The Sphere Project: Evaluation Report

Presented by:

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"[M]ore attention to needs and capacities assessments, contingency planning, preparedness measures, and adoption of the most cost–effective interventions by UN agencies, NGOs and donor governments, including military contingents providing humanitarian assistance, would have resulted in better allocation of relief resources and, more importantly, could have saved even more human lives. One problem regarding such concepts as contingency planning and preparedness measures is lack of consistent working definitions among agencies."

(Eriksson J et al, Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, 1996:49)

Evaluation Team Members

Ronald Waldman

Marci Van Dyke

Fred Wabwire-Mangen

Gakenia Wamuyu Maina

Lynn Atuyambe

Karen Marcovici

Yvette Gonzalez

Sara Jacoby

Other Bodies

- Sphere Project Management

- Sphere Management Committee

- Evaluation Advisory Committee

Methods

- Literature review
- In-depth interviews
- Questionnaire
- Case study – Tanzania
- Case study – Angola

Literature Review

- 279 entries
  - 110 "Critical"
  - 169 "Related"

- Published and 'gray'

In-depth Interviews

- 84 interviews

- Held in Washington DC, New York City, Paris, Geneva, London, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola, and Brussels and phone

- Targeted: INGO and LNGO representatives, Donors, Sphere Management Committee members, Sphere pilot agencies, UN agencies, Government representatives, Sphere founders, academics

Questionnaire

581   Returned

422   (72.6%)   completed on-line
66   (11.4%)   administered in person
59   (10.2%)   as an e-mail attachment
35   (6.0%)   by post

Questionnaire

Received from more than 90 countries and almost 200 humanitarian agencies

516 (88.8%)	English-language responses
47 (8.1%)	Spanish
18 (3.1%)	French

Country Currently Working in

Afghanistan (13)
Africa (1)
America Latina y Caribe (1)
Angola (6)
Antigua and Barbuda (1)
Armenia (5)
Asia (1)
Australia (9)
Azerbaijan (1)
Balkans (3)
Bangladesh (6)
Benin (2)
Bolivia (5)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (5)
Bulgaria (1)
Burundi (4)
Cambodia (1)
Cameroon (1)
Canada (4)
Central Asia (1)
China (1)
Colombia (11)
Costa Rica (2)
Croatia (2)
Dominican Republic (1)
DR Congo (10)
East Timor (1)
Ecuador (1)
Egypt (1)
El Salvador (4)
Eritrea (3)
Fiji Islands (1)
France (5)

Georgia (1)
Germany (2)
Ghana (1)
Global (21)
Guatemala (1)
Guinea Bissau (1)
Haiti (2)
Honduras (2)
India (13)
Indonesia (10)
Iran (1)
Iraq (5)
Ireland (1)
Israel (1)
Italy (4)
Jordan (3)
Kazakhstan (1)
Kenya (13)
Kosovo (7)
Kuwait (1)
Laos (1)
Lebanon (3)
Lesotho (1)
Liberia (10)
Macedonia (3)
Madagascar (2)
Malawi (1)
Mali (1)
Mauritania (3)
Mexico (2)
Mongolia (1)
Mozambique (3)
Nepal (5)

Netherlands (3)
Nicaragua (5)
NIS (1)
North Korea (1)
Norway (1)
Pakistan (2)
Palestine (5)
Peru (10)
Philippines (3)
Republic of Georgia (2)
Russia (6)
Rwanda (5)
Senegal
Serbia and Montenegro (3)
Sierra Leone (3)
South Africa (2)
Southern Africa (2)
Spain (6)
Sri Lanka (7)
Sudan (3)
Sweden (1)
Switzerland (16)
Tanzania (37)
Thailand (13)
Toda America Latina (1)
Tonga (1)
Turkey (1)
Uganda (34)
UK (17)
USA (41)
Uzbekistan (1)
Vietnam (5)
Zimbabwe (2)

