### Summary

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



### Aim

This module aims to introduce the three rights at the core of the Humanitarian Charter and their legal and ethical foundations, and to discuss their implications in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders implicated 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 foundation
* 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 and the communities 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 legal and ethical basis of engagement of humanitarian agencies endorsing Sphere, and 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 of 3-5 participants |
| * Prepare the video IHL in a nutshell: <http://vimeo.com/107016879> with speakers, test it in advance * Handout ‘Frequently asked questions around the Humanitarian Charter’ | * Sphere Handbook * Handout ‘Sources of international law’, and Handout ‘In which situation are we?’; one copy in colour | * A flip chart, marker pens, post-its |

### You may also want to look at:

* **Module A3** – The Sphere person
* **Module A11** – The Code of Conduct, a foundation for the Sphere Humanitarian Charter
* **Module B6** – Sphere and advocacy
* **Module C2** – Sphere and accountability to the affected population

### To know more:

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

#### Session plan

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| Activity | Description | Timing |
| Introduction | Explain that Sphere is not just a manual of good humanitarian practice; it is first and foremost a statement about rights and duties. It attempts to articulate the contents of these rights and their implications for humanitarian practice. The Humanitarian Charter is the core of the Sphere philosophy.  Explain that the session will provide an overview of the Humanitarian Charter, followed by a focus on roles and responsibilities and a specific emphasis on assistance and dignity. The session will finally explore the commitments specifically outlined in the Humanitarian Charter. | 5' |
| Slide presentation  ‘Overview of the Humanitarian Charter’ | Present, in an interactive manner, slides 2-8, referring to the slide notes, notably:   * Slide 3,4,5: prompt participants to concretely explain the meaning of the 3 rights * Slide 7: Explain to participants that they will get a handout at the end of the session further detailing the link between the international legal framework and the Humanitarian Charter, refer to the upcoming video * Slide 8: prompt participants to concretely explain what they understand about each of the humanitarian principles | 20' |
| Video  ‘IHL in a nutshell’ | Show the video ‘IHL in a nutshell’.  Draw connections with the previous slides, specifically slide 7. | 5' |
| Group work  ‘Roles and responsibilities’ | Display slide 9 with the group work instructions on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in humanitarian intervention.  Have participants write down which type of guidance is provided for the stakeholder to whom they have been assigned. | 15' |
| Plenary feedback | After each group has presented its findings for 3 minutes, wrap up with slide 10. | 15' |
| Group work  ‘Assistance and dignity’ | Display slide 11 ‘Translating the right to life with dignity in actions’.  This woman is expressing key concerns which affect her right to life with dignity. Read out loud each of the concerns, asking each time in plenary what type of concrete action could be taken by a humanitarian agency to alleviate this concern. You can use the next slide (12) to add up the participants’ ideas, if you deem necessary. | 15' |
| Slide presentation  ‘Our four commitments’ | Present slides 13-17, referring to the slide notes, specifically prompting participants to share examples of poor or good practices for each of the four commitments. | 10' |
| Wrap-up | Use slide 18 to wrap up. Ask one participant to read out loud one key message, another participant will read out the next one, etc. After each key message, ask participants if it is clear and clarify any remaining questions. | 5' |

### Tips for facilitators

* Carefully read the handouts and suggested reading to prepare for this module.
* Don’t be ashamed if you are not a legal expert – rely on the expertise of some of your participants!
* Stress the moral commitment represented in the Humanitarian Charter and park any questions which are too technical for you – you can always answer them by e-mail at a later stage.
* Be aware of language issue: ask how key expressions such as ‘dignity’ or ‘humanitarian imperative’ translate in participants’ mother tongues, to ensure a common understanding.