

# The Sphere Project Training Policy

January 2007

## 1. Aims and Objectives

Sphere training and learning activities around the world aim to support the effective use of Sphere in practice: improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian response.

In terms of training the Sphere office role is:

- to be a resource centre for training (tools, documents, information)
- to act as a facilitator as well as an implementer of training
- to be a focal point for advice in order to aim for an appropriate level of quality

The training policy set out in section 3 intends to be consistent with the Sphere office's role as described. It aims to support, clarify and facilitate the work and initiatives on Sphere learning/training around the world, in order to identify and increase learning/training opportunities while ensuring a high level of quality.

## 2. Background

This training policy addresses two main areas:

### I) Sphere Training of Trainers Courses (ToTs), organized by the office or by others

Sphere ToTs aim to prepare individuals to promote learning on applying the Sphere handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, as a tool for improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action, through sharing experience and practising. They aim to be a sustainable way of ensuring that learning on the Sphere handbook takes place around the world in many organizations, as participants aim to replicate learning after the course (through presentations, basic workshops, peer to peer learning, integrating Sphere in current training programs, etc.)

### II) Recognition of Sphere training and trainers

The Sphere Project office is constantly faced with the questions around how a person can be certified as:

- a) A Sphere trainer
- b) being "Sphere trained", or
- c) a Sphere Training of Trainers trainer/facilitator

The procedure is seen as a diploma or guarantee given by the Sphere Project that certifies a person as a Sphere Trainer, a workshop participant as having attained a certain level of knowledge about Sphere, or an experienced trainer as being capable of conducting or co-facilitating Sphere Training of Trainers courses. However, neither ToT courses nor regular Sphere workshops focus on evaluating or grading participants. This has been a deliberate practice from the beginning of the Sphere Training programme, in order to establish and maintain a safe learning environment during Sphere training/learning events. Without an evaluation or grading system, the value of any certification would reasonably be questioned.

On this basis, the Sphere Project Office issues Certificates of Attendance and prompts others to do the same. A consultancy to study the possibilities, advantages and disadvantages of a certification process for Sphere Training is currently being carried out. Its findings will inform a decision by the Sphere Board in relation to certification of Sphere training. The Sphere community will be informed through the Sphere website whenever any such decision is taken. In the meantime, policy on the recognition of Sphere training and trainers is as set out in section 3.

There is currently a relatively small group of 'recognized' Sphere ToT trainers/facilitators listed on the Sphere website. In order to expand the current list, and to recommend a wider spectrum of suitable ToT trainers, the criteria and characteristics of a Sphere ToT trainer described in section 3. II) B) will be used to identify experienced facilitators who could be included on the list of Sphere ToT trainers.

### **3. Policy statement**

#### **I) Sphere Training of Trainers (ToT) courses**

- Sphere Training of Trainers (ToT) courses may be organized by the Sphere office or by other organizations.
- ToT courses organized by other organizations which meet the criteria set by the Sphere Project (described below) will be recognized as 'Sphere Training of Trainers' courses.
- No difference will be made in recognizing participants of ToTs organized by the Sphere office, and those organized by others which meet the Sphere office criteria. All ToT participants should receive a certificate of attendance, and their names and personal trainer's profile will be included in the online database of Sphere trainers.

#### **Criteria for recognition of Sphere ToT courses and participants not organized by the Sphere office:**

To try to ensure quality and consistency, a course is considered to be a Sphere ToT when it is organized by the Sphere Project or by an organization that respects the following criteria:

