

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION NO 45
REVISING THE FOOD CHAPTER OF THE SPHERE HANDBOOK
FROM 19 OCTOBER TO 16 NOVEMBER 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	GENERAL INFORMATION	1
II.	INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC.....	2
III.	LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS	3
	Contribution by George Kent from the University of Hawaii, USA	3
	Contribution by Judith Appleton from UK	4
	Contribution by M K Dasgupta.....	4
	Contribution by Nugroho Abikusno.....	5
	Contribution by DSK Rao.....	5
	Contribution by Nira Ramachandran	5
	Contribution by DSK Rao.....	6

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration:	from 19.10.09 to
Number of participants:	6
Number of Contributions:	7

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Dear FSN Forum colleagues,

For this final round of consultation via the FSN Forum we would like to have your feedback on specific questions related to the **nutrition component** and on **common topics** shared by the food security, nutrition and food aid components for the Sphere Handbook revision.

This discussion will reinforce the feedback from the initial FSN discussion on food security conducted in July-August and recent consultation meetings conducted in various countries (including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, India, Malawi, and Zambia).

The main nutrition components are comprised of six minimum standards within Chapter 3. We would like to invite FSN members to give feedback to the following questions in relation to these minimum standards.

1. **What are the indicators/guidance notes that need to be adjusted?** Please be specific, suggest actual changes and provide evidence based background knowledge or references to your suggestion
2. **What are the new standards which should be added, if any?** Please be specific, suggest ideas for the standards and accompanying indicators and guidance notes and provide evidence based background knowledge or references to your suggestion
3. **What information is missing that needs to be considered and reflected in the indicators/guidance notes or annexes?**

Moreover, please find below some further crosscutting questions:

1. **How to improve the analytical capacity?** Considering the minimum standards 1 and 2 of Food Security and Nutrition Assessment and Analysis (pages 111-117) and appendices 2 (pages 174-176) and 4 (pages 180-182) in chapter 3, what adjustments need to be made to improve a common assessment, understanding and a better analysis of needs?
2. **How to better link analysis to action / integrated responses?** Referring to the appendix 3 (Food Security responses pages 177-179) what would you suggest to develop this appendix in order to reinforce integrated responses (Food Security, Nutrition and Food Assistance) in emergencies? Do you think a similar appendix is needed for nutrition and food aid interventions?
3. **Should Sphere (and specifically chapter 3) integrate emergency preparedness?** Considering the scope of Sphere (disaster response) how would you suggest the integration of preparedness measures, what tools would be referenced, be specific and suggest indicators/guidance notes
4. **How to integrate cash-based responses in Sphere?** Since the last revision there has been evidence that cash-based responses should play a growing role in humanitarian response to crisis. How should this be addressed in the new Sphere Handbook?

The full text can be found

In English:

http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,17/Itemid,26/lang,english/

In French:

http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,44/Itemid,26/lang,english/

In Spanish:

http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,46/Itemid,26/lang,english/

Your input will help finalising the first draft of the handbook (expected early 2010).

We thank you in advance for your contributions to this upcoming handbook revision and look forward to hearing from you!

Best regards

Susan Thurstans (Save the Children UK), Paul Turnbull (WFP), Walter Middleton (World Vision), Devrig Velly (ACF)

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by George Kent from the University of Hawaii, USA

Dear Members

Here are some thoughts on the food chapter of the Sphere Handbook, based on the premise that sometimes fresh eyes can provide a useful perspective.

(1) I am responding here solely to the food chapter, and not to the larger Sphere Handbook of which it is a part. I appreciate that some of my questions might have been answered elsewhere in the Handbook.

(2) It might be useful to write this and other chapters so that they could also serve as stand-alone documents. Specialists would find that useful, since they are not likely to read the entire Handbook. Maybe some boiler-plate introductory material could be repeated in several of the chapters.

(3) To illustrate, even if it is covered elsewhere, it would be useful to have a restatement here: these minimum standards are for what agencies operating under what conditions? In other words, this document is for whose guidance?

(4) What resources and management structure are assumed to exist?

(5) Are the standards intended to apply in high-income as well as low-income settings?

(6) P. 107 refers to those affected by calamity and conflict. Elsewhere the text refers to disasters, crises, and emergencies. Is there a detailed definition somewhere (perhaps in the Humanitarian Charter) that defines the scope of concern here? Perhaps that definition could be repeated here?

(7) One could edit out words such as disaster and emergency and still have a very meaningful text. As a specialist in the human right to adequate food, I have always wondered why standards and other policies should be different in sudden-onset situations than in chronic situations. Perhaps the chapter could address that question?

(8) It would be useful to have a fuller discussion of how the Minimum Standards relate to the human right to adequate food. In my view, rights-based social systems involve three major roles: rights holders and their rights; duty bearers and their obligations; and accountability mechanisms to ensure that duty bearers carry out their obligations, including in particular the recourse mechanisms available to the rights holders themselves. Apparently the approach here is about

the responsibilities of those who provide assistance. It has little to say about the rights of those who receive the assistance, or about accountability mechanisms.

(9) Clear distinctions should be made between the services that are called for in the chaos immediately following a sudden-onset disturbance and the services that are appropriate when the situation stabilizes. In that first phase, things like anthropometric surveys and worries about micronutrient deficiencies would not be appropriate. This and perhaps other chapters could make systematic distinctions regarding what should be done (a) in anticipation of possible future disruptive events; (b) during and immediately following disruptive events; (c) after disruptive events, when situations have stabilized.

