

Module: Public Health Disaster Planning for Districts

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Complex Emergencies

Compiled By The Eastern Africa Disaster
Management Training Core Team

Narrated by Dr. Roy William Mayega

Part 1: Complex Emergencies



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Scenario: What is a Complex Emergency?

- *A certain district Y has been affected by a 10 year conflict in which over 200,000 people have been internally displaced and they live in camps. They cannot return to their homes for fear of the rebels. The living conditions and health status of people in these camps is very poor. This is an example of a Complex Emergency.*
- *What then is a Complex Emergency?*

Definition of Complex Emergency (CE)

- ◆ Deep social crisis in which large numbers of people die from war, displacement and hunger owing to man made disasters (Klugman, 1999)
- ◆ Humanitarian crisis with a break down in authority due to internal or external conflicts that requires international response (*UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 1999*)

Characteristics of a Complex Emergency

- ◆ Violence and Massive displacement
- ◆ Administrative, economic, political collapse
- ◆ Long lasting and widespread
- ◆ Exploitation and worsening of existing differences in civil society (economic, social etc)



 chrissam42, flickr

Characteristics of a CE

- ◆ Dispute over legitimacy of authority (government or rebels)
- ◆ Vulnerable population at greatest risk
- ◆ Large scale humanitarian assistance needed
- ◆ Hindrance of assistance by political or military forces
- ◆ Catastrophic public health emergencies

Complex Emergencies

- Wars and civil strife, armed aggression, insurgency and other actions resulting in displaced persons and refugees
- Usually have a political undertone
- Name some in your region?



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Priority Interventions in Refugee Situations

1. Rapid Needs Assessment
1. Water and Sanitation
2. Food and Nutrition
3. Shelter and Site Planning
4. Health Care
5. Control of Communicable Diseases
6. Co ordination

1. Needs Assessment

- ◆ Health priorities identified on the basis of rapid collection and analysis of data
- ◆ Information collected on background of displacement, risk factors, resources required etc.
- ◆ Use a guideline based on standards (e.g. the SPHERE Standards)

2. Water and Sanitation

◆Water

- ◆Drinking water is top priority
- ◆Both quality and quantity are important
- ◆During first days 20 litres per person per day is required
- ◆Poor and inadequate water is associated with sanitation related diseases

2. Water and Sanitation

◆ Sanitation

- ◆ In the first days of the displacement: emergency latrines for 50-100 persons
- ◆ Improve to 1 latrine for 20 persons
- ◆ Ideally 1 latrine per family

3. Food and Nutrition

- ◆ Population movement both a cause and consequence of food shortage
- ◆ Malnutrition is an important contributory cause of death
- ◆ Food distribution should be planned, effective and equitable

4. Shelter and Site Planning

- ◆ **Importance of shelter**
 - ◆ Protection, Security and Privacy
 - ◆ Recommended 3.5 sq metre per person
- ◆ **Appropriate shelter site**
 - ◆ Secure location away from border
 - ◆ Availability of land and access to water
 - ◆ Location should be socially and culturally agreeable



 United Nations Photo, flickr

5. Health Care

- ◆ Aims to reduce excess mortality in the emergency phase of displacement
- ◆ Curative, preventive and rehabilitative care is crucial
- ◆ Manuals and guidelines should be available for standardization of treatment
- ◆ Tier system of health care (hospital, health centre and outreach services)
- ◆ Determine human resource needs, recruit and train health workers

6. Control of Communicable Diseases

◆ Intervention Strategies

- ◆ Attack source of infection (e.g. curative care, isolation etc)
- ◆ Prevent transmission (e.g. environment sanitation, personal hygiene etc)
- ◆ Protect the susceptible (e.g. measles immunisation, chemoprophylaxis, bed nets etc)
- ◆ Continuous surveillance to detect epidemics and to assess effectiveness of interventions

7. Co-ordination

- ◆ Rationale: Many actors are usually involved
- ◆ Goal is to achieve greatest impact through integration of activities
- ◆ Establish clear leadership and co-ordination
- ◆ Ensure priorities are shared
- ◆ Rationalise services by establishing common standards
- ◆ Ensure good communication among stakeholders

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