

# **Sphere support for Cyclone Nargis response**

**Report by Anne Lloyd:**

**Independent consultant / Sphere resource person; in Myanmar from 20 July – 28 September 2008**

## **1.0 Introduction**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2008 tropical cyclone Nargis hit the coast of Myanmar and devastated large parts of the low-lying Irrawaddy delta. 2.4 million People were affected and 140,000 were reported killed or remain missing (OCHA situation report, no. 49, September 2008).

The aim of the assignment was to ensure that all relevant agencies responding to the impact of the cyclone were given the opportunity to build their awareness and practice in relation to Sphere standards, alongside other tools for improving quality and accountability.

Support for the implementation of Sphere standards in Myanmar was done in conjunction with Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) staff. Church World Service (CWS Pakistan/Afghanistan) who works as part of Action by Churches Together (ACT) in Myanmar funded the Sphere and HAP interventions. The Sphere and HAP personnel were hosted by Save the Children in Myanmar (SCiM). Both Sphere and HAP staff worked in collaboration with the NGO Liaison Officer (Kerren Hedlund) and worked closely with the Local Resource Centre (LRC) who provided office space in Yangon.

This report should be read in conjunction with previous reports:

- Kelly Wooster, (Consultant / Sphere Resource person, in Myanmar 5 – 15 July 2008)
- Shabana Bhatti (Sphere Focal point in Pakistan, in Myanmar 16 – 29 July 2008)
- Monica Blagescu, (HAP Field representative, in Myanmar 7 – 25 July 2008)
- Ester Dross (HAP Complaints Handling Training Officer, in Myanmar 11 – 29 August 2008)

## **2.0 Achievements of project activities**

(As listed in the ToR which is attached in appendix 1)

### **2.1 Assessment of the priority needs for support on the use of Sphere, and the HAP standard where appropriate:**

The initial assessment of needs had been done by the previous Sphere/HAP representatives. However, continuous regular meetings were held (weekly) with the Accountability Learning Working Group (ALWG) to ensure that the needs and requests of the organisations were met as far as possible concerning the implementation of the Sphere standards. Links were made with as many

organisations and individuals as possible by attending cluster meetings and other coordination meetings to discuss support needs.

## **2.2 Advocacy and briefings on Sphere and HAP to encourage understanding and acceptance of their use:**

Three briefings on Quality and Accountability were conducted jointly by Sphere and HAP staff the week of 21 July; for 3 groups of participants (Inter-agency = 22 participants, ACT partners = 40 participants and local training/support organisations = 12 participants).

## **2.3 Representation of Sphere in coordination meetings, promoting the significance and relevance of the Sphere standards:**

Attended several meetings, giving brief presentations and raising the profile of Sphere and HAP and offering further support in terms of training, information and handbooks:

- several cluster meetings: Health, WASH, Shelter, Protection
- an INGO coordination meeting
- a Cluster leads meeting

## **2.4 Identifying and delivering support to agencies to meet Sphere standards:**

Introductory one-day Sphere training was designed to respond to the demand for a short training. A total of 346 participants received this Sphere training, of which 143 attended training in the Delta. Responding to requests for a shorter Sphere training, a half-day training was given to 107 participants. Twelve participants attended a Sphere Training of Trainers course (ToT) and sixteen attended a one-day field based Sphere training. Efforts were made to include a wide-range of participants, including local organisations and government personnel. Further details of the participants for these training are in the table and graph below; although please note, it is not very easy to categorise participants – all the faith-based organisations are local organisations. Staff from the Red Cross movement, and local training organisations such as the Capacity Building Initiative are categorised as “other”.

Although all these trainings were primarily Sphere trainings as requested, links were made with other quality and accountability initiatives, such as HAP, and when there was a HAP staff member present more information was included on HAP. Attempts were made to make links with the Education cluster to do a joint Sphere/Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), but this was not possible for various reasons, but two education staff attended the Sphere trainings and hope to do more training for the Education cluster in the future.

