

Sphere Standards in Protracted Crises

A Case Study of DRC and Haiti



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THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



Sphere

Humanitarian Charter
and Minimum Standards
in Humanitarian Response

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Background of the Report

This report is product of research conducted by a consultancy team from the London School of Economic and Political Science and was commissioned by Sphere. This is a component of the Humanitarian Consultancy Project course and the MSc Development Studies programme.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the London School of Economics and Political Science or Sphere.

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ACRONYMS

CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CTP	Cash Transfer Programmes
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
LIFDC	Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
NFIs	Non-Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Aid
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Humanitarian standards seek to hold humanitarian agents accountable for their levels of performance; Sphere has been at the forefront of such efforts internationally. It is, however, important to note the context within which most humanitarian standards operate. The typical model of a crisis- a sudden acute disaster, with a recovery back to normal- does not apply to protracted crises, which are marked by recurrent relapses and complicated routes to recovery. This report has been commissioned by Sphere to study specifically the ways Sphere standards have, and can, be used in the context of a protracted crisis. Using two case studies, namely DRC and Haiti, we build a base of literature and primary information from humanitarian agents and experts to draw conclusions about the usage of Sphere standards in these contexts. Based on this, we propose recommendations that can feed into the next handbook to better guide humanitarian agents in protracted crises.

Protracted crises are markedly different from acute crises; apart from the prolonged duration, the former also suffers from underlying vulnerabilities that lead to fluctuations in standards of living. These differences impact the way humanitarian agents operate in a protracted crisis; standards for humanitarian performance need to reflect these differences. To this end, this report seeks to answer the following questions:

- I. How and why have Sphere standards been used in situations of protracted crisis?
- II. What have been the contributions and limitations of the Sphere standards in ensuring affected people's protection, dignity and quality of life in situations of prolonged insecurity and volatility?

Our findings show that while there is a general appreciation of the utility of the Sphere standards, they are seen to be lacking in the aim of resilience building, which is crucial in such crises. The standards are seen as very helpful in the immediate aftermath of a relapse, but this is insufficient as the approach in a protracted crisis needs to account for frequent relapses, paying attention to systemic weaknesses. The convergence of development and humanitarian efforts in a protracted crisis, as noted in literature and from the interviews, is an aspect that cannot be ignored by humanitarian standards such as Sphere. Moreover, while the standards are comprehensive in the technical chapters, they could benefit from more detailed guidance under the protection principles, which are of paramount importance for affected populations in a protracted crisis. Based on these critiques, we provide the following recommendations:

I. Sphere should encourage the interaction between development and humanitarian agents.

The line between development and humanitarian work in a protracted crisis is blurred; therefore, the coordination and collaboration between development and humanitarian organizations can be enhanced by ensuring the dissemination of knowledge of Sphere standards to development workers, local/national authorities and the community.

II. Give prominence to resilience building in the Sphere Handbook.

The focus in a protracted crisis is not just to ‘bounce back’, but to ‘bounce back better’. In order to do this, the Sphere standards should incorporate a section on resilience building, with particular emphasis on local capacity building. This would enable the affected populations to reduce aid dependency, and build back on their own.

III. Standards and indicators should be expanded and/or adapted.

Certain sectors acquire greater importance in a protracted crisis, with affected populations constantly being vulnerable. The most important of these are the protection principles- a framework to translate the preventive, responsive and remedial functions of the protection principles into action is recommended.

IV. Sphere should be used as an advocacy tool with stakeholders in protracted crises.

The role of the government and donors are paramount in the alleviation of poor living standards in a protracted crisis. The Sphere standards, in this context, can be used as an advocacy tool in two ways. In areas where even the existing standards of living fall below Sphere minimum standards, the Sphere-trained humanitarian agents can use the minimum standards as a guide to be advocated to the government. With donors, the Sphere organization can advocate for the inclusion of protection principles and objective funding criteria, so as to ensure enforceability of process standards and to provide the scope for fulfilment of technical standards.

The Sphere standards are recognised as a pioneer in humanitarian standards, and rightly so. However, given the lack of focus on protracted crises within humanitarian standards, it is befitting that Sphere leads the way in formally incorporating protracted crises as an ambit of humanitarian standards.

INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian crisis climate is changing dramatically. Humanitarian crises are becoming longer in duration and more complex in scope. Consequently, humanitarian assistance needs to adapt to these changes. Sphere, seeking to respond to these trends, commissioned this study in order to put under scrutiny the use of the minimum standards of humanitarian assistance featured in the Sphere Handbook, in the particular context of protracted crises.

Sphere

The Sphere Project was established in 1997ⁱ as a collaborative effort by a group of international humanitarian agencies. The standards captured in the Sphere Handbook are based on Sphere's two core beliefsⁱⁱ.

Chapters and Usage

The 2011 edition of the Sphere Handbook is divided into two types of standards:

Principles and Core Standards

These refer to **the standards governing the way all humanitarian work is carried out**. They encompass the Humanitarian Charter, Core Standards and Protection Principles. The former looks at the beliefs, role, common principles, rights, duties and commitments as expressed by consensus by the founding humanitarian agenciesⁱⁱⁱ. The latter set of standards are concerned with "the safety, dignity and rights of people affected by disaster or armed conflict"^{iv}. The different modes of protective activity are preventive, responsive and remedial.

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), a relatively new development, was established to replace the Core Standards of the Sphere Handbook in order to harmonize different sets of existing international standards. It outlines 9 commitments based on the humanitarian

principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality^v.

Technical Standards

The technical standards pertain to **the levels of assistance that must be achieved in the four life saving sectors**:

- Water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH)
- Food security and nutrition
- Shelter, settlement and Non-Food Items (NFIs)
- Health action

Usage

The standards are used widely by both international and local organizations across various stages of their intervention. These stages are part of the conventional Humanitarian Project Cycle (HPC) and include assessment and analysis, strategic planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation (see Figure 1). First, the technical chapters are used to assess the current state of the affected population, identifying pressing needs and gaps that have to be filled. At this stage the agents also assess the protection measures that need to be considered. Secondly, the agents are expected to contextualize the standards and design an appropriate strategy for the given conditions. Finally, the Sphere indicators are used to monitor and evaluate the performance of the humanitarian assistance being delivered. This aims to ensure the quality of the assistance and strengthen the accountability both to the donor and the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the handbook is used as the base for capacity building and training to ensure humanitarian agents comply not only with the minimum standards but also with the fundamental humanitarian principles outlined in the humanitarian charter.

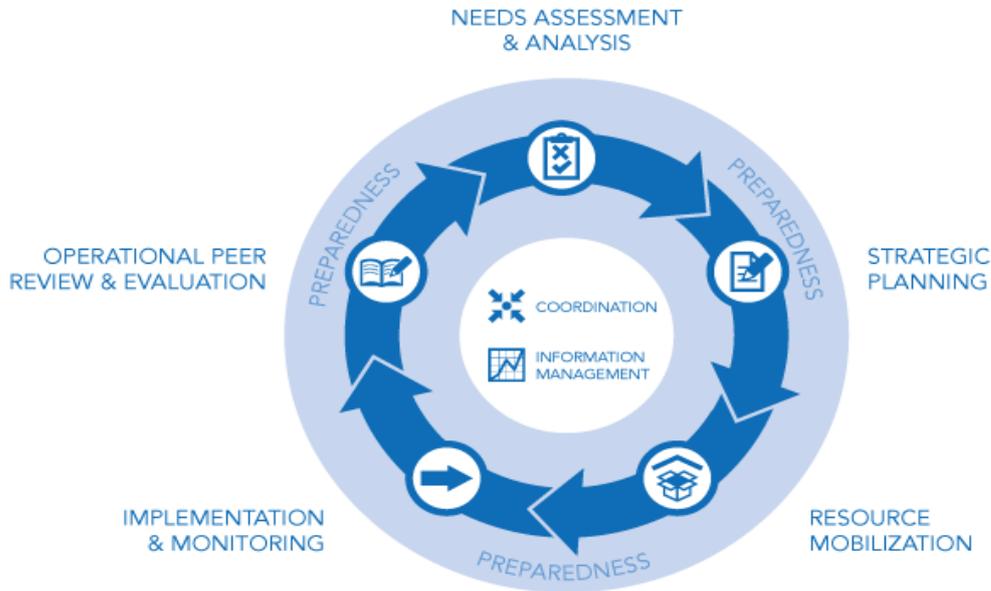


Figure 1: A Humanitarian Project Cycle. Source: www.humanitarianinfo.org

Additionally, the Sphere standards are regularly used as an advocacy tool to mobilize funding and to justify the humanitarian organizations' activities in any given country.

