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Occupational therapy on the margins: the aftermath of disaster

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Introduction: People displaced from their homes experience disruption of their usual roles, habits and routines, affecting livelihood, lifestyle and other practices. When the displacement is permanent, people may need help to adapt to their new situation. M.A.R.C.H. Village is situated in a group of islands in Cebu province in the Philippines. After typhoon Yolanda hit the area in 2013, several of the smaller islets were declared areas at serious risk in the event of a major natural disaster, and the inhabitants are being progressively relocated to M.A.R.C.H. Village. An occupational therapist was recruited as camp administrator in 2015. She has three main roles: community organization and development, project management, and advocacy and networking

Objectives:

1. Recognize the impact of displacement on people's daily occupations
2. Understand the role of occupational therapy in post-disaster reconstruction.

Approach: This presentation identifies the issues of transition and actions undertaken by the occupational therapist as the community began to take shape. The education, livelihood, social, empowerment and health components of the community are situated within the WHO CBR matrix to establish an overall perspective of the resettlement programme and to evaluate its effectiveness. Examples are given to demonstrate the advantages of such activities as: structured pre-school classes for young children; cookery lessons for women, and sports activities, all of which promote community integration, security and stability.

Practice implications: Occupational therapists have the skills to assist communities to adapt following natural disasters.

Conclusion: The M.A.R.C.H. Village project demonstrates the effectiveness of occupational therapy in post-disaster reconstruction.