The participants who attended the ToT were then encouraged to do further Sphere training for their own organisations and wider audience. Several ToT participants were given further support enabling them to assist with the training held in the Delta and other trainings; coaching them with support to continue more training themselves.

Many of the trainings (particularly the earlier trainings) were conducted in English with translations; but several trainings were conducted (including some in the Delta) in Myanmar language (with support and extra explanations with translations from English) – by the Sphere ToT group.

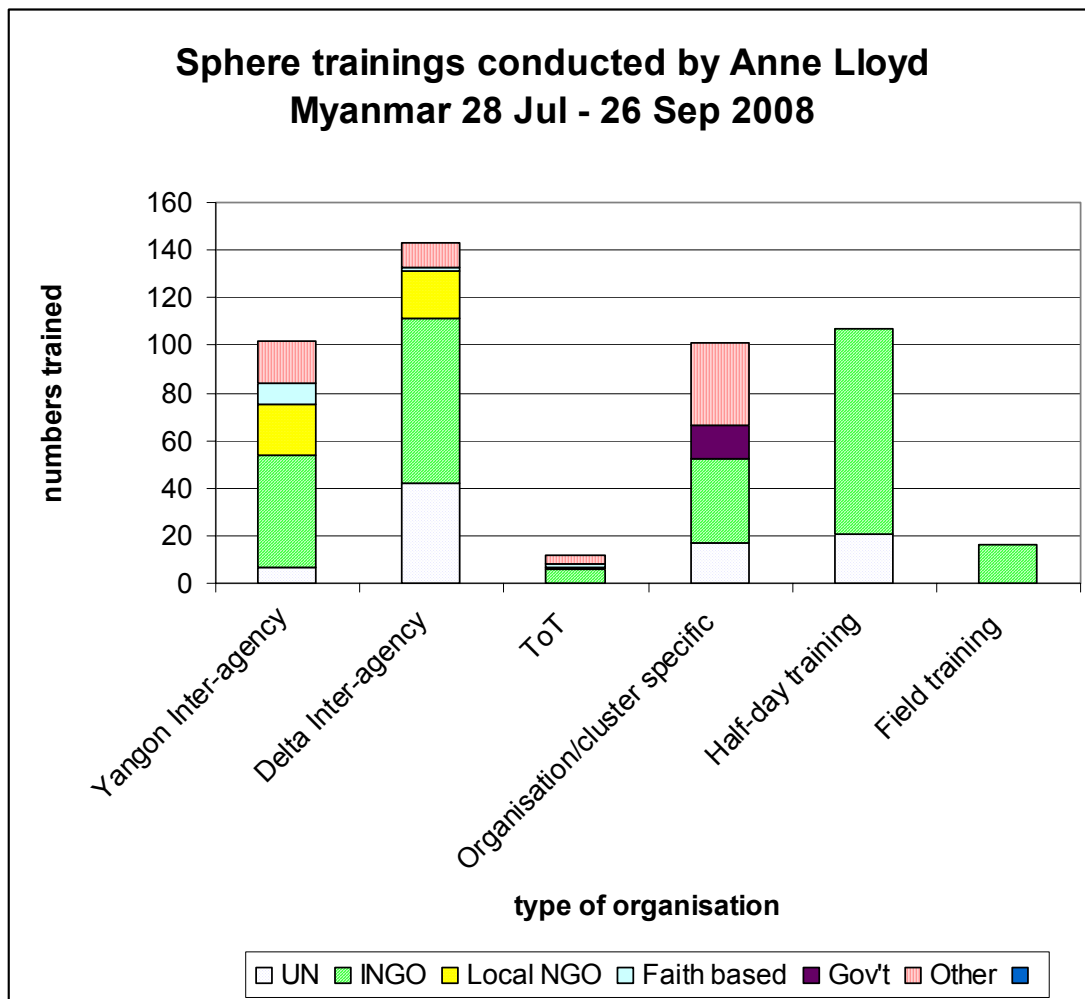
There is a clear need for more support to agencies on implementing and mainstreaming Sphere into their interventions and using Sphere to measure their performance. One field-based Sphere training was done in the Delta (for CARE staff) working through how Sphere can be used for planning, implementing and monitoring a Water/Sanitation/Hygiene Promotion programme.

