

Mass Casualty Management Systems

Strategies and guidelines for building health sector capacity

Health Action in Crises

Injuries and Violence Prevention



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FOREWORD

Major emergencies, crises and disasters have become more frequent during recent decades, especially in middle and low income countries. They affect more and more people, disrupting health sector programmes and essential services, and slowing the process of sustainable human development.

Many lives could be saved if the affected communities were better prepared, with an organized scalable response system already in place. In addition, survivors of mass casualty incidents often suffer disabilities or health impairment – physical or psychological. These can severely strain the health sector and draw scarce resources away from other essential programmes. Again, much of this is avoidable.

Experience shows that the community is the first to provide emergency assistance in such incidents. For this reason, preparedness planning increasingly emphasizes building capacity (human, organizational and infrastructural) at the community level. Empowering communities to develop emergency management plans for mass casualty incidents requires strong involvement by health authorities at all levels, especially the national level, as well as support from other sectors.

The common gaps in health system preparedness around the world are generally well understood, but they are often not addressed in a comprehensive and systematic way. In particular, many countries have not yet developed Mass Casualty Management Plans, and communities are too often left alone to develop preparedness and response plans without guidance from higher levels.

In September 2006, a Global Consultation on Mass Casualty Management was held in Geneva at WHO headquarters. The Guidelines set out in this document are the direct result of the consultation. They are designed to help policy makers, decision makers and emergency managers at all levels, especially at community level, to overcome the gaps in health system preparedness for managing mass casualty incidents.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCC Command, control, and coordination

CDC Centers for Disease Control

CERT Community Emergency Response Team (Australia)
CRED Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters

CWTC Citizens Welfare Training Course (Philippines)

ED Emergency Department

EMS Emergency Medical System

HAC Health Action in Crises
Hazmat Hazardous Material
HCF Health Care Facility

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