

Problems of Psychological consequences of Chornobyl and Fukushima accidents

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Psychosocial rehabilitation was missed after Chernobyl

After the large-scale disasters governments usually concentrate their efforts on

- Technique and technology to overcome the consequences
- Monitoring and rehabilitation of the environment
- Monitoring the status and protection of physical health of population

- And, as a rule, little attention is paid to transformation of the affected population to socially active citizens, its social and psychological rehabilitation

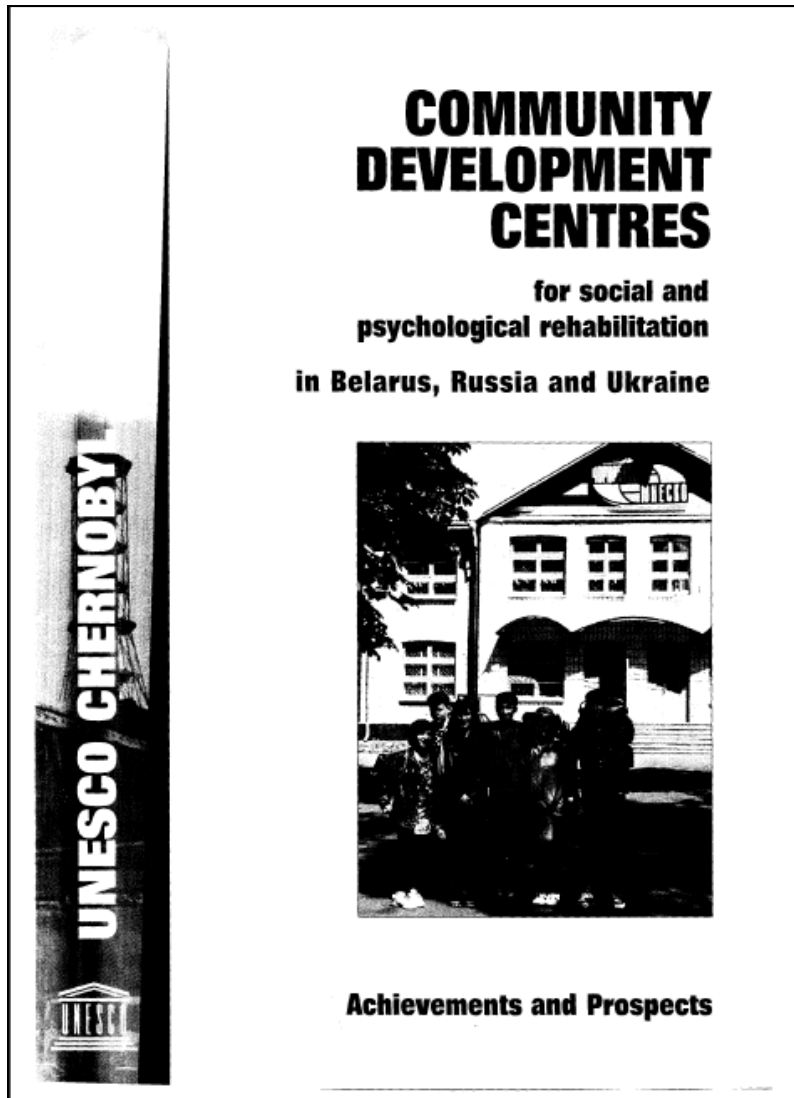
Step by step problem of psychosocial rehabilitation was recognised and addressed

- **May 1988. Scientific conference “Medical aspects of the Chernobyl NPP accident” in Kyiv:**
 - Reports: Right on the early stages of the accident teams of specialists with the obligatory participation of psychologists should be involved to conduct health educational work
 - Recommendations: To improve the effectiveness of explanatory and health educational work, objectivity and quality of information
- **June 1989. WHO Group of experts:**
 - the observed biological and medical deviations can not be attributed to radiation, and most likely are the result of the impact of psychological factors and stress
- **Early 1990. Experts of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies:**
 - State of psychological stress and anxiety which are natural for the given situation, can cause somatic (physical) symptoms and provide a variety of effects on human health

Step by step problem of psychosocial rehabilitation was recognised and addressed

- **1990-1991. International Chernobyl Project:**
 - **Conclusions:** The accident has caused significant negative psychological effects manifested in increased anxiety and stress due to the constant presence of a strong sense of uncertainty, also observed outside the contaminated areas, exacerbated by the socio-economical and political changes
 - **Recommendations:**
 - organisation of programmes to mitigate the psychological consequences of the accident
 - educational programs for teachers and local doctors on general preventive measures in health and on the consequences of humans exposure to radiation