All the participants who attended the one-day sphere trainings completed an evaluation on how they felt about the training, including: whether the objectives were achieved, the standard of facilitation, the relevance of the training to their work and suggestions for future trainings. Generally these evaluations gave positive feedback. There were numerous requests for more training. All the evaluation forms were compiled and added to a short report on the content of the training with the main messages and lists of participants and were sent back to all the participants (where possible).

Input was given into the ToR for the Inter-agency Real Time evaluation to ensure that accountability indicators were considered. Attempts were also made to input into the Periodic review to make links with the Sphere standards and indicators.

**Table: Sphere trainings conducted (20 July – 28 September)**

Type of training	Type of participants	Number of trainings	Location	Participants
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	Inter-agency	4	Yangon	102
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	Inter-agency (participants organised by OCHA)	6	Towns in the Delta (Bogale, Pyapon and Labutta)	143
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	Food & nutrition cluster	1	Yangon	6
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	OCHA	1	Yangon	17
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	World Vision programme staff	1	Yangon	29
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS)	1	Yangon	19
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	Local Myanmar media	1	Yangon	9
Level 1 (one-day introduction to Sphere)	MRCS and representatives of Myanmar Government (Department of Social Welfare)	1	Yangon	21
Half-day introduction to Sphere	UNICEF Health & Nutrition staff	1	Yangon	21
Half-day Introduction to Sphere	Save the Children WASH staff	1	Yangon	75
Half-day Introduction to Sphere	Save the Children Monitoring & evaluation staff	1	Yangon	11
Sphere training of trainers: 5 days	Inter-agency	1	Yangon	12 (all had done the Level 1 training)
On-the-job training using Sphere	CARE staff	1	Kungyangone Township	16
<b>Total</b>				<b>481</b>



#### Distribution of Sphere handbooks:

997 Sphere handbooks received (from CWS in Pakistan)  
992 have been distributed:

NGO (local)	281
INGO	354
UN	246
Others (Red Cross, Local resource Centre etc)	90
Government	26
Remaining (slightly damaged copies)	5

There are 500 more Sphere handbooks on order.

## **2.5 Develop ways of monitoring the use and impact of Sphere:**

At the end of each of the Sphere trainings, the participants wrote their action points that they would complete in the next month following the one-day introductory Sphere training; they kept the cards as a reminder. Attempts were made to contact those who had done the one-day training (mainly those who had emails) to see whether they had achieved their action points and whether they were using Sphere in their work; there were only a few replies and this needs more follow-up.

## **2.6 Regular contact with the Sphere office including learning for further implementation of Sphere standards in this context with advice on how to continue the support beyond one-month, and the best way to manage such work in future ‘new emergencies’**

Brief weekly updates were written on achievements and action points for the following week to assist with monitoring and sharing information on the progress.

A concept note was developed in collaboration with all the relevant partners (Sphere Project, HAP, SCiM, LRC, NGO Liaison officer) for future inter-agency support on quality and accountability, which has now been funded by DFID and a job description is agreed upon and advertised.

## **3.0 Lessons learnt:**

The joint approach of the Sphere Project and HAP working together partly worked in that it had a good start, but was hindered by that lack of continuity of HAP staff and the lack of a clear supported strategy. It would also help that both the Sphere and HAP staff had a clearer understanding on how the integrated approach can be done; possibly with a joint ToR.