see handout

Questionnaire

Agency Currently Working for

AAH (2)
ACAD (1)
Academia (1)
ACF (3)
ACHAU (1)
ACJ (1)
ACORD (2)
ACSUR Las Segovias (1)
ACT (3)
ActionAid (3)
ADB (1)
ADEO (1)
ADRA (3)
ADRA- National Angola (1)
Africa & Middle East Refugee Assistance (1)
Africa Humanitarian Action (4)
ACDI- (1)
Agency for the Young - Adults Health and Dev't (1)
Air Serv International (1)
AAH (1)
American Red Cross (1)
Anglican Board of Mission - Australia Ltd (1)
ARC (7)
ARTREACH (1)
Asian Medical Doctors Association (1)
Aust Council for Overseas Aid (1)
Australian Volunteers International (1)
AMDD (1)
AYUDA EN ACCION (1)
BUSPH (1)
BBC (1)
CAFOD (2)
CAMBA (1)
CARE (15)
CARE Australia (1)
Cáritas del Perú, (1)
Caritas Europa (1)
CDC (2)
CEDPA (1)
Center for Int'l Disaster Info. at Heartlands (1)
CEDPA (1)
CHF International (1)
China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (1)
Christian Aid (4)
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (1)
Church of Sweden (1)
Church World Service (1)
Columbia University (3)
COMISION CRISTIANA DE DESARROLLO (1)
CISP (1)
Concern (1)
Consejo Latinoamerciano de Iglesias (1)
Consortium of World Education and World Learning (1)
CORD (2)
Cordaid (5)
Counterpart International (1)
Croix Rouge Française (2)
CRS (16)
DanChurch Aid (3)
Danish Refugee Council (1)
Defensa Civil (1)
Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (2)
DIA (1)
Dirección General deprotección civil del estado de Mexico (1)

Directorate of Refugees (1)
Disaster Mitigation Institute (4)
Doctors of the World, USA (2)
ECHO (2)
Ecumenical NGO (1)
Eglise (1)
FAO (5)
Feinstein International Famine Center (1)
FEMA (1)
FICR (1)
Finn Church Aid (1)
FONGA (1)
Food Aid Management (1)
Freelance (1)
FUNDESUMA (1)
Grantee, US/OFDA, (1)
Gvt of Norway (1)
Handicap International (2)
Health and Nutrition Organisation (1)
Health Delivery Service Organisation (1)
HealthNet International (1)
ICRC (2)
IFRC (20)
IMC (2)
Independent (3)
ICHAP (1)
Instituto Nacional de Defensa Civil del Perú (2)
Intermon Oxfam (1)
International Executive Service Corps (2)
IOCC (1)
INTERSOS (2)
IOM (1)
IRC (
Italian
ITDG (
Jesuit R... gee Service (JRS) (1)
Johanniter International (1)
John Snow (1)
KOINONIA (1)
LWF (26)
LWF/DWS (4)
MÉDICOS DEL MUNDO ESPAÑA, (1)
Mercy Corps (15)
Met Office, UK (1)
Middle East Council of Churches (1)
Ministry of Health and MOGLSD (1)
Ministry of Home Affairs (3)
MSF (1)
MSF Suiza (1)
NCC - Philippines (1)
NCM International (1)
Nepal Red Cross Society (1)
SNV (1)
Norwegian Church Aid (1)
Norwegian Refugee Council (1)
NPA (3)
OCHA (2)
OMS (1)
ONG Malagasy : SAF / FJKM (1)
Opportunity International Australia (1)
ODI (2)
Oxfam (26)
Oxfam GB (27)
Oxfam Netherlands (1)
Oxfam- Solidarity (Belgium), (1)

PAAC (1)
Palestine Red Crescent Society (1)
Pathfinder Charitable Trust India (1)
People in Need Foundation (1)
PSF (1)
Procaribe (1)
Programa Mundial de Alimentos (1)
Red Cross (4)
Red Cross Armenia (1)
Red Cross Bolivia (2)
Red Cross Canada (1)
Red Cross Colombia (1)
Red Cross Ecuador (1)
Red Cross Netherlands (1)
Red Cross Peru (1)
Red Cross Spain (2)
Red Cross Tanzania (1)
Red Cross Uganda (1)
Red Cross Uruguay (1)
RedR (2)
REDSO (1)
Save the Children (10)
Save the Children Norway (2)
Save the Children Sweden (1)
Save the Children UK (6)
SC... (1)
...en Chretien d'Haiti (1)
...har... ...r development (1)
...da (1)
South Africa Extension Unit (1)
SEESAC (1)
State Department of Health (1)
TCRS (2)
The Sphere Project (1)
Tufts University (1)
TWESA (1)
UMATI (1)
UMCOR (3)
UNDP (6)
UNESCO (1)
UNFPA (1)
UNHCR (12)
UNICEF (1)
US Association for UNHCR (1)
Universidad en Capacitacions Academica (1)
Universidad, (1)
UNOCHA (1)
URD (1)
USAID/OFDA (10)
Vietnam Vets of America Foundation (2)
Visión Mundial Bolivia (1)
WFP (7)
WHO (3)
WCRWC (2)
World Concern (1)
WCRP (1)
WCC (1)
World Emergency Relief (1)
World Relief (1)
World Vision (21)
World Vision Australia (1)
World Vision Canada (1)
Yme, (1)

