

**The following is an excerpt from the Preserve and Adapt: Education and Training for Responding to Conflict and Humanitarian Emergencies. Report and Recommendations by the Integrated Education and Training Working Group January 2012:**

## Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response (HA/DR)

### **RAISE AWARENESS OF EXISTING PROFESSIONAL HA/DR & ENHANCE PREPARATION OF PERSONNEL**

#### THE SITUATION

Disasters across the globe—from the famine in the drought-plagued Horn of Africa to the earthquakes that leveled Haiti and ravaged nuclear reactors in Japan—present multiple and often unprecedented challenges for first responders. Leaders of major contributing nations and agencies are often compelled to respond repeatedly to these unfolding events with inadequate understanding of the field, resulting in: 1) immediate life-saving relief that is difficult to transition to a larger strategic response, 2) strategies that emphasize the political gains from high-visibility response; and 3) misperceptions among some policy-makers and operators about the principles and practice of humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR).

Working Group participants agreed that:

- The current pace of simultaneous and/or back to back HA/DR operations will likely continue into the future and resources to address the most critical needs will be extremely limited;
- Interventions will continue to require the participation of multiple and diverse actors from the affected host nation(s), international donors and their civilian and military agencies and nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations that specialize in relief operations;
- Operations themselves are increasing in complexity and may be occurring in fragile, failed or conflict affected states presenting unique dilemmas for participating agencies; and
- New technologies and social media are having an impact on the field with little understanding of the implications for effective response.

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING CHALLENGES

Working Group participants agreed that HA/DR should be considered a professional field and career that is developed through education and training and experience. Further, that though HA/DR is a highly technical field, there is a need for a curriculum that increases the level of awareness and understanding about how the international infrastructure for HA/DR operates.

Specific challenges highlighted by the Working Group that bear specifically on preparation and education and training include:

- Agency personnel that conduct these operations receive no training or extremely limited training and often encounter each other for the first time on the ground without basic understanding of the roles, responsibilities, operating procedures and governance structures of participating agencies and/or agency personnel that are sent have no previous HA/DR experience at all.
- Military personnel from the U.S. and other key contributing nations have no specific doctrine nor adequate education and training to equip them with the knowledge of the nongovernmental and intergovernmental HA/DR community and methodologies and common operating procedures for HA/DR.
- Current responses to HA/DR situations flow from leaders operating across multiple agencies and multiple agency personnel attempting to “share the space” in the field. The lack of understanding across these agencies about each other’s roles and responsibilities—both in the government and non-governmental sectors—results in sub-optimal results on the ground for the intended recipients of assistance.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Focus on increased understanding of major contributing agencies—both in and outside of government—to improve delivery of assistance to affected communities

Recognizing the severe deficits in preparation for personnel operating in these environments in this sector, Working Group participants urged that senior leaders address this problem through the following:

- a. Map institutional roles with sensitivity to humanitarian principles and space, and identify existing education and training programs and gaps.
- b. Increase leader awareness of HA/DR principles, capabilities and best practices, including at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level, ambassadorial level, USAID mission leaders, general officers and equivalent leaders of nongovernmental and intergovernmental agencies.
- c. Develop a senior leader HA/DR tabletop exercise for both governmental and nongovernmental leadership.
- d. Develop a HA/DR course building on existing curricula, including USAID’s Office of Disaster Assistance Joint Humanitarian Operations Course (JHOC), the UN’s Civil-Military Coordination course (CIM-Coord), the Naval Post Graduate School’s “Sharing the Space” course and the ICRC’s International Humanitarian Law Course for operators at the GS 14/15 and O6 level.
- e. Expand offerings of JHOC, CIM-Coord and ICRC IHL courses throughout HA/DR response community, and especially in integrated educational settings, such as:

- J7 will identify opportunities for dissemination of current HA/DR education and training (JHOC/CIM-Coord) and ICRC's International Humanitarian Law Course to military training venues.
- Civilians identify opportunities for dissemination of JHOC/CIM-Coord and ICRC's International Human Law Course in joint educational experiences with the military.

f. Have the proposed Exercise Support Group develop priority HA/DR exercises for government, intergovernmental and nongovernment personnel (see recommendation above on establishment of an exercise support group).

2. Build a professional cadre of HA/DR responders and the capacity of host nation(s) to mitigate and respond to disaster and humanitarian crises

a. Institutionalize education and training to develop and maintain a cadre of HA/DR responders.

b. Identify government (both civilian and military agencies), nongovernmental and intergovernmental agency programs that build the capacity of host nation to mitigate and respond to HA/DR crises.

c. Identify case studies that illustrate humanitarian principles, best practices and lessons learned.

d. Develop and disseminate good advising practices, including courses on mentoring and advising.