February 2024

Sphere in Urban Context Training

Online, December 2023 – February 2024
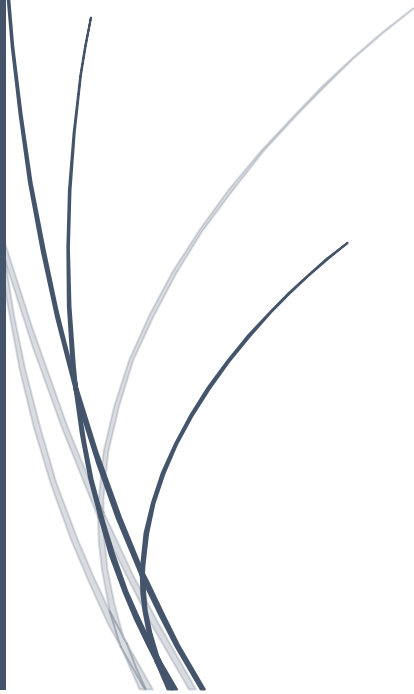
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1. Background

[The Sphere in Urban Context training package](#) represents a collaborative effort between [Sphere](#) and the [German Red Cross (GRC](#)), aimed at fostering a comprehensive, rights-oriented, and community-centered approach to disaster response in urban settings. By adapting and applying Sphere's core humanitarian standards to the complexities of urban environments, this package equips trainers with the tools to facilitate a 3-day workshop or for individual study.

The training package, initially developed in 2022, underwent multiple online pilot events aimed at refining and enhancing its effectiveness. In May 2023, it was implemented for in-person training sessions in Albania targeting participants from the Eastern European region under [The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative-South-eastern Europe (DPPI-SEE)](#).

On July 11, 2023, Sphere organized a launch event to introduce the training package to a broader audience within the Sphere and humanitarian communities. This event featured a 2-hour online [webinar](#) led by trainer Aya Yagan. Sphere's current objective is to disseminate the training package widely, making it an invaluable resource for practitioners engaged in urban response efforts.

As a result, this training programme was organized through collaboration between Sphere and GRC, with a focus on engaging Sphere focal points, trainers, and active practitioners from diverse regions.

The training programme was structured to include a 3-day training session utilizing the package, complemented by mentoring sessions. The overarching goal was to empower participants to seamlessly integrate the package into their practices and subsequently train their colleagues and fellow practitioners within their respective regions.

2. Introduction

The training targeted individuals with a minimum of 2-3 years of experience in the humanitarian field, possessing a basic understanding of the Sphere handbook and holding specific roles relevant to their current job responsibilities. Sphere managed the invitation process using their roster of Sphere trainers and network. From 35 confirmed registrations, 21 participants were ultimately approved. Selection criteria included confirmation of full program attendance and recommendations from the Sphere team, prioritizing those actively engaged within the Sphere network.

In total, 21 participants (9 female, 12 male) from 19 countries (Republic of Moldova, Philippines, Nepal, Syrian Arab Republic, UK, Afghanistan, Switzerland, Kenya, Indonesia, Pakistan, USA, South Africa, Yemen, Bangladesh, Brazil) attended and successfully completed the course. Participants represented civil society organizations, international NGOs, and Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations.

The training of trainer sessions occurred from December 7 to December 15, 2023. And the mentoring sessions were conducted on the 6th and 7th of February 2024.

The training was facilitated by two Sphere trainers: Aya Yagan and Stephen Blakemore. Their brief biographies are provided below:

Mrs. Aya Yagan Alnaset is an M&E specialist with ten years of experience providing consultancy for humanitarian aid projects in conflict and crisis situations. Serving as a Sphere trainer since 2014, she has conducted numerous training events for NGOs and practitioners worldwide. Aya's notable contributions include customizing Sphere training modules for the Syrian context, incorporating challenging real-life examples from the field. She has also played a key role in developing the Sphere in urban setting training curriculum.

Stephen Blakemore is an independent consultant and trainer working with non-profit organisations in the UK and around the world. He has a professional background in Human Resource Management and nearly thirty years of experience in the field of training and group facilitation, mostly with humanitarian relief and development organisations. With a reputation for his creative and learner-centred approach, Stephen has designed, led or contributed to a wide range of courses, workshops and conferences in more than fifty countries. Stephen has been a Sphere trainer since 2023.

3. Course objectives

Overall objectives:

1. Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts

- **Apply Sphere Standards** to urban contexts to plan and deliver humanitarian response.
- **Identify differences and similarities between humanitarian response** in urban contexts and rural/camp contexts, specifically identifying attributes of cities that present opportunities and challenges for humanitarian response and for the application of Sphere Standards.
- **Conduct needs analysis using a people-centred, rights-based approach** and context analysis using a systems approach, including stakeholder mappings and mappings of existing capacities, resources, and risks in urban contexts.

2. Mentoring Session

- State the key elements of the facilitator guide and related materials
- List key steps necessary to prepare and successfully deliver the "Applying Sphere Standards in Urban Context" training
- Identify potential challenges in delivering the training, and ways to prevent, mitigate or manage them
- Share presentation and facilitation tips

4. Training methods and techniques

The training was delivered online via Zoom. The facilitators strived to create and maintain an engaging and inclusive learning environment, maximising active participation.

Breakout Rooms were used for group work, and each group recorded its outputs and discussion points on Google Slides. These served as a virtual whiteboard for each group whilst also enabling facilitators to monitor each group's progress. The slides could then be presented in plenary using Screenshare. The links to Google Slides were sent to participants in advance of each session.

The training package has a lot of content, all relevant but too much for the time available. Only those sessions earmarked as 'essential' were included.

The TTX is the most important component of the training, focusing as it does on the application of learning. It is highly participative and fast-moving. A debrief and feedback session aims to draw out learning, highlight challenges, and identify good practice.