The Research Question

The implementation of these standards in protracted crises has so far not been extensively examined in humanitarian circles. Academic work on the changing role of aid policy in protracted crises is abundant, but the focus on the corresponding role of humanitarian standards is negligible. This report contributes to filling this gap by exploring the interpretation, use, potential, challenges and limitations of the Sphere standards in protracted crisis situations.

To do this, we seek to answer the following questions:

- I. **How and why have Sphere standards been used in situations of protracted crisis?**
- II. **What have been the contributions and limitations of the Sphere standards in ensuring affected**

people's protection, dignity and quality of life in situations of prolonged insecurity and volatility?

From the answers to these questions, the report draws conclusions and proposes recommendations for consideration in the revised edition of the Sphere Handbook.

Methodology

The research for this report was undertaken in two stages: first, a desk review was conducted. The main characteristics of protracted crises, as is discussed in the next section, were identified.

The second stage involved choosing two countries for study based on FAO's criteria and the main causes of the crisis. The case studies are exploratory in nature, as this is a relatively unexplored subject^{vi}. We chose the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti as case studies, due to the relatively disjoint natures of their crises; while the former crisis is mainly human-induced, the latter is plagued by a predisposition to natural disasters. We do not look at specific crises or specific areas in the country as the nature of this research's

subject matter begs for a comprehensive analysis of the protracted crises as a whole in DRC and Haiti. The report looks at the usage and interpretation of Sphere standards under these contexts. The intention of examining such contrasting cases is that the heterogeneity within the characteristics will expectedly offer a spectrum of results. The drawback, however, is that this approach limits the report's power to provide generalised conclusions. To strengthen our conclusions, we use extensive literature to corroborate our findings.

After the desk review was conducted, Skype/written interviews with humanitarian agents on the ground as well as independent experts were taken. The respondents- a total of 14- provided a picture of the gap between theory and praxis. Their responses along with the findings from the literature form the basis of the recommendations of this report.

Understanding protracted crises

Humanitarian assistance has largely failed to make a long lasting impact in protracted crisis contexts^{vii} mainly because of a lack of understanding of the nature and particularity of protracted crises.

Before we can make any assessment of the use of minimum standards in protracted crisis situations, we need to truly understand their characteristics.

There is no consensus on the definition of protracted crises yet, which accounts for the disjointed approach to these contexts in the humanitarian community. Nevertheless, a widely accepted definition describes protracted crises as

"those environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease, and disruption of their livelihoods over a prolonged period of time."

(Macrae and Harmer, 2004)

Formal indicators used by the FAO to identify a country as being in a protracted crises include **longevity**: the country must

have reported a crisis during at least 8 years in the last 10 years; **type of aid** received: at least 10% of ODA must have been delivered in the form of humanitarian assistance; and the **economic and food security status**: the country must appear in the list of LIFDCs^{viii}.

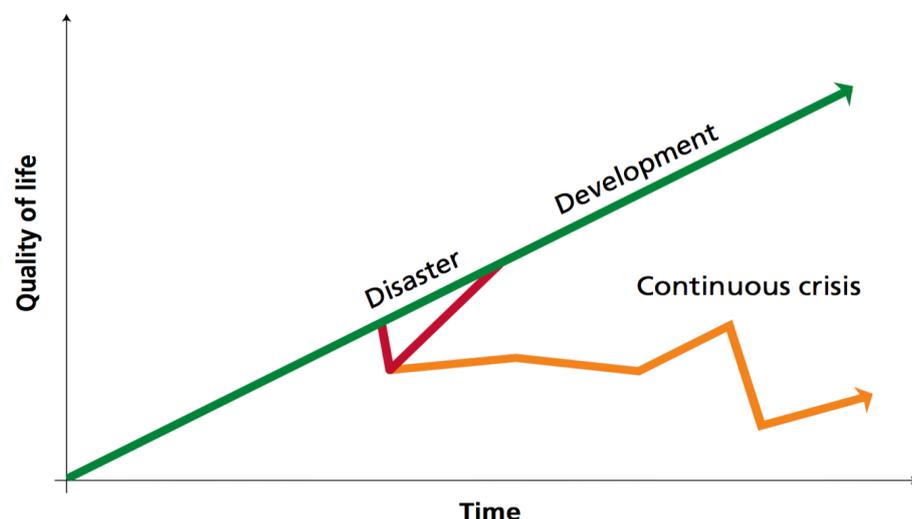
Ongoing protracted crises around the world share a number of important characteristics:

Duration| Protracted crises are increasing in number and duration. Today humanitarian crises last 7 years on average while the mean length of displacement reaches 17 years^{ix}. More and more countries are surpassing the 10, 20 and even 30-year thresholds in crisis. Now "short, acute crises are the exception, not the rule"^x. Some even call crisis situations the "new normal"^{xi}.

Non-linear recovery| One of the main misconceptions about modern crises is about their relation to the process of development. The common conceptual framework of the crisis cycle is closely related to the misconception of linear development. As displayed in Figure 2, the crisis is portrayed as a short interruption in the otherwise progressive development path^{xii}. Here humanitarian assistance plays an important role in the restoration of pre-disaster quality of life. This conceptualization is inappropriate for protracted crises. As represented by the orange line, these hardly experience significant recovery. They are characterized by recurrent relapses, stagnation and a sustained state of emergency for a long period of time. This understanding has huge implications for the ways humanitarian assistance should be planned and delivered.

Not traceable to one acute shock| The origins of protracted crises are hardly traceable to one acute shock^{xiii}. Instead of being triggered by a major event, protracted crises should be thought of as a constant state of vulnerability caused by a combination of factors. Not having a clear starting point from

Protracted crises are fundamentally different from the model of acute disasters



Source: P. Walker. 2009. How to think about the future: history, climate change and conflict. Presentation to the Harvard Humanitarian Summit, Cambridge, September 2009.

Figure 2: Modelling a Protracted Crisis. Source: FAO, 2010

which to measure the crisis has implications on the traditional way we think of the crisis cycle and on the assessment, and evaluation of humanitarian assistance^{xiv}.

Complex crisis | Protracted crises usually entail a mix of disasters ranging from armed conflict and waves of violence, natural hazards like droughts, earthquakes and floods, and epidemics like cholera. While most protracted crises today are mainly caused by the former and exacerbated by the latter, each protracted crisis is unique.

Weak governance | Additionally, host governments are usually incapable of managing such a complex crisis. Affected countries are usually characterized by weak public administration and a government which lacks the political will or the capacity to provide basic public goods and services, let alone respond to humanitarian crises. The list of countries with protracted crises also often resemble the list of failed states^{xv}.

