

Responding to nutritional needs in demanding environments – Regional training on Nutrition in Emergencies runs its 3rd course

Interest Story

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BANGKOK, Thailand – Professionals who can anticipate and respond to nutritional needs of communities in changing environments are essential in preventing and treating malnutrition in emergencies. Also, effective coordination between professionals in different sectors such as health, food security, livelihoods, water, sanitation, hygiene, and logistics is crucial.

To help emergency responders meet these qualifications, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) organizes its 3rd Regional Course on Nutrition in Emergencies (NiE-3) on 7 - 18 October 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. The course provides knowledge on how to lead and support nutrition responses in emergencies, and its content is based on the NiE Harmonized Training Package (HTP), which has been developed by international experts in emergency nutrition on behalf of the Global Nutrition Cluster. This is the most up-to-date training package for NiE and is widely recognized by organizations working in the sector. The course content has been tailored to meet the requirements of the Asian region while at the same time it caters to the needs of other regions as well.

“The course is aimed at anyone who is involved with emergency nutrition, including health and food security staff and

general program managers. We employ a range of training techniques to help participants to think more practically about what they would need to do to prevent and address malnutrition during an emergency”, says Ms. Rita Bhatia, Course Director and Public Health Nutrition Advisor from ADPC.

The course provides knowledge on the various forms of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies that occur in emergencies. During the training it will also be demonstrated how to take anthropometric measurements and to calculate nutritional indices.

“At the end of the course, the participants will know how to design and undertake an appropriate assessment to determine the severity of malnutrition and to identify its causes. They will also be able to describe the conceptual framework for the causes of malnutrition and explain how different types of emergencies affect nutritional status. Participants will be able to take home knowledge and skills to design program interventions based on the causes of malnutrition”, Ms. Bhatia states.



At the start of each training day, the participants gather into an interactive review session to discuss the previous day's contents.



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Preventing malnutrition at refugee camps

Nutrition Manager Ms. Preeyalak Sataranon from The Border Consortium attended the previous Nutrition in Emergencies course in 2012. She has found the new skills in preventing malnutrition in rural contexts very useful in her work at Burmese refugee camps.

“We are developing the programming for infant and young child feeding for nine refugee camps along the border of Thailand and Myanmar, and have based the curriculum and implementation guidelines on UNICEF’s material and the knowledge gained during the NiE course. New skills in infant and young child feeding learned at the course are very useful for me as they are applicable to both emergency and non-emergency situations”, she states.

Since Nutritionist Dietitian IV Ms. Florinda Venzon Panlilio from Health Emergency Management Staff at the Depart-

ment of Health (DOH) of the Government of the Philippines took part in the 2011 course, DOH has integrated new knowledge on nutrition in emergencies to a number of its materials that are being developed in cooperation with the department’s cluster partners. The materials include guidelines such as a pocket emergency tool for nutrition and a training manual on nutrition in emergencies for the local government.

“During the course it was helpful that for every session participants with field experience from certain areas could be requested to share lessons and best practices as a jump-start towards a more comprehensive discussion. The course even helped me in developing my management, communication, and technical skills”, Ms. Panlilio says.

Conducting surveys and spreading the knowledge

NiE course alumnus from 2012, Head of Nutrition Department Dr. Osa Rafshodia Rafidin from Samarinda Health District Office of the Government of Indonesia has used his new skills in conducting nutrition-related surveys in his city.

“Since the 2012 course, we have already conducted two nutritional surveys based on ADPC’s guidelines. We have also been working on a proposal to develop legislation for a specific surveillance system”, Dr. Rafidin states.

Dr. Roy Hoevenaars attended the same course together with his wife, Mrs. Hilary Hoevenaars. They both work intermittently as volunteer lecturers in nutrition at St John’s University in Tanzania.

“The course was extremely informative and helpful, particularly because we had no prior experience in this field. Most useful for me have been the skills related to infant and young child feeding. My wife has found the modules related to malnutrition very useful in teaching applied nutrition to nursing students in Tanzania”, Dr. Hoevenaars says.

The course is part of the Nutrition in Emergencies Regional Training Initiative (NIERTI) of Department of Nutrition & Food Science, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; Public Health in Emergencies, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Thailand; and School of Public Health, Makerere University, Uganda. It is conducted in collaboration with the University College London’s Institute for Global Health, UK; and Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN).

“ I had no prior experience of working in emergency situations, so it was great learning how important it is to emphasize nutrition, which sometime is ignored. Now I have skills to screen both children and adults in terms of malnutrition in emergencies and also during the preparedness phase, ”

says alumna, Program Coordinator Ms. Shririn Afroz from Helen Keller International in Bangladesh.



Course participants during an emergency simulation.