



AFTER THE DISASTER: REBUILDING COMMUNITIES

Revitalizing Community Within and Across Boundaries

Edited by Megan Scribner and Lauren Herzer • A Fetzer Institute / Wilson Center Seminar



Woodrow Wilson
International
Center
for Scholars



Fetzer Institute

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April 4-5, 2011



AFTER THE DISASTER: REBUILDING COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

What is the relationship between a community's resilience and its ability to cope with a disaster? How can one identify the strengths of a community? How can technology give voice to communities, fostering engagement and resilience in daily life and in responses to a disaster?

These are just a few of the provocative questions discussed at the *Retrieving the Wisdom of Those in Need: Community Engagement and Healing in Times of Disaster* seminar held April 4–5, 2011, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. This gathering was the last of three remarkable seminars brought about through a partnership of the Wilson Center and the Fetzer Institute to look at the issues that hinder and support efforts to revitalize community within and across boundaries.

The first seminar in the series—*Community Resilience: A Cross-Cultural Study*—looked at questions of community resilience. The discussion centered on how to foster conditions that promote resilience and examined compelling examples of community resilience worldwide. We learned a great deal as activists who have devoted their lives to organizing slum dwellers and other poor communities joined together with other practitioners and academics representing a range of disciplines and sectors to exchange insights and share lessons learned from their experiences. During this seminar, we learned that there is a lack of precision in what is meant by resilience. A number of the participants pointed out that to say an area is resilient means that there is something positive to which it can return, but this is not always the case. So whereas resilience can be positive in some circumstances, the tone of the first meeting was that we need to understand that resilience can also impede the kind of deep social change that communities sometimes need to go through.

At the second seminar, *Environmental Pathways to Peace*, we built on that foundation of the discussion of community institutions, resilience, and strengths—even the challenges of resilience as a concept. Again the participants approached these issues from very different scales, with widely varying tools, concerns, and views of how conflict, cooperation, and peace are defined. We focused on understanding how mutual interdependencies vis-à-vis natural resources, particularly water, were sources of both conflict on the one hand and cooperation and peacebuilding on the other. Among the many topics of discussion, the participants often focused on the complex relationship between funders and communities.

After these two seminars, it seemed natural to come to try to understand these issues in more depth—in particular, how recovery efforts support or impede community resilience in the context of both human-made and natural disasters.

We were fortunate to be able to bring together a remarkable group of people from around the world for this seminar. Participants came from Bosnia, Burundi, Canada, Haiti, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, Thailand, and the United States. They represented a wide range of perspectives and professions: humanitarian professionals and community organizers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), public health professionals, and scholars.

Throughout the seminar, the participants spoke of their experiences and efforts with natural and human-made disasters and disaster relief and recovery. Although there were differences in aspects of natural and human-made disasters, we found that there were many similar issues regarding recovery and resiliency.

The participants shared some success stories, acknowledging the good work taking place and what can be learned from people doing this work. But most often, their stories illustrated a broken “system” of disaster relief efforts and the subsequent unintended consequences of this brokenness. Most often, they did not ascribe the problems encountered with disaster relief efforts to any uncaring or intentionally neglectful actions on the part of those involved. They acknowledged that those engaged in the hard work of disaster relief were largely well intentioned and were committed to alleviating suffering and helping communities on the road to recovery from disasters.

But it was also clear that at a disaster site, there were often problems with responders and with their perceptions of what was needed and their methods for doing the work. Though they were there, in principle, to aid those most harmed by the disaster and to help them get back on their feet, they tended to have flawed or nonexistent relationships with those on the ground, those most affected by the disaster. This often led to ineffectual and sometimes even harmful and destructive actions, policies, and plans. And it also tended to lead to efforts that worked against, or certainly did not enhance, a community's resilience.

The participants recognized the difficulties in reconciling the two sometimes contradictory needs in responding to a disaster: (1) the need for speed, to move quickly in response to a disaster to save lives, provide food and housing, and establish order and security; and (2) the need to take the time to accurately assess and understand the situation in all its complexity, to grasp the needs and desires of the affected community, and to involve the community in the short and long-term recovery efforts. The participants affirmed how important meeting this second need was to a community's resiliency and successful long-term recovery from a disaster.

Throughout the seminar, the participants struggled with this paradoxical challenge of needing to "go slow" in order "to go fast." They examined how the tensions inherent in this paradox played out in many situations, and they sought to understand the perspectives of those involved and make recommendations for how to address this complex situation in a way that could be productive for all.

Through the following excerpts from the seminar discussion and the seminar papers, we hope to share the remarkable experiences, insights, and wisdom of the participants vis-à-vis this paradox and other challenges regarding recovery and community resilience in the face of natural and human-made disasters.

To learn more about these extraordinary people and their programs on disaster relief and community resilience, see the complete list of papers on page 89, which can be downloaded from www.wilsoncenter.org/cusp. There, you can also learn more about the first two seminars, the participants, and their work on community development and peacebuilding by downloading the reports and participants' papers from the first two seminars.



SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

EXCERPTS FROM THE CONVENING PAPERS

1

Dr. Frederick Burkle, Eliane Ubalijoro, and Paul Born wrote convening thought papers to help ground and launch the discussion at the seminar. The other participants then wrote short response papers reflecting on the convening papers and bringing their own insights and experience to the table. All these papers were shared in advance, which greatly added to the collective wisdom of the group and deepened the conversation right from the start.

In his response paper, John Katunga Murhula (Catholic Relief Services, Nairobi) reflected on the main themes of the three convening papers:

The three papers . . . come as a strong reminder of the centrality of human good relationships in withstanding shocks and building resilience. The authors seem to suggest two sets of preparation that are needed for an effective disaster preparedness strategy and community resilience: (1) They advocate for the building of institutions and systems that are accountable, democratic, transparent, and efficient in service delivery. These institutions must have good leaders and must be as participatory as possible. They must function according to laws and procedures governing the society. This type of preparation is based on tangibles, the visible part of the preparation. (2) The society should be able to strengthen its social capital. It should find ways of creating strong bonds among its members and humanize their relationships in ways such that members of the community care for one another in an “altruist citizenry” fashion. This building of strong social cohesion constitutes the intangibles of the strategy. It clearly emerges from the authors’ reflections as a pressing invitation to accompany the institution building and strengthening with the increase in social cohesion. It is only at this price that community resilience will be effective.

What follows—after a text box quoting a participant that sets the stage—are brief excerpts from the three convening papers.

HOW FAR WE HAVE TO GO: ONE PARTICIPANT'S THOUGHTS AT THE START OF THE SEMINAR

I am one of the cofounders of the St. Bernard Project. We're a direct service organization in New Orleans. We rebuild houses for people who were primarily affected by Hurricane Katrina. We are also trying to tackle the blight problem in New Orleans. It's one of the most blighted cities in America. Our model is really simple and straightforward. We utilize supervised volunteer labor. We work closely with a lot of different organizations, including the Mennonites, and we get families back into their homes. It takes about twelve weeks, \$15,000 to 20,000, and we can get a family home.

I have a background in middle school, teaching middle school, so I'm really good at long division if anybody needs help with that. My boyfriend, with whom I started the organization, is an attorney. So if anyone finds themselves in trouble with the law, he can definitely get you out of jail. I tell you all that to say that I have no background in disaster work. My dad is an architect, and my grandpa was a builder, but aside from spackling I don't really know much about building homes.

But I do know that it's straightforward and easy, yet in New Orleans there are still between 6,000 and 10,000 families that own a home, that don't have the resources to fix it up. And in a country like ours, where we are so resource rich, it's shocking to me that five and a half years after a disaster we can still literally have thousands and thousands of families that don't have the simple recipe to get home. It has been very revealing to me to learn how broken long-term disaster recovery is in America, and our commitment is to develop a model that can be taken to communities not only affected by natural or human-made disasters, as is in the case of New Orleans, but also by economic disasters—cities like Detroit, and other communities that face very, very significant blight and have large populations that don't have access to home ownership or any sort of asset building. How do we rebuild homes and communities, bring people up with those, and start to make our cities more functional?

The last piece of what I do, and this is where it starts to get very strange, is what's weirder than an attorney and a middle school teacher opening a construction company, or a construction company opening a mental health clinic? We also run a mental health clinic in partnership with Tulane and Loyola Universities, and our primary focus is to work with people who don't have access to insurance but are struggling very significantly with PTSD, depression anxiety, and a litany of other mental health problems that are a result of not only Katrina and broken communities but more recently the oil spill that happened about a year ago. So that's what we do. I'm excited to learn from a lot of the professionals in this room, and look forward to two interesting days of discussion.

—LIZ MCCARTNEY, ST. BERNARD PROJECT AND
TULANE UNIVERSITY, NEW ORLEANS

THE LIMITS TO OUR CAPACITY: THE REALITIES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, RESILIENCY, AND RECOVERY IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CRISES

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Senior Fellow and Scientist, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative,

Harvard School of Public Health

When asked, I openly welcomed the invitation to discuss resiliency as it relates to post-disaster relief and conflict community building. I accepted knowing, despite the fact that I have used this term often in my life (I'm also a psychiatrist), that "resiliency" is a slippery term that can be misunderstood if not outright abused. I am stating this up front because it is difficult to find a universal definition of resiliency that satisfies all the disciplines that claim ownership of the term and satisfies the one-definition rule that would measure its impact on individuals, communities, and society itself. It has been labeled as everything from a metaphor to a theory; and some authors, while they include acts of nature—such as hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes—in their studies of resiliency, exclude mass violence such as wars and terrorism, and epidemics and pandemics.