A lot of training was conducted, but the impact could have been greater if it was targeted better. Although attempts were made to gather groups together by language and level of experience this was not always successful. The managers need different emphasis on their training (more on how to ensure their agencies were accountable) than the implementers (more on the practical field work). The ToT was a success in that it was a small group which enabled time for learning, but the selection could have been better to get a wider group who are able to continue the training. The selection was not easy to get participants who had done the Introductory one-day training and who were available for 5 days training – it takes time to get the correct group and there was not a lot of time.

The Accountability Learning Working Group worked well to make links with agencies interested in support on implementing Sphere; but the idea of a Core Support Group did not work so well, possibly as it did not get enough input and support due to the lack of time. As the Sphere and HAP trainings were done separately it was important to encourage participants from the Core Support Group to attend both the trainings.

Time could have been saved by employing a part-time administrator. It was time consuming doing all the administration, organising the participants, sorting out the venue, refreshments, organising handouts, photocopying, writing up participants lists, reporting, feeding back to participants, keeping contact lists up to date – as well as doing the actual training!

Sphere training was given to a wide variety of people, including government staff; but there were some missed opportunities; such as inputting into other training courses.

Time was put into getting material such as the handouts and the Sphere handbook translated, but it was very slow and it would have been better to put more effort into getting a translator at an early stage. There were numerous versions of the Red Cross, Red Crescent NGO code of Conduct translated (one with only 8 principles and mis-titled The Sphere Code of Conduct!). All handouts/translations needed to be quality controlled and checked, which takes time.

The Red Cross, Red Crescent NGO Code of Conduct should be included in all trainings; it was not included in the beginning; but then the need was seen, so it was included in all the Sphere trainings.

The Sphere website needs to be made more user-friendly for slow internet connections – internet access can be difficult from Myanmar.

Documentation could have been improved; e.g. Sphere and HAP staff documenting meetings with other agencies to share the information.

The linkages and ways of working between the NGO Liaison Officer and the Sphere/HAP staff could have been clearer; it was unfortunate the NGO Liaison Officer was away for a month at the beginning of this assignment; even though there were clear handover notes – there were some gaps such as in the future planning.

#### **4.0 Follow-up needed**

- More support for those who have done the Sphere ToT – some are trainers, but have limited emergency field experience, others have experience working with NGOs but limited training experience
- Another Sphere ToT to widen the group able to support with Sphere training in Myanmar
- Agencies and individuals need more support to mainstream and use Sphere into their work
- Work with members of the Core Support team and ALWG, supporting focal points within agencies to support the implementation of Sphere
- More training needed in the Delta (staff in Pyapon and Labutta are requesting more Sphere training)
- Link Sphere training with the Education cluster (INEE) if needed.
- Target certain groups such as the government, local organisations for further training as needed
- Assisting managers to measure their performance against Sphere and other standards

- Follow-up with those who have done the Sphere training to see how they are implementing the training and what further support they need.
- Identify and support a Sphere focal point for Myanmar.
- Support ACT with Sphere training for their partners in Myanmar.
- Facilitate/Support the translation of the Sphere handbook, in collaboration with the MRCS and the Federation.
- Assist with establishing relevant indicators on the use of Sphere (and HAP) to provide a way of measuring progress
- Prepare for the implementation of the DFID funded inter-agency quality and Accountability initiative.
- Input into an evaluation of the NGO Liaison role (if there is one) concerning quality and accountability; linking lessons learnt to the future stage of the programme.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This assignment achieved a lot in terms of awareness raising about the Sphere Project; but more support and follow-up is needed to help with the practical implementation and use of Sphere.

Although the Sphere handbooks were in English, they were much appreciated; as demonstrated by a Government staff member (fireman) who rushed back to the training room an hour after he left the training to look for his Sphere handbook which he had forgotten!

The theory of HAP and Sphere working together needs to be explored further, to see if and how they can integrate further.

## **6.0 Thanks**

Many thanks go to all those who made this assignment possible and so enjoyable. CWS for the funding, SCiM for hosting me, Sphere staff in Geneva for their support, LRC for their office space, training room and smiles, HAP staff for their collaboration, Kerren (NGO Liaison) for constant support and lastly, very importantly thanks to Kyaw the driver not only for his driving but for all his logistical support!