An additional mentoring component was designed so as to support those participants interested in delivering the training package themselves. All participants were invited but needed to satisfy these eligibility criteria:

- Completion of the "Applying Sphere Standards in Urban Context" training
- Prior experience in training and facilitation (online or in person)
- Have plans or an aim to deliver this training before the end of July 2024
- Familiarisation with the contents of the Sphere Handbook and how Sphere Standards are applied in practice

The half-day group mentoring sessions were conducted twice, with each session spanning four hours. These sessions aimed to familiarize participants with the facilitator guide and provide them with tips and techniques for delivering the content effectively, whether in-person or online. The agenda for the mentoring sessions is presented in the appendix.
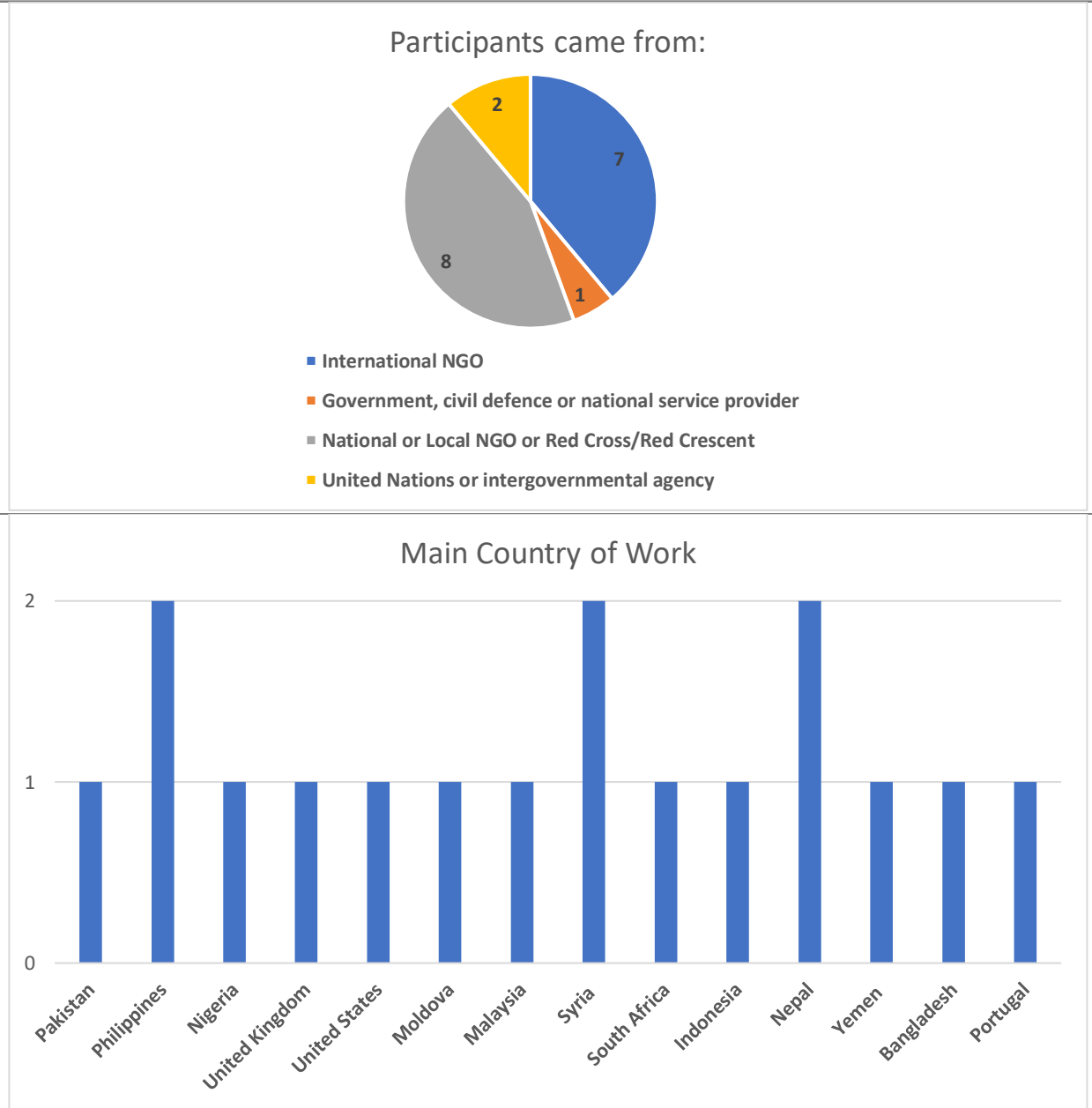
5. Training quality control measures

