



## **Humanitarian Aid and Disasters**

### **Rationale Of The Course:**

This course is about understanding the importance of humanitarian aid in disaster situation and the consequences of it.

### **Objectives Of The Course:**

1. Understand humanitarian aid and 'build back better'
2. To understand the implication of humanitarian aid, the distribution and the unintended consequences on the communities.

### **Conceptual understanding of the course**

Humanitarianism is associated with the humane and the positive, partaking of the notion of 'human rights'. Humanitarianism is constructed around the helping of 'victims especially the 'victims' of natural disasters. Even though operating in highly politicized circumstances, humanitarian action is often rendered as being non- political (Larry and Weiss 1995, p.17). Humanitarianism is deeply shaped by the political sphere and involves mundane political activities, like getting visa permissions and duty free entry of supplies (Daniel Warner, 1999). But scholars cautioned that the humanitarian space should be understood in informal daily interactions, in socially negotiated arena and be read between the lines. Humanitarian space is seen as an environment, where humanitarians can work without hindrance and follow the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity (Spearin 200, p.22 cited in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). Whereas in practice, human resources and implementation of relief projects takes place through subtle power processes, defying the very principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence, coordinated by institutional interests, the local socio-cultural fabric and power differentials among the aid recipients (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010).

Effective use of Aid depends on effective governance. It is important in the long run to have effective democratic government systems along with inbuilt evaluating and monitoring systems in place for increasing accountability, transparency and effective RR.

In 2015, all countries with humanitarian response planned to prepare "humanitarian response monitoring frameworks", using online financial tracking service platform. To ensure more effective response, the findings and recommendations presented in the periodic monitoring reports would be adjusted to close as many gaps as possible. Although millions of people are receiving desperately needed aid, problems of access are still limiting the delivery of humanitarian assistance. There is

also a shortage of funds to meet the global needs. The Global Humanitarian Response Plan Status Report shows that only 26% of aid requirement is fulfilled, with a short fall of \$14 billion. Thus, it is imperative to use the aid fund judiciously and reach to the most needy of the lot. (Global Humanitarian Overview Status Report 2015, p.23).

For more effective humanitarian response, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) has committed to increase pooled funds under the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) and Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs). It also envisages the ensuring of transparency and efficiency, complying with donor conditions and prioritizing humanitarian needs without undue burden on humanitarian actors (Manisha Thomas 2017).

The sustainable development goals of UN focuses on ‘ensuring that no one is left behind’ and calls for disaggregated data that pinpoint where specific population groups are lagging behind and reach out to them (UN Economic and Social Council Secretary General, SDG report 2016).

The Annual meeting in 2017 of the humanitarian program highlights the increasing “digital humanitarianism” in recent years, using a range of emerging technology. These include satellite imaging, participatory mapping, read-write web, big-data analysis, artificial intelligence, crowd sourced translation, social media and mobile technology, all of which can help anticipate and respond to crises. Data can be used in humanitarian crises to effectively identify the needs of individuals and improve decision-making (World Economic Forum 2017, p. 7).

The key concepts behind reconstruction policy should be complete collaborative partnership with the community, sustainability and risk reduction. It must not be just rhetoric of “community participation” with tokenism (Jha and Duyne 2010). A handbook by Podger (2013) on a very relevant aspect of context specific understanding of reconstruction tasks and how to undertake them should be developed for each country under the reconstruction and rehabilitation policy. International, national and local partnerships in reconstruction, monitoring and information management, evaluation and mitigation of risk of corruption are given in this handbook (Podger2013).

It is very important to recognize the social dimension of housing and develop a post disaster resettlement plan, which is ecologically and culturally sensitive. Revival of livelihoods should be given more emphasis in rehabilitation process. For early recovery, it is important to assess damages, timely and accurately and maintain communication and interaction with the community. Prior assessments like land use, physical, environmental and social needs based planning should be done. For important housing decision like, whether to relocate or not to relocate, housing design, construction technology, and cultural heritage conservation are important in reconstruction. More importance should be given to the revival of livelihoods, where community organization and participation is pertinent.