see handout

Sex

Male	366	(63.0%)
Female	208	(35.8%)
Missing	7	(1.2%)

Age
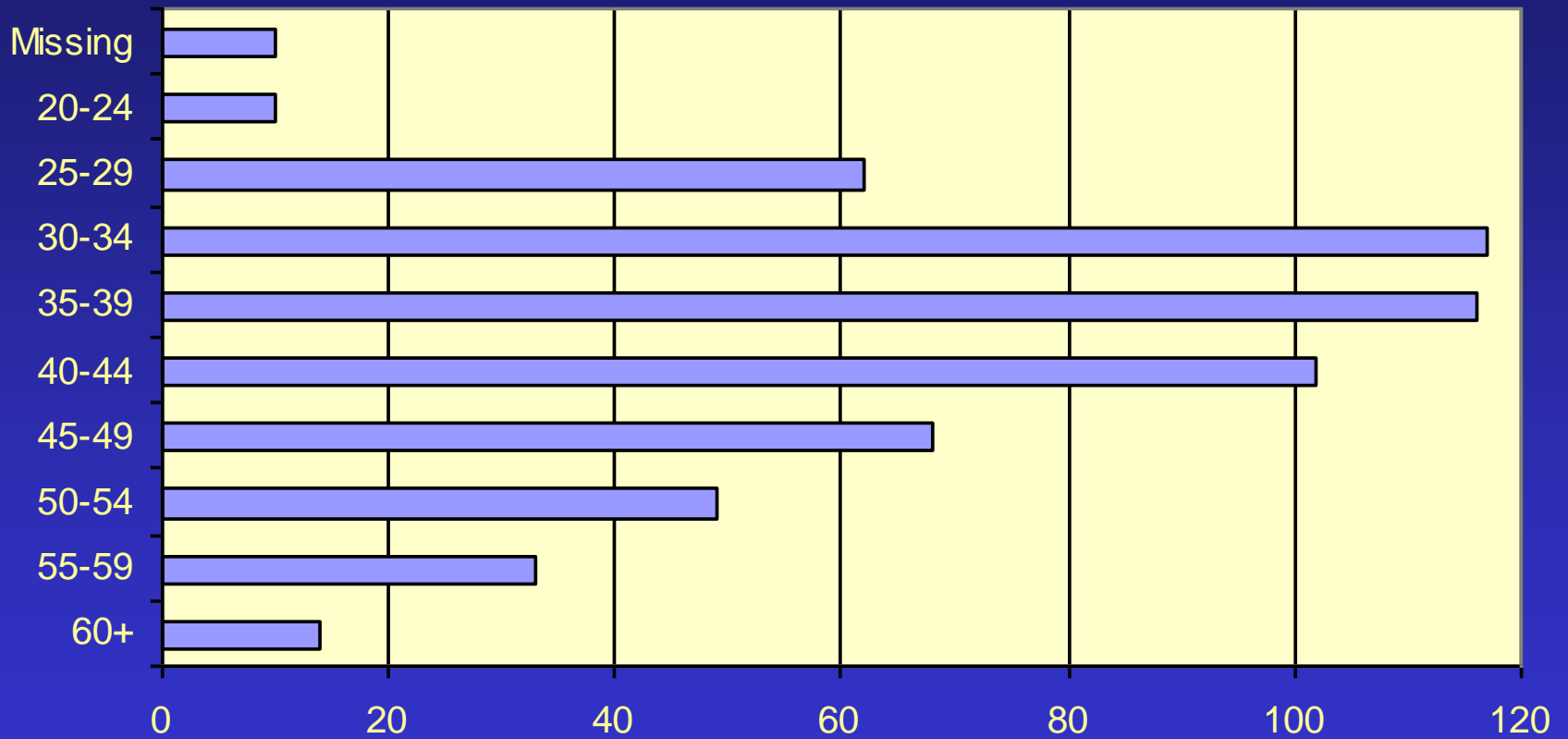
Staff

- International   289   (49.7%)

- Local   185   (31.8%)

- Difficult to classify 107   (18.5%)

- "Are you a native of the country you are working in?" If country receives humanitarian aid, classification was as "local".

