esos tres pilares

La Plataforma

Pregunas y respuestas

Esfera

PAGE

Module 1 – 1 February

Introducción al módulo

Introducción a Esfera

Un enfoque coherente

Esfera en contexto

Calidad y rendición de cuentas

Charla de la semana

- Aydée Marín sobre la Norma Humanitaria Esencial (CHS)

Herramientas en el sitio web de Esfera

Preguntas y respuestas

La hora del café

Esfera

Module 2 – 8 February

Introducción al módulo

Los derechos humanos

La comunicación bildireccional

La participación y el desarrollo de capacidades

Charlas de la semana y Preguntas y Respestas
- Diego Prado
- Ivonne Ascensio Díaz

La protección contra la explotación y el abuso sexual (PEAS)

Preguntas y respuestas

Esfera

Module 3 - 15 February

El enfoque de hoy

Nuestras organizaciones forman parte de un sistema complejo.

Intercambio efectivo
Desglose de datos y datos sensibles – PAES
Una respuesta bien planeada

Dos invitados

En video: evaluaciones iniciales

Esfera

Module 4 - 22 February

El enfoque de hoy

Las varias obligaciones de una organización humanitaria

- Cuidar de si mismo

- Rendición de cuentas a las personas afectadas (el foro)

- La resiliencia – la respuesta humanitaria en un proceso a más largo plazo

Dos invitados:
Alojamiento y asentamiento: cambios en el espacio y en el tiempo

En video: Evaluación inicial, Monitoreo, Evaluación y Aprendizaje
Charla con Alejandro Castañeda: inclusión e innovación hum.

Esfera

La agenda de hoy

Beatriz – Esfera por poblaciones indígenas

Aninia – unas reflexiones sobre el Módulo 5

Erwin – los efectos del cambio climático en Centroamérica

Amanda – unas informaciones importantes de parte de la oficina Esfera

Gracias y cierre

Forum discussion questions

1 February:

Según Vd, ¿cuales son las cualidades más importantes que las personas afectadas esperan de los trabajadores humanitarios ?

8 February:
 ¿Cuáles son las barreras para el intercambio eficaz de información entre las partes interesadas? ¿Cómo se pueden superar estas barreras?

15 February:
Reflexione sobre el argumento de Tsunami en Balmec (y en otras situaciones con las que usted este familiarizado)
- ¿Qué significa para usted una rendición de cuentas?
- ¿Cuáles son las barreras a la rendición de cuentas?
- ¿Cómo pueden ser superadas?
- ¿Cómo su organización implementa mecanismos de retroalimentación?
- ¿Qué consejo daría usted a alguien que esté implementando un mecanismo de retroalimentación por primera vez?

22 February:
Reflexione sobre situaciones con las que esté familiarizado (o el ejemplo de Equalio en el Módulo 5):
- ¿Por qué ocurre la parcialidad y la discriminación en las sociedades y en los programas humanitarios? ¿Es esto accidental o deliberado?
- ¿Qué consejo daría para abordar la parcialidad y la discriminación que ya está ocurriendo en una comunidad afectada por una crisis?
- ¿Qué consejo le daría a una organización humanitaria para evitar prácticas discriminatorias (o que refuerzan la discriminación existente) y para ayudar a las personas afectadas por crisis basándose únicamente en sus necesidades?

- ¿Pueden las buenas intenciones traducirse en parcialidad o discriminación? ¿Tienes ejemplos? ¿Cómo se puede evitar / reducir esto?