- a) The main characteristics of a Sphere ToT as organized by the Sphere office are maintained (see "Lessons from the Sphere ToT Courses"), as well as at least 70% of the content of the proposed agenda (some flexibility should be observed by the Sphere office, especially when changes are proposed in response to a learning needs assessment).
- b) The organizers contact the Sphere Project office at least three months in advance of the ToT to share their plans, agenda, name and background of facilitators, criteria for selecting participants and follow up plans. They may wish to seek advice from the Sphere office on these points.
- c) The organizers are open to incorporate changes and suggestions from the office especially in terms of agenda, aims and objectives, criteria to select participants and the content of the course.
- d) The organizers and trainers understand the "nature" of a Sphere ToT as defined in the "Lessons from the Sphere ToT Courses", and are –or become – very familiar with the content of this document as well as the Sphere handbook and training materials
- e) The organizers and trainers become familiar with and incorporate recommendations from past Sphere ToTs (read the last 5 ToT reports, available on the Sphere website)
- f) After the course, organizers provide the Sphere office a report and a table with the names and contact information of all participants, which will be made available on the Sphere website. They will also provide the Sphere office with information about their future plans on Sphere training/learning, for the Sphere office to follow up.
- g) Organizers provide a summary of participants' evaluations of the course and the trainers. They are willing to provide copies of the evaluations themselves, if requested by the Sphere office.

For organizers of Sphere ToTs that agree to meet the above criteria, the Sphere Project office will advertise the course on its website and will incorporate the information about the ToT participants in the online database. There will be one single ToT participant database regardless of who organized the course.

Other Sphere courses or training events that do not meet the above characteristics should not be called Sphere Training of Trainers courses. The Sphere office will aim to help organisers name workshops and learning events according to the content and agenda of the course, as well as help to find suitable trainers.

## II. Recognition of Sphere Training and Trainers

### A) Sphere Trainers

Instead of issuing certificates (apart from certificates of attendance, as described in 2. II), the Sphere office will focus on the *recognition* of "Sphere ToT participants" who provide training/learning about Sphere. This will be done through the Sphere online database, by building the profile of each ToT participant as information is received, or submitted by the individual, on his/her activities. It is important to include not only information provided by the trainer him/herself, but also to crosscheck with references (organizers and participants)

All ToT participants will have a personal trainer profile on the Sphere online database. Participants that facilitate and include in their profile at least one Sphere training/learning activity within 6 months of finishing their ToT will be considered as Sphere Trainers in the database. In order to remain a Sphere Trainer in the database, at least one new training/learning activity should be added to the personal trainer profile every six months. Please note that training/learning activities could include areas such as coaching and other support to learning about and better using Sphere within an organization or for individuals; not just formal training workshops.

People who regularly facilitate Sphere learning/training activities but who have not attended a Sphere ToT can be recognized as Sphere trainers and be listed as such on the Sphere database, as long as references taken from both organizers and participants of Sphere activities already facilitated are considered satisfactory. The same criterion of adding at least one training/learning activity to their profile every six months applies. Particular attention will be given by the Sphere office to the follow up of this group of trainers, and encouragement given to them to attend a Sphere ToT to complement their training skills.

### B) Sphere ToT Trainers/Facilitators

A Sphere ToT trainer/facilitator should:

- Be a very experienced trainer: 5-10 years' experience of training in a wide variety of settings and subjects (wide experience of adult learning methods, training and facilitation skills)
- Have an excellent understanding of the contents of the Sphere handbook and Training Package
- Have good experience of running full Sphere workshops (3-4 day workshops) and other types of learning events (field school, coaching, peer to peer learning, etc)
- Have co-facilitated, preferably alongside an already recognized 'Sphere ToT trainer', at least one Sphere ToT with positive results (based on feedback from other co-facilitators and participants).

Potential Sphere ToT trainers who otherwise meet the above criteria should contact the Sphere office to explore opportunities to co-facilitate a ToT course.

*Policy paper endorsed by the Sphere Board, January 2007*

### **Additional note on attendance at Sphere training workshops**

The Sphere office does not have the capacity to evaluate the knowledge of the hundreds of people that participate in a Sphere induction or training. However, information about the type of training that such people have received - combined with the length and contents of the course - can be captured in the Sphere online database. This information should come from two main sources:

- 1) Sphere Trainers that send their reports (which include the agenda and participant list)
- 2) Organizations that incorporate Sphere in their training/workshops (Training Institutions, Sphere Board member organizations - through their different ways of introducing Sphere to staff, i.e. induction, specialized training, interagency training - other NGOs, UN agencies, etc)

The focus of the Sphere office is to understand the Sphere training/learning activities given by different organizations, and learn more about the kind of people who are participants. This should help the Sphere team to identify and respond better to training needs on Sphere.

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