

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

**Weekly Meeting  
Summary Notes**

9 November 2005  
Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room F 3

**I Sphere Project / Sphere Standards**

*By Ms. Alison Joyner, Project Manager, The Sphere Project*

Ms. Joyner briefed on The Sphere Project and the Sphere Minimum Standards as well as linkages between Sphere and the broader humanitarian reform initiatives

Ms Joyner introduced the latest, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, edition of the Sphere Handbook. Its creation and revision was endorsed by the IASC in 2000 and the edition was completed in 2004. The handbook is a compilation of existing standards in disaster response and includes minimum standards for areas such as water and sanitation, food security, shelter and health services. This edition furthermore addresses a number of cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS and gender.

The Handbook has been widely used by NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, but although most humanitarian UN agencies participated in its creation and revision it has only to a limited extent been used and institutionalized within the UN.

Ms Joyner underlined that the humanitarian reform process is seen as an opportunity for Sphere to demonstrate the value of Sphere to all humanitarian actors, and particularly UN agencies. Sphere focal points will engage in relevant Clusters and furthermore Sphere is represented in the DfID led global benchmarking exercise. Sphere is seeking to engage more with UN agencies through the IASC and will give a presentation at the coming IASC Working Group on 21-22 November. Ms Joyner also proposed that ICVA could host a meeting between UN agency focal points and Sphere.

In the discussion following the briefing the importance of incorporating the work and the standards developed by the Sphere Project in the current humanitarian reform initiatives was reiterated.

## **II Zimbabwe - Humanitarian Situation and Challenges**

*By Ms. Zuhal Ayoub, Surge Capacity and Contingency Planning Section, OCHA*

Having recently returned from a mission to Zimbabwe Ms. Ayoub briefed on the general humanitarian situation and challenges in the country.

Humanitarian conditions are worsening at a rapid rate in most sectors. Ms Ayoub underlined a number of socio-economic factors indicating the gravity of the situation such as: 360% inflation; difficulties in importing food and fuel (because of sanctions); lack of seeds and tools for the planting season and; high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (about 25%). Regarding HIV/AIDS, the healthcare system is extremely inadequate with only about USD 4 allocated per person affected by HIV/AIDS – this is compared to about USD 400 in Eritrea. Furthermore, much of the informal economy, which provided the livelihood for many people, was destroyed by the governments “clean-up” operation earlier this year.

The “clean-up” campaign during summer is believed to have displaced about 700,000 people, most of whom have been living without access to basic services since then. There is a serious need for especially shelter material with the rainy season closing in. However, the international aid community and the Zimbabwe government have not been able to reach an agreement on assistance. The government seems to be in complete denial as to the existence of a humanitarian crisis.

The country suffers from a major food deficit, with millions of people in need of food aid. The situation is caused by a combination of draught and rapid land reforms and made even worse by import sanctions. The food balance deficit will rise next year because of the lack of agricultural input this year. WFP is committed to assistance but food aid is very controversial. In general, opportunities for response have become highly politicized and international actors risk being expelled from the country if they confront President Mugabe’s regime too clearly.

The discussion following the briefing focused on the government’s refusal to cooperate with the international community and the difficulties of acting in the politicized environment in Zimbabwe. Several participants stressed the need for more international and regional pressure on Mugabes regime, including from UN agencies in Zimbabwe.

### III Participants

Name:	Organisation	Email
Jesse Bernstein	NRC / Global IDP Project	<a href="mailto:Jesse.Bernstein@nrc.ch">Jesse.Bernstein@nrc.ch</a>
Christophe Bean	NRC / Global IDP Project	<a href="mailto:Christophe.bean@nrc.ch">Christophe.bean@nrc.ch</a>
Sebastian Gillios	Human Rights Watch	<a href="mailto:gillios@hrw.org">gillios@hrw.org</a>
Michael Meier	OCHA / CRD	<a href="mailto:meierm@un.org">meierm@un.org</a>
Jennifer Dietrich	OCHA / CRD	<a href="mailto:dietrichj@un.org">dietrichj@un.org</a>
Nina Sreenivasan	UNFPA	<a href="mailto:Nina.sreenivasan@undp.org">Nina.sreenivasan@undp.org</a>
Nili Safavi	OHCHR	<a href="mailto:nsafavi@ohchr.org">nsafavi@ohchr.org</a>
Karen Gulick	RSG on HR for IPDs	<a href="mailto:kgulick@ohchr.org">kgulick@ohchr.org</a>
Jacob Korreborg	IASC Secretariat	<a href="mailto:korreborg@un.org">korreborg@un.org</a>
Ivane Bochorishvili	IASC Secretariat	<a href="mailto:bochorishvili@un.org">bochorishvili@un.org</a>
Zuhan Ayoub	OCHA	<a href="mailto:ayoubz@un.org">ayoubz@un.org</a>
Marilena Viviani	IASC Secretariat	<a href="mailto:viviani@un.org">viviani@un.org</a>
L. Simao	WHO	<a href="mailto:simaol@who.int">simaol@who.int</a>
Nadir F. Nawas	UNRWA	<a href="mailto:gunrwa@unog.ch">gunrwa@unog.ch</a>
Kashka Huyton	OCHA	<a href="mailto:huyton@un.org">huyton@un.org</a>
Paul Paredes	FAO	<a href="mailto:Pparedes-portella@unog.ch">Pparedes-portella@unog.ch</a>
Mirko Forni	UN-Habitat	<a href="mailto:Forni.unhabitat@unog.ch">Forni.unhabitat@unog.ch</a>
Karen Oliveira	OCHA / ReliefWeb	<a href="mailto:oliveiradacosta@un.org">oliveiradacosta@un.org</a>
Mutoy Mubiala	OHCHR	<a href="mailto:mmubiala@ohchr.org">mmubiala@ohchr.org</a>
Natacha Tolstoi	OCHA	<a href="mailto:tolstoi@un.org">tolstoi@un.org</a>
Mijke Hertoghs	UNEP	<a href="mailto:Mijke.hertoghs@unep.org">Mijke.hertoghs@unep.org</a>
Yael Blic	UNICEF	<a href="mailto:yblic@unicef.org">yblic@unicef.org</a>
Hani Eskander	Sphere Project	<a href="mailto:Hani.eskander@ifrc.org">Hani.eskander@ifrc.org</a>
Mercedes Insroini	Sphere Project	<a href="mailto:Mercedes.Insroini@ifrc.org">Mercedes.Insroini@ifrc.org</a>
Alison Joyner	Sphere Project	<a href="mailto:alison.joyner@ifrc.org">alison.joyner@ifrc.org</a>

