### Summary

An exercise with case studies using the video ‘Humanitarian Standards in Context – Bringing the Sphere Handbook to Life’ to grasp the importance of adapting Sphere to each specific operating context.



### Aim

One of the major challenges in using the Sphere Handbook is to contextualise it correctly. This module aims to address how to use Sphere appropriately in context.

### Learning objectives

*By the end of this session, participants will be able to:*

* Identify key elements of the humanitarian context which should be considered when applying Sphere
* Describe how real life scenarios link to Sphere principles, standards and indicators
* Explain considerations for selecting and adapting Sphere key indicators to a specific context.

### Key messages

* Context considers political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors.
* Minimum standards are universal, but key actions and key indicators must be selected and, where appropriate, adapted to the context. Guidance notes provide advice on how to do this appropriately.
* Key indicators should not be adapted simply because there is a lack of resources to meet them.
* If your organisation is unable to meet the Sphere indicators, you should acknowledge and report it, describe the potential negative consequences of not meeting the indicators and mitigate the negative consequences.

#### Preparation & resources

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| For the facilitator | For each participant | For each group of 4-5 participants |
| * Sphere Handbook * Projector, laptop, speakers for the Humanitarian Standards in Context video downloaded in advance * Select 2 to 3 of the most relevant scenarios from the video * Instructions for group work on a flip chart | * Sphere Handbook * Review in advance the chapter ‘What is Sphere?’ of the Sphere Handbook * Video guide sections I and II as a take-away (optional) | * Flip chart stand, paper and marker pens (various colours) * Post-it notes, medium size * Print the corresponding handouts (one per participant) of the 2 to 3 most relevant scenarios you selected from the video |

### You may also want to look at:

* **Modules A1-A2-A3** – What is Sphere? (It is highly recommended to have gone through one of these modules beforehand)
* **Module A6** – Sphere in practice

### To know more:

* **See** the video ‘Humanitarian Standards in Context – Bringing the Sphere Handbook to Life’: [www.sphereproject.org/resources](http://www.sphereproject.org/resources)
* **Browse** the Sphere Project website: [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

#### Session plan

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| Activity | Description | Timing |
| Introduction | One of the major challenges in using the Sphere Handbook is to contextualise it. | 5' |
| Brainstorming  ‘Introduction to context’ | Distribute post-it notes to participants and ask them to write down some examples of contextual information that it is important to know for designing an effective humanitarian response: one idea per post-it note.  Show the flip chart (prepared in advance) with ‘Context’ written across the top and  P-E-S-T-L-E written vertically down the left side. Explain that the PESTLE model is an easy way to remember the different elements of context.  Ask participants to place their post-its on the flip chart beside the element of context that it most closely matches, and debrief. (5’)  Ask: How might a disaster change elements of the context? (Examples: damages to infrastructure, breakdown of justice system, change in social structures in a camp). (5’)  Review how the structure of Sphere supports contextualisation: Minimum standards ➙ key actions ➙ key indicators ➙ guidance notes. (5’) | 15' |
| Group work preparation | Divide participants into 4 groups of 3-5 people, but keep the group in plenary to watch the video together. Assign one video scenario to each group. (There may be more than one group assessing the same scenario.)  Present the discussion questions on a flip chart:   * What elements of the context affected the situation (PESTLE)? * What are the related Sphere principles, standards and indicators? * What are the issues at stake in the scenario? * How did the agency apply Sphere in context taking the above issues into consideration? * What could be improved? | 5' |
| Video | Show the entire video to the plenary. | 25' |
| Group work | Explain that groups have 20’ to create a flip chart (which will be shown at the end) with the responses to the discussion questions for their assigned scenario only. | 20' |
| Gallery walk feedback | Ask all groups to stick their flip charts on the wall when they finish.  Ask the groups to review all the flip charts in silence. | 5' |
| Brainstorming in plenary  ‘Adapting indicators’ | Ask participants to review when it is not appropriate to adapt Sphere indicators. Highlight that Sphere key indicators should not be adapted when:   * There is not enough information about the context before and after the disaster. The indicators should be used as they are and any required adaptations can be made later * Needs outweigh the available resources to meet them * There is widespread poverty and Sphere standards cannot be met even if no disaster * The key indicators should not be adapted simply because your agency cannot meet them.   Point out that sometimes in emergency situations, an organisation or humanitarian clusters may decide to set targets that do not align to Sphere indicators. In the examples just discussed, the humanitarian community chose to set targets lower than Sphere ones, and thus, not to meet Sphere indicators.  Review with participants why it is sometimes difficult to implement Sphere indicators as they are written (Ex: lack of funds and resources, lack of access, lack of capacity, etc.). Elicit from participants what they think they should do/what they do if standards and key indicators are not met in their context. | 10' |
| Wrap-up | Add to their responses by recommending the steps:   * Describe in their reports (assessment, evaluation, etc.) the gap between the relevant Sphere indicators and the ones reached in practice * Explain the reasons for this and what needs to be changed * Assess negative implications for the affected population * Take appropriate mitigating actions to minimise the harm caused by these implications.   Summarise by saying that by committing to the above steps, agencies are being accountable even though they do not meet all the Sphere standards and indicators.  You may distribute the Handout ‘Humanitarian standards in context’ as a take-away to summarise the exercise. | 5' |

### Tips for facilitators

* You may be able to pre-identify examples of selection and adaptation in the location where the training is taking place. However, make sure the examples are not too sensitive, as the debate could become biased.

**Acknowledgement**: This module has been built using, adapting and complimenting training materials from the ‘Humanitarian Standards in Context’ Video Guide developed by Kelly Wooster, Wooster Consulting.