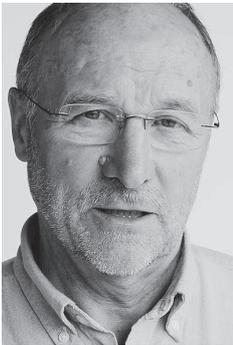


# Training Health Professionals for the Management of Complex Emergencies

*An appeal to public health schools to introduce master programmes in public health and human security*

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Complex emergencies are characterised by the impact of armed violence on people and entire populations requiring humanitarian action by the international community. Such action is most frequently taken in situations in which the security of both the conflict's victims and the humanitarian actors is at risk. In this context, health professionals have a key role to play because of their expertise and their closeness to the victims. The education currently available to them does not provide them with all the tools necessary for optimally tackling the health and security problems they are faced with.

#### PRIORITIES IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

Most of the problems that victims have in complex emergencies are related to health — on the one hand, due to direct effects of war (death, injuries, forced displacements) and, on the other hand, due to indirect effects, such as the destruction of the health infrastructure, the deterioration of economic systems disrupting, in particular, food supply, and the destruction of social relations. History has also taught us that war involves a sustained curtailment of fundamental rights for individuals and peoples. These violations increasingly constitute a veritable war strategy aimed at eliminating populations (genocide), making people flee (ethnic cleansing), destroying people and thereby the foundations of a society by targeting specific groups, such as female victims of sexual violence<sup>1</sup>.

Health and the integrity of populations are intricately linked. In Darfur, for example, «...civilians are continually exposed to violence in their daily activities and subjected to sexual and gender-based harassment...»<sup>2</sup> These attacks both violate fundamental human rights and constitute determinants of the population's health problems. Numerous epidemiological studies, for example, highlight the correlation between forced displacements and a disastrous increase in the mortality rates of the populations affected<sup>3</sup>.

Strategies of humanitarian action have been adopted to cope with this development. The main priority is to restore and maintain the health of persons and peoples struggling with the consequences of war and, at the same time, to protect their integrity.

By and large, they cover the fundamental elements of human security:

- > Access to food, water, a safe environment and health care
- > Respect of physical, mental and social integrity, which is essential for maintaining the life and dignity of peoples.

»Protection activities in the context of humanitarian crises seek to address fundamental protection needs, rather than the broad spectrum of political, economic and social rights, without denying that these are all of the utmost importance.«<sup>4</sup>

#### WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES?

In practice, health professionals tend to cover the following two aspects in their work: health and integrity. It is now recognised that their contribution to the protection of fundamental rights is important for several reasons: their presence with the population combined with their health-related activities, and the increasing use of epidemiological tools for assessing violations of fundamental rights<sup>5</sup>. In particular, they help to establish the link between hostilities and their impact on health<sup>6</sup>. In this context, it is useful to remember that the ban on anti-personnel mines and cluster bombs was originally based on health data illustrating the impact of these weapons on the population<sup>7</sup>.

#### IS THE CURRENT TRAINING OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ADEQUATE?

The development of the role played by health professionals in complex emergencies is only partially reflected by their training in humanitarian principles. In a nutshell, they currently have two options:

- > Short courses (one to three weeks) that may be highly specialised in a specific medical discipline (transmissible diseases, nutrition, water and sanitation, etc.) or give a rough overview of most health problems occurring in complex emergencies, such as the HELP course<sup>8</sup>;
- > Long programmes that, in general, take one year. Two types can be distinguished:

– Standard MPH programmes that include specific modules on humanitarian aid, e.g. the Master of Public Health (MPH) programme with a module on refugee health care at Johns Hopkins University;

– General humanitarian action diplomas that cover several disciplines including law, health, humanitarian diplomacy and logistics. Depending on the expertise of the relevant academic environment, the focus is on a specific field. The most typical example is the diploma course offered by the Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA)<sup>9</sup>.

#### DO THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES OFFERED MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES?

