

**SW24 Spring 2012: Section Guide #8, Environment & Complex Emergencies**  
**Dates: April 4, 5, 6**

**Goals for this section:**

1. 5 min – Announcements & time for questions
2. 15 min – Mental Health Challenges/ Adopt-a-country
3. 30 min – Debate/Role-play: Complex humanitarian emergency
4. 3 min – Wrap up

**Section Materials:**

*To be read **in preparation** for section:*

Lancet article “Severe mental disorders in complex emergencies”:  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0140673609612538>

Additional interesting readings:

Lancet article “Mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings: linking practice and research”:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0140673611610945>

Lancet article “Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in low income and middle income countries: risk and protective factors”:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0140673611600500>

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New York Times article to send out to students in advance to read as preparation for the debate/role play:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/21/world/africa/21somalia.html>

Lancet article “Health in the horn of Africa: a collective response needed”:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0140673611612737>

Lancet article “Fighting and drought worsen Somalia’s humanitarian crisis”:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0140673609616871>

Additional information:

<http://csis.org/publication/somalia-remains-worst-humanitarian-crisis-world>

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## 1. Announcements & time for questions (5 min)

Point out again the opportunity to meet with Sue during morning and afternoon sessions.

## 2. Mental Health Challenges (15 min)

In preparation for section let the students search the internet for mental health disorders that could be prominent in their countries (due to a complex emergency or not) as well as mental health policies that address those problems. What mental health metrics were used?

\* Discuss interesting country findings in the group.

Use the LANCET article provided (Severe mental disorders in complex emergencies) to start a discussion about mental health problems in complex emergencies and go over the rubric for policy analysis.

*Discussion point:* Why is the data and burden of mental health disorders so hard to estimate? Raise the issue that differences between countries may not be due just to actual disease rates but also cultural issues that might influence under-reporting and how specific mental health issues are defined

**Establishing the context.** What is the underlying problem? Why does it deserve attention? What are the challenges to addressing the problem?

**Laying out the alternatives.** What are the options for addressing the problem? Are there other alternatives not mentioned in the paper? Are they adaptable as additional information on the problem becomes available?

**Predicting the consequences.** What are the consequences of each of the alternative actions? How certain are the outcomes?

**Valuing the outcomes.** How should we measure success for each objective? Are there inherent trade-offs? If so, how should these different combinations of valued objectives be compared with one another?

**Making a choice.** Drawing all aspects of the analysis together, what is the recommended course of action?

### 3. Dealing with a humanitarian crisis - Debate (30 min)

Some background on the situation in Somalia:

- Over 1.4 million people forced from their homes due to violence
- Five consecutive years of failed rains
- One in six children malnourished

Since the beginning of 2007, 700,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in Mogadishu, arriving in areas to which aid agencies often have little or no access. There are now over one million internally displaced people in Somalia and approximately two million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Rising food prices are badly affecting the population, and in most parts of the country, malnutrition rates are beyond the emergency threshold levels set by the UN. The price of imported rice, for example, rose by 350 per cent in several markets between January and May 2008.

The conflict, combined with cycles of drought and flooding across Somalia, has had a catastrophic impact on the ordinary citizens of Somalia, creating enormous needs amongst rural and displaced communities.

Hyperinflation has pushed the price of food and other goods to record highs, making the availability of food a serious problem, especially for internally displaced and poor people living in urban areas.

It is estimated that there are currently 3.4 million people (nearly half the population) in Somalia who require urgent life-saving assistance as they do not have access to enough food.

Many of those who can are fleeing the country. Thousands of Somalis have been streaming across the borders of Kenya and Ethiopia every day.

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This debate is motivated by several current political crises occurring around the world that are leading to health emergencies. One such example is described in the New York Times article on the drought and war crisis that students were asked to read. For this activity, students are asked to imagine that there has been a political crisis in a low-income country (ex: Somalia), leading to a mass exodus of the population (including local nationals and foreign workers residing in the country) to

a neighboring state. Some refugees have already entered the neighboring country, while there are estimates of many more still attempting to escape.

Divide your students into 5 groups (of 2-4 students each depending on your section size) representing the following key players who will be debating about what the most urgent immediate and long term steps should be in dealing with the humanitarian crisis. The decision maker (Actor 6) is forced to make a final decision about what to fund with \$5 million that they have committed to this cause.

Actor 1: Neighboring country (ex: Kenya, Ethiopia) Political Figure

Actor 2: UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) / Red Cross

Actor 3: Mental health advocate

Actor 4: World Food Program

Actor 5: UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) / UN Women

Actor 6: Decision-maker: Gates Foundation/Funder

Each group is given an information sheet to guide the scope of their actor's concerns and assist groups in preparing their proposed strategy and arguments for the debate. The Gates Foundation/Funder is given all the info sheets to review.

Allow students 10 minutes in their small groups to come up with their main points and elect one to two representatives to present the group's arguments to the rest of the class. The decision-maker should create a list of what is important to them in making their funding decision. Groups should also be prepared to counter other groups' arguments to increase their chances of receiving the funding. Have each group present their case to the class, allowing other groups to respond or present counter-arguments (as appropriate).

Give the decision-maker (Actor 6) the last 7 or so minutes of the debate to explain their decision and give their rationale/reasoning for choosing the actor they have decided to fund.

Remind students that during this debate, they should touch on all of the following topics (if applicable to the role they are playing): Health, Finances, Security, Ethical considerations, Environmental concerns (including clean water and sanitation), Education, Food and water availability, Housing.

Have students discuss the most interesting/contentious issues – what were the hardest issues to reconcile?