 

**Training report**

**Three-day Introductory SPHERE Training customized to the Syrian context and in Arabic language**

**Gaziantep, Turkey - July 27th to 29th 2015**



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**The Training in a Snapshot**

Organizers

The training was organized by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and The SPHERE Project.

Location and timing

The training took place at Novotel in Gaziantep - Turkey between July 27th and July 29th 2015 (3 days).

Participants

The training was attended by 24 humanitarian workers operating cross-border from Turkey.

The training team

***Khaled Khalifa, lead trainer***

*Khaled Khalifa is the Chief of Partnerships Coordination at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Geneva. In his previous capacity, Khaled was Head of the Gulf Office of the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). He is also the representative of the United Nation's IRIN News Bureau for the Middle East and Asia. Over the past 10 years, he worked in several senior managerial positions with major international organizations in several countries including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Indonesia, Malaysia, Libya, Pakistan and the UAE. Khaled Khalifa holds an MA degree in English Literature & Humanities from Egypt, an MSc in Sustainable Development from the University of London, and a Project Management Diploma from Aalborg Technical School, Denmark. He is a senior Sphere Trainer, the focal point for the Sphere project in the GCC and a member of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team (UNDAC).*

***Elham Allan, IASC Gender Advisor***

*Elham Allan is the Senior Gender Capacity Adviser (GENCAP/IASC) based with UN OCHA in Gaziantep, Turkey. Her role is to build capacity of humanitarian actors at country level to mainstream gender equality programming, including prevention and response to gender-based-violence, in all clusters of the humanitarian response. Elham Allan holds a Master Degree in Middle Eastern Studies with a specialization in gender, an elective module in psychology from the University of Copenhagen and a Diploma in International Humanitarian Action from the University of Fordham. Since 2006 she has worked in the EU Delegation to Syria as a Programme Manager and with the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jordan as a Gender Officer and as a Senior Human Rights and Gender Analyst in Sudan and Libya.*

***Aya Yagan, co-facilitator***

*Aya Yagan is a MEAL (Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning) manager at Save the Children country office in Turkey. She started working with SARC in 2009 inside Syria as a first aid trainer and was also part of the field rescue team during the first years of the conflict inside Syria. Aya also acted as a board member in Soul Society for disabled children.*

*Aya holds a bachelor degree of Financial & Banking Sciences from Aleppo University.*

*In Turkey, she facilitated an introductory Sphere training in early 2014 targeting Syrian NGOs. In 2015 she became a member of the pool of SPHERE Syrian trainers set up in coordination with The Sphere project and OCHA and aiming to spread the Sphere culture to all humanitarian workers in the Syrian context. Aya participated to the contextualization of the Sphere training modules to the Syrian context. She also acquired an extensive experience in training and building M&E systems.*

***Hamza Hamwie, co-facilitator***

*Hamza Hamwie has over ten years of experience in Humanitarian Action, primarily in emergency operations and early recovery projects working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, International Non-Governmental Organizations and local communities. He is a facilitator with over seven years of experience in psychosocial support, child protection, advocacy and active citizenship fields.  
He is a SPHERE certified trainer and a companion of the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS).*

**Mamdouh Tello, co-facilitator**

Mamdouh Tello is Co-Founder of Point society for consultancy and capacity building for NGOs and he is the MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) Coordinator at CARE international for cross border program in Turkey. Mamdouh has more than 9 years’ experience in Humanitarian and Development work, during his work before with many INGOs like ICRC, IFRC Syrian Arab Red Crescent SARC and Qatar Red Crescent. In addition, he has 4 years’ experience in consultancy field when he worked with Multi-national consultancy group in MENA zone.

Mamdouh is Sphere certified trainer, Certified Disaster Management and Risk Reduction trainer from IFRC & SARC and Certified Trainer from CARE – International in Resources Mobilization. Mamdouh Holds BA in Business Management from University of Greenwich-UK. Moreover, Mamdouh earned diplomas in different business & humanitarian majors in one of the best educational resources in UK. Mamdouh had professional certificate in project management like PMP, Marketing like LCCI Marketing Management, Audit and business analysis CBAP and International Organization Management from University of Geneva.

