



**Social Services in Times of Disaster**

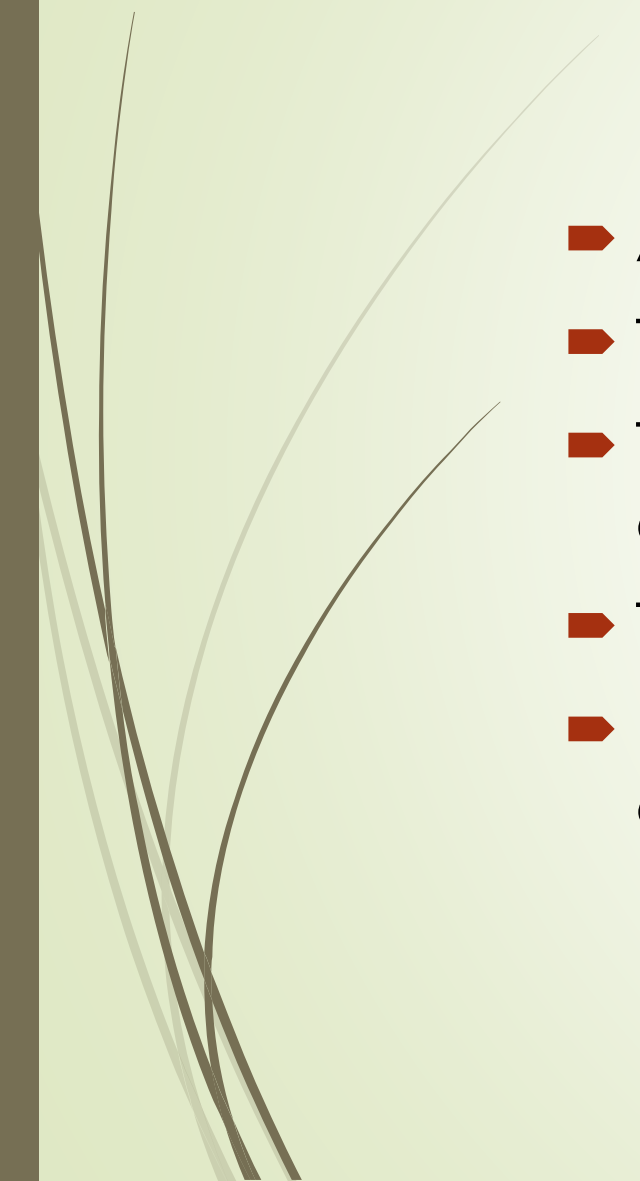
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***The earthquakes in southern Iceland in  
2008;  
The Mayor's Perspective on the role of  
local social service***

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- ▶ Former Mayor of Árborg, South Iceland



# Focal Points

- About the earthquake „Suðurlandsskjálfti“ in May 2008.
  - The effects it had on the work of local authorities.
  - The importance of guidelines for local authorities concerning response to disasters in their community.
  - The role of social services in times of disasters.
  - How can social service be better prepared to face the consequences of disasters.
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# „Suðurlandsskjálfti“

## The earthquakes in Southern Iceland 2008

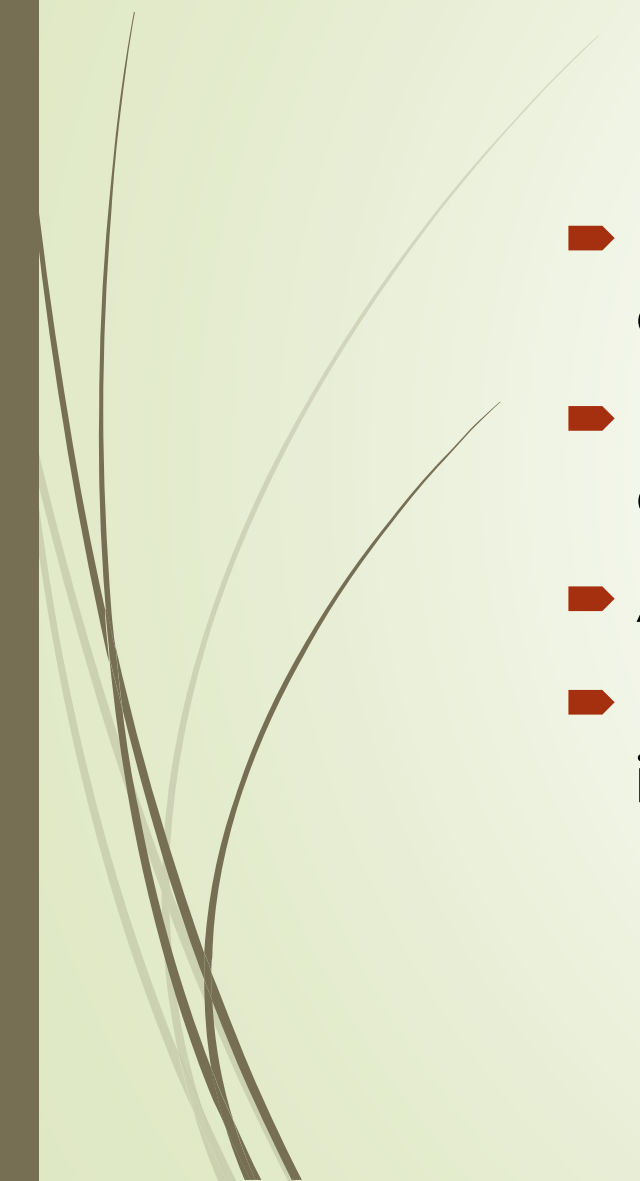
- Thursday 29. maí 2008 kl. 15.45.
- The earthquake measured 6,3 on the Richter scale.
- Numerous smaller aftershocks followed in the next few days.
- The quake hit without warning.
- Suðurlandsskjálfti had a huge impact on 3 municipalities in the South of Iceland; Árborg, Hveragerði and Ölfus.

