

CONSULTATION REPORT  
ON  
“DISASTERS DUE TO NATURE, WAR AND TERROR:  
FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES”  
DAMASCUS, SYRIA

FOR  
INTERNATIONAL PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION (IPA)  
SYRIAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

JANUARY 2004

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## SUMMARY:

Rainbow Center for International Child Health, Case Western Reserve University and The International Pediatric Association (IPA) collaborated with the Syrian Ministry of Health to jointly conduct a training course, “Disasters Due to Nature, War and Terror: Focus on Children and Families” in Damascus, Syria between 1/18 and 1/22/04. The transportation and accommodation for the traveling participants were supported by WHO Syria and UNICEF. My responsibility was to deliver six lectures and to co-facilitate small group discussions with the Syrian faculty members.

## PURPOSE:

- 1) To provide essential knowledge and skills as a relief worker in humanitarian emergencies.
- 2) To enable the participants to acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

## ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Deliver 6 lectures: “Rapid Epidemiological Assessment”  
“Water, Shelter and Sanitation”  
“Emergency Deliveries and Infant Resuscitation”  
“Pediatric Crush Injuries”  
“Landmine and UXO Injuries”  
“Security Issues”
- 2) Facilitate small group discussions throughout the course

## RESULTS:

The participants included male and female pediatricians, primary care physicians, emergency surgeons, nurses, social workers, epidemiologists, international NGO workers, and journalists, totaling 84. This was the largest number of participants for this course provided in Cleveland and overseas in the past eight years. The Syrian faculty members played a critical role in leading the course since all lectures and discussions were offered in the bilingual (Arabic/English) format. One of the significant and unique aspects of this course was the implementation of small group discussion as a teaching tool. The discussions were designed with the theories of problem-based learning, which was totally new to our counterparts. By the end of the course, however, the Syrians were able to facilitate the discussions on their own.

#### PROBLEMS AND ISSUES:

- 1) Lack of opportunities to communicate with local faculty members.  
There was no time to prepare presentations collaboratively.
- 2) The need for translators was not informed beforehand.  
The need for translation was figured out a few days before the course. All lectures had to be reduced in content due to the time constraints.
- 3) Some impractical contents for the training purpose.  
Although the contents were important as a medical topic, some presentations were neither practical for the relief work in the field, nor relevant as information in solving the problems in the discussions that followed the presentation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) To organize a well-planned faculty meeting before the beginning of the training, in which the trainers in Syria and from the US have an opportunity to get to know each other, review the content of the lectures, and discuss any issues.
- 2) To be prepared for bilingual training. Shorter versions of presentations have to be always in hand just in case. The language and content should also be revised each time according to the local culture. Identifying appropriate translators in advance is a must for every course provided overseas.
- 3) To constructively review the entire training curriculum, presentation contents and the case stories.
- 4) To form a task group to do 3) listed above.

LOG:

Date	AM	PM	Evening
1/15 (Thu)		Left Cleveland to Atlanta	Left Atlanta to Paris
1/16 (Fri)	Arrive Paris	Left Paris to Damascus	Arrived Damascus
1/17 (Sat)	Opening Ceremony at National Assad Library	Faculty meeting: Introduction to local faculty members	
1/18 (Sun)	Day 1: Facilitate group discussions	Delivered lecture on Rapid Health Assessment	Dinner organized by Abbott Laboratory, Syria
1/19 (Mon)	Day 2: Facilitate group discussions	Delivered lecture on Water, Shelter and Sanitation	Visit to see Health Minister, Syria
1/20 (Tue)	Day 3: Facilitate group discussions	Facilitate group discussions	
1/21 (Wed)	Day 4: Delivered lecture on Emergency deliveries	Delivered lectures on crush injuries, Landmines & UXO	Official dinner with WHO
1/22 (Thu)	Day 5: Delivered lecture on Security issues	Diploma ceremony	Left Damascus to Paris
1/23 (Fri)	Arrive Paris	Left Paris to Cincinnati	Left Cincinnati to Cleveland