Social Work Education for Disaster Recovery and Community Building
by
M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad
Case Western Reserve University

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New Responsibilities for Social Work Education

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The Importance of Social Work Education for Disaster Management

• Need for well educated professionals to address human caused and natural disasters
  ➢ Terrorist attacks to Tsunamis
  ➢ Conflicts between and within countries
  ➢ Earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions

• Need to apply social work knowledge and skills to tasks ranging from
  ➢ Reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons
  ➢ Rebuilding of communities and societies
The Field of Disaster Management

• Social workers long involved with disaster management
  ➢ Many employed by Red Cross, Red Crescent, and other non-governmental agencies
  ➢ Others work for governmental and intergovernmental agencies, such as the United Nations’ High Commission on Refugees

• Often they are not identified as social workers
  ➢ Need for more interaction and organizational linkages between emergency management and the social work profession
The Field of Disaster Management

- Emergency management in multi-disciplinary work
  - Social work is one of many disciplines in the field
  - Currently there is limited content in social work education with specific focus on disaster management
  - Most specific training is on the job or through special courses offered by the International Association of Emergency Managers
  - Some universities offer degrees in Emergency Management Administration
Social Work Roles in Disaster Work

• Disaster relief and recovery requires a range of roles familiar to social workers
  ➢ These include roles ranging from counseling to case management to community development
  ➢ Social workers have foundation training in micro and macro roles applicable to emergency management
  ➢ Some generalist knowledge and skills provided by social work education can be applied to the field of disaster management
Social Work Roles in Disaster Work

• However, some studies of social workers involved in disaster work conclude that they are not adequately prepared to handle many of the special demands of this field
  ➢ The crisis nature of the work, the emotional stress, and the problems of interacting with multiple organizations created special demands for which they were not prepared
  ➢ On the job training was not sufficient to prepare them for the multiple demands that were different from their previous social work experience
Framework for Disaster Management Education*

• Education for professional roles in disaster management should provide curriculum content and experiential learning in the following phases of the disaster event:
  ➢ Assessment for:
    - probability of occurrence
    - vulnerability to risk
    - community capability to manage disaster
  ➢ Mitigation by:
    - minimizing potential of destruction and disruption by building social and physical infrastructure and organizing the community for potential emergencies

* Adapted from Gillespie, Rogge, and Robards (1996)
Framework for Disaster Management Education*

➤ Preparedness by:
  - planning for services to vulnerable groups
  - training volunteers for disaster event
  - developing community support groups

➤ Response by:
  - mobilizing resources for vulnerable populations
  - providing food, shelter, and other survival resources
  - targeting health and social services

➤ Recovery by:
  - rebuilding social and physical infrastructure
  - empowering citizens and communities through social development
  - reintegrating vulnerable groups into the community
Macro Social Work Roles in Disaster Recovery

• Pre-Disaster
  ➢ Organize and participate in community pre-disaster planning and management committees
  ➢ Plan and develop interventions focused on the groups most vulnerable to the impact of the imminent disaster

• Post-Disaster
  ➢ Focus on team-building and community coordination during immediate aftermath of disaster
  ➢ Manage reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees
  ➢ Engage in grassroots social development in rebuilding communities and social networks
Macro Social Work Roles in Disaster Recovery

• Managing reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees
  ➢ Examples: Afghanistan and Pakistan

• Development of human services for vulnerable populations
  ➢ Example: Social service centers in Bosnia and Kosovo

• Grassroots social development
  ➢ Example: Peru and Philippines
Incorporation of Disaster Management Knowledge and Skills Into Social Work Education

• Curriculum Options:
  ➢ Infusion of disaster management content and cases into existing courses
    - Positive outcome: Exposure to large number of students
    - Negative outcome: Limited depth and breadth of learning
    - Obstacle: Finding room in courses already filled with content
  ➢ One course and field placement:
    - Positive outcome: Overview of field plus some skill development
    - Negative outcome: Much content left for post-degree in-service training
    - Obstacle: Limited number of elective options for most social work students
Incorporation of Disaster Management Knowledge and Skills Into Social Work Education

• Curriculum Options (continued):
  ➢ Concentration (specialization) in disaster (emergency) management
    - Positive outcome: Exposure to service network and specialized knowledge and skills
    - Negative outcome: Available to a limited number of social work students
    - Obstacle: Difficulty of adding more specializations to the curriculum
  ➢ Dual degree in social work and disaster management
    - Positive outcome: Learning to work within a multi-disciplinary field of practice
    - Negative outcome: Increased amount of time in educational program
    - Obstacle: Working out curriculum compatible with curriculum requirements in two or more disciplines
Important Components of Disaster Management Education for Social Workers

• Field Education
  ➢ Expansion of field practicum placements beyond traditional agencies, e.g., Red Cross

Examples:
  - United Nations programs
  - National voluntary organizations active in disaster (NVOAD)
  - Local emergency management offices
  - Public health agencies
  ➢ Field experiences covering both micro and macro levels of intervention
  ➢ Multi-disciplinary field experiences
Important Components of Disaster Management Education for Social Workers

• Classroom
  ➢ Provision of generalist practice knowledge and skills within field of emergency management
  ➢ Content on service networks as well as specific policies and services
  ➢ Specialists in counseling or community development should have sub-specialties in other levels of practice

• Laboratory
  ➢ Experiential learning should include simulated experiences covering different phases of a disaster event
  ➢ Simulations in disaster management should help develop skills for different levels of intervention, e.g., micro, meso, and macro