## **READING LIST**

- Binder M (2009). Humanitarian crises and the international politics of selectivity. *Human Rights Review* 10(3): 327-348
- Birkmann J, Buckle P, Jaeger J, et al (2010) Extreme events and disasters: a window of opportunity for change? Analysis of organizational, institutional and political changes, formal and informal responses after mega-disasters. *Natural Hazards* 55(3): 637-655
- Bosher L, Dainty A (2011) Disaster risk reduction and ‘built-in’ resilience: towards overarching principles for construction practice. *Disasters* 35(1): 1-18
- Coyne, C (2013) *Doing bad by doing good: Why humanitarian action fails*. Stanford University Press, United States
- Schuller M (eds) *Capitalizing on catastrophe: neoliberal strategies in disaster reconstruction*. Altamira Press, New York
- Hilhorst D, Jansen BJ (2010) Humanitarian space as arena: perspective on the everyday politics of aid. *Journal Development and Change* 41(6):1117-1139
- Howden M. (2009) How Humanitarian Logistics Information System can improve Humanitarian Supply Chains: A view from the field. In: *Proceeding of the 6<sup>th</sup> International ISCRAM conference – Gothenburg, Sweden May 2009*.
- Hyndman J (2011) *Dual disasters: Humanitarian aid after the 2004 tsunami*. Sterling, VA, Kumarian Press.
- Inderfurth KF, Fabrycky D, Cohen SP (2005) The tsunami report card. *Foreign Policy*, p.57-68. Jha AK, Duyne JE (2010) *Safer homes, stronger communities: a handbook for reconstructing after natural disasters*. World Bank Publications.
- Klein N (2007) *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. Macmillan, New York
- Kweifio-Okai C (2014) Where did the Indian Ocean Tsunami Aid Money go? *The Guardian*. Lund R, Blaikie P (2013) *The tsunami of 2004 in Sri Lanka: Impacts and policy in the shadow of civil war*. Routledge, UK
- Minear L, Weiss TG (1995) *Humanitarian Politics*, Headline Series No. 304. Foreign Policy Association, p.17.
- Nakagawa Y, Shaw R (2004) Social capital: A missing link to disaster recovery. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 22(1): 5-34
- Oliver-Smith A (2002) Theorizing disasters: Nature, power, and culture. In: Hoffman SM, Oliver-Smith A (eds) *Catastrophe & Culture: the anthropology of disaster*. School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, p 23-47
- Podger O (2013) Adapting Professional Practices for Post-Disaster Reconstruction. *Project Management World Journal* 2(4):1
- Reddy S (2012) *Clash of Waves: Post Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Indos Publishers, Delhi
- Riddell R (2007) *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?*. Oxford University Press, UK
- Schneider SK (1992) Governmental Response to Disasters: The conflict between Bureaucratic Procedures and Emergent Norms. *Public Administration Review* 52(2):135-145
- Silva KT (2009) ‘Tsunami third wave’ and the politics of disaster management in Sri Lanka. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography* 63(1): 61-72
- Singh SJ (2009) Complex disasters: The Nicobar Islands in the grip of humanitarian aid. *Geographische Rundschau International Edition* 5(3): 48-56
- Strömberg D (2007) Natural disasters, economic development, and humanitarian aid. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21(3): 199-222
- Telford J, Cosgrave J (2007) The international humanitarian system and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis. *Disasters* 31(1): 1-28

Thomas M (2017) Understanding Humanitarian Funds: Growing beyond country based pooled funds. Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

World Economic Forum (2017) The future of humanitarian response, World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

Zanotti L (2010) Cacophonies of aid, failed state building and NGOs in Haiti: setting the stage for disaster, envisioning the future. *Third World Quarterly* 31(5): 755-771