In an article published in *The Lancet*<sup>10</sup> on the mortality in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, two types of conclusions are drawn: first, measures need to be taken to improve the efficiency of health services and, second, political and military measures are required to improve the safety of the population especially in order to ensure that people have access to those services.

Health professionals increasingly have to integrate the health dimension into a wider political view of the situations in which they work.

The short courses offered provide specialised competence, but do not prepare the health professionals for the integration of health activities into a broad view of complex emergencies.

The long programmes give a general overview of humanitarian assistance, but their multidisciplinary approach neither ensures that the required professionalism is reached in the field of health nor guarantees a sufficient level of skills in the use of epidemiological tools so that they can be applied to human right violations.

MPH programmes including humanitarian aid modules give priority to classic training in public health so that the humanitarian aspects are generally covered only to a very limited extent.

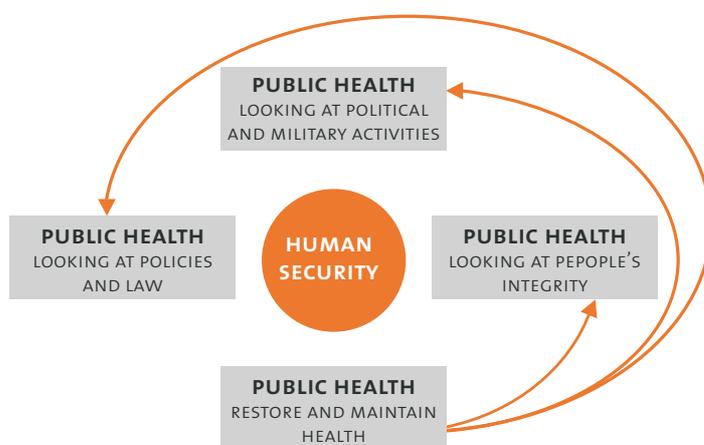
#### WHAT WOULD BE THE OPTIMUM TRAINING FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?

## *A master programme in public health and human security*

#### THE BASIC CONCEPT:

A view of humanitarian action through the prism of public health

#### PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SECURITY



#### THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER PROGRAMME:

- > Management of health activities in complex emergencies
- > Protection of the right to health and fundamental human rights
- > Development of the required capacities to prepare health professionals for decision-making at the top level of the humanitarian system