The below measures were in place to ensure the training programme is relevant to the context and participants needs:
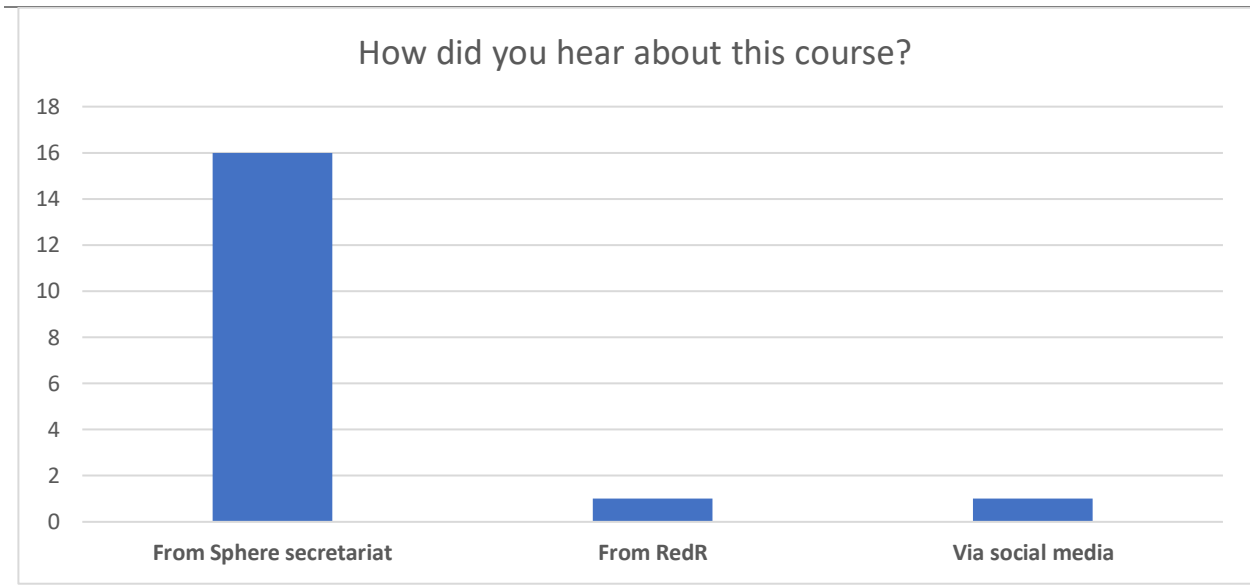
- Prior to the course, participants were asked to provide information on their knowledge and experience on the topic, as well as their learning objectives. This was used by the lead facilitator to tailor the course.
- Daily feedback was sought in various forms from participants to evaluate daily impact and to allow the lead trainer to make adjustments for subsequent days.
- Training materials were shared with participants at the end of each training day to provide them with the opportunity to read, reflect, and prepare for the following session.
- Participant guide Google Slides were shared prior to each training day, enabling participants to utilize them as a tool for documenting their collective discussions in the breakout rooms.
- A training evaluation form was used to collect quantitative and qualitative comments from participants immediately after the training in order to evaluate the training from various angles.
- Participants who attended the course received a Certificate of Attendance.
- A pre-mentoring session survey was shared with participants to enable them to share the extent to which they meet the eligibility criteria, gather insights into their preferences regarding mentoring, and indicate their preferred timeline for the session.
- Eligibility criteria for the mentoring sessions were agreed and communicated to participants.
- A final training report was created, which included a full breakdown of feedback and suggestions for improving future events.

## 6. Pre and post course surveys results[1]

Participants Details

Participants came from:

- International NGO
- Government, civil defence or national service provider
- National or Local NGO or Red Cross/Red Crescent
- United Nations or intergovernmental agency

Main Country of Work

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[1] Only 18 participants responded to the pre survey, but 20 responded to the post survey.

How did you hear about this course?

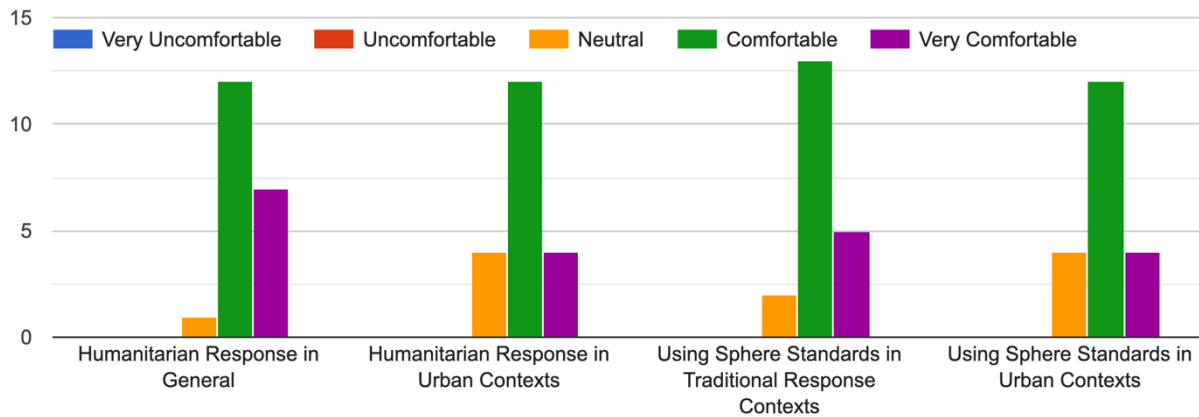## Knowledge Improvement

Pre Training

Please indicate your level of comfort working with the following:
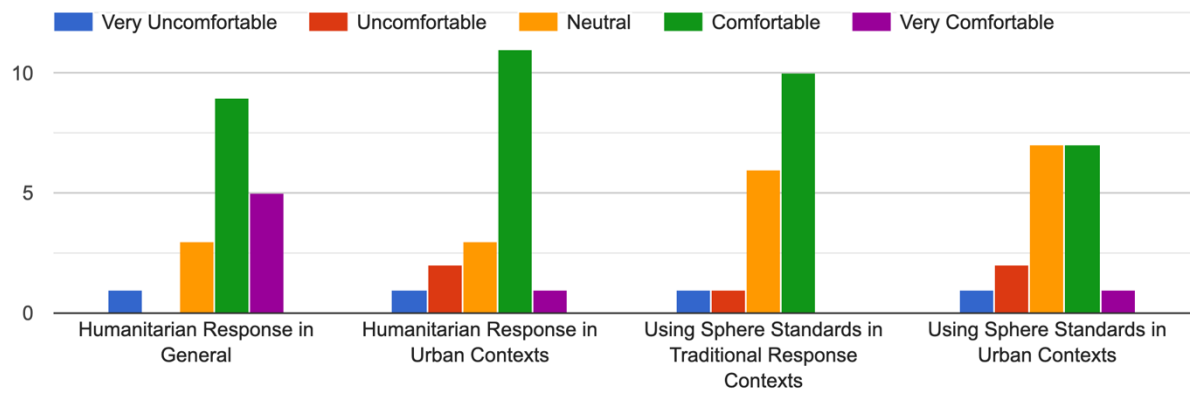
Post Training

Please rank your level of comfort working with the following

Participants enrolled in the Sphere in Urban training course for various reasons, including a desire to deepen their understanding of Sphere standards within urban contexts and to observe the facilitation methodology of Sphere in an online platform after completing a recent Sphere ToT program.

