



The Nordic Welfare Watch – in Response to Crisis

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Social Services in Times of Disaster



The project Nordic Welfare Watch is divided into four independent tasks

- Examine emergency response plans amongst the Nordic states focusing on the role of welfare services, especially social services;
- Evaluate the activities of the Icelandic Welfare Watch;
- Define and map the risk challenges that the Nordic welfare system could face in coming years;
- Combine the results from the above three projects, as well as the results of other research groups (the reaction to the bank crisis, social and health indicators as well as results from the NordForsk Centres of Excellence on Societal Risks). Based on these results a proposal will be made for a Nordic Welfare Watch





Disaster Social Work

How do the affected and the response bodies experience the disaster?

- Critical values are threatened
- Time for decision-making is limited
- Uncertainty associated with the current situation

(Sundelius, Stern, and Bynander, 1997)

Causes of disasters:

- ✓ Disasters caused by nature
- ✓ Disasters caused by human activity
- ✓ Disasters of technical origin

(<http://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/events/911/disasters.asp>)





New concept, same role?

- Thomas and Healy pointed out that the social workers have always played important roles in the wake of disasters
(Thomas and Healy, 2010)
- International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) now places a focus on the importance of education of social workers in the field of disaster social work





Resilience

- The term resilience refers to the capacity of communities, groups and individuals to handle the effects of disasters in such a way that the recovery phase will be quick and efficient.

(Ersing, 2010)





Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to the elements in individuals, groups and societies that make them more vulnerable to disasters.

(Gillespie and Danso, 2010)





Social status – main determinants

- Economic status
- Health
- Age
- Origin





Lessons learned so far

- Essential to take into account the results of research showing that events have different effects on different groups
- Although we like to believe that the Nordic welfare and civil protection system meet the needs of different groups, we need further research
- Reassessment on the response and emergency system creates new knowledge





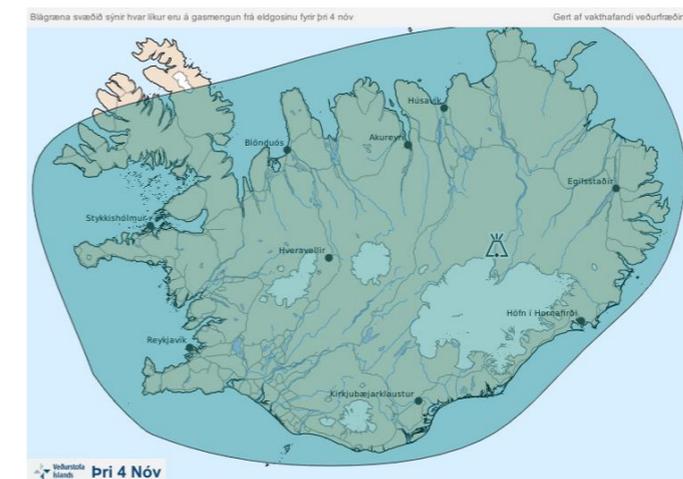
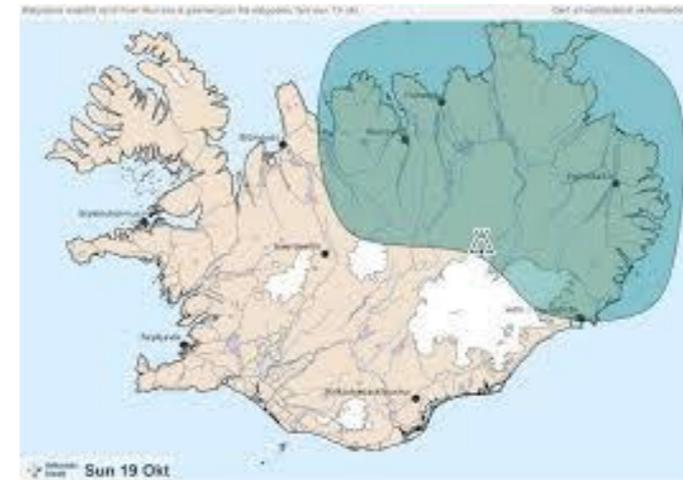
Holuhraun eruption



Source: Mbl.is, 29.8.2014



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The role of social workers

Supporting people in stressful situations is a part of the daily of social workers

- They work within the social, health, and school sectors.
- They work in voluntary organizations, such as the Red Cross





Social workers and disasters

Social workers are the professionals best prepared to deal with complex situations resulting from an emergency

- Professional training in understanding the circumstances of others
- Expertise on the resources of the community
- Social workers work in different sectors (social, health, education, private/public)

(Yanay og Benjamin, 2005)





Their role in disasters

- **Prevention/mitigation**, with communities, groups and individuals
- Provide **social support**, trauma relief therapy and other treatment
- **Working with clients** in the recovery phase (everyday life, health, family, social network etc.)
- **Working with groups**, including self-help groups
- **Recovery work** with the community
- **Conduct research** on the consequences in order to increase knowledge
- **Disseminate new information** to professionals and utilize it





Ecology model – Carol Adamson

<https://unidirectory.auckland.ac.nz/profile/c-adamson>



FIGURE 6.2 Incorporating stress and resilience within a civil defence framework





PhD - Main objectives

To explore how well the Nordic welfare and civil protection system, with emphasis on social services, are prepared to deal with the consequences of disasters

- Analyse the state of the art on contingency plans with a focus on social services (and social disaster work) in the Nordic countries.
- Investigate the role of social services in local contingency plans in Iceland.
- Compare Icelandic and other Nordic municipalities in relation to their contingency plans.
- Examine best practices in the Nordic countries in relation to social services and contingency plans on municipal level.





Thank you!



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