Step by step problem of psychosocial rehabilitation was recognised and addressed



- UNESCO Chernobyl Programme, 1990-1991 (started)
- Subprogramme of establishment of Community development centres for social and psychological rehabilitation
- in 1993-1994 9 Centres in three countries created
- till April 1996 assistance provided to 160 ths persons
- Centres dealing with a whole complex of local psychological problems, not only Chornobyl
- Methodological support by scientific institutes

Step by step problem of psychosocial rehabilitation was recognised and addressed

- **Experts now agree that some of the most significant long-term effects of the Chernobyl disaster are social and psychological. Surveys and observations have uncovered a whole set of complaints, such as:**
 - Low self-esteem (53% of the population in one survey).
 - A tendency to link all illnesses to Chernobyl.
 - High personal anxiety.
 - Feelings of being a victim.
 - Feeling there is no future.
 - Feeling unable to influence the present or the future.
 - Reduced intellectual achievement.
 - Social tensions over eligibility for Chernobyl benefits.
 - Conflict between healthy living and the need to save or earn money by accepting contamination.
 - **Mistrust of government experts and information.**

Chernobyl Forum, 2005

*Chernobyl's Legacy:
Health, Environmental
and Socio-Economic Impacts*
and
*Recommendations to the
Governments of Belarus,
the Russian Federation and Ukraine*



The Chernobyl Forum: 2003–2005
Second revised version

- **The mental health impact of Chernobyl is the largest public health problem unleashed by the accident to date**

Chornobyl Forum, 2005

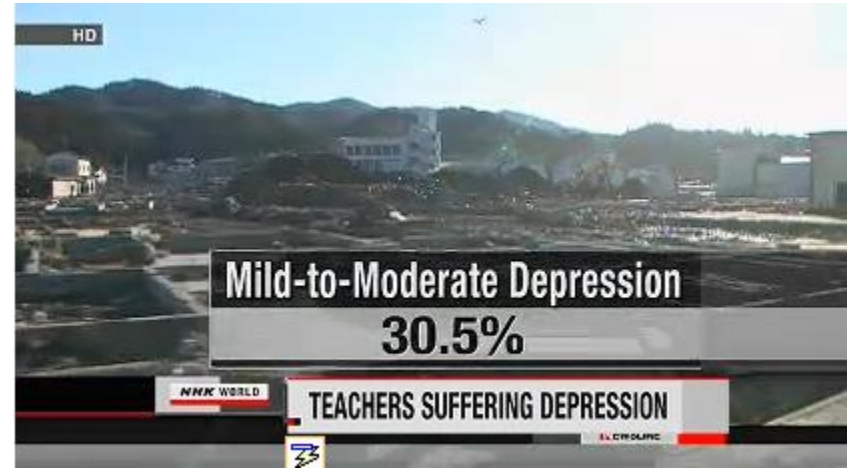
- Added to exaggerated or misplaced health fears, a sense of victimization and dependency created by government social protection policies is widespread in the affected areas. The extensive system of Chernobyl-related benefits has created expectations of long term direct financial support and entitlement to privileges, and has undermined the capacity of the individuals and communities concerned to tackle their own economic and social problems. **The dependency culture that has developed over the past two decades is a major barrier to the region's recovery.** These factors underscore the importance of measures aimed at giving the individuals and communities concerned control over their own futures — an approach that is both more efficient in use of scarce resources and crucial to mitigating the accident's psychological and social impact.

Fukushima

- Complex disaster:
 - Earthquake
 - Tsunami
 - Nuclear accident
- The state appeared to be unprepared to respond to such a complex emergency

Fukushima

- **December 2011**
 - A survey has found that one in 3 teachers in the disaster-hit Miyagi Prefecture suffers from depression.
- **March 2012**
 - A survey has found that many Self-Defense Force members engaged in rescue operations after the March 11th disaster suffered psychological stress that could lead to mental disorders.
- **May 2012**
 - The National Police Agency estimates that around 4 percent of police officers working in 3 disaster-hit prefectures in northeastern Japan are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.



Chornobyl - Fukushima

Implications for policy-making

Proposal for collaboration from Ukrainian organisations:

- Implementation of the psychosocial monitoring and rehabilitation of population affected by the nuclear accidents;
- Improving of radiological education and radiological information provision to target groups and general public;
- Summer school somewhere in Fukushima

Thank you for your attention