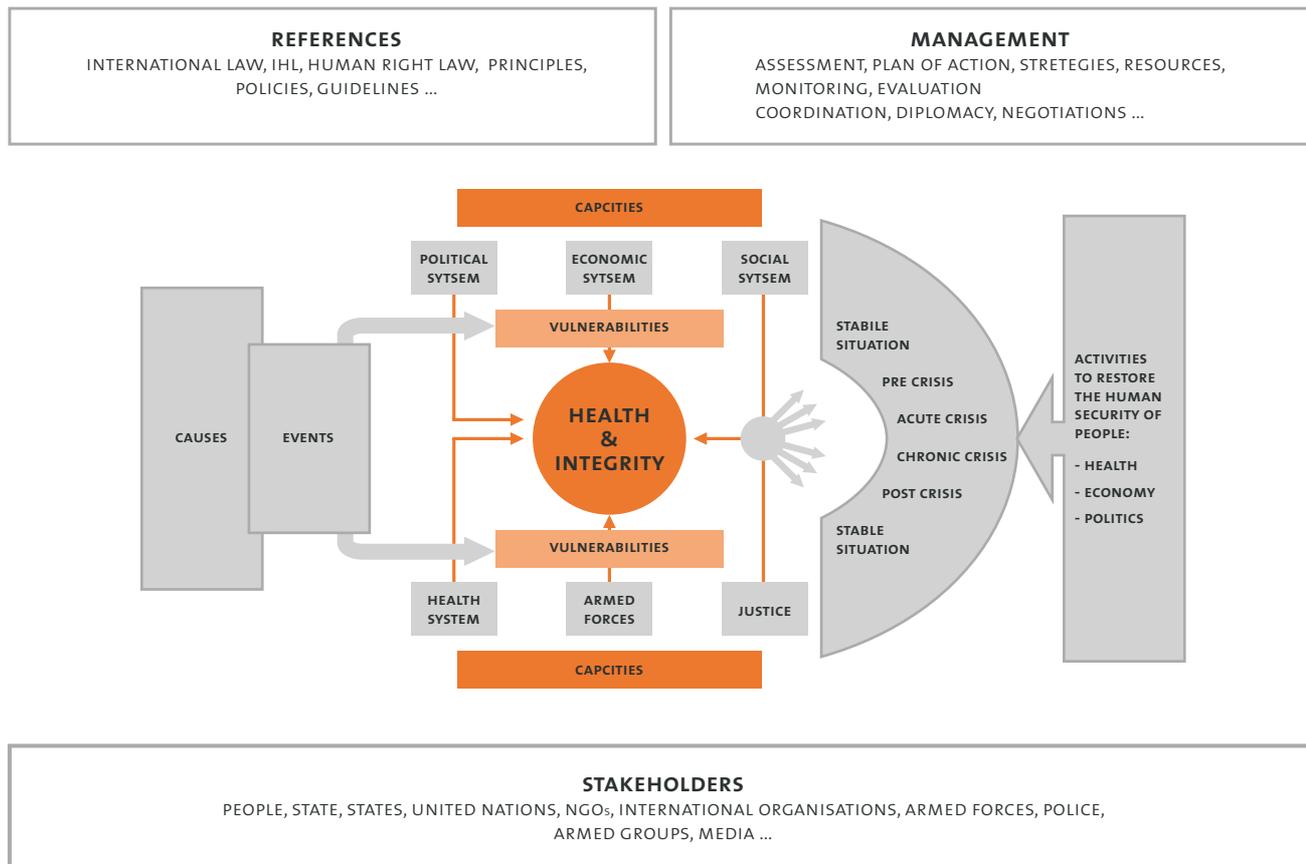
## Abstract

#### MASTERSTUDIUM »PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SECURITY«

Komplexe Notfälle sind gekennzeichnet durch Auswirkungen von Waffengewalt auf Einzelne und die ganze Bevölkerung, und erfordern humanitäre Maßnahmen der internationalen Gemeinschaft. Den Gesundheitsmitarbeitern kommt hier auf Grund ihres Fachwissens und ihrer Nähe zu den Opfern eine entscheidende Rolle zu. In diesen Situationen ist es auch erforderlich, die auftretenden Probleme in den richtigen politisch-militärischen Rahmen einzuordnen. Sicherheitsbedrohungen beeinflussen die Strategien der humanitären Akteure im Bereich der Gesundheit. Des Weiteren wirken politische und militärische Akteure an humanitären Maßnahmen mit, woraus sich eine Neudefinition von Verantwortlichkeiten der einzelnen Beteiligten ergibt.

Die Ausbildung, über die Gesundheitsmitarbeiter derzeit verfügen, gibt ihnen nicht alle Werkzeuge in die Hand, die sie für die optimale Bewältigung der Probleme, mit denen sie in den Bereichen Gesundheit und Sicherheit konfrontiert sind, benötigen.

Die Einführung eines Masterstudiums »Public Health and Human Security« würde es erlauben, den erweiterten Public-Health-Aufgaben in komplexen Notfällen gerecht zu werden. Mittelfristig werden den Gesundheitsmitarbeitern die Kompetenzen vermittelt, die für die Umsetzung humanitärer Maßnahmen nötig sind, und welche die Aspekte Gesundheit, Schutz sowie Beziehungen zu Politik und Militär in komplexen Notfällen ganzheitlich abdecken. Dies erfordert ein starkes Engagement auf Universitärebene, welche bei einer solchen Initiative die Führung übernehmen muss.



