### Summary

An overview of the Humanitarian Charter which is the cornerstone of the Sphere philosophy.



### Aim

This module presents the three rights at the core of the Humanitarian Charter, their legal and ethical foundations, and discusses their implications in terms of roles and responsibilities for the different stakeholders involved in humanitarian action.

### Learning objectives

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

* Explain the three rights at the heart of the Humanitarian Charter, and their ethical and legal foundations
* Illustrate how the Humanitarian Charter provides guidance on roles and responsibilities in humanitarian action
* Describe the four commitments of humanitarian agencies in humanitarian assistance.

### Key messages

* The Humanitarian Charter is the backbone of the Sphere Project and is articulated around three ‘rights’ underpinned by both legal instruments and ethical humanitarian principles.
* The Humanitarian Charter guides stakeholders on roles and responsibilities in humanitarian action:
* The affected population, communities and local institutions play a central role especially at the initial stage
* The state has the primary role and responsibility to provide timely assistance and protect those affected
* Humanitarian agencies ‘role depends therefore on the capacity and willingness of those primarily responsible to actually take up their responsibilities.
* The Humanitarian Charter is the ethical basis of engagement for humanitarian agencies who endorse Sphere, and it translates into four commitments: humanitarian assistance should be people-centred, minimise adverse effects, respect the Code of Conduct, and be accountable.

#### Preparation & resources

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| For the facilitator | For each participant | For each group |
| * Handout ‘Frequently asked questions around the Humanitarian Charter’: one copy * Handout ‘The key words game’: one copy * Colour cards | * Sphere Handbook * Handout ‘The legal framework’ | * A marker pen * Handout ‘The Humanitarian Charter cartoons’: printed out in A4 size at least and in colour (download originals from the Sphere website for better resolution) |

### You may also want to look at:

* **Module 3** – The Sphere person
* **Module 9** – Sphere, the Humanitarian Charter and the Code of Conduct
* **Module 17** – Sphere and advocacy

### To know more:

* **Read** ‘User Guidance and Commentary on the Humanitarian Charter’ by James Darcy, Sphere Project website: [www.sphereproject.org/humanitariancharter](http://www.sphereproject.org/humanitariancharter)
* **See** video ‘IHL in a Nutshell’: <http://vimeo.com/107016879>
* **Do** the ‘Sphere Handbook in Action’ e-learning course, Module ‘Human Rights’: <http://www.sphereproject.org/learning/e-learning-course/>

#### Session plan

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Description | Timing |
| Introduction | The Humanitarian Charter is the cornerstone of the Sphere philosophy.  The three rights at the core of the Humanitarian Charter, and their legal and ethical foundations, have implications for the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in humanitarian action. | 5' |
| The keywords game: preparation phase | For your preparation, refer to the handout graph:  Prepare one colour card per keyword, using one colour for each type of keyword as in the graph. For the few keywords illustrated by a cartoon, prepare instead an A4 colour printout of the cartoons. Split your participants into 9 groups and display the following instructions that you should also copy onto a flip chart:  Allow 20’ per group: browse through the Humanitarian Charter to find information related to your two keywords. Summarise the information on the back of your card. You will have 1’ to orally explain each keyword in plenary. | 25' |
| The keywords game: construction phase | Put the chairs in a large circle. Start by asking the three groups who analysed the three ‘rights’ to stand up. Have each group present its keyword and put their colour card on the floor, and then return to their seats.  Step in and summarise the links between the three words which have just been presented, using the notes below slide 1.  Move on and ask for the groups presenting the three legal sources for the Humanitarian Charter to do the same and step in to summarise.  The following groups present the ethical principles, the key stakeholders and finally the four commitments.  At the end, you should have rebuilt the above graph on the floor with the cards. | 30' |
| The keywords game: debrief phase | Depending on the participants’ profiles, ask the following questions:   * What kind of guidance on roles and responsibilities in humanitarian intervention does the Humanitarian Charter provide? * How can you use the Humanitarian Charter in your daily work? * How does the Humanitarian Charter relate to the other parts of the Sphere Handbook? * Can someone share examples of good or poor practices related to the four commitments? | 25' |
| Wrap-up | Copy the 3 key messages on a flip chart and ask 3 participants to read them aloud. | 5' |

### Tips for facilitators

* Look at both this module and Module A9 to see with which methodology you feel most comfortable. The content is equivalent, but this module can be used without electricity and requests a different kind of involvement from participants.
* Time the participants’ keyword presentations with a timer to set the pace for the 18 keywords. Make sure you step in to summarise and clarify the links between the different words.
* This module will be a success if participants concretely relate the content to their own working environments.
* Be aware of the language issue: ask how key expressions such as ‘dignity’ or ‘humanitarian imperative’ translate in the participants’ mother tongues to ensure participants share a common understanding.