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## Appendix 1

# Terms of Reference Sphere support in collaboration with HAP International Cyclone Nargis Response, Myanmar

27 June 2008

### Background to the emergency context

On 2 May 2008 tropical cyclone Nargis hit the coast of Myanmar and devastated large parts of the low-lying Irrawaddy delta. Winds exceeding 190 kilometres per hour ripped through the Myanmar's biggest city Yangon for more than ten hours. Homes were flattened, more sturdy structures damaged, trees uprooted and power lines downed. In rural parts of the country up to 95 per cent of homes were wiped off the face of the earth.

This is a situation that the country has not dealt with before and the scale of the needs is clearly massive. Casualty figures continue to rise. It is estimated that more than two million people have lost their homes or been severely affected<sup>1</sup>.

### Sphere

The Sphere handbook – *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* – includes a Humanitarian Charter which describes the principles on which Sphere<sup>2</sup> is based, and minimum standards, indicators and guidance notes for use in humanitarian emergencies. There are minimum standards common to all sectors, as well as for the core areas of disaster response:

- Water, sanitation & hygiene promotion
- Food security, nutrition & food aid
- Shelter, settlement and non-food items
- Health services

The purpose of the standards is to improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response. The revised, 2004 edition of the handbook is the product of 18 months' work and the involvement of over 4,000 people in 400 organisations in 80 countries.

### Aim of the consultancy

For the Sphere handbook to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian response, it needs to be used effectively in emergency situations. Support to people to do this has been identified as an important need. The consultancy will aim to ensure that all relevant agencies are given the opportunity to build their awareness and practice in relation to Sphere standards, alongside other tools for improving quality and accountability (see below, 'Collaboration with HAP Support personnel') so that their work is representative of recognized "best practice" in

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<sup>1</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,  
<http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/response/myanmar-nargis/index.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Sphere, as used generally in these terms of reference, is three things: a **handbook**, a broad process of collaboration and an expression of commitment to quality and accountability. It does not refer to either the Sphere Project or the Sphere Board.

humanitarian work. It will also be a learning experience informing possible future deployments of Sphere resource personnel.

### **Collaboration with Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) support personnel**

There is a clear demand from NGO staff for integrated and coherent support to improve quality and accountability in the context of the Myanmar Cyclone Nargis Response. A deployment of Sphere and HAP support personnel that goes beyond conducting inter-agency trainings side by side is proposed. This will explore new modalities to provide joint support in future interventions, to maximise the expertise and resources of the two initiatives.

While HAP and Sphere support personnel will be jointly identifying and responding to the individual and collective needs of agencies working in Myanmar, this will not exclude the possibility of HAP or Sphere support personnel separately providing support (within a unified framework), should there be demand for this. The Sphere Handbook and HAP Standard will be presented as complementary tools that can be used separately or together.

### **Objectives**

Working with HAP support personnel:

1. To work in close collaboration with national and international agencies responding to the humanitarian crisis, to decide as quickly as possible the most appropriate ways (such as training, coaching, field level advice) to support needs for awareness raising and training on the effective use of Sphere, with the HAP Standard as appropriate.
2. To deliver that support, with the aim of improving the quality and accountability of the response.
3. To work in close collaboration with others (such as the NGO Liaison Officer, UN Clusters, INGOs, local NGOs and any other 'quality and accountability' initiatives such as INEE) who are working on complementary approaches, with a view to mutual learning and sharing of resources as appropriate.
4. To identify during the one month of this consultancy the most appropriate ways to establish longer term support, and the funding and personnel that would be required to achieve this.
5. To use this experience to advise on lessons learned, and how to improve the provision of similar support in future emergencies.

