

## **Training for Complex Emergencies**

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The decade of the 1990s brought many changes in how we respond to large-scale disasters. This is especially true in complex emergencies where concerns with quality, effectiveness and efficiency in direct performance of relief, and the management and interagency coordination of functions, led the humanitarian community, governments and donors to demand professionalism in the ranks of responders. As a result, numerous educational conferences representing the policy, operational, and field level requirements in disaster management and humanitarian assistance have been offered to assist in the professional development of both civilian and military audiences throughout the world.

Training offerings, such as the Health Emergencies in Large Populations (HELP) course developed by the ICRC, have regionally expanded the number of available courses and added new sector requirements in Reproductive and Psychosocial Health, Health and Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, and Humanitarian Medicine. Unique alliances developed between academia and NGOs, often with the support of major donors, are designed to improve education and training in health sector requirements, especially in assessment and surveillance skills and in the epidemiological principles of public health.

Research grants, both organizational and operational, have increased the knowledge base in understanding the consequences of complex emergencies and the capacities and capabilities of the humanitarian community to respond. The Sphere Project, under the auspices of the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies coordinated experts from all health sectors and organizations to develop a consensus Humanitarian Charter and Manual documenting standards of care.

These activities have been the center piece of conference and educational agendas and have catalyzed additional research in conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation of communities and healthcare infrastructure. In particular, many conferences and training initiatives have focused their efforts on agency-integrated audiences in order to better reflect the realistic mix of participants that responders will be faced with under field conditions. These educational initiatives provide a lasting opportunity to solve problems of interdisciplinary and interagency coordination and cooperation and to optimize lessons learned during protracted conflict. The numerous conference and training opportunities listed in the course catalogue “medicine & health” speak well to the expansion and contributions of many institutions in meeting the professionalism demanded in disaster management and humanitarian assistance.

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