Unsustainable livelihoods | The constant natural shocks and waves of violence cause displacement, and consequently repeated and even permanent livelihood disruptions^{xvi}. This directly impacts the affected population's capacity of resilience and psychological coping mechanisms. But unsustainable livelihoods are both the symptom and the cause of protracted crises^{xvii}. They make communities more susceptible to future shocks, exposing them to further deterioration of their livelihoods. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that communities develop various coping mechanisms and are able to adapt their livelihoods if they are correctly promoted. The FAO (2010) distinguishes between livelihood provisioning, protection and promotion, and emphasises the latter as the most desired intervention.

Vulnerability and risk | These unsustainable livelihoods translate into the persistent vulnerability of the population. It is

crucial that we understand the primary role of vulnerability and risk when we speak about protracted crises. What makes communities fall back into crisis, even after humanitarian assistance, is the neglect of underlying vulnerabilities. The main problem here is the difficulty in distinguishing the vulnerabilities of the host population from those of the affected population caused by shocks^{xxiii}. A good example of the cycle of unsustainability and vulnerability in protracted crises is observed when the environment of weak institutions, bad infrastructure and high vulnerability kill off any incentives for private-led investment to contribute to sustainable development.^{xxix}

Implications on humanitarian assistance:

The humanitarian system has recently faced harsh critique and scrutiny. This is largely because of the failure to effectively address chronic crises. Existing literature^{xx} poses some insights of the implications of the characteristics of protracted crises on humanitarian assistance.

Donor fatigue| Addressing protracted crises requires a gargantuan amount of money, time and effort. But crisis relapses and sustained states of emergency cause frustration in both humanitarian workers and donors. The constant appeals of crises, yearly pledges for further funding and lack of significant impact causes what has been called 'donor fatigue'. The decrease of aid at the same time makes it even harder for humanitarian agents to deliver quality assistance and achieve the minimum standards required^{xxi}.

The failed relief-development continuum| Following the traditional conceptualization of disaster as a short-term interruption of the progressive state-led development of a country^{xxii} (see Figure 2), the idea of a continuum from humanitarian to development efforts makes sense. But scholars have pointed to the inappropriateness of this approach in

protracted crises^{xxiii}. If we consider the main cause of protracted crises to be underdevelopment^{xxiv}, the line between relief and development becomes unrecognizable. This is becoming exigent for both humanitarian and development agencies. For the former side, the literature calls to include resilience and development strategies in the planning of humanitarian interventions^{xxv}. If we look at widely accepted humanitarian and development principles (as compared by the OECD 2007^{xxvi}, See Appendix IV), we can see that many of the efforts needed particularly in protracted crises stand on the development side. We therefore need a more integrated rather than sequential approach of intervention. A first step would be to assess the dichotomy in the aid system.

Beyond live-saving response| Humanitarian assistance is mainly associated with quick and live-saving response. But as the humanitarian system is often the only vehicle of assistance in protracted crises, they would need to go beyond the traditional humanitarian mode of "filling in the gaps" of needs in order to address deeper underlying vulnerabilities and reduce risks^{xxvii}. Nevertheless, scholars warn from leaving development work solely to the humanitarian sector as it would be in danger of getting politicized.^{xxviii}

Engaging with governments| Humanitarian agencies are traditionally reluctant to engage with the political agents of the country. But ignoring the underlying political dynamics in the areas of intervention has proven to be catastrophic^{xxix}. Given that protracted crises are increasingly caused by conflict, humanitarian agents need to engage with authorities on local and national levels, both to advocate for support and to promote capacity building^{xxx}.

Minimum standards in protracted crises| It is argued that existing sets of minimum standards such as Sphere, while impactful tools for ensuring quality and accountability when the primary concern is

acute crises, are now inappropriate for increasingly protracted contexts^{xxxii}. New standards gain greater relevance such as the provision of psychological support, education and capacity building^{xxxiii}. Sphere standards are criticised for only being able to contribute to short-lifesaving interventions, and offering little guidance to pursue long-term strategies of capacity building and development-oriented service delivery^{xxxiii}.

In this section we have identified the main characteristics of protracted crises and presented the greater implications on humanitarian assistance laid down by existing literature. The next section, comprising the case studies, explores primary evidence of how humanitarian agents use the standards and the major challenges they face in doing so. The deeper discussion will take place after the case studies.

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were conducted through interviews and literature review. DRC and Haiti, as mentioned in the methodology, were chosen for their heterogeneity to allow diverse results, if these are the case. We aim to explore how humanitarian agents on the ground have applied the Sphere standards given the very context of the country they operate in.

DRC

Context

The long and complex humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been characterized as one of the worst in the world. After the struggle for independence and the two Congolese Wars in the past century, DRC has been host to innumerable outbreaks of conflict and violence, epidemics, food insecurity and environmental shocks. The more than 20 year-long protracted crisis has affected approximately 8.2 million people^{xxxiv} leaving around 2 million internally displaced^{xxxv} and 5.9 million food insecure^{xxxvi}.

Ranked 176 out of 188 countries in the world’s human development index, DRC has been named the poorest country in the world^{xxxvii}. Underlying poverty makes the region more prone to conflict and vulnerable to any natural disasters, such as drought,

earthquakes and landslides, and more prone to epidemics such as cholera, yellow fever and measles.

The DRC crisis is mainly characterized by conflict and violence mostly affecting the Eastern part of DRC.

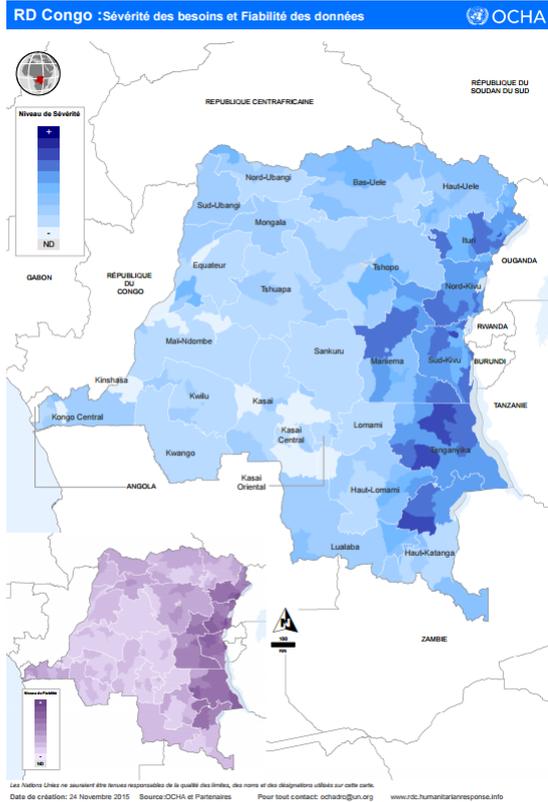


Figure 3: Map of DRC. Source: <https://www.acaps.org/country/drc>

Identity is at the heart of the conflict. The ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of the country sparks constant violent encounters and makes governance for the already weak state very hard. The difficulty to control the situation is exacerbated by the fact that there are around 70 armed groups^{xxxviii} who operate with interests over land, natural resources, political power and more. The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries exacerbates identity conflicts.

Case study findings

DRC: A protracted crisis? | The understanding of protracted crisis among humanitarian agents in DRC is just as inconsistent as in the academic literature. Although DRC is often referred to as a textbook example of protracted crises, half of the agents interviewed do not identify/are hesitant about labelling the situation in DRC as a protracted crisis. This could be explained by the fact that although DRC as a country has reported humanitarian crises for the past 20 years, the crisis outbreaks occur locally and are perceived as acute. Although academia includes situations with constant relapses of acute crises into the understanding of protracted crises, the difference between those relapses and traditional acute crisis cycles needs further research.