# Suðurlandsskjálfti May 29. 2008, kl. 15.45 6,3 Richter





# „Suðurlandsskjálfti“ – a Social Disaster


- No serious injuries to people but property damage was on a much larger scale.
  - Disruption on the lives and daily routines of those affected.
  - A huge effect on the work of the municipalities.
  - It is a long term project to recover from disasters, for individuals as for the community in whole.
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## Property damage in the City Hall of Árborg




**Property damages on a large scale in homes, on buildings and in open spaces.**





## The main focus of Local authorities following the quake was on:

- The human aspect, making sure that everyone, both employees and local residents, received ample information and instructions on how to proceed.
  - A fast and effective disaster-relief program that evaluated the extent of damage caused to homes and made certain that all the systems were operational and connected to each other.
  - Getting the municipal system operating as close to its original state as possible, as soon as possible.
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# General Guidelines for Long-Term Response to Natural Disasters

- Guidelines (template) for Long-Term Response to Natural Disasters was handed over to the 3 municipalities that were most affected, the day after the quake had hit.
- Based on the assumption that disaster can be divided into three phases; immediate, short-term and long-term responses.
- Árborg instantly decided to make use of this tool.
- Those guidelines came of good use when dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake.
- Following “Suðurlandsskjálfti” we wrote special guidelines for Árborg on the basis of these template.
- Local authorities should write their own guidelines and be prepared if and when disaster strikes.



# The Relief & Recovery Team in Árborg

- Included key council employees (from departments of welfare, environment, economic) in addition to the head of department of administration, directed by the mayor.
  - The Team's objective was to synchronize the work of the municipality in times of emergency and imminent danger as well as in times of reconstruction following disasters.
  - The Team's work followed the guidelines and matching checklists that are part of the guidelines.
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# Three Clusters

## ➤ Welfare Cluster

- **the physical, mental and social wellbeing and needs of those affected. Their subjects are social services, health care, education and childcare, culture, youth programs and organized sports.**
  - It may be useful to establish teams within the Clusters, contrary to organizational units or institutions, for example in regards to housing, social service and school-matters.

## ➤ Environmental Cluster

## ➤ Economy Cluster



# Special Teams within the Welfare Cluster

- ▶ Team for housing affairs
  - ▶ Responsible for providing housing for those who must leave their homes due to damages, for longer or shorter time.
- ▶ Social Service Team is responsible for:
  - ▶ arranging psychological trauma counselling,
  - ▶ checking up on those who's houses were damaged the most,
  - ▶ monitoring residents with social problems, individuals with no family or social network, people of foreign nationalities and the elderly, the disabled, and the sick.
  - ▶ The team also organized the support that was applied to municipalities staff and to service units such as daycare for the elderly, kindergartens and elementary schools in cooperation with those in charge of those establishments.



# Social services is highly important in times of disasters

- Knowledge and understanding to be able to serve various groups and individuals within the community in times of crisis.
- Connections with other establishments in the community, such as schools, health care establishments, charity organizations and sports organizations.
- Information about situations in the community that are essential to the local authorities in times of disaster-relief and when it comes to distributing finances.
  - F. ex. about different groups within the community like those who are living in dire conditions and need special attention when disasters strike
- Important role in all three phases, most important after the immediate phase, specially in the long-term response.



# How can local authorities, especially local social service, be prepared for disasters ?

- By writing, and updating, special guidelines for relief and recovery in response to disasters in their communities.
- By regularly gather significant and important informations about the living situations in the community and among known vulnerable groups.
- By developing social service and other local services in line with the informations about the communities pulse.
- Local authorities have to be regularly informed about the social situation and the social healt of the community.
- By practicing holistic perspective.

**Thank you all**

At the riverbank in Selfoss, Árborg

