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**“Health Emergencies in Large Populations (H.E.L.P.) – Training for the African Continent”**

In Africa, there remains a pressing need for appropriate emergency response training to ensure that the effects of man-made and environmental emergencies are minimised. There are benefits to having trained individuals throughout the African continent who are able to assess and appropriately respond to health emergencies. The ability to react quickly and efficiently to a variety of emergencies allows those affected to maintain or restart their livelihood, housing and family stability in the shortest amount of time. It also reduces the health impacts on those regions by identifying and reacting to potential threats, therefore minimising the impact and encouraging recovery. In Africa, the South African (English) H.E.L.P. course together with the Benin (French) course works to meet the training needs for those working in these contexts. The course follows the global curriculum designed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and concentrates on concepts and approaches which have proved to be relevant for humanitarian field activities during emergency situations. The curriculum encompasses twelve interrelated fields, which cover most activities involved in emergency situations. In the three week course, the first two weeks focuses on public health interventions and the third week on international humanitarian law, human rights, responsibilities of health professionals and ethics. As it is impossible to deal with all topics extensively the program focuses on certain priority subjects and in the African context, special emphasis is given to communicable diseases. Facilitators are from both the international and national arena and are drawn from the public, private and academic sectors. Learning takes place through lectures, workshops and case studies in a participatory environment with students learning from other’s experiences and cultural background. Some Masters of Public Health students of the host organisation are included in order to maximise their competencies for when they return to their home countries. Some local context is provided in the tour to Soweto and finally, no Pretoria H.E.L.P. course is complete without participants learning how to listen to each other, leave space for dialogue and working to produce a harmonious result as a team by playing in a drumming circle!

Links to this and other H.E.L.P. courses: <http://shsph.up.ac.za>