Years worked in humanitarian assistance
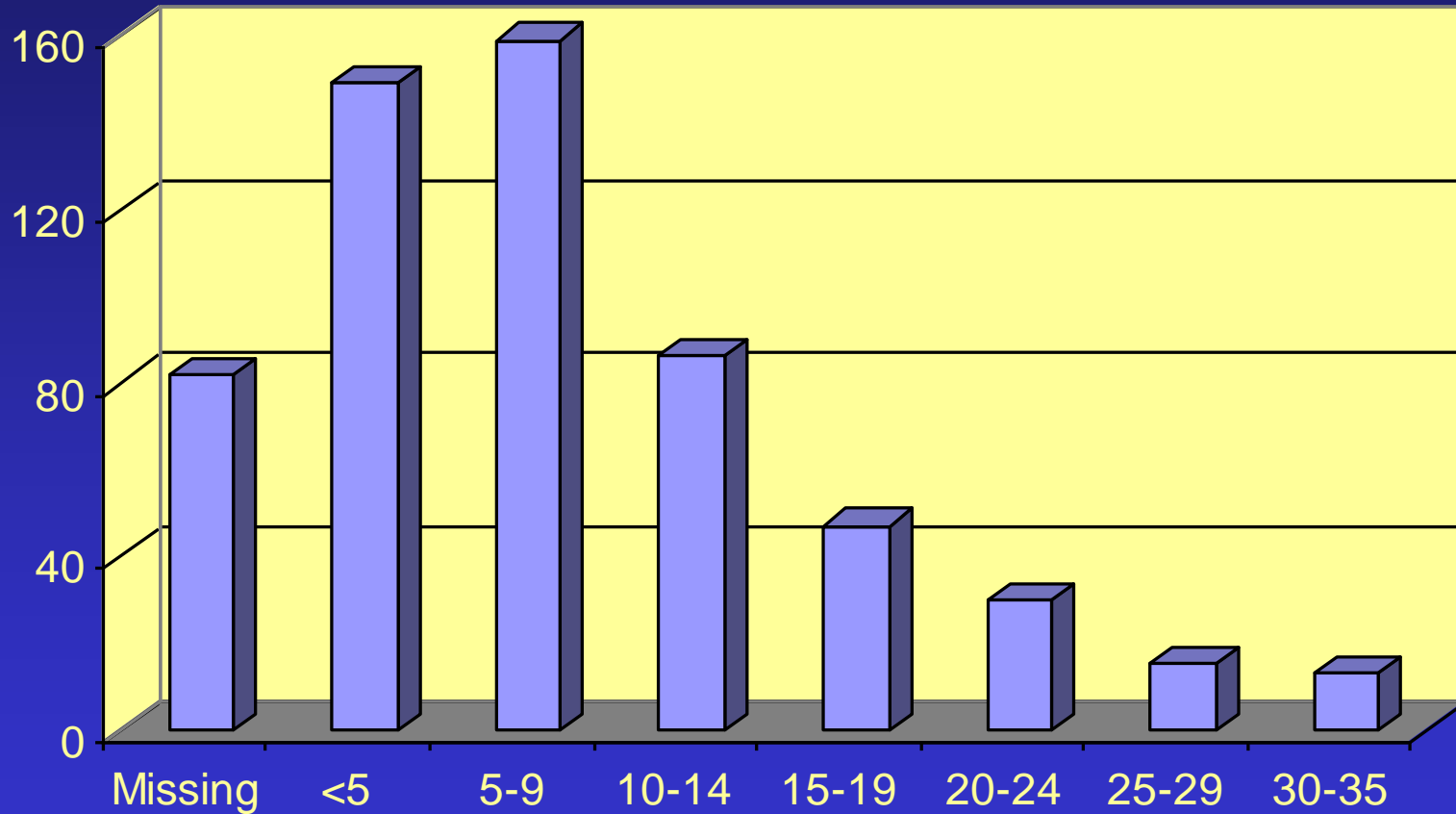