Many sought to expand their knowledge to become a valuable resource for applying Sphere standards in urban humanitarian response and capacity building. Participants aimed to identify and articulate key challenges in applying Sphere Standards in urban contexts, analyze urban vulnerabilities, and adapt Sphere Standards to suit the unique needs of urban crises.

Several participants, with experience in urban disaster management and humanitarian operations, aimed to integrate traditional Sphere standards with urban contexts, especially in countries like Syria facing prolonged crises affecting urban areas. Others sought to improve their capabilities in working in urban areas, strengthen organizational capacity, and train others on Sphere standards.

Additionally, participants from organizations like Fraternity - International Humanitarian Missions (FIHM) saw the course as essential for training personnel on delivering proper humanitarian response in complex urban settings, especially with the translation of "Using Sphere Urban Settings" into Portuguese. Overall, participants enrolled to gain knowledge, improve capabilities, and contribute effectively to humanitarian work in urban settings.

![Sphere logo]

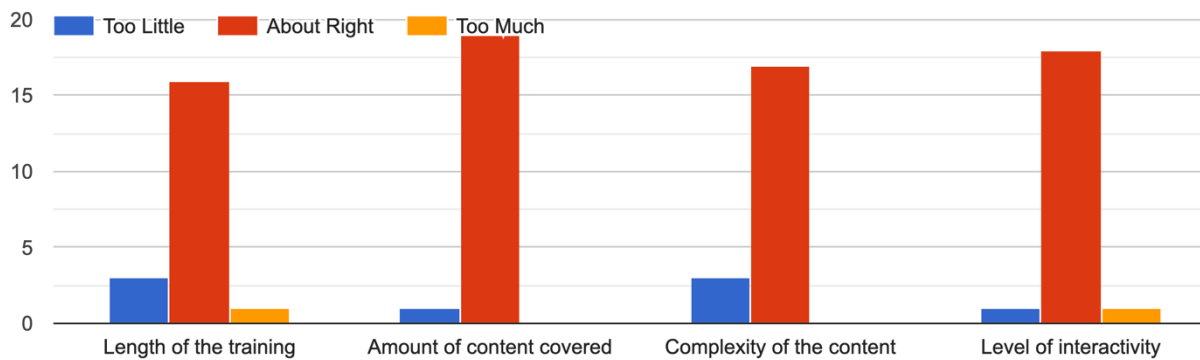## 7. Final evaluation

Sphere in Urban Training Evaluation

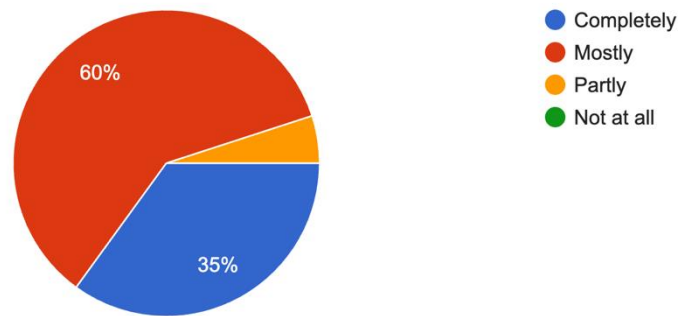How would you rate this training event?
20 responses
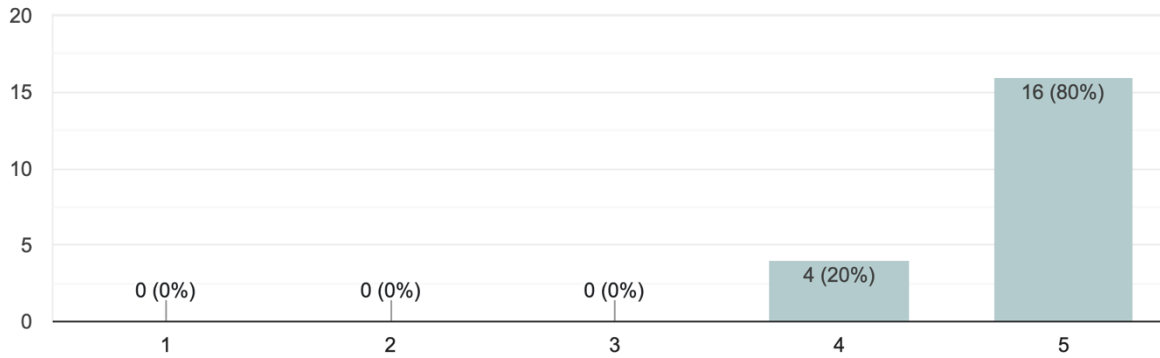
1= Very Poor 2= Poor 3= Average 4= Good 5= Very Good
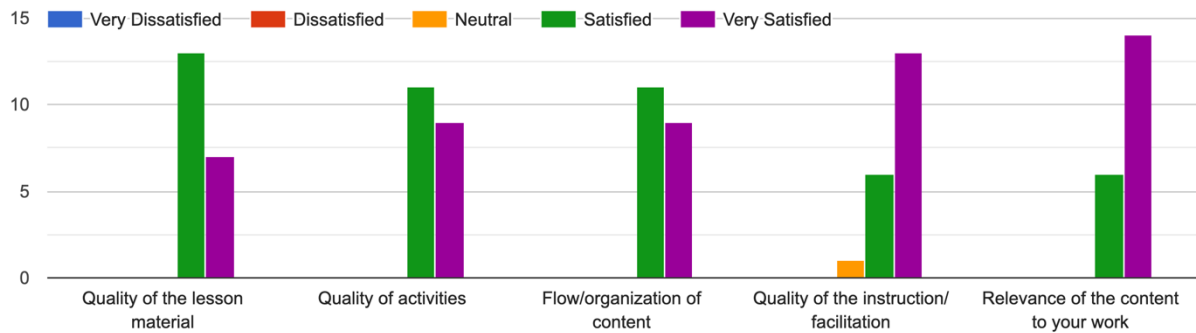
Please rate the following:

Sphere

Did the course meet your learning objectives?
20 responses

- Completely
- Mostly
- Partly
- Not at all

60%
35%

Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following:

