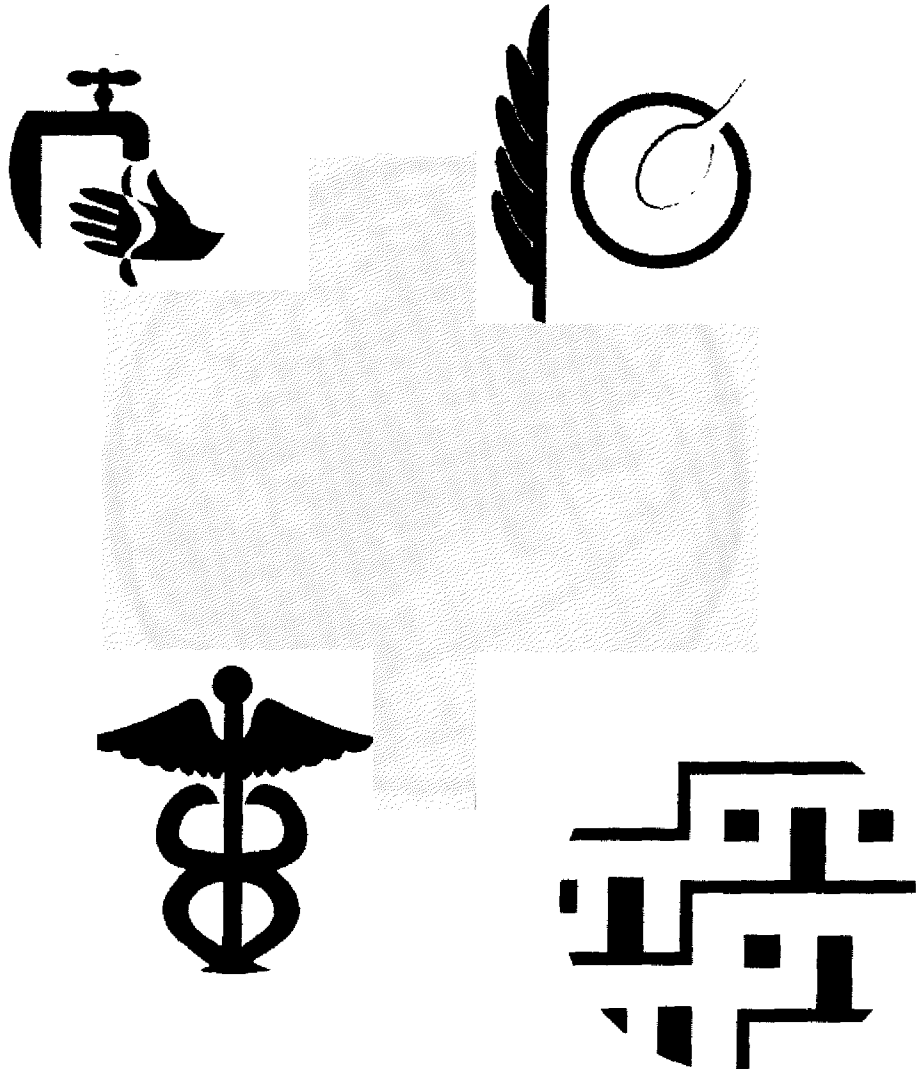


LEARNING FROM THE SPHERE PROJECT: SPHERE RESOURCE CENTRE

The Sphere Project was launched in 1997, as an international inter-agency collaboration to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and enhance the accountability of humanitarian agencies through the use of minimum standards for disaster response. DMI was invited to be one of the 14 global pilot agencies.

The Sphere in India Campaign was launched by DMI in 1998, inspired by the discussion on the need for "downward accountability." The campaign has promoted community participation and disaster preparedness in the context of camp and non-camp situations. The campaign has covered both the government and voluntary sectors: INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, disaster affected and multi-hazard prone vulnerable communities, media and camp organisers.





In relation to Sphere Standards the following activities were undertaken by DMI since 1997:

- Capacity Building Exercises: In-house team trainings, three Local Capacity Building Cycles and three National Courses.
- Awareness Generation through multiple tools. Sphere Preparedness Pocketbooks, Media Kit, Sphere Professionals Directory, Experience Learning Series and other publications.
- Local input to the Global Sphere Handbook Revision process: Two National Consultations on a) Site and Shelter Planning, and b) Food and Nutrition Chapters. One Community and National Consultation on Water and Sanitation Chapter. Follow up inputs on Chapter drafts. Participation in Global Food and Nutrition Revision Meeting. Consolidation of Revision Process in India through ongoing expert group exercise
- Training resources for various agencies and government authorities.
- Organised and participated in national and international Inter Agency Meetings for promoting and drawing lessons from Sphere
- Exclusive website for Sphere in India: www.sphereinindia.net
- Sphere Campaign Team Review and Campaign Evaluation to consolidate Sphere related work and plan future direction in institutionalising Sphere in India.
- Support the Sphere India Country Piloting Programme (2003-2004)

Applications of Sphere Standards at community level is important to DMI.

Future activities of the Sphere Resource Centre will further stress, pursue and develop the community centred approach to promoting and applying Sphere.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SPHERE RESOURCE CENTRE

Its dual objectives are to Institutionalise Sphere within DMI and promote Sphere amongst the wider humanitarian community through a campaign. Encouraging active partnership and participation from various stakeholders, the campaign concentrated on a range of activities with the aim of spreading awareness and action in order to institutionalise, operationalise, and contextualise Sphere in India:

- **Institutionalisation:** to have both government and non-government organisations adopt sphere standards
- **Operationalisation:** to have these organisations actually implement these standards in their day-to-day activities
- **Contextualisation:** to modify the Sphere standards so that they are appropriate for India while maintaining their basic intent

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPHERE PROJECT

As in all its activities, DMI has taken a community based approach to Sphere standards and worked at the local, South-Asian, and international level. According to Sean Lowrie, Sphere Training Manager, "DMI has been a pioneering agency in the Sphere Institutionalizing process DMI's work has been a remarkable feat of leadership by a local NGO, ahead of many large and well-financed international NGOs."



DMI piloted Sphere in India, by holding three national consultations for Sphere Project team members in India

Sphere Standards (a Western concept) to make them appropriate for an Indian context. Since not all officials can take a national course DMI developed a separate website so people can obtain relevant information on Sphere standards. The website gets about 7000 hits a month.

DMI was successful in making the Sphere project effective at the community level, in part because material was published in Gujarati. It has also been effective at the national level in the training of senior officials. One person with a drought relief agency was able to compare Indian standards with international standards. In addition, DMI successfully modified the