**ORGANISATION OF THE MASTER OF PH & HS**

- a. Introductory course on complex emergencies
- b. Modules providing in-depth knowledge in specific fields related to health, human right violations and the political and military management of complex emergencies
- In the field of health:
  - > Module on food safety
  - > Module on water and environmental sanitation
  - > Module on health activities (control of transmissible diseases, reproductive health, health education, essential medicinal products, patient care, etc.)
- In the field of fundamental rights:
  - > Legal module: international humanitarian law, human rights from the perspective of the protection of the right to health
  - > Module on political sciences: the obligations of the state, the role of the United Nations, the concept of interference, the positioning of humanitarian actors in an insecure environment
  - > Applicability of epidemiological tools for:
    - Integrating the factor of violence as a key determinant of health problems
    - Quantifying human rights violations in order to supply reliable, relevant and credible information to humanitarian diplomacy so that protective measures can be launched to stop violence, in particular, by significantly influencing the conduct of political and military activities in complex emergencies<sup>11</sup>
  - > Implementation of protection strategies, including the following activities:
    - Negotiations with the parties involved in the

conflict on respecting non-combatants with a focus on using health data in the negotiation process

- Monitoring the conduct of hostilities in order to analyse their impact on the population

**Management modules**

- > Needs analysis, action planning, monitoring, evaluation
- > Management of resources: human, financial and logistic
- > Humanitarian system
- > Actors in complex emergencies: humanitarian actors (mission, operational policies, expertise, conflicts of interests)
- > Military actors (national military forces, UN peace keeping forces, opposing military forces...)
- > Communications
- > Management of co-ordination processes
- > Negotiations and humanitarian diplomacy<sup>12</sup>

These modules could be offered through distance training since the development of communication technologies and their very rapid spread all over the world makes this a realistic approach.

**c. Case studies**

- Case studies addressing current humanitarian crises are analysed.
- > Types of humanitarian crises: health and fundamental human rights
  - > Activities taken to restore the population's security
  - > Link between those activities and measures

addressing the causes of a crisis in a process aimed at combining humanitarian aid and future development in order to prevent new crises

- > Examination of the relations between all the actors (co-ordination, diplomacy, conflicts of interests)
- > Analysis of useful references, for example, for defining:
  - Types of armed conflict
  - Strategies of the actors
  - Health activities
  - Protection activities

#### COURSE ADMINISTRATION

- > Content management: The contents have to ensure very high consistency with the basic concept, i.e. addressing complex emergencies as a function of how public health (with the roles defined above) can support the population
- > Role of the academic environment
  - A pool of public health schools is necessary for establishing a master programme in public health and human security in complex emergencies
    - Co-ordination group: Within this pool, a co-ordination group has to develop the contents, maintain consistency and evaluate the training provided at the module level
    - Expertise: Each school involved has to identify its fields of expertise for elaborating specific modules relevant for public health and human security
- > Contributions of operational actors: These are vital for the success of this master programme. Their input in the development of the contents and teaching will ensure the operational approach of the master programme.
- > Students:
  - The question whether they should come exclusively from the field of health or not needs to be discussed. One of the objectives is to enable health professionals to take operational decisions in all the fields of humanitarian aid. In that case, priority is to be given to enrolling health professionals. Another strategy is to provide political and diplomatic actors active in humanitarian aid with public health education. At present, the training offered for them is limited to a few modules that are highly insuffi-

cient for successfully using the tools of public health identified above. This master programme could also ensure the required level of professionalism among those persons.

– The students come from humanitarian organisations, military and political actors, UN agencies, etc.

#### CONCLUSION

The master programme in public health and human security is in line with the development of the role of public health in complex emergencies. In the medium term, it will provide health professionals with the capacities required for taking humanitarian actions that integrate health, protection as well as political and military aspects of complex emergencies. This requires a strong commitment from the academic environment which has to take the leading role in such an initiative. ■

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