Very Dissatisfied — Dissatisfied — Neutral — Satisfied — Very Satisfied

Quality of the lesson material | Quality of activities | Flow/organization of content | Quality of the instruction/ facilitation | Relevance of the content to your work

How likely are you to recommend this training to others?
20 responses

0 (0%)   0 (0%)   0 (0%)   5 (25%)   15 (75%)
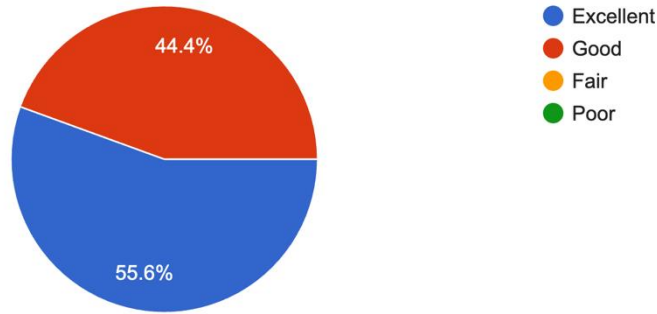
1   2   3   4   5
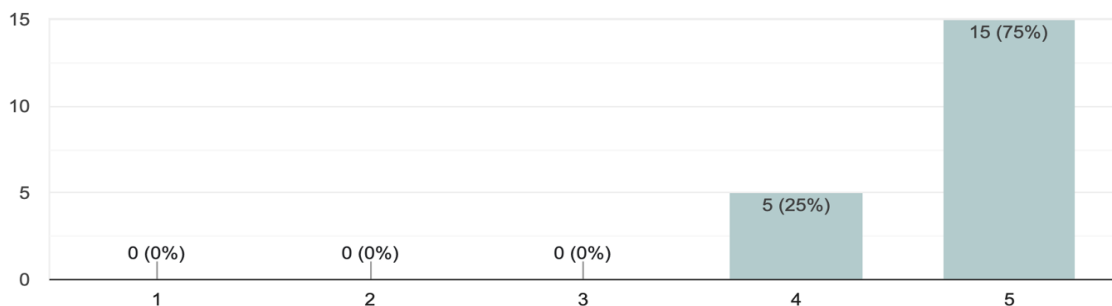
1= Very Unlikely 2= Unlikely 3= Maybe 4= Likely 5= Very Likely

![Sphere logo]

Mentoring Sessions Evaluation

1. How would you rate your overall experience in the mentoring session?
9 responses

Legend:
- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

- 44.4%
- 55.6%

2. Were the key objectives of the mentoring session clearly communicated to you?
9 responses

Response	Count
Yes	8 (88.9%)
No	0 (0%)
Partially	1 (11.1%)
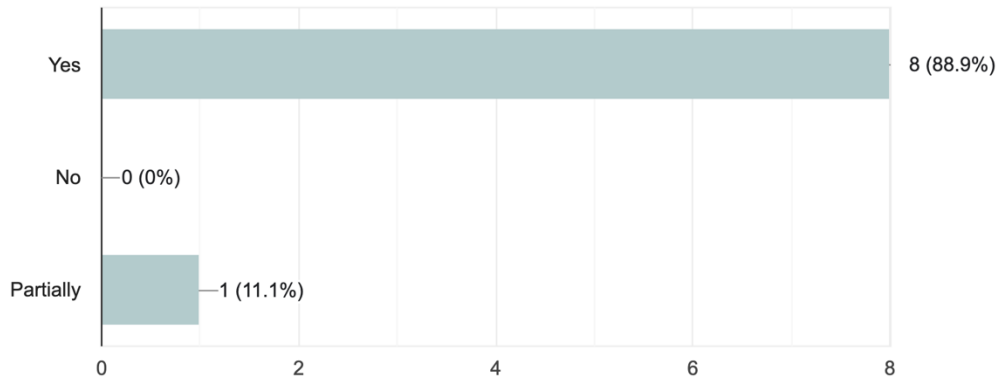
| To what extent do you feel the mentoring session helped you in achieving the following objectives?			
State the key elements of the facilitator guide and related materials	Moderately (2)	Very much (1)	Completely (5)
List key steps necessary to prepare and successfully deliver the "Applying Sphere Standards in Urban Context" training	Moderately (1)	Very much (4)	Completely (4)
Identify potential challenges in delivering the training, and ways to prevent, mitigate, or manage them	Moderately (2)	Very much (2)	Completely (5)
Learn about some presentation and facilitation tips	Moderately (1)	Very much (4)	Completely (4)

8. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel now in independently conducting the "Applying Sphere Standards in Urban Context" training?

9 responses
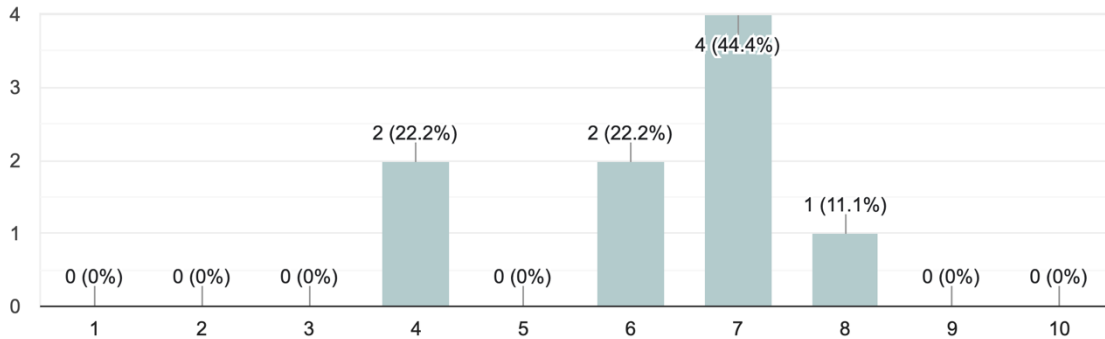
9. Would you recommend this mentoring session to others?

