

**Training on Emergency Health Management and First aid for Medical Officers,
GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme, Guwhati, Assam
25 to 28th of June 2007**

Workshops were organized on Mass Casualty Management and First Aid for the doctors of Assam in two batches of two days each. The workshops were held at Assam Administrative, Staff College where a total of fifty four doctors (batch 1- 31 & batch 2 - 23 doctors) participated. The participants were drawn from the department of Health at state, district, and sub-district levels and from Assam & Guwhati Medical Colleges.



The workshops aimed at providing a framework for strengthening Mass Casualty Management systems in the state in addition to creating a pool of resource persons who could be utilized for capacity building of the first responders during any emergency or disaster.

The topics covered in the workshop were establishing Mass Casualty Management systems, Triage, developing Hospital Disaster Management Plans, Basic life support, First aid, transportation from the incident site to the hospital, Gender Health Issues in Disasters and the opportunities for disaster health management with identification of roles and responsibilities of Medical officers at various levels. The training had group discussions, practical demonstrations, evaluation sessions and a table top exercise on a Mass Casualty event.



Sessions:

The first session covered various aspects of Emergency Health Preparedness and Response highlighting the primary role of the Health Department in limiting morbidity and mortality following disasters by preventive public health measures. Through a question answer session the participants were sensitized on various myths related to disaster health management.

The session on triage highlighted the need for sorting out casualties in Mass Casualty Incidents to maximize survival and to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of casualties. The presentation was followed by a table top exercise and an evaluation using a questionnaire. The participants appreciated the importance of Triaging and sorting out casualties in any Mass Casualty Incidents particularly where resources are limited.

The session on Mass Casualty Management and Hospital Contingency Plan was followed by a case study of a post earthquake scenario and the response of the health sector. The participants



were asked to critically assess the response of the health sector and list out the steps that need to be taken up in such instances for an effective response.

The doctors practiced Basic Life Support and First Aid measures with great enthusiasm. The sessions focused on onsite care with practice of different slings and fracture

immobilization techniques using improvised bandages and immobilization tools that would be available in the field.

Dr. Bikash Kumar Prasad, St. John Ambulance, Orissa State Center covered topics on Basic Life support and pre-hospital care. Dr. Deepa Prasad, Programme Associate – Emergency Health UNDP, Orissa covered sessions relating to Mass Casualty Management, the Role of Medical officers in Disaster management and Ms. Nandita Hazarika, State Project Officer, Assam made a presentation on the GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme and various initiatives under the programme. She also highlighted the efforts undertaken in institutionalizing and integrating disaster mitigation into developmental programmes.



A questionnaire on gender in health disaster management was circulated to assess the extent to which the health needs of men and women were being addressed. As per the feedbacks sex disaggregated mortality and morbidity data though available, reproductive health care needs in general and nutrition of pregnant and lactating women in particular are areas that are not adequately addressed during the emergency phase. The limited number of lady doctors in the department is also an area which requires attention at all times. Sensitization sessions particularly for sectors involved in emergency response, relief and recovery was suggested in-order to assist address of gender issues.

The **feed backs** from the participants indicate that the workshop was informative and useful both in day today emergencies and in major disasters. Many participants felt that the workshop could have

been extended by another day to have more practical sessions. Extensive awareness generation and infrastructure strengthening particularly for trauma care are key areas that need focus.

The doctors felt that directives from the department of health would facilitate in taking up action in disaster health management in the field. The doctors highlighted the need for training of first responders – community, police, fire service personnel etc., for better management of mass casualty incidents. Inclusion of a topic on psychosocial care in post disaster phase was suggested for further workshops. Refresher training programmes, training of paramedical staff, follow up programmes to evaluate the implication of the workshop were also suggested.