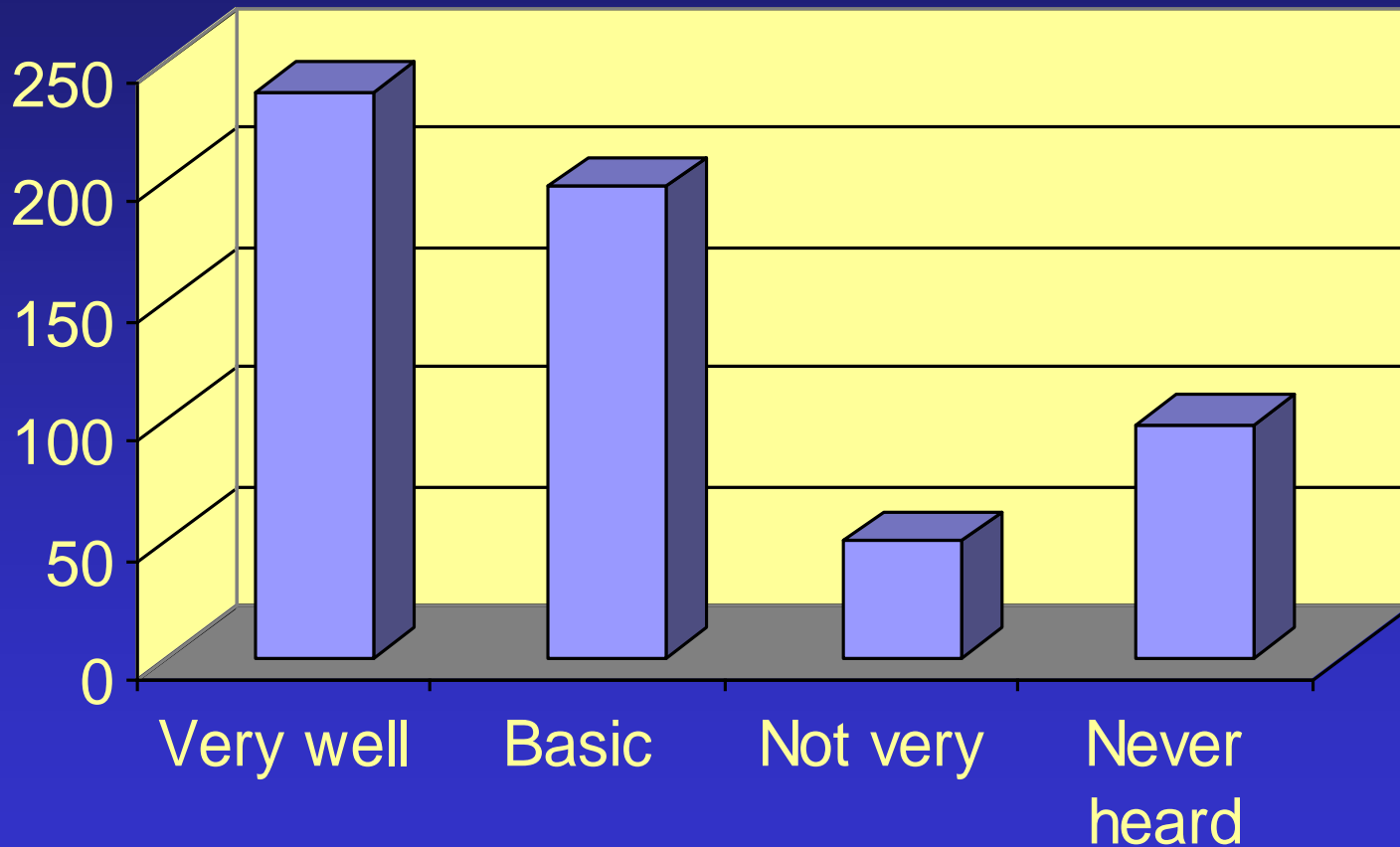
Respondents' Place of Work