***Rami Rajjoub, co-facilitator***

*Rami Rajjoub is the CEO of Point society which works to build and develop the capacity of individuals and groups in local communities. He has over eleven years of experience in relief and development and in particular in displacement contexts (both IDPs and refugees) as a staff member of national societies of Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and of several NGOs. Rami has acquired extended skills in the development and implementation of disaster management programs. He is a certified trainer in Disaster Management (Syrian Arab Red Crescent & British Red Cross), a SPHERE certified trainer and a lecturer in humanitarian affairs. Rami holds a Bachelor's Degree in Science / Chemistry Department, and an English Diploma for Academic Purpose.*

1. **Background and context of the training**

The humanitarian community operating cross-border from Turkey shares a common understanding about the need and the importance to develop the capacities of Syrian NGOs. According to a survey conducted by UNOCHA Turkey[[1]](#footnote-1), a majority (64%) of Syrian humanitarian aid workers operating cross-border from Turkey have less than 5 years of humanitarian work experience. While relief activities had started in a spontaneous and voluntary manner, there is a clear shift towards the professionalization of Syrian civil society organizations and integration of international standards and coordination mechanisms.

In this context, introduction to the SPHERE Handbook, a widely known and recognized set of common principles and universal minimum standards for humanitarian response, is an important step. In spring 2014 the Turkey-based cross border health sector conducted a SPHERE introductory training in Reyhanli and identified a clear need and demand for further SPHERE trainings. The first MENA Sphere regional practitioners’ workshop (Amman, May 2015) identified a clear need for further capacity development of national NGOs and CBOs, training of trainers (ToT) courses, quality certification of training programmes, and consistent post-training follow-up and refresher sessions in order to help humanitarians apply their acquired knowledge.

Based on this analysis and within its capacity building mandate, OCHA Turkey initiated consultations with the Partnerships Coordination Section (PCS) of OCHA Geneva and The SPHERE Project with the aim of supporting the roll-out of customized SPHERE trainings in Arabic, targeting Syrian staff of INGOs and SNGOs through a two-pronged approach:

- Customization of the SPHERE standard to the Syrian context

- Set-up of a pool of Syrian SPHERE trainers

On July 24th and 25th 2015, a SPHERE workshop took place in Gaziantep to discuss and finalize the customization of the SPHERE training modules to the Syrian context. During the workshop, the roll-out of the customized training was discussed and it was decided to conduct 3 introductory SPHERE trainings and one SPHERE ToT by the end of 2015[[2]](#footnote-2). This training is the first out of the 3 planned introductory trainings.

1. **Objectives of the training**

Through the training, the organizers and the training team aimed to reach 3 parallel objectives:

1/ Deliver introductory SPHERE training in Arabic language and customized to the Syrian context

2/ Test the customization of the training modules (pilot training)

3/ Provide on-the-job training to selected Syrian co-facilitators and extend the pool of Syrian trainers[[3]](#footnote-3)

***Note about the selection of the co-facilitators***

*Through consultations with organizations and consultants which previously hosted and facilitated Sphere ToTs in the MENA region, six potential Syrian co-facilitators residing in Turkey were identified. Out of them, the four above-mentioned co-facilitators confirmed availability. They are all Sphere Certified Trainers and have gained humanitarian experience in Syria prior to the crisis.*

1. **Selection of participants**

Invitations to attend the training were spread through the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), the OCHA Turkey SNGO Platform and the NGO Forum.

In order to involve a maximum number of partners, each organization could nominate one participant. Priority was given to SNGOs and to female candidates. Participants had to be Syrian Program Staff or Field Staff with operational responsibilities and experience in implementing humanitarian programs (especially in Health, WASH, NFI/ Shelter and FSL).

OCHA Turkey received over 80 applications and screened them before selecting 24 participants with the validation of the training team. All participants were humanitarian workers operating cross-border from Turkey and were representing 15 SNGOs, 7 INGOs and 2 other humanitarian organizations. Out of 24 participants, 12 (50%) were female participants.

1. **Agenda of the training**



1. **Detailed content of the training by session**

**Session 1: Introduction to SPHERE standards**

The aim of this module is to provide basic information about Sphere global approach and tools. After a quick survey among participants, it appeared that more than 60% of them have no previous knowledge of the SPHERE standards while the remaining 40% had some knowledge but considered the standards theoretical and not applicable to the Syrian context.

At the end of the session, participants strongly supported messages spread about the necessity to commit to humanitarian principles and to the SPHERE core belief around the right to live with dignity.

**Session 2: The Humanitarian Charter**

The humanitarian charter session started with a main introduction into the timeframe for the most important stages and initiatives in the humanitarian response aligned with the crisis around the world to give the participants an overview of the most important events in the humanitarian history and how the humanitarian charter is a common factor for the humanitarian work over the years

The main focus of the humanitarian charter session was on the ethical and legal backdrop to the Protection Principles and the Core and minimum standards that follow in the Handbook.