The use of Sphere | The Sphere standards are widely used in DRC and are often referred to as “the Bible”^{xxxix}. We also found that they are used in this context just as they are used in the phases of any traditional humanitarian project cycle. According to the interviewees, the minimum standards remain useful benchmarks that guide all fundamental humanitarian activities and do not lose value in the protracted DRC context. Interestingly, Sphere standards are not only used in humanitarian but also in development efforts^{xl}. This points to a blurred line and even overlap between humanitarian and development activities in DRC, but also to a huge potential for traditional assistance

transformation.

Nevertheless, humanitarian agents face several challenges particular to the protracted context.

Funding. Interviewees point to the lack of funding as the major obstacle to achieving the standards. Besides the increasing number and worsening of crises around the world which translates into a competition for funding^{xli}, donors become increasingly tired of funding assistance in a seemingly never-ending crisis. This fatigue also extends to humanitarian organisations and workers on the ground when they perceive that the assistance provided doesn’t seem to have a long-lasting effect^{xlii}. In DRC, where the crisis has lasted for many years and where lack of funding is persistent, humanitarian actors emphasize the importance of using the standards flexibly^{xliii} and think of creative ways to achieve these^{xliv}.

Time as an ally? On the other hand, some agents identify an opportunity in protracted crises. Projects are easier to plan, implement and evaluate when there is an already functioning humanitarian system setup. As one interviewee recognizes, a functioning humanitarian architecture is not built overnight^{xlv}. In a country where humanitarian assistance has been present for many years, the humanitarian architecture has had time to develop, learn from past projects and from each other. This, plus the relative stability that comes with post-emergency phase situations^{xlvi} makes it easier to plan more effective interventions.

New sectors. Finally, in line with some academic calls for expanding and adapting the sphere standards, the interviews show that several areas gain importance particularly in protracted crises and should be considered as important as the life-saving sectors of the technical chapters. Indicators that reflect certain standards of resilience become paramount for reasons that will be discussed below. Additionally, psychological assistance deserves major attention^{xlvii} especially in conflict and post-conflict situations as in DRC, and not only as a sub-point of Health or

Protection standards. In regards to adapting already existing standards, the findings do not show a debate on the sufficiency of the *minimum* standards.

Donor issues| As mentioned above, funding fatigue is identified as the major obstacle to achieve the Sphere minimum requirements. Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement in the funding system. Various interviewers suggest an umbrella agency either nationally or on a cluster level with the responsibility to allocate funds more efficiently^{xlviii}, this way ensuring that the most vulnerable people are being assisted and the most pressing needs are being addressed. Moreover, they agree that this is an area where the Sphere serves best as an advocacy tool both towards donors and the DRC government to raise money and resources.

Nevertheless, without undermining the importance of funding, agents point to the fact that the very beneficiaries hold the capacity to fill in the gaps in the assistance. An example provided explained how locals started building their own houses after for some time only temporary tents could be provided^{xlix}. With some promotion, the self-built houses could improve in quality. This has the benefits of cheaper solutions and the externality of capacity building. An interviewee points to the importance of honesty about lack of resources in such cases^l, which opens space for dialogue and opportunities to integrate local capacity into the assistance delivery.

Development and resilience| The lines between humanitarian efforts and development efforts have become blurry. One interviewee expresses that it is

“difficult to distinguish structural and conjectural vulnerabilities”

ii

Another one perceives humanitarian assistance as rather superficial.^{lii} All agree that in order to make a real impact organizations

must make serious efforts to link humanitarian interventions with development efforts. But within this agreement some debates arise:

While some strongly believe that resilience, development and sustainability should be themes integrated in all stages of the humanitarian project cycle^{liii}, others believe stability and security are preconditions to development^{liv}. The latter view^{lv} would mean that in a conflict crisis like in DRC, humanitarian efforts need to focus on protection to open the path for development efforts. But traditionally, security and peacebuilding have been areas attributed to development. This has resulted in both areas passing the buck to each other in a country where conflict and violence is the very cause of crisis relapses.

Another big debate relates to the difficult trade-off between urgent lifesaving and long-term development^{lvi}. In a country where territories have been in state of emergency for more than 20 years, it begs the question whether life-saving efforts are enough to ensure the dignity and quality of life of the affected population in the long-run. The crises in DRC are generally treated as unique situations and saving lives is always at the forefront^{lvii}, but there is a growing notion of the importance to look at the whole picture and the need to invest in the future^{lviii}.

Further, the Do-No-Harm principle as stated in Protection Principle 1 states that actors should avoid causing harm as a result of humanitarian intervention^{lix}. E.g. The provision of free medicine by an interviewee’s project led to the local medicine provider to run out of business. Instead, integrating the provider into the supply chain is a solution that not only complies with this principle, but also builds capacity and expands the business.^{lx} Strategies like this are crucial in protracted crises; this also makes complying with exit-strategies easier thereby successfully avoiding dependency. On this note, all agents call for a more systematic development of a clearly defined resilience strategy, one that should be

defined from the planning stage of any project.

Protection | Protection has been quoted in every interview as one of the major challenges in the DRC crisis.

Difficulty in accessing affected populations is a problem commonly reported^{lxvi}. First, the assessment of needs is difficult or impossible. It was also reported that the implementation of projects often had to be delayed due to security issues. Moreover, as the DRC crisis is mainly conflict driven, humanitarian agents face challenges being impartial and neutral. They often find themselves negotiating with the host population, government officials and even rebels^{lxvii} to be able to provide assistance to the most vulnerable^{lxviii}. While the Sphere Handbook can be used as an advocacy tool to justify humanitarian interventions in these situations, the interviewees reported the need for additional guidance on engaging with government and armed groups in a constructive manner.

Capacity building | As stated in the third CHS, building capacity among local authorities is just as important as among humanitarian agents. Providing basic goods and services as well as assistance in case of crisis, always remains the state's responsibility^{lxix}. In DRC, provincial authorities are too often incapable of doing so. Interviewees expressed concerns that government officials are not familiar with humanitarian standards^{lxx}. Given the poverty they are used to seeing on an everyday basis, they appear to have a very poor idea of what minimum life standards are and therefore rarely want to or do not know how to provide certain services. To this end, given that local officials are frequently newly appointed, an agent calls for more systematic trainings for the authorities^{lxxi}.

Standards promotion | Although the Sphere standards are widely recognized and used among humanitarian agents, there are important stakeholders that, according to the

interviewees, need to be more aware of them. As mentioned above, standard promotion among government officials is important to start shifting responsibility of humanitarian assistance over to them.

Special emphasis was placed on increasing awareness among donors of the standards^{lxxii}, specifically protection principles. This is a section that is often neglected by the donors as they are hardly measurable and present difficulties in holding organizations accountable.

Coordination and Collaboration | The wide acceptance of Sphere makes it a powerful coordination channel. In order to more effectively address the new challenges emerging from the nature of protracted crisis, the interviewees call for better coordination and collaboration among humanitarian actors^{lxxiii}. Sphere users coming together in fora could be a great opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences and capacities in addressing local difficulties of achieving the Sphere standards^{lxxiv}. For example, this could help coordinate efforts to improve the access to vulnerable groups^{lxxv}.

Ideas of new forms of coordination are pervasive in the DRC humanitarian community. Suggestions received include appointing a national leader for each technical chapter, and creating a formal network of organizations that use the Sphere.

