

CHAPTER 6

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES

by

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The technical ability to solve environmental health problems raised by natural disasters is only one aspect of the work. The effective application of such technical knowledge under difficult conditions requires advance planning and coordination with other activities in the area stricken by the disaster, so that full use can be made of available resources.

Immediately after a natural disaster the public health team - comprising at least a public health doctor or physician, a sanitary engineer or sanitarian, a nurse, a laboratory technologist, and other allied staff - should launch a comprehensive public health programme. Active case-finding and reporting of infectious diseases, immunization and other prophylactic measures, diagnostic services and chemotherapy, first aid and surgical operations, nursing services and environmental health work, all help to protect or restore the health of the afflicted population. All public health resources should be deployed to prevent the outbreak of communicable diseases and to alleviate suffering.

COORDINATION: Often, sanitation personnel will have to rely on the general relief work administration for communications, transport, equipment and supplies. Consequently, the importance of establishing an effective plan for coordinating all services engaged in relief work requires a brief explanation.

Unplanned or improvised coordination of the many activities involved in an emergency causes a series of difficulties in applying relief action. The chaos and overlapping of efforts that often occur at such times can largely be avoided by proper preparations. In countries stricken by repeated disasters, a central authority should be appointed to assume