9 responses
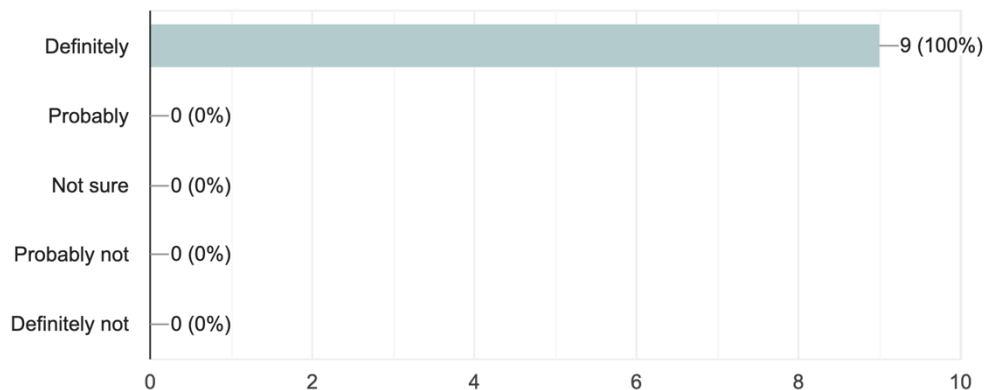
Main strength as shared by participants

Participants in the training highlighted several main strengths, including its highly interactive and participatory nature, which facilitated learning from diverse perspectives and experiences. The Table-Top Exercise (TTX) was particularly praised for promoting brainstorming and discussion among participants. The content was described as excellent, with up-to-date examples and well-planned exercises, including simulations.

Participants appreciated the well-prepared modules and the structured flow of the training, which seamlessly integrated theory with practice and maintained engagement throughout. The trainers were commended for their depth of knowledge and experience, and the inclusion of

group activities further enhanced engagement and facilitated networking among participants. Overall, the training was lauded for its comprehensive approach, engaging classes, and well-equipped resources.

Main areas of improvements as shared by participants

- Improve organization and effectiveness of role-playing activities
- Allocate time for networking to benefit from diverse group composition
- Provide more time for pre-training reading
- Consider face-to-face training for increased interactivity
- Extend duration of Table-Top Exercise (TTX) for deeper discussion of Sphere indicators
- Address issues with slide order and instructions
- Include more guided exercises on adapting indicators to different contexts
- Address challenges with online delivery, including language barriers and limited internet access
- Improve TTX experience for participants with limited technological proficiency
- Adjust duration of breakout sessions
- Consider breaking up long sessions for better engagement
- Provide facilitator support in breakout rooms to assist participants effectively.

Most valuable components of the mentoring sessions

- Key Elements of Facilitator Guide and Materials: Participants appreciated having access to comprehensive materials that guided their mentoring sessions and provided valuable resources.
- Facilitator Presentations and Tips: The insights and advice shared by facilitators were highly valuable, providing participants with practical guidance and strategies for effective mentoring.
- Clear Instructions and Feedback: Participants found clear instructions and constructive feedback from trainers before and after group discussions to be particularly helpful in guiding their mentoring sessions and improving their facilitation skills.
- Beneficial Areas Overall: Many participants expressed that most areas of the mentoring session were valuable, indicating a comprehensive and well-rounded learning experience.
- Caliber of Facilitators and Participants: The expertise and professionalism of both facilitators and participants contributed significantly to the overall value of the mentoring session, creating an environment conducive to learning and collaboration.
- Learning from Breakout Sessions: The opportunity to learn from each other through breakout sessions was highlighted as especially useful, allowing participants to exchange perspectives, challenge each other's thinking, and gain insights from diverse viewpoints.

- Mentors Offering Different Viewpoints: Mentors providing different viewpoints and challenging participants' thinking were seen as valuable in helping participants see things from different angles and deepen their understanding of the material.

Suggestions for additional topics to be covered

- 1 participant suggested that it would be helpful to receive resources or tips on how to locate audiences interested in Sphere in Urban Contexts sessions. This suggests a potential opportunity for the organizers to provide guidance on audience outreach and engagement strategies.

- 1 participant mentioned the idea of establishing a collaborative network of people and resources for future use, indicating a desire for ongoing support and resources beyond the session itself.

Suggestions to improve the mentoring sessions

- Include more real-world examples and practical advice from training experiences to enhance relevance.
- Consider extending the session or adding extra days to allow for more in-depth discussion and learning.
- Participants suggest that in-person sessions may be more beneficial for increased interactivity and engagement.
- Gather input from participants on specific mentoring needs beforehand to tailor session content accordingly.
- Some participants feel that a single day may not be sufficient and suggest extending the duration of the session for comprehensive coverage.

Quotes from participants

"Thank you so much for this wonderful and unforgettable training experience."

"The training is well-designed, and both facilitators demonstrated a strong command of the content."

"Thanks Steve and Aya for your lively facilitation and GRC for organizing the training. "

8. Recommendations

1. The materials, whilst detailed and comprehensive, are lengthy and can be hard to navigate. **Add a 'quick start guide' and checklists to make them more user-friendly.**
2. **Include additional guidance on online vs in-person delivery.**
3. The scenario (war in Ukraine) is less relevant to participants working on natural / climate-induced disasters. **Add a second, alternative scenario.**
4. Because the case study scenario focuses on a real and ongoing crisis, it runs the risk of being overtaken by actual events. **Consider using a generic, non-country specific scenario, particularly for the TTX.**
5. Some participants needed time to become familiar and comfortable using some of the online tools (Google Slides, etc). **Include a pre-training session for introductions and familiarisation with the online tools, participant guide, etc.**
6. Participants joined the training from a wide range of time zones. Whilst having a diverse group was an asset, the timing of the sessions favoured some over others. **Consider targeting participants from the same geographical region and/or time zone. This would improve access to the training and potentially promote networking and collaboration in certain countries or regions.**
7. In order to benefit from the course, participants should have knowledge of Sphere. **Ensure that participants have at least participated in an Introduction to Sphere course before attending this one.**
8. The TTX seems a little detached from Sphere, focusing more on coordination and collaboration between different actors. **Focus the learning objectives more specifically on Sphere and the application of Sphere standards in an urban setting. Interventions in the TTX should push participants towards considering how, for example, certain indicators might be adapted.**