Sphere as an advocacy tool | Besides calls for adapting and expanding the Sphere standards, most of the past sections point to the increasing potential of Sphere as an advocacy tool. Sphere is already widely used to raise funds and to justify humanitarian activities. In DRC it has been used to justify humanitarian agents' position not only in face of the government but also in face of armed groups and host communities.

HAITI

Context

Dubbed the ‘Republic of NGOs’^{lxxi}, Haiti has been at the throes of crises since as early as the 1990s. Coupled with governmental instability and frequent hydro-meteorological disasters, the country has grappled with an influx of NGOs and aid from around the world. However, none of this has seemed to make an impact -it is today one of the poorest countries in the Western hemisphere.

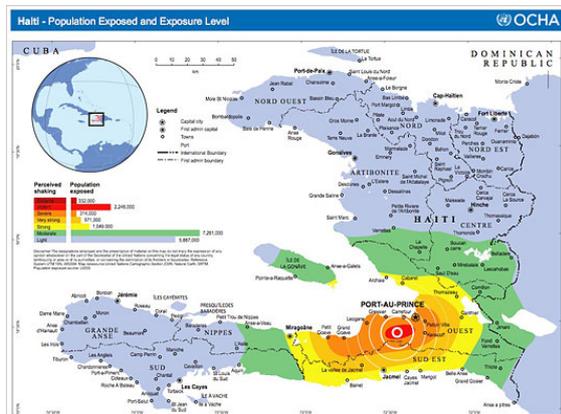


Figure 4: Map of Haiti. Source: www.unocha.org

With this oft cited statistic, come others: in 2014, it stood 163rd out of 188 countries in the world in terms of the Human Development Index, and about half its population suffered from multidimensional poverty^{lxxii}. When the earthquake hit in 2010, it further exacerbated the weak conditions. UN peacekeepers were deployed; however, due to an oversight by the UN which was only admitted six years later- a cholera outbreak was inadvertently brought in by the peacekeepers. This has caused about 9,200 deaths and 800,000 infections till date^{lxxiii}. Struggling to overcome this blow, in early 2015, the occurrence of the El Nino exacerbated drought conditions. This has adversely affected food security^{lxxiv}. The recent devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew on October 4th, 2016 has worsened the cholera crisis. Figure 5 shows a broad

picture of the crises that hit Haiti within recent years.

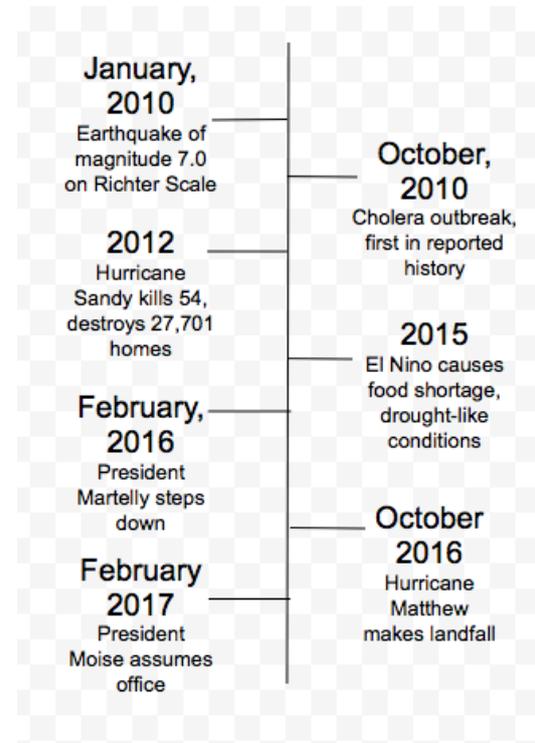


Figure 5: Timeline of events. Source: Authors' own

Case study findings

Characterization of the emergency | The interviews yielded consistent characterizations of Haiti, marked by poor governmental intervention. While the assistance provided by civic bodies like the police, mayors and local NGOs are commonly seen as sufficient, the striking feature that comes across from the interviews is the absence of a strong state. This, along with the prolonged food insecurity and malnutrition are seen as features shared with other protracted crises. The factors that separate Haiti from others is the cholera outbreak and natural predisposition to disasters. Humanitarian agents interviewed classified Haiti as a protracted crises precisely due to such underlying vulnerabilities.

An understanding of protracted crises| The critical finding from the interviews is that all humanitarian agents, whether on the ground or in the upper hierarchy of the organization, viewed a protracted crisis as a situation when humanitarian emergencies occur in an area with underlying vulnerabilities. In such a situation, responses to sudden-onset disasters are not enough to mitigate the issues, but require work to address the systemic faults. In the case of Haiti, the consistently high unemployment rates, lack of presence of media and internet access and most of all, a weak state, are factors that dilute the impact of emergency and long-term development work.

'Minimum' Standards| While there is general consensus on the adequacy of the minimum standards, the need to modify and re-evaluate humanitarian approaches in a protracted crisis in timely intervals is recognised. Taking this further, the findings suggest that there exists a tendency to view Sphere standards as the 'benchmark', and the need to acknowledge them only as the minimum. Interviewees suggest that merely fulfilling the minimum is seen as an achievement, and even in such cases, it is hard to attest whether they actually *have* been fulfilled^{lxxv}.

Delving deeper, the reason behind this seems to be financial and logistical constraints. The common theme reported is a trade-off between 100% support to some people, and some support to 100% of the affected population^{lxxvi}. This is possibly the reason why the Sphere standards are used as a benchmark instead of the 'minimum' it purports to set; the constraints associated with relief delivery play a major role. These will be discussed in detail in the latter part of the report.

Contextualisation| The findings from the interviews and literature^{lxxvii} show that there is the exercise of discretion when using the Sphere standards in Haiti. The guiding principles of the CHS and protection principles

are incorporated into all work, with the technical standards contextualised according to the situation. However, there is a gap in the understanding of the fulfilment of the standards. While the Sphere Handbook does suggest the scope for contextualisation^{lxxviii}, there appears to be a widespread misconception that any deviation from the standards is going against the rule. This might arise from an incomplete understanding of the core standards. This just points to the greater need of holistic training of staff in Sphere standards^{lxxix}.

Resilience building| The focus on resilience in a protracted crisis is imperative, and is recognised as such in the responses from the interviews. However, the consistent finding is that the Sphere standards need to devote more attention to disaster risk reduction and resilience in its standards. The common understanding is that the Sphere standards are the most helpful in the first few months after a sudden-onset disaster- being termed as its strength^{lxxx}. However, **it is not viewed as a disaster-risk-reduction tool**. The importance of DRR in a naturally sensitive area like Haiti is paramount, and is required in order to build long-term stability.

The resilience strategy is characterised by the question 'How can we bring people up from the minimum level?'^{lxxxi}. The emphasis on not just meeting minimum standards, but bettering them is akin to the 'build back better' attitude. The frequent spikes of crises in protracted crises, as has been explained before, is something that is acknowledged as a 'normal' state of affairs in Haiti^{lxxxii}. The focus then shifts to ensuring that people are able to withstand shocks, especially in a natural disaster-prone area such as Haiti.

From humanitarian relief to development| Tying in with the resilience aspect, is the 'transition' from emergency work to development efforts. The idea of a transition was highly contested by our findings from Haiti; there was unanimous agreement on the *convergence* of humanitarian and

development efforts in such a protracted setting^{lxxxiii}. As an example, an interviewee said that viewing the link as a 'transition' could backfire in that different sectors could be at different stages- health facilities could be in the development phase but WASH could be only in the relief phase^{lxxxiv}. Under such circumstances, it is important for both actors to work side by side. An example from literature about the failed conception of a 'transition' is the usage of trucks in Haiti to transport water to camps even 2 years after the 2010 earthquake, as the humanitarian organizations were unable to find alternatives. What they realised too late, however, was that there was a pre-existing network of water vendors who only needed a slight push to get back on their feet; this would ensure consistent water supply in no time^{lxxxv}. It is in the **failure to adapt responses to long-term solutions** that this 'transition' has failed in Haiti in many respects. However, this approach is also contingent on the existence of a strong state-centred coordination infrastructure. As commonly noted, this feature is missing in Haiti, which could be an obstacle in the furthering of development goals.