(10) P. 141 says there where a mother has died, breast-milk substitutes should be used. The option of wet-nursing by another woman should be mentioned.

(11) P. 156 speaks about the risk of food aid being commandeered by combatants in an armed conflict. There is also the risk of food aid being commandeered by political leaders and diverted according to their political interests.

I hope these scattered observations are useful.

Aloha, George Kent

Contribution by Judith Appleton from UK

Not sure where this fits - food or food security, already said or not, but here goes.

Is Sphere addressing the need to consider developmental relief, or the relief-development contiguuum (yes, with a G not an N)? Humanitarians should, particularly in complex emergencies, since they are by nature protracted, and some form of institution-building and/or capacity-building related to food security now and later, can only be a good thing. The implications are that at least in this area staff with development experience need to be on board as well as the humanitarian specialists: they can tackle the analysis of local livelihoods institutions together, with knowledgeable locals, make some suggestions, get others interested in formulating proposals, and together win round the donors and/or government to get moving on more than food aid and seeds and tools distributions.

Judith Appleton MBE

Food and Nutrition Specialist

Contribution by M K Dasgupta

Dear All

Well, it's Judith's (*Appleton, previous contribution to this discussion*) good idea to get both institution-building and capacity-building in one go.

Also, coverage has to be a significant segment of population; else, they go back to where they were once the population is withdrawn.

M K Dasgupta

Santiniketan

West Bengal, India

Contribution by Nugroho Abikusno

Dear All,

When addressing the food and nutrition needs of the internally displaced families we tend to lump them into the overall needs of the family. In this situation, we forget that within these displaced 'extended' families there are older people who have specific needs both physically, mentally and spiritually.

Nugroho Abikusno

TIP-Nutrition, WHO/SEARO

New Delhi, India

Contribution by DSK Rao

Dear Friends at Sphere and members,

I have few generic observations which I am listing in this email and hopefully address few specific observations in my next email, if I can squeeze enough time.

1. The Handbook is for Disaster Response and accordingly there may be a uniformity in the usage of this word as words like Calamity, Armed Conflict are being used (Page 16) which may be reworded as ' Disaster arising due to Calamity or Armed Conflict' for consistency and uniformity
2. Any Disaster normally has Disaster Injured People. These people require special attention including medication, Diet and attention. They should figure in the Cross Cutting issues(Page 10)
3. Nutrition is a long term issue and may not be applicable immediately after Disaster
4. As the Hand Book is for Disaster Response, any Disaster Preparedness may have limited scope of Disaster Response Preparedness vis-a-vis Disaster Preparedness which has a broader scope like building Earth Quake Resistant Buildings or Early Warning Systems, which may be beyond the scope of this Hand Book. Any reference to Preparedness may therefore be limited to Disaster Response Preparedness
5. Food Aid should be planned keeping strictly in view the habits of the affected populations. As an example if Wheat is provided to say populations which are Rice consumers, it will not be helpful.

DSK Rao

Gyantech Information Systems (P) Limited

Hyderabad, India

Contribution by Nira Ramachandran

Dear all,

The issue of cash based responses in disaster response is a vital one and must be suitably emphasized, not just relegated to the Guidance notes. In my personal opinion, it is preferable to focus on micro-credit to help revive pre-disaster livelihoods and set in motion a revolving fund to expand income opportunities for the community in future, without the stigma of handouts.

As such, under Food Security Standard 1, following the point which reads:

- "When a response supports the development of new or alternative livelihood strategies, all groups have access to appropriate support including necessary knowledge, skills and services (see guidance note 5)",

-

a new point could be introduced as follows:

- "When financial support is required to revive pre-disaster livelihoods, micro-credit schemes are made available with help provided to set up self-help groups and initiate activities."

-

Another issue which needs emphasis is that of women's access to aid during crisis. In many parts of the world, Afghanistan and Pakistan to name a few, many women could not access the food or other relief supplies provided during recent disasters, or had to depend on male relatives for help, which was often misappropriated. This issue was raised during the discussions in New Delhi, India, but seems to have slipped through the text. A brief reference is made to women amongst other vulnerable groups in Guidance note 7: Coverage, access and accessibility.

However, a stronger emphasis and more clarity on the issue is needed. For example, an additional sentence on the lines of the one below may be introduced.

- Participation is partly determined by ease of access and the acceptability of activities to participants [existing]. "In the case of women, the sex of the facilitator may well prove a constraint to access. It is, therefore, essential to ensure adequate female representation among relief workers in societies where communication among the sexes is forbidden or frowned upon."

-

Nira Ramachandran

Independent Consultant
New Delhi, India

Contribution by DSK Rao

Dear members,

Further to my earlier email, I have the following for Cash based responses.

- It is observed that Cash based responses have a great impact on providing immediate relief immediately after a Disaster
- It is also observed that monitoring Cash aid is very difficult and possibility for misappropriation of funds is high

To make this scheme effective, I suggest Cash Transfers through the good old Post office and Post Man. The Post Office normally has a good knowledge of the residents and a robust system of Money Orders. The Post man knows the people of the area and would be a good bet in ensuring that cash reaches the correct person and also ensuring that it is not collected by any person impersonating the beneficiary.

DSK Rao

Gyantech Information Systems (P) Limited

Hyderabad