The 3 core common principles, rights and duties delivered as an interactive exercise by going through effective photos with key massages where the participants discussed the key messages, how it is implemented in the Syrian context and embedded in their day to day work

By the end of the session, participants increased their understanding on correlation between the core common principles, the international law, code of conduct and the Sphere technical chapters as well as the importance of the humanitarian charter in the humanitarian aid.

**Session 3: Protection Principles**

Most of the attendance didn’t have previous background of the 4 principles

During the session, the trainer presents the protection principles as case studies related to Syria Context to understand the attendees the important of protection principles and the relation between the protection principles and the technical parts and why we are working as humanitarian aiders.

Overall the attendance now aware of the main Protection principles and how they introduce the principles within the project life cycle.

**Session 4: Core Humanitarian Standard**

Within this session, the trainer present the 6 core standards of Sphere Project and the trainer present the 9 core humanitarian standards that now replaced the 6 standards.

The 9 standards integrated with people in Aid, HAP and focusing on quality and accountability for the humanitarian organization.

**Session 5: Gender**

The aim of the presentation “Women, men, girls and boys - Different needs – equal opportunities” was to integrate a gender perspective in the different training modules of the Sphere minimum standards to make sure that women, girls, boys and men of all ages, abilities and backgrounds have access to humanitarian and protection services that cater to their distinct needs and experiences. The presentation covered the following subjects: defining gender core concepts, gender in emergencies, gender and programming, accountability to affected population and the sphere philosophy, vulnerable groups, sex and age matters, gendered needs assessments and M&E processes.

The Sphere standards related to cross-cutting issues in addition to the IASC’s Gender Marker and the ADAPT and ACT Framework for gender equality programming were presented as some of the tools used to ensure more efficient impact on beneficiaries and for measuring/tracking the inclusion of gender in programme and projects.

Key messages from the training include:

• Consult with both males and females in needs assessments and monitoring; their views and priorities will differ.

• Identify and address barriers for accessing services for all age and vulnerability groups.

• Overlooking or ignoring gender differences leads to an ineffective humanitarian response.

• Need assessments that don’t include female perspective result in gender bias data/information and does not necessary represent the area/population covered.

• Beneficiary selection criteria need to be defined and monitored throughout the project (not only for services but training and employment also).

• Encourage female participation in the project (appropriate timing, location, childcare, transportation and female/male trainers, assessment and M&E teams etc.).

• Collect, analyse and report on sex and age disaggregated data.

• Ensure both women and men participate in decision making forums such as established committees.

• Ensure assessment and monitoring teams are gender balanced to can conduct both mixed and separate group discussions with men and women and to allow needs and concerns on gender issues to be openly articulated. Women should interview women.

• Historically, attention to gender relations has been driven by the need to address women’s and girls’ needs as they are typically more disadvantaged. However, the humanitarian community recognizes the need to understand what men and boys face in crisis situations.

By the end of the training, participants increased their understanding and awareness of gender issues and their impact on humanitarian programming and on their work with clusters including the importance of performing gender analysis and better advocating for gender issues. Participants also had a better understanding of the importance of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) and can articulate how to improve SADD in the current context. Finally, participants were introduced to tools and resources on gender and know where to access them for enhanced programming and more efficient impact on beneficiaries.

**Session 6: Minimum standards in water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion**

The minimum standards for water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) include the right to life and dignity, the right to protection and security and the right to receive humanitarian assistance based on need.

The majority of the audience was composed of Syrian NGO staff that had a fair field experience and therefore the WASH session was interactive and smooth.

The session started with a brief discussion around common WASH problems inside Syria, the applicability of the WASH Sphere standard in the Syrian context and the different implementation of technical standards in urban communities and camps in terms of distance, water amount and water sources.

Other challenges discussed included:

* The lack of camps planning and allocation of sanitation sources since most of the camps in Syria are in fact informal and unorganized settlements
* The necessity to set up efficient feedback mechanisms
* The limited consultation with and participation of the beneficiaries in the design of the project. In the best-case scenario, interaction only occurs with one key resource person/ community leader
* Lack of disabled persons adjusted facilities (latrines, water sources)
* Continuous movement due to insecurity situation which results in the waste and inadequacy of resources and services

While the last session focused on recommendations and suggested actions to enable the humanitarian community working to better shape the response to the Syrian context and to implement the Sphere standard in the extend possible:

Hygiene promotion:

* Build the capacity of social workers on innovative hygiene messages tailored to the culture and the targeted communities
* Increase hygiene campaigns targeting children in schools and child centres

Water supply:

* Increase the amount of water provided in the camp area to 20-30 liters per person per day (which exceeds Sphere standards) to match community’s behaviour and needs
* Replace shared latrines (that are not appropriate even in the camp settlement) with separated or clustered latrines