Where the Sphere standards have proven handy is in the 'gap' between the relief and development phases; several interviewees reported a simultaneous overlap between the two kinds of work, but also reported that often, it is the humanitarian agencies which can obtain a larger amount of funds. Given that it is also the humanitarian agents who are first on the scene in the case of recurrent disasters, the Sphere standards have been helpful in 'filling the gap' between the arrival of humanitarian agents and development workers^{lxxxvi} by providing a benchmark in the period immediately after the disaster.

Sphere Promotion | A gap in the number of people and organizations using the Sphere

standards was noted. The interviewees were of the opinion that the usage and knowledge of Sphere standards extended only to workers of international humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies. The number of people within these agencies who are fluent in its use are also not as high as required. The knowledge of Sphere standards is especially crucial in Haiti as it helps collaborative efforts between organisations, as noted by one interviewee. The lack of proper training and knowledge can then pose obstacles^{lxxxvii}. Given the Haitian context, there is a need to extend accessibility of Sphere training to development workers, local agencies and government agencies as well.

Donor based issues | The problem that seems to be prevalent across all themes is the lack of donor interest. The long duration of protracted crises results in dwindling media and donor interest, which our interviewees in Haiti claimed was a driving reason behind many of the problems that were faced in meeting humanitarian standards. The financial resources committed to Haiti in between acute crises has always been inconsistent^{lxxxviii}. The trade-off between *meeting all the needs of some people, versus meeting some needs of all the people* is the biggest problem that results from this.

An interesting viewpoint was also offered with relation to donor-driven standards: while technical chapters from the Sphere standards are commonly used as reference points for donor requirements, the **lack of emphasis on meeting protection principles is glaring**^{lxxxix}. This implies that not all organizations are *formally* required to meet protection principles by their donors.

Protection and Participation | The humanitarian agents interviewed all attested to the usage of protection principles in their

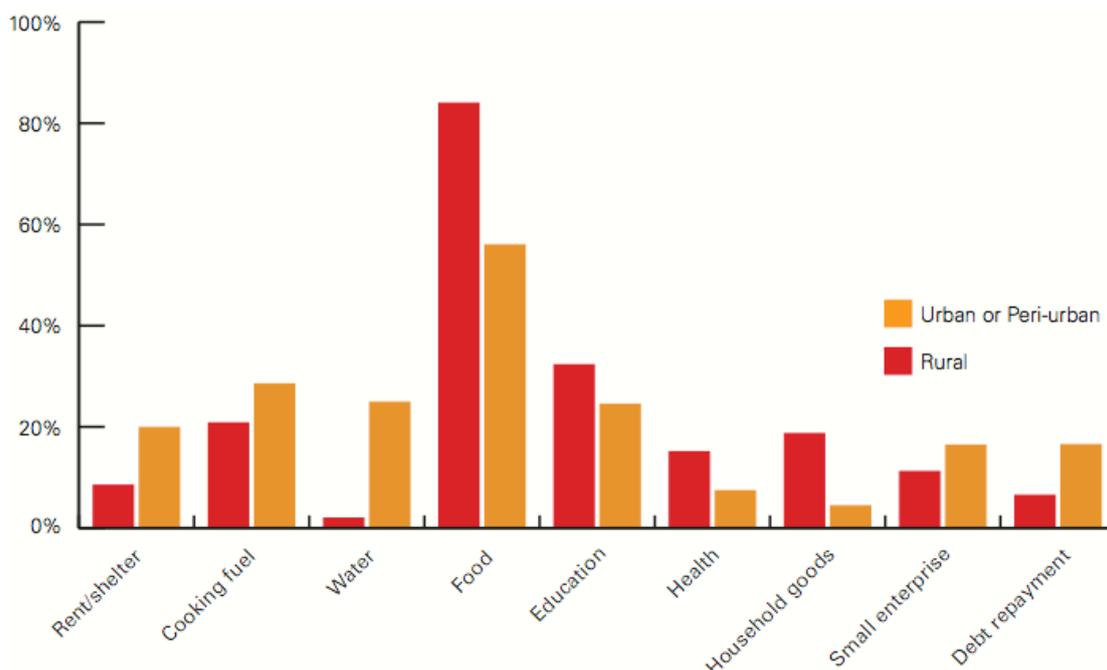


Figure 6: Percentage of people spending on each sector – rural and urban comparison. Source: Christian Aid, 2012

work, by taking into consideration vulnerable sections of society. However, the shortcomings reported were in the lack of standard guidelines and indicators. As cited in Satterthwaite (2011), in the words of a human rights lawyer in Haiti, “They quantify the number of tarps they give, but don’t count the number of sexual attacks that take place within their camps.” Even when protection principles are still met, there is a lack of emphasis on participatory approaches with vulnerable groups, specifically people with disabilities; “there is a risk that, with the country so shaken in its foundations, a hierarchy of interventions might be generated whereby the most able will benefit the most and the least able will be left behind.”^{xc}

With respect to participatory approaches, most responses reported positively, with local participants being included in project implementation. However, it was noted that in the case of the sudden onset disasters, there is a tendency to simply implement Sphere standards in the immediate phase, without accounting for local inputs in the planning and design of programmes^{xc}. There is

also evidence of local capacity building and participation but this is seen to be an activity which can be undertaken only when the immediate dangers have subsided. These are issues that pertain to process standards, as it appears to violate the tenet of local participation.

Unexplored aspects: Urban resilience | A point made was the lack of focus on urban areas in the Sphere standards^{xcii}. The needs of affected urban residents in Haiti is starkly different from those in rural settings, as illustrated in Figure 6. In the protracted crisis setting in Haiti, it is even more important to understand the differences between relatively urban areas. Case in point being the complex risks faced by Port-au-Prince owing to its dense population and weak governance, which leaves it particularly vulnerable in recurrent natural disasters. The biggest challenge in this context remains safe accommodation, which in a situation like Haiti needs to be carefully assessed for long-term stability^{xciii}.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This final section will answer the research questions and critically review the case study findings in the light of the literature on protracted crises.

How and why have Sphere standards been used in situations of protracted crisis?

“Focusing on the period of humanitarian response, the Sphere minimum standards cover activities which meet the urgent survival needs of disaster-affected populations. This phase can range from a few days or weeks to many months and even years, particularly in contexts involving protracted insecurity and displacement. It is, therefore, impossible to assign a particular timeframe to the usefulness of the Sphere standards.”
(Sphere Handbook, 2011)

The Sphere standards are indeed widely used in the two protracted cases studied for this report. The research finds that the Sphere Standards are mostly viewed in a favourable light, and are considered very comprehensive. As opposed to some academic critiques, which state that the Sphere minimum standards are not appropriate for protracted crises^{xciiv}, humanitarian agents still view them as relevant and useful. The minimum standards are used throughout the conventional project cycle as a technical guide for assessment, planning and evaluation and as an advocacy tool for resource mobilization. Although used primarily in the aftermath of an acute crisis, it is also widely used in protracted and stable situations. This begs the legitimate question raised by the literature, of whether the standards, being emphatically focused on the *urgent survival needs* of the population, are appropriate for post-emergency and long-term conditions.