### **Activities include:**

1. Assessment, in close collaboration with as wide a range of people as possible, of the priority needs for support – both immediate and longer term – on the use of the Sphere *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, and the HAP Standard where appropriate.
2. Advocacy and briefings on Sphere and HAP to a wide range of actors – including government, local and international NGOs, UN agencies especially the Clusters, the NGO Liaison Officer, media – in the response to the humanitarian crisis, to encourage understanding and acceptance of their use.
3. Representation of Sphere in coordination meetings, with a view to promoting the significance and relevance of the Sphere standards, and the benefits to affected people of the standards being met in programmes that are implemented.
4. Identifying and delivering practical ways of supporting relevant agencies to meet Sphere standards (again, as appropriate in collaboration with those supporting the use of other relevant tools, particularly the HAP Standard and the INEE Minimum Standards), such as:
  - training interventions, designed in length and content to meet locally-felt needs

- advising, training and coaching individuals who have been identified as focal points or resource persons on Sphere/quality and accountability. This would include supporting them in mainstreaming adherence to Sphere and other relevant standards as appropriate into the design, development and delivery of their agencies' response, and helping them to identify and overcome obstacles to meeting the standards
  - assisting managers to measure their performance against Sphere and, as appropriate, other relevant standards
5. In close collaboration with all concerned, development of ways to monitor and assess the use, and if possible the impact, of the effective use of Sphere (see also below 'Possible indicators for measurement of results')
  6. Regular contact with the Sphere Project office: crystallising the learning from the work to implement Sphere standards in this context, providing information and advice on how to continue the support beyond the one month of the consultancy, and the best way to manage such work in future 'new emergencies'.
  7. Provision of a report at the end of the consultancy to the contracting agency, Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan, outlining achievements and comments against the objectives and proposed activities. This report will be shared with the Sphere Project office and the Sphere Board

### **Line management**

Save the Children Fund in Myanmar

### **Key qualifications and experience**

1. Substantial experience of emergency work including the use of Sphere in humanitarian response, and an understanding of relevant issues, including other 'quality and accountability' initiatives.
2. Training experience, especially including training on Sphere
3. Commitment to working in a collaborative way, involving particularly affected communities and local organisations.
4. Excellent interpersonal skills enabling effective influencing and successful representation on issues relevant to Sphere and how it complements other quality and accountability initiatives; diplomacy, tact and negotiation skills.
5. Excellent communicator who leads in building relationships with key external/internal contacts; ability to communicate technical information to a wide audience.
6. Demonstrable ability to identify and implement opportunities for innovation
7. Competent to work with significant levels of autonomy, showing creativity and initiative
8. Strong conceptual, analytical and critical thinking
9. Sensitivity to cultural differences, and the ability to work in a wide variety of cultural contexts
10. Good written and spoken English
11. Commitment to humanitarian principles and action

### **Possible indicators for measurement of results**

1. Participating agencies agree on a selection of relevant indicators of effective use of Sphere and HAP in this particular context, to provide a way of measuring progress.
2. There are focal point people and/or dedicated Sphere/HAP/quality and accountability resource people within each participating agency, who take responsibility for enabling the effective use of Sphere and HAP within their agency.
3. Focal points in each participating agency are able to explain how this initiative is relevant to their organisational mandate, priorities and key activities.

4. Self-monitoring by all participating agencies against the indicators agreed.
5. Selected agency representatives have a clear understanding how to communicate with the Sphere Project office for relevant support and information and experience sharing.
6. The degree to which agencies adopt common approaches to assessment, design, and implementation of activities that adhere to Sphere and other quality and accountability guidance.

#### **Time**

Initial 4 weeks' consultancy, with possibility of extension.

*Sphere support personnel represent and act on behalf of the hosting organization providing their line management. They have broad accountability to the wider Sphere community, including the interagency effort that has established and promotes the use of the Sphere handbook. However, Sphere support personnel are not agents of the Sphere Project or the Sphere Board, neither of which shall have any responsibility for or to Sphere support personnel.*