HOW TO PROVIDE SAFETY OF HEALTH FACILITIES IN NATURAL DISASTERS: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FROM SOUTH EAST EUROPE: CROATIA AND SERBIA

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Abstract: The United Nations launched in 2010 a worldwide campaign to improve the safety of schools and hospitals in natural disasters. Some of the goals were to mobilize resources to repair and rehabilitate school and hospital buildings, to relocate vulnerable structures to safer sites, and to construct better buildings as necessary. It is well known that Year 2010 was considered a year of natural disasters in the whole world. In the region of South East Europe, Croatia and Serbia recorded some events which made great impacts on their communities and health facilities. Due to expected consequences of global climate change in the region and increase of different kinds of environmental risks, both countries have a need to increase awareness of populations. Environmental security should be a daily issue in many offices because at least one of the countries faced with great floods, drought and extreme weather events. The effects of a natural disaster are amplified in the health sector, for several reasons: the recovery needs significant investments, also implies large outlays, difficult to procure at a time when the rest of the affected territory is also trying to recover; and needs to quickly recover its capacity because there is an urgent need to care for the population affected by the event. In Serbia there were lessons learned revealing that most damage to health facilities were due to their location in vulnerable areas, inadequate design, and/or lack of proper maintenance. In November 2010 earthquake hit the town Kraljevo and months after this earthquake, the regional hospital “Studenica” is not rebuild due to lack of financial resources. The situation is significantly better in Croatia, the country which almost reached a full membership in EU. In recent years, stakeholders in Croatia have, in cooperation with WHO, made significant efforts to assess and reduce the vulnerability of existing health facilities as a part of critical infrastructure. This review provides a comparison between system of safety and protection of people and existing legislative, some positive and negative examples from both countries, and recommendations on measures that should be taken in the future to provide better safety for health facilities and populations.

Keywords: Environmental security, natural disasters, safety, hospitals, critical infrastructure, planning.