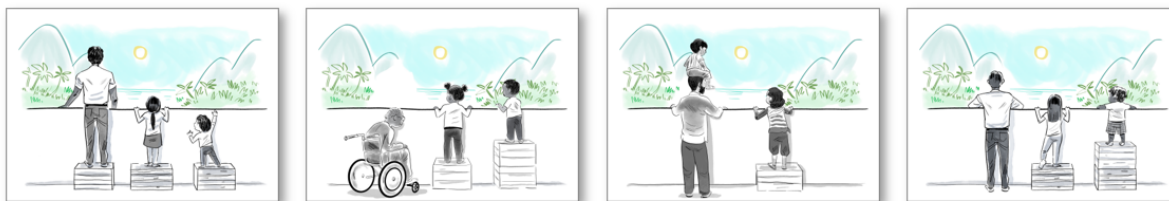


Standards vs. Targets Learning Activity Guide for Trainers



Background

It is important that users of humanitarian standards, notably those provided by the [Humanitarian Standards Partnership](#) (HSP), can recognize the difference between **standards**: qualitative statements of human rights which apply in every context, and **targets**: quantitative values associated with some indicators which may signal a problem if they are not met, and which must be considered in context.

Probably the best-known **target** in the Sphere Handbook is “Minimum of 15 litres per person per day” (from the [Access and water quantity](#) standard on page 105).

Water supply standard 2.1:

Access and water quantity

People have equitable and affordable access to a sufficient quantity of safe water to meet their drinking and domestic needs.

Key indicators

Indicator

Average volume of water used for drinking and domestic hygiene per household

- Minimum of 15 litres per person per day

Target

The text in bold is an **indicator**. The bullet point is a **target** associated with that indicator. The bold and bulleted text together are referred to as a **target indicator** (see [Working with the key indicators](#) on page 7 of the Sphere Handbook).

Pursuing targets rather than standards is to assume that everyone is born with equal *needs*, rather than equal *rights*, which is a potentially harmful error.

About this learning resource

This learning resource is designed to help learners make the distinction between **standards** and **targets**. It uses a set of 12 images which were inspired by an original illustration by Craig Froehle ([The Evolution of an Accidental Meme | by Craig](#)).

The best way for people to learn this important distinction is to work it out for themselves, which they will do by analysing some or all of these 12 images. This activity can be easily adapted for online or in-person training workshops or courses.

The cartoons are based on an imaginary standard: *People can safely view the beautiful landscape*. Unlike standards in the Sphere Handbook, this is not based on human rights. It is chosen because it is easy to understand, and because it is easy to depict a wide range of contexts.



The target indicator, *Number of crates: 1 per person*, is not necessarily a *good* indicator. It is chosen because it is easy to depict, and because in a “normal” setting, 1 crate per person should allow everyone to see the landscape (provided that the crates are distributed based on individual needs, as shown).

The activity debrief (see [below](#)) should include a discussion around context (including that there is no such thing as a “normal” context); and could include discussions about how suitable this indicator is and/or what other indicators would be appropriate for this standard.

The activity guide below is a suggestion only. Feel free to use the cartoons in other ways, and please share your ideas with us at learning@spherestandards.org.

Activity guide

1. Split participants into groups and assign each group a few images.

Images may be randomly assigned or manually grouped.

2. Initially, ask groups to simply discuss what is happening in their images.

This is a discussion about context. Some assumptions can be made based on this visual information, but there are many other contextual factors which cannot be known. For example, what is happening just outside the frame?

3. Next, share the following information with participants...

Standard:

People can safely view the beautiful landscape

Key indicators

Number of crates

- 1 per person

...and ask them to answer the following questions (for each image):

- i. Is the Standard being met? (Yes/No/Maybe)
It should be obvious whether people can see the landscape or not, but whether they are *safe* may be less clear.
- ii. What is the indicator reading, i.e., the number of crates? (0, 1, 2, etc.)
 - a. Is the target being met? (Yes/No/Maybe)

- . Is the target appropriate for the situation/context? (Yes/No/Maybe)
- . What actions might you take to achieve the **standard**?

4. Debrief in plenary.

This stage requires preparation and experience. There are many directions this conversation could go in. Guiding questions could include:

- a. Why have indicators?
- a. Why have targets?
- b. What other indicators could be appropriate for measuring progress against this standard?
- c. How can safety and security be defined and measured?

As part of this debriefing, there are a few key themes that should be covered:

- i. **Context:** While standards always apply without alteration, indicators and targets must be considered in context. In this set of cartoons, the height of the wall is a contextual factor that runs throughout the set of images and has an influence on the target.
What are the other contextual factors that influence targets and indicators?
- ii. **Participation** (and different forms of aid): Handing out crates is not participatory, and it is not appropriate in many contexts.
In which of the contexts depicted might cash-based or technical assistance be more appropriate?
- iii. **Needs, capacities and vulnerabilities:** In the cartoons, there is one person depicted in a wheelchair, there are many children, and there appear to be people of different sexes. It is also necessary to discuss roles, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities which cannot be observed in the images, e.g., cultural practices, gender roles, sensory or cognitive limitations, etc.
It appears in a couple of the images that the people depicted have the capacities (skills and tools) to achieve the standard without needing any crates, although there could be safety and security issues with their solutions.
What other roles, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities might they have?

5. Distribute the handout.