This argument could be split into three strings. On the one hand it is argued that the minimum requirements are not sufficient for protracted displacement. For example, people can tolerate certain conditions for a few

months, but not for a number of years. Besides, the minimum requirements are often reported to have justified the limited provision of funds; it is perceived by donors that assistance which complies with the standards is “enough”^{xciiv}. In a context where people are supposed to live under these conditions for many years, this sort of complacency can clearly hamper further development and resilience.

On the other hand, Sphere standards are reportedly harder to achieve in protracted crises due to donor fatigue, conflict and protection issues. As a result, the standards can be seen as unrealistic; some (although very few) therefore call for the standards to be set lower. This, however, is negated by the acceptance of the fact that the evidence-based minimum standards are the absolute minimum for a life with dignity. Besides, the flexibility in adaptation already provided by Sphere makes changes across the board unnecessary.

The third string questions the comprehensiveness of the technical chapters and calls for expansion of these. We learned from the interviews that indeed certain components essential to service delivery in protracted crises, like resilience building, and psychological assistance, are still lacking in the Handbook. McDougal and Beard (2011) list a number of shortcomings, and calls for an extension of the evidence base on protracted crises as was done on acute crises in 1997.

What have been the contributions and limitations of the Sphere standards in ensuring affected people’s protection, dignity and quality of life in situations of prolonged insecurity and volatility?

The Sphere has provided a useful tool for humanitarian practitioners to identify needs and plan appropriate interventions. The established framework of indicators enables a

quick response during acute crises and relapses within protracted crises. This focus on minimum needs, however, prevents the shift of approach to sustained improvement in quality of life in a protracted crisis. Given the duration of a protracted crisis, it is especially crucial that the focus shifts to resilience building^{xcvi}, a finding that has repeatedly come across in this report. A focus on resilience refers to strengthening the population's capacities, as opposed to only providing for their needs in an emergency^{xcvii}. While resilience could refer to, among others, 'bouncing back' from a disaster, or 'bouncing back better'^{xcviii}, we emphasise the latter in the context of a protracted crisis. An example of this approach is found in the differentiation between livelihood *provision, protection and promotion*^{xcix}. It is livelihood *promotion* that builds capacities in the long-run, which goes beyond merely protecting existing capacities.

The discussion so far leads directly to the so-called 'humanitarian-development' transition. This report finds that the conceptualisation of the link between development and humanitarian assistance in a protracted crisis is more integrated than simply sequential. However, a caveat to our findings is that by taking on development challenges, humanitarian aid does not simply become a panacea to the complex problems of protracted crises^c. In light of this, the Sphere standards can only do so much; they cannot be viewed as a replacement for political action^{ci}. However, the application of Sphere can certainly go beyond its existing domain of purely humanitarian workers, and can smoothen the integration of development and humanitarian work by ensuring the dissemination of Sphere standard knowledge to development workers, local authorities and governments. There are other positive externalities that arise from expanding the network of Sphere users: the scope of collaboration between organizations increases, and offers increasing possibilities of not just understanding the 'what' of a solution, but also the 'how' of a solution.

Coming to the Sphere's emphasis on ensuring the dignity and protection of people, our findings report that this commitment is faced by several problems in the protracted crisis context. The lack of indicators under the Protection Principles pose a major challenge in its monitoring. While the emphasis on preventive, responsive and remedial protection activities is explicitly stated in the Handbook, there needs to be a focus on creating a framework for its application. The importance of such a framework rises particularly in the context of a protracted crises; simple steps like creating an evidence base, the lack of which is a major obstacle in tackling GBV in situations of prolonged instability^{cii}, can go a long way in ensuring justice.

Lastly, the impact of other stakeholders on humanitarian work cannot be ignored by a set of standards such as Sphere, which seeks to ensure the accountability of humanitarian action. While there are limitations to Sphere's influence on the same, this report finds direct advocacy channels which could achieve significant improvements on humanitarian work in protracted crises. Firstly, as is often the case in protracted crises, existing standards of living may be lower than the Sphere minimum. As noted in literature^{ciii} and the Sphere Handbook^{civ}, this presents the opportunity for the users to employ the Handbook as an advocacy tool with the government, leaders and the host population. Secondly, it was noted that the compliance with Sphere's technical chapters is used as a requirements by donors^{cv}. However, the usage of protection principles, in any form, is not mandatory across donors: while the ECHO uses protection indicators primarily from UNOCHA^{cvi}, the requirements of donor governments are limited to a few questions about how gender, resilience, protection etc. were integrated into the projects^{cvi}. Thus, greater advocacy by Sphere for the inclusion of protection principles in donor requirements would promote the enforceability of protection principles in humanitarian work.

Thirdly, the impact of inconsistent funding due to the duration of a protracted crisis was a key finding. This is attributed to the fact that the media latches on to disasters that represent a particularly devastated picture, as in the case of acute crises. Only disasters with a sense of urgency^{cvi} receive international aid and

support; with increasing duration of crises, this eventually wanes. Hence, this justifies the promotion of objective metrics for funding, which could be advocated for by Sphere as an organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Sphere should encourage the interaction between development and humanitarian agents.

Given the importance that is increasingly given to long-term impact beyond saving lives of affected populations, it becomes paramount that humanitarian and development efforts are integrated in all stages of crisis intervention. This can be achieved by facilitating the interaction between agents from both worlds. In contexts such as Haiti and DRC the line between humanitarian and development projects are already quite blurry. It is now crucial that a more organized and systematic way of integration takes place. Sphere can contribute by promoting the Sphere standards in development agencies. Additionally, Sphere trainings should include national and international humanitarian and development NGOs as well as local and national authorities.

II. Give prominence to resilience building in the Sphere Handbook.

Although resilience is included in the language of the current Sphere Handbook, it is still too soft in light of the primacy it bears in the context of protracted crises. In order to ensure not only the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance, but also the sustainability of its impact, it is suggested that resilience receives an own set of standards and indicators. The following are some of the actions that can be encouraged to promote resilience building. First, humanitarian agents should be required to include local systems in the supply chain of the assistance being delivered. Second, where resources lack, agents should be encouraged to seek local capacities to creatively fill the gap of the humanitarian effort. This will strengthen the project's impact, the people's capabilities and their confidence.

III. Standards and indicators should be expanded and/or adapted.

With methodical attention being paid to other indicators, this report recommends the extension of this attitude to the **Protection Principles**; for starters, it could begin with the measurement of violent incidents against vulnerable groups, which is particularly relevant in the context of protracted crises. Similarly, other efforts towards the lack of indicators which detail the role of the Protection Principles can be made. For example, psychological counselling is an embodiment of the remedial function of the Protection Principles, but there is inadequate emphasis on such facilities within the standards.

IV. The Sphere Handbook should be used as an advocacy tool with stakeholders in protracted crises.

With governments/ In an area where the Sphere minimum standards represent a quality of life better than the status quo, these could be used to advocate for development actions that benefit the entire population.

With donors/ Furthermore, on the basis of the findings of this report, we recommend that the Sphere, as an organization, advocate for specific types of funding with donors. Based on forecasts and risk profiles, as opposed to media attention, the criteria for funds should be lobbied to be made more objective. Secondly, we find that while technical chapters are commonly used as project requirements by donors, advocating for the inclusion of protection principles would be a method to ensure enforceability. This is a gap that has not been filled adequately.

APPENDICES

I. Terms of Reference

Organization

Sphere

Project Working Title

Sphere Standards in Protracted Crises

Background

Sphere is a voluntary initiative that brings a wide range of humanitarian agencies together around a common aim - to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors to their constituents, donors and affected populations. The Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.