9. Appendix

Sphere in Urban Course Structure

Day 1	Module 1. Introduction to Humanitarian Response in Urban Contexts	
SESSION TIME	**SECTION**	**SUB-SECTION**
09:00 – 10:30	Session 0. Introduction to the Course	0.1. Introduction to the Course 0.1. Module Overview ⬤ Activity 0.1. Introductions 0.1.A. Course Learning Objectives 0.1.C. Training Structure Overview 0.1.D. Activity Environment 0.1.E. Training Schedule Overview

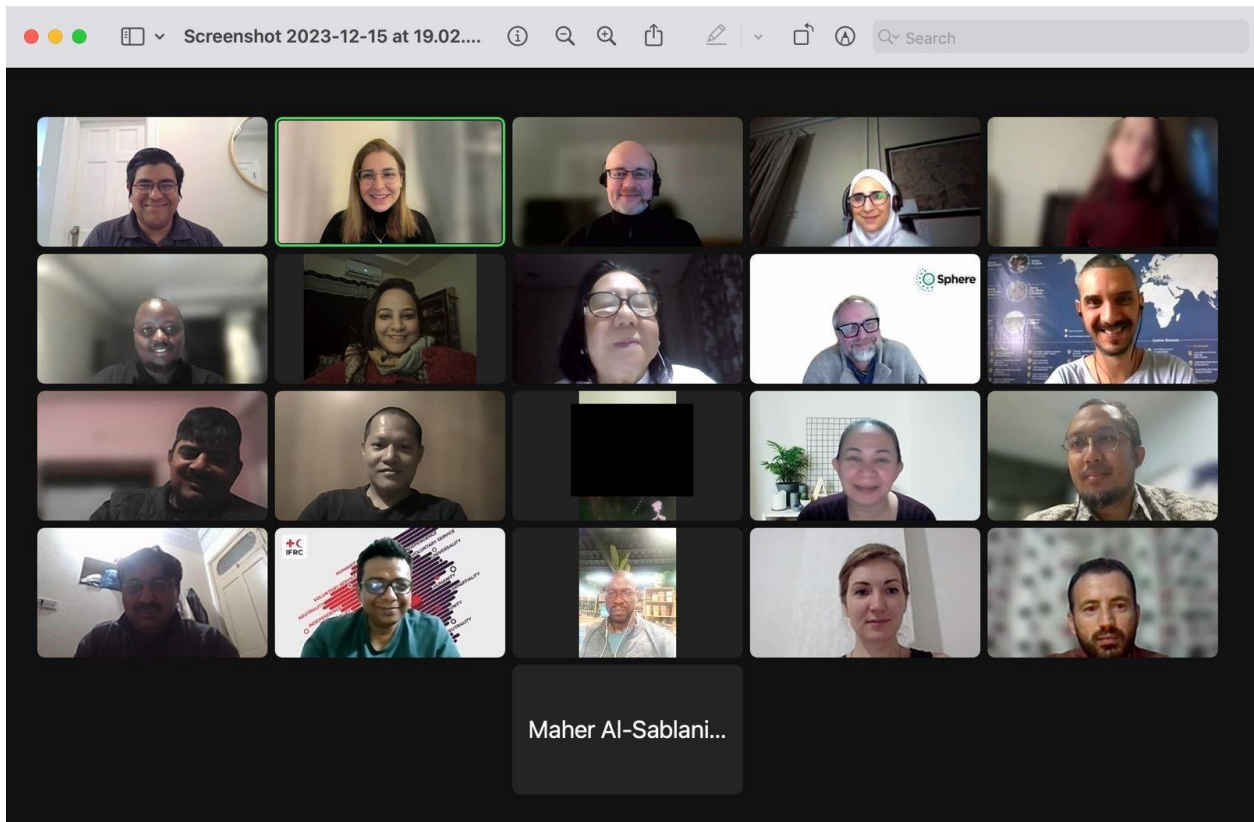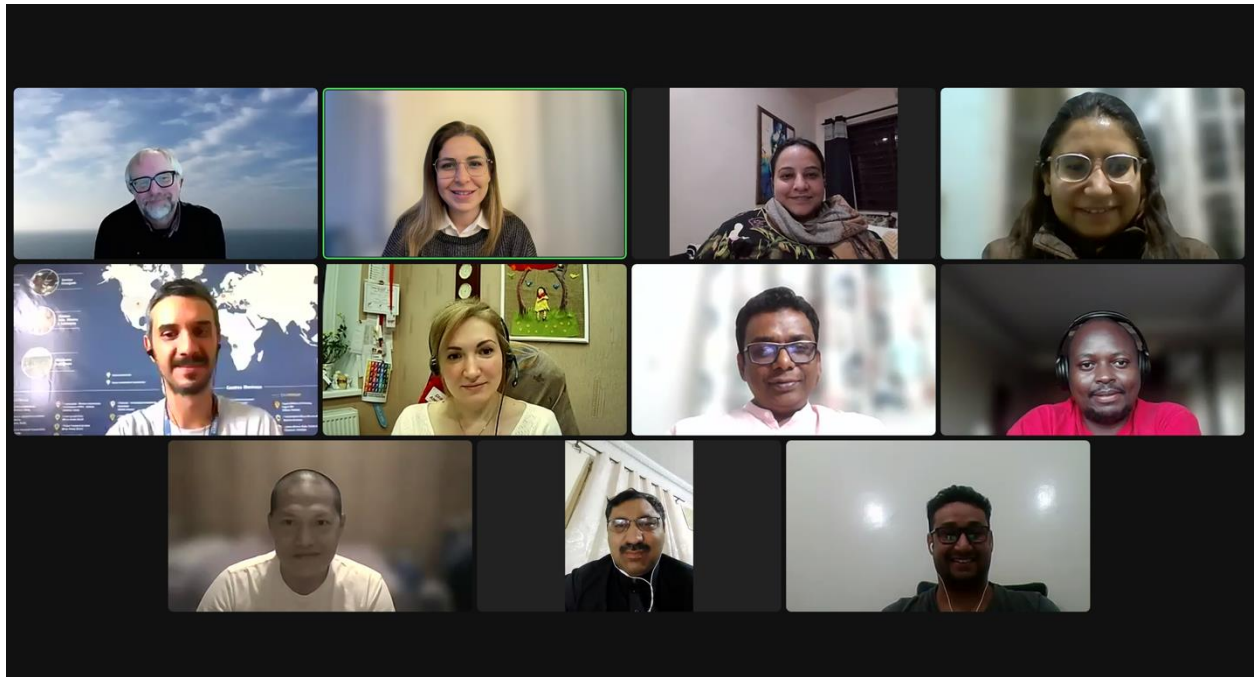| 10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 11:45	Session 1.0 Introduction to Humanitarian Response in Urban Contexts	1.0.A. Case Study: War in Ukraine ⬤ Activity 1.0. Introducing the Urban Context 1.0.B. Key Features of Urban Contexts ◐ Activity 1.0. Why Are Urban Contexts Important? 1.0.C. Framing Urban Contexts Through Systems Thinking 1.0.D. Learning Objectives for Module 1 1.0.E. Module Overview 1.0.F. Additional Reading
11:45 -12:30	Session 1.1 Defining the Urban Context	1.1. Section Overview ⬤ Activity 1.1. Part 1 - Define the Urban Context 1.1.A. Definitions of Urban Contexts ◐ Activity 1.1. Part 2 - Group Definition of the Urban Context 1.1.B. Comparing Contexts 1.1.C. Identifying Opportunities 1.1.D. Identifying Challenges 1.1.E. Additional Reading
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30 – 15:30	Session 1.2 Conceptualizing the urban context	1.2. Section Overview 1.2.A. Conceptualising Urban Response 1.2.B. Needs Analysis Using a People-Centred Approach ⬤ Activity 1.2. Part 1 - Needs Analysis Using a People-Centred Approach 1.2.C. Context Analysis Using a Systems Approach 1.2.D. Systems Approaches to Context Analysis
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee Break	
15:45 -16:45	Session 1.2 Conceptualizing the urban context (continue)	⬤ Activity 1.2. Part 2 - Systems Modelling Using the Five Urban Systems Approach
16:45 – 17:00	Session 1.4 Conclusions	Module Conclusions
Day 2	MODULE 2. Adapting and Applying Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts	

