

Practice Oriented Training in Humanitarian Aid –Being prepared is essential!

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Natural disasters, war and civil war threaten the life of many people all over the world. Without quick international Humanitarian Aid even more people would die because of starvation or other sequences of disasters. Therefore, governments and humanitarian organisations have been working hard to improve their preparedness in the recent past. Aid workers have to master very complex situations in their work. Apart from their technical expertise they have to be familiar with the specifics and limitations of Humanitarian Aid; they have to know about planning procedures and logistics in aid operations, and they have to be able to help and assist large numbers of often traumatised people in life threatening conditions – without putting themselves at unnecessary risks. Therefore, a special preparation and training for aid workers is indispensable. In particular, smaller organisations have real difficulties in organising such trainings, but also the larger organisations have to rely on a pool of aid workers who can be mobilised quickly.

In Germany, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF Germany), the German Red Cross (DRK), Johanniter International, Malteser Auslandsdienst, Terra Tech, the Association for the Promotion of Socially and Environmentally Adapted Technologies (AT-Association), and the Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) formed an initiative to develop an organisation-independent basic training course which provides the necessary skills for the work in humanitarian relief operations. With financial support from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs the training concept was designed and tested in 1998.

The goal of this 10-day basic training course is to introduce the participants into the variety of situations and forms of Humanitarian Aid and to provide them with the basic skills they need in the field besides their personal and professional expertise. The practically oriented training course has the following elements: Introduction into the history of Humanitarian Aid; Human Rights and principles of Humanitarian Actions; planning procedures and project development; logistics (procurement, personnel management, transport, etc.); inter-cultural sensitivity and communication; stress- and conflict management; primary health care in camp situations; personal and project security.

The course is organised by the AT-Association. Trainers and participants come from different aid organisations. So the training situation provides already an introduction into the inter-organisational cooperation which is typical for many aid operations in the field. The relief organisations cooperating in the course ensure through a joint control committee that the course is regularly updated in the light of the experiences made in the field.

Target groups for this course are especially personnel without basic training, preparing for a field mission in Humanitarian Aid. People not related to organisations but with intentions to qualify themselves for the work in the field of Humanitarian Assistance are also specifically addressed. In some cases it may be possible to access sponsorships for the training. Some organisations use the course also for further training of their experienced personnel. They see value especially in the inter-organisational perspective of the course.

Further plans include the establishment of a pool of trained staff that could be recruited by relief organisations.

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