The Sphere minimum standards focus on the period of humanitarian response in different contexts and cover activities, which meet the urgent survival needs of disaster-affected populations. This response phase can range from a few days or weeks to many months and even years, particularly in contexts involving protracted insecurity and displacement. It is, therefore, impossible to assign a particular timeframe to the usefulness of the Sphere standards. At the same time, the Sphere standards also have a specific place as a reference tool within the broader realm of humanitarian action, which frames the response phase and includes disaster preparedness and early recovery, eventually moving over to development. All these phases are conceptually distinct but must in reality be considered simultaneously.

Protracted crises pose a particular challenge to the work with humanitarian standards: In long-term camp displacement, does the interpretation of standards change over time from minimal to aspirational/development standards? If so, what does it mean for the development potential of a situation if humanitarian minimum standards are used as a benchmark? How can standards contribute to planning and programming in drawn-out and fluctuating conflict situations such as in CAR or DRC?

Objective

The objective is to provide an insight and better understanding of the interpretation and use of the Sphere standards in humanitarian responses to protracted crises; and offer recommendations on the drafting of the standards and the timeframe of their use. These insights and recommendations will directly feed into the upcoming Sphere Handbook revision process.

Research Questions

How and why have Sphere standards been used in situations of protracted crisis?

What have been the contributions and limitations of the Sphere standards in ensuring affected people's protection, dignity and quality of life in situations of prolonged insecurity and volatility?

Scope

The project will look at the implementation of the standards in DRC and Haiti. The interpretations of the Core standards as well as the impact of the performance will be analyzed. Recommendations will address the drafting of the standards, the timeframe within which to adopt them as well as organizational and external challenges in the humanitarian response to given protracted crises.

Research Method

First, a general desk review will take place in order to understand the use of standards globally and historically. Then, a country level review will be undertaken in order to look at specific cases and try to draw general conclusions based on them. The project will employ a case study approach, looking at DRC and Haiti in detail. The research methods as well as the analysis will be mainly qualitative. The main sources of information to be used will be a combination of primary and secondary sources: desk review of existing literature, interviews with humanitarian agents on the ground and further experts, documents provided by organizations, and external reviews on the organisations' actions.

Deliverables and outputs

A report (up to 8,000 words) presented on 13th March, 2017.

II: List of interviewees

- BAMFORTH, Tom**, *Global Focal Point for Shelter Coordination*, Shelter Cluster/IFRC
- BANDU, Anatole**, *Country Representative*, HelpAge DRC/Focal Point, World Medical Fund DRC
- DI TRANTO, Enzo**, *Head of Office*, OCHA, Haiti
- HABIMANA, Jonas**, *Sphere Focal Person and Executive Director*, BIFERD, DRC
- JEAN, Renel**, *Technical Adviser*, ACCOPA, Haiti
- KAMBALE, Hugo**, *Programme Officer*, UNICEF, DRC
- LIBOTO, Moise**, *Field Manager*, Save the Children, DRC
- Member of Protection Cluster Coordinator**, UNHCR, DRC
- MUBALAMA, Alain**, *Food Security Cluster Coordinator*, WFP/FAO, DRC
- NYALUNDJA, Ciza**, *WASH Cluster Coordinator*, UNICEF, DRC
- SCHMIDT, Axel**, *Sphere Trainer*, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V.
- SHEACH, Chris**, *Disaster Relief Director*, World Concern
- PERRY, Stephen**, *Independent Consultant*
- VIGEREUX, Jean-Michel**, *Country Director*, CARE International, Haiti

III: Interview Guide

Sphere Standards in protracted crises

Semi-structured Interview

Introduction to the project, the interviewer and research objective.

- Hello, Thank you, I am...
- LSE research in collaboration with the Sphere. Contact: Aninia Nadig
- Our research aims to...

Information about the interview

- Duration
- Being recorded
- Being open: encouragement to say everything they that comes to their minds, general or concrete

Getting to know the interviewee and their views on protracted crises

- What is your current role?
- How long and in what form has your involvement been in DRC/Haiti?
- How do you think this crisis in DRC/Haiti is unique?
 - What are the biggest problems?
 - Do you identify it as a protracted crisis?
 - What do you understand under protracted / chronic crisis?
 - Have you worked in another (acute) humanitarian crisis? If yes: How is your experience different here?

The use of Sphere standards

- What has been your involvement with the Sphere? Are you familiar with another set of minimum standards and benchmarks?
Always in reference to the DRC/Haiti crisis:
- How are the Sphere standards/handbook used in your organisation?
 - How have the standards guided your work? Can you give me concrete examples?
 - What difficulties have you faced in trying to achieve the Sphere standards? Can you give concrete examples? And how have you solved or settled those challenges?
 - Can you think of other challenges in your work here in DRC/Haiti that have not been sufficiently addressed by the Sphere or other standards?

The timeframe, use and impact of Sphere standards

- Protracted crises are characterized for being of long duration. How does that affect the efforts to achieve the standards during the crisis? Can you give me concrete examples?
- Protracted crises are also characterized by recurrent “spikes” or relapses of violent crisis, epidemics, etc. Have the standards informed humanitarian assistance differently throughout these fluctuations? (All over again? Preparedness for the next crisis? Learning from the past, using the standards differently? More connection to development efforts?)
- What do you see has been the impact of the use of standards in this protracted crisis situation in DRC/Haiti, especially on the life of the affected population?
- Do you think they (the standards) have facilitated the bridge between humanitarian and development efforts?
- Do you generally think (sphere) standards are used or interpreted differently in a protracted crisis than an acute crisis? Do you see any importance in this?

Further themes

- What role has the DRC/Haitian government played during this crisis?
- What has been your work relationship with local agencies?
- How responsive are the affected population to humanitarian assistance in DRC/Haiti? How are they engaged in these efforts?

Overall lessons and further ideas

- Are there any lessons you feel other practitioners can learn from your experience with the use of Sphere standards in protracted crises?
- Do you have any other thoughts about the use of the Sphere standards in such a protracted crisis like here in DRC/Haiti?
- May we contact you for follow up questions if these emerge?
- Are there any contacts or documents you would find useful to our research and that you could provide?
- Would you be fine if we reference you directly on the report, or would you like to stay strictly anonymous?

IV: Figures

Principles for engagement in protracted crises?

Humanitarian principles have long been well articulated, though increasingly difficult to adhere to in protracted crisis situations. The principles underlying development efforts have never been as explicitly articulated, but are broadly as outlined in the second column of the table below. While both sets of principles may be applicable in protracted crises, there is little clarity about what principles apply when. To address this lack of clarity, the OECD issued a set of principles for “engagement in fragile states” – not precisely the same as countries in protracted crisis, but

similar in many ways. These appear in the third column of the table. However, some of these principles would clearly clash in situations with ongoing conflict – particularly internal conflict or counter-insurgency where the state is one party to the conflict. With many of the same donors and the same external agencies involved in both humanitarian response and development programmes in protracted crises (or in fragile states or both), there remains a lack of clarity about what operating principles govern what kind of interventions, and when and where.

Principles for protracted crises?

Humanitarian principles	Developmental principles	OECD principles for “engagement in fragile states”
Humanity	Empowerment	Context-specificity
Impartiality	Participation	Do no harm
Neutrality	Sustainability	State building as central objective
Independence	Self-reliance	Prioritize prevention/risk reduction
Universality	Equity	Recognize political, security and development links
	Capacity building	Promote non-discrimination
	Transparency/accountability	

Sources: Based on OECD. 2007. *Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations* (available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/45/38368714.pdf>); and D. Maxwell. 1999. Programs in chronically vulnerable areas: challenges and lessons learned. *Disasters*, 23(4): 373–84.

Source: Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2010). “The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises”.

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