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Mental Health Needs in Disasters

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Disaster is a severe disruption: ecological and psychosocial which greatly exceeds the coping capacity of the affected community.
A complex emergency is a social catastrophe marked by the destruction of the effect of the population’s political, economic, socio-cultural and health care infrastructures. Economic collapse associated with destruction and displacement.
Fig: Macrolevel Interactions

Disaster:
- Natural
- Manmade

Poor economic development
- Increased social capital
- Human rights (?)
- Loss of personnel
- Loss of structures

Action Plan
- Disaster management
- Existing structures
- New Structures

Health & Mental Health Services

Health and mental health impairment
Mental Health Care

- Coordination and collaboration
- Assessment and monitoring
- Early intervention—”psychological first aid”
- Existing care vs. urgent needs
- Training and education
- Culturally appropriate
  - Language
  - Cognitions
  - Idioms of distress
  - Sociocentric/Egocentric interventions
Mental Health Care

• Ethics
• Human rights
• Community participation
• Caring for the carers
• Outcome assessment
• Focus on needs, distress **NOT** diagnosis. **NOT** PTSD
Disaster Preparation
Disaster Management
Coordination
Information sharing
Building on existing resources
Reconsolidation
Evaluation
Conclusions

Mental health integral to delivery
Be sensitive to cultural needs
Be sensitive to local idioms of distress