

**Department of Social Work**  
**Workshop on Psychosocial Preparedness in Disaster Management**

**Introduction**

A disaster can be a devastation, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or manmade causes. Disasters are quite devastating and usually leave a trail of human agony including loss of human life, livestock, property, livelihood and physical injuries that have a significant impact on the survivor's quality of life.



The schools of social work have a significant role to play in providing psychosocial care in disaster management. National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore being a nodal centre for psychological care in disaster management has been actively involved in providing psychosocial care in disasters for the past two decades through direct involvement in disaster

affected communities and training of various sections of the society such as teachers, students, community level workers, concerned Government departments, volunteers and so on. NIMHANS has developed a bank of resource materials required for sensitization and training of various individuals. These trainings aim to discuss the issues related to disaster preparedness and equip the personnel with the skills and knowledge to provide psychosocial care to the disasters affected communities.

**The Programme**

The Department of Social Work, Christ University had organized a workshop on psychological preparedness in disaster management for the students of Social work. 35 MSW students participated in the Workshop.

This was a two day workshop which was held on **5th and 6th of March 2014**. The resource persons for the training programme were Dr. Kavitha Jangam, Assistant Professor, NIMHANS, Ms.Paromita and Ms.Revathi, students doing their fellowship programme in Disaster Management from NIMHANS.



**Session Details**

The training programme was divided into 8 sessions which was again divided into 4 sessions each day. There were several activities which were carried out during the training programme. These activities were:-

- To fill in 3 forms which was the participant profile, a questionnaire to assess the knowledge of the trainee on the psychosocial preparedness in disaster management

and a visual analog scale on the knowledge of psychosocial preparedness in disaster management.

- To identify the disaster which has occurred in India, be it human made or natural disasters.
- To understand the vulnerability mapping, the student were asked to map Christ University and identify the hazards in case of disasters, the resources available, the gaps which are present which could be filled upon and the vulnerable groups during the occurrence of the disaster.



- The trainees were divided under 4 states in India which are Karnataka, Kerala, North-East and Nepal. The trainees were asked to identify the hazards, resources, vulnerable groups and the gaps during the occurrence of the disaster. This activity was followed by a brainstorming session and discussion with the other group members.
- Car and a driver activity was carried on where all the trainees were divided as pairs and were asked to take the role of the car and the driver. Through this it was known as to how a response could be for a disaster and the coping mechanism which could be used. The coping mechanisms could be healthy or unhealthy in nature.
- The topic got more specific when the trainees were asked to identify the risks faced by the vulnerable groups such as women, disabled, children and elderly. The trainees identified 3 main categories such as physical, psychosocial and economical. Under these areas the trainees identified the challenges which these vulnerable groups undergo.



- The trainees were divided into 2 groups and each group was asked to identify the Normal reaction during a disaster situation and an abnormal reaction during a disaster situation. After the brainstorming it was known that, a situation, a person is treated as

a normal one when there is outcry then denial or non-acceptance of the situation, intrusion, working through and finally acceptance of the situation. An abnormal situation was when a situation, a person is overwhelmed with panic exhaustion where there is extreme avoidance in a flooded state responding in a psychosomatic way causing long term illness.

- Discussion on the psychological first aid after the occurrence of the disaster which were active listening, empathy, social support, externalization of interest, ventilation, realization and recreation and spirituality.
- Roles play of a disaster situation and the role of a counselor after the occurrence of the disaster. This was then analyzed by the trainees of the situation of the survivor of a disaster. The trainees were shown the aspect of empathy through this role play.
- The trainees were asked to identify through picture art the psychosocial first aid for a family i.e. family preparedness in disaster and psychosocial first aid for a community i.e. empowering communities.



- Through pick and speak activity, the principles of psychosocial preparedness in disaster was discussed.
- Activities required to be carried out during preparedness which was planning; procedure and protocol, training and exercises, personal qualification and certification were discussed. Finally a checklist required for preparing for a disaster work was prepared by the trainees at the end of the session.
- Lastly a post analysis of the questionnaire and the visual analog scale was conducted to assess the knowledge of the trainees on psychosocial preparedness in disaster management after 2 days of brainstorming about the psychosocial preparedness in disaster.

### **Impact of the programme**

The training programme was supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Govt. of Karnataka, organised by NIMHANS. All the participants were provided with the certificate of participation. The students had developed better understanding on the causes and impact of Disasters and the measures to overcome the psycho social issues related to disasters. The sessions and activities further enhanced the skills of students in terms of psychosocial support to disaster affected communities.