**Session 7: Minimum standards in food security and nutrition**

*This module describes the Sphere methods of minimum standards of responding to any humanitarian crisis in food security and nutrition. After the discussion with the food and nutrition clusters coordinator in the Sphere standards to customize to Syria context, we found most of the NGOs not used the Sphere indicators or the standards. So, during the training, the trainer focus more to describe the integration between nutrition and food security and how most of the NGOs worked directly in food security and forget to work in nutrition as Sphere said we should work as first with the nutrition of the mothers, children then the most Vulnerable groups not directly distribute food baskets.*

*In the end of the sessions all participants received the full information of how manage the response to the humanitarian crisis using the Minimum standers in*

*1. Food security and nutrition assessment,*

*2. Infant and young child feeding*

*3. Management of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies*

*4. Food security*

**Session 8: Minimum Standards in health action**

Based on a quick analysis (informed by WHO statistics and reports) of the health needs and challenges inside Syria, this module provided information about the minimum standards in health action. The session insisted on the necessity to integrate the Humanitarian Charter, Protection Principles and Core Standards as well as cross-cutting themes into the health response. Inter linkages between health and other sectors (such as WASH) were highlighted.

Participants highlighted challenges around the implementation of Health SPHERE standards in the Syrian context such as the necessity to integrate more female health workers to ensure access of female population to health services and the deliberate targeting of health facilities by parties to the conflict.

**Session 9: Minimum standards in shelter, settlement and non-food items**

This module built on examples from the Syrian context (and more specifically challenges faced in IDP camps) to present the main technical standards and their implementation. At the end of the session, participants have become able to differentiate between the various types of collective shelters and camps, to understand camp planning standards, to enumerate NFI needs according to Syrian cultural and social norms and to establish linkages with SPHERE technical minimum standards in other sectors.

**Sessions 10 & 11: Case study**

During the last half of the third day, a case study was organized. Participants were divided into groups and they were required to respond to a given scenario, each group was responsible for drafting a response plan applying the 4 Sphere technical standards.

The purpose of the activity was

• To measure the participants’ ability to use the sphere handbook, specific standard and guidance notes

• Measure the participants’ understanding of the Sphere standard and their implementation

After a preparation time, each group presented its response plan. The plan included the practical implementation of the SPHERE standards and suggestions for adaptation and innovation when standards could not be strictly followed.

GENCAP provided technical advice during the last day of the training where the participants had to do exercises to apply the minimum standard and integrate gender equality measures using the gender tip sheets into their group work and presentations.

The participants improved their understanding of vulnerability based on analysis of sex and age disaggregated data; advocate for the equal participation of men and women throughout the programme cycle and use a gender lens to ensure that project design and reporting processes are better able to articulate the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men.

**Session 12: Application of SPHERE standards to the Syrian context and recommendations**

*Brief description of the module*

*Key findings of the session (level of knowledge of SPHERE, main concerns, key points around application of SPHERE standards to the Syrian context)*

1. **Summary of lessons learned and recommendations**

Gender: Even though the sphere handbook incorporates key gender issues in the indicators and guidance notes, gender is almost absent in the training modules provided especially in the cluster specific training modules (protection excluded). This is a major gap which needs to be addressed in future revisions of the training modules to ensure trainees are introduced to how gender is practically implemented during the whole project cycle and into cluster specific activities.

1. **Evaluation by the participants**

Out of the 24 participants, 22 completed the evaluation form. Below the summary of the evaluation per subject/ area of work.

Among other positive outcomes of the training, participants mentioned that they gained:

* The ability to use the SPHERE handbook and understanding of the SPHERE standards, humanitarian principles and protection
* An overall understanding of general trans sectorial humanitarian needs
* The ability to integrate SPHERE standards in project design and proposal
* The capacity to transition from ad hoc emergency response to strategic planning
* Enhance understanding around the importance of trans sectorial coordination and overall coordination between humanitarian stakeholders

Areas of improvement and suggestions include:

* Better time management
* Revision of the Arabic translation of the SPHERE Hand book
* Additional exercises and group activities
* Longer training to allocate more time to the technical chapters
* Preparation of an annex presenting the adaption of SPHERE to the Syrian context
* Set-up of a tool enabling better coordination between SNGOs
* Organization of a SPHERE ToT
* Wider focus on protection issues throughout the technical chapters

1. Training Needs Survey Report, UNOCHA, April 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A separate report on the customization workshop is available [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. During the 3 introductory trainings, potential candidates to a SPHERE ToT are identified among participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)