- Headquarters   133   (30.7%)

- Regional Office   58   (13.4%)

- Country head office   149   (34.3%)

- Field/project site   122   (28.1%)

How well do you understand the Sphere Project?

Questionnaire

Case Study -- Tanzania

Focus Group Discussions

   – 15 in total (6 Congolese, 9 Burundian)

   – In each location 3 FGDs held simultaneously
- Women
- Men
- Camp Leaders

Case Study -- Tanzania

Key Informant Interviews

- Interviews held with
  - INGOs
  - LNGOs
  - Donors
  - Refugee camp officials
  - Government agencies
- Followed interview guidelines
- Notes taken at the time of the interview
- Notes reviewed and typed each day

Case study -- Angola

- Methodology

  - Key informant interviews
    Interviews held with
    - INGOs
    - LNGOs
    - Donors
    - Refugee camp officials
    - Government agencies

    Due to Visa issues Dr. Maina and Mr. Atuyambe were unable to assist with this case study. As a result, the focus group discussions were abandoned for this second case study

"*Has Sphere changed the quality of humanitarian assistance? Yes, it has contributed to an overall improvement. In a qualitative way. And the things that have improved are: the discourse, the thought, and the process of the delivery of services. And Sphere has been part of the landscape in which that improvement has taken place.*"

Limitations of the Evaluation

- Providers, not recipients
- Representativeness
- Quality of data
- Attribution
- Bias

Conclusion 1

The Sphere Project has been one of the most important and most successful initiatives in the field of humanitarian assistance. There is a widespread perception among donors, NGOs, and other members of the humanitarian community that the quality of the discourse surrounding humanitarian assistance and the quality of humanitarian assistance programs has improved in recent years and that this improvement is due, in part, to the Sphere Project.

Sphere Project Handbook Sales
(Oxfam Publication)

English	21,201
French	3,141
Spanish	2,250
Russian	1,262
Portuguese	1,406
TOTAL	**29,260**

As of July 2003

"...the Sphere Project initiative is representative of one of the big policy shifts in the international humanitarian system in the last decade."

Buchanan Smith. ODI's Bridging Research & Policy Project: Humanitarian

Case Study: The Policy Initiative to Launch the Sphere Project.

Has Sphere changed the way you design programs?

Yes

No

Do not kow

Missing

Conclusion 2

Not all parts of the Sphere Project have been equally successful: While most of the designers of the Sphere Project and others closest to it feel that the Humanitarian Charter is its most important component, most of those involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, from donor agencies to local staff, are more interested in to the technical parts of the Handbook. Consideration should be given to re-asserting the centrality of the Charter to the Project.

In your words, describe the Sphere Project and its purpose

403 responses

57/403   (14.1%)

mention "rights", "droits", "derechos"

"The understanding of rights in Sphere is embryonic. We're in Year One of rights development in humanitarianism."

Conclusion 3

The Sphere Project is considered to be more useful in refugee camp settings and in tropical areas. The standards, and especially the key indicators, are not felt by many to be universally applicable. Guidance as to how to achieve the standards, rather than the indicators themselves, may be more important to field workers.

Conclusion 4

There is widespread confusion regarding the terminology used in the Sphere Handbook. The terms "standards" and "indicators" are very frequently interchanged and misused.

Conclusion 5

The Sphere Project key indicators are difficult to attain in many settings for a number of reasons, among which a lack of adequate funding is among the most important. The relationship between NGOs and donors in regard to their use of the Sphere Project needs to be further defined.