09:00 – 09:15	Session 2.0 Introduction to Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts	2.0.A. Relating Needs, Context, & Standards 2.0.B. Learning Objectives for Module 2 2.0.C. Module Overview 2.0.D. Additional Reading
09:15 – 10:30	Session 2.1. Defining the Sphere Standards	2.1. Section Overview 2.1.A. Defining Sphere 2.1.B. The Sphere Handbook 2.1.C. Defining the Sphere Standards 2.1.D. Meeting Sphere Standards 🔴 Activity 2.1. Standards vs. Targets 2.1.E. Additional Reading
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 12:30	Session 2.2. Conceptualising the Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts	2.2. Section Overview 2.2.A. Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts 2.2.B. Urban Complexity & Sphere 2.2.C. Case Study: War in Ukraine 🔴 Activity 2.2. Exploring Standards in the Urban Context 2.2.D. Conceptualising Application 2.2.E. Adapting Indicators 🔴 Activity 2.2. Adapting Indicators for the Urban Context 2.2.F. Additional Reading
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30 – 15:30	Session 2.2. Continue Session 2.3 Applying the Sphere Standards in Urban Contexts	🔴 Activity 2.2. Adapting Indicators for the Urban Context 2.2.F. Additional Reading 2.3. Section Overview 2.3.A. Practice Applying the Standards 🔴 Activity 2.3. Standards, Indicators, and Systems (Required) 2.3.B. Additional Reading
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee Break	
15:45 -17:00	Session 3.0 Introduction to the TTX	3.0 Introduction 3.1 Roles 3.2 Exercise Landscape 3.3 Actions 3.4 Submitting Actions

Day 3	MODULE 3. Applying the Sphere Standards to an Urban Humanitarian Response TTX	
09:00 – 10:30	Session 3.1 Simulation	TTX Simulation-Part 1
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 12:00	Session 3.1 Simulation	TTX Simulation-Part 2
12:00 – 12:30	Evaluation and Certificates	Evaluation and Certificates
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break	

Mentoring Sessions Structure

Session	Details	Time
Warm Up	How equipped/ready do you feel to deliver this training?	**10- 15 mins**
Part 1: Training Materials	A comprehensive walkthrough of the training materials.	**30 mins**
Group Activity (breakout rooms)	Development of a "quick start" guide for the training materials.	**30 mins**
Presentation and discussion	Group work presentation and discussion.	**30 mins**
Break		**15 mins**
Part 2: Presentation and Facilitation Techniques Group Activity (breakout rooms)	Reflection on participants experience from the prior training.	**10 mins**
Challenges brainstorming	Specifying challenges encountered.	**10 mins**
Group activity (breakout rooms)	Developing tips and mitigation measures for the identified challenges.	**20 mins**
Presentation and discussion	Group work presentation and discussion.	**20 mins**
Part 3: Closing	Training tips Open space for Q&A Expected support.	**30 mins**

Photo gallery

10.   Links and contacts

Sphere website: https://spherestandards.org/event/sphere-standards-in-urban-contexts-3-5-may-2023-albania/

Sphere in Urban Context Training Package: https://spherestandards.org/resources/using-sphere-standards-in-urban-contexts-training-package/

Sphere trainers can be contacted at:

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