

**Student-oriented disaster preparedness lecture series:
“International Medical Interventions: Strategic Preparation”
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Objectives:

1. Analyze the impact of disasters/conflict on health
2. Discuss the challenges in post-disaster/conflict settings
3. Recognize the resources in post-disaster/conflict settings
4. Understand the constraints in post-disaster/conflict settings

BONUS: How can YOU prepare for an international mission?

Lecture outline:

- **Impact of disaster on health: issues of health status and health systems**
 - Poor and underfunded region
 - Unstable region—conflict, shooting, theft
 - Burden of injuries
 - Curtailed health services and their decreased utilization
 - Poor public health programs
 - Impact on intellectual capital

- **Challenges in a post-disaster setting:**
 - Balance between prevention, promotion and curative services
 - Change in health priorities: promotion, drugs, emergency services, nutrition, health prevention, basic curative care, primary health care
 - Environment:
 - Change priorities
 - Establish transitional authority
 - Shift stakeholder relations
 - Development and redefinition
 - Sustaining financial basis
 - Reintegration of different health workers
 - Maintaining successful elements of existing system
 - Supporting public-private relationships
 - Maximizing benefits of international assistance

- **Resources in a post-disaster setting:**
 - Internal resources
 - Limited availability
 - Variable commitment (based on shifting stakeholders)

 - External resources
 - Military—security, rapid needs assessment, transportation, intelligence, engineering, etc

- International relief organizations
 - United Nations agencies
 - ICRC (e.g. Red Cross)
 - NGOs (National Government Agencies)
 - Bilateral/multilateral lending organizations—State Dept (USAID, OFDA)
 - Major role/presence and accountability
 - Need rapid results for donors
 - Need to accomplish goals quickly
 - **The main goal:** contribute, NOT complicate, **the existing health systems**
- **Constraints in a post-disaster setting:**
 - Basic and primary care services often unavailable
 - Imbalance between needs and services
 - Political insecurity, structural breakdown, disinformation
 - Logistical issues
 - Technical issues—deterioration of health services
- **Guidelines for assistance in a post-disaster setting**
 - Relief—development continuum
 - Initial goal: ensure access to basic care (primary and urgent care)
 - Restrict initial training programs and address immediate gaps in provision and coverage
- **BONUS: How can YOU prepare yourself for an international mission:**
 - Internal assessment:
 - Have a purpose: ask yourself why you are doing it
 - Decide on the type of experience you want
 - Determine timing and duration
 - Establish what preparation you need: e.g. Red Cross courses, etc
 - Explore funding resources
 - Think through family issues
 - Analyze your personal attributes
 - Find a mentor/advisor
 - External assessment:
 - Understand organization's goals and objectives
 - Know the country
 - Have a cultural orientation
 - Prepare for a cultural shock
 - Ensure personal safety
 - Learn about health issues for yourself (e.g. vaccinations, medicine, insurance)
 - Go through logistics: travel, visa, lodging, etc

A helpful resource: <http://www.sphereproject.org>

Humanitarian Character and Minimum Standards in a Disaster Response