Conclusion 6

The standards and key indicators are sometimes seen as setting the bar too high, especially when local populations live in conditions that do not meet Sphere Project standards.
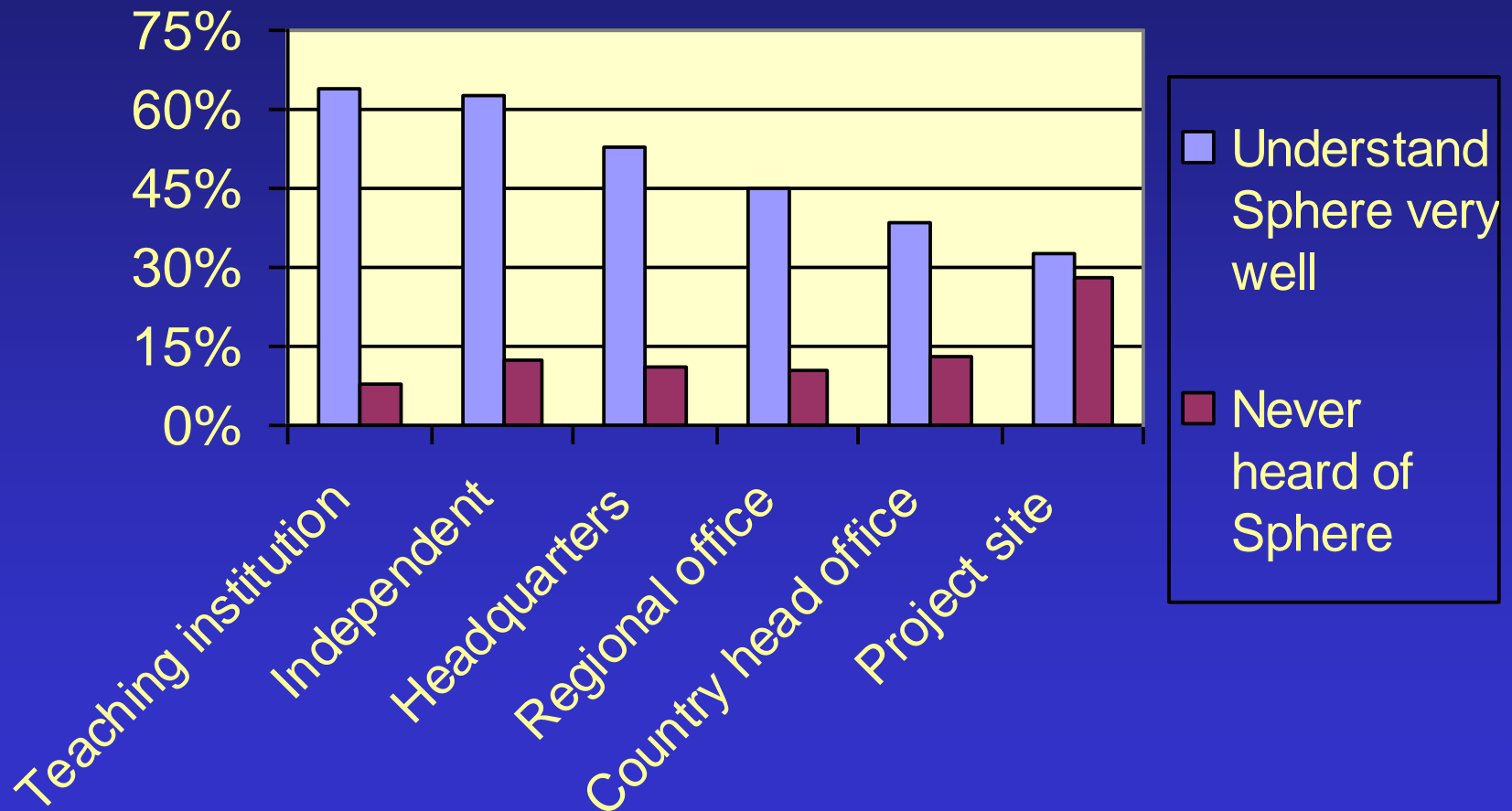
Conclusion 7

The trainings offered by the Sphere Project are quite successful in imparting the spirit, the philosophy, and the key messages of the Sphere Project. But they do not reach enough of the people engaged in providing humanitarian assistance. Other means should be found to orient both new and experienced personnel.

Conclusion 8

The concepts that underlie the Sphere Project are not well-known throughout the humanitarian community. Field workers, especially local staff, have far less knowledge regarding the Sphere Project than headquarters staff and international field staff. In other words, implementation of the Sphere Project tends, at least in some places, to be characterized by a "top-down" approach.

Knowledge of Sphere by current working base

Questionnaire

Conclusion 9

The Sphere Project is selective in regard to the topics that it presents.

Conclusion 10

We feel that some attention should be called to an issue that we do not feel is in the hands of the Sphere Project to address. The standards and indicators are being used not only as "minimum standards for disaster response", as they are clearly intended, but also as standards for at least the early stages of the transition from relief to development, for which they are less clearly drawn.