First, my biases: I am a clinician and pride myself on speaking from my experienced knowledge base. I practice international health in war, conflict, and human crises (all of which are major public health emergencies), and played the diplomatic scene for a time, so I have witnessed tests of resiliency at every level. I am also an academician and scientist concerned that we all get the opportunity to read from the same script and understand its content. When it comes to vulnerability and resiliency, I recognize that not all that might be disclosed to society is being disclosed, especially the best available science and best practices of these threats that affect our well-being and that of global health. Governance, and the lack of it, is a more compelling element in determining what is disclosed to the public and what is not. For almost four years now, I have served as the chairman of the National Disaster Life Support Consortium, an American Medical Association program that deliberates and debates on a daily basis how we can better communicate, educate, and train our citizenry.

Most disasters are defined by the need for external assistance. The Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters defines a disaster as a "situation (incident) or event which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to



FREDERICK BURKLE

a national or international level for external assistance.” Disasters are further identified as natural disasters, human systems failures, and conflict-based disasters. Interestingly, the large majority of daily casualty events common to every society are usually handled well by local emergency medical services resources, in both developed and developing countries. They will receive the usual press coverage at the time, but both individual and collective recovery and rehabilitation of the community are the expected outcomes. However, there are other categories of disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Haitian earthquake and its aftermath, and the frequent wars and conflicts that plague and challenge our global communities where outcomes may be quite different. A legitimate question is why are they different and why after the event do deaths (mortality) and injuries and illness (morbidity) continue long after the disastrous incident is over. In the scientific arena, we refer to these disasters as “public health emergencies,” which are defined as those that “adversely affect the public health system and/or its protective infrastructure (i.e., water, sanitation, shelter, food, fuel, and health), catalyzing additional direct and indirect consequences to the health of a population.”

Public health emergencies have shown an increased frequency worldwide, often exacerbated by a twenty-first-century decline in both physical and social public health infrastructure and protections following the onset of natural disasters, human systems failures, and conflict-based disasters. These protections declined because they have not been maintained; were destroyed by the event; purposely denied to certain ethnic, religious, and minority groups (especially during internal wars and conflict that followed the cessation of the Cold War); or failed to keep up with growing population demands, especially in rapidly urbanized enclaves where the growing influx of fleeing refugees outstrips the essential resources to protect them. The recognition of this common thread of public health loss of structural and functional capacity is what identifies

a major human catastrophe. A cornerstone of public health preparedness is community resilience; yet community resilience is not possible without strong and sustainable public health protections and a system to guarantee them.

In part, we in medicine are at fault for not communicating effectively to the lay community about possible threats brought about by public health emergencies or the failures to prepare and prevent their occurrence. It is an art form of communication that few seem to do well or relish. The dangerous consequence of this gap plays out when society experiences a major crisis. In general, society and its political decisionmakers have been reluctant to disclose all that needs to be known about a crisis, either conscientiously ignoring it or giving it out in small increments to their constituents when they feel it is appropriate to do so. Society, more often than not, is simply asked to be “resilient.” Admittedly, there are expectations placed on those responsible for the health of a community, some self-imposed, some not.

When I was a first-year medical student in 1960, an elderly and seemingly sagacious role model for the university spoke to our impressionable class about our responsibilities to “protect society.” Using a singular example of what we would soon experience with frequently psychiatrically deranged and often-dangerous patients presenting late into the night at the emergency departments of local hospitals, he stated that it was our obligation to learn to manage them efficiently and rapidly house them in psychiatric wards. All this, he emphatically stressed, must be completed well in advance of morning, when people awoke, expecting that all would be well in their community. That day, as you can imagine, few of us thought of venturing into psychiatry as a career. Admittedly, many of those same scenarios remain today, and many decisionmakers still consider their role in protecting society from the potential ills of the world to remain an obligation of their profession or elected office. It is fair to question whether these cultural habits and expectations have actually im-

peded the development of functional resiliency at many levels and done more harm than good.

Disasters have an uncanny ability to immediately reveal and define the status of public health protections and expose their vulnerabilities. I say “expose” because no one factor in society has had more success in toppling political regimes and revealing government’s hidden secrets and deficiencies than major natural disasters and other preventable crises. We must answer such questions like why, during Hurricane Katrina, did nearby Mississippi which took a harder hit than New Orleans, recover quicker, more smoothly, and without fanfare. We still ignore the fact that the hurricane, whilst a natural event, was clearly a preventable human-made disaster produced by a previously known and well documented failure of the walls (levees) that society assumed would protect them. Worse, to date, no one seems to admit that the city of New Orleans is in the wrong place. Skill and competence of a government, or lack thereof, can have profound effects on vulnerability and whatever resilience can be mustered to cope at the final hour, a process called “managed resiliency.” But there is a limit to that capacity. By using the background of what we know and don’t know about modern day disaster experiences, we must attempt to answer questions such as:

- How can we respond to disasters and other human crises with dignity and act in accordance with the lived experience of others?
- In community participation and governance, who is listening?
- What technologies and community engagements can benefit communities in a sustainable way?

To help answer these questions, and others, one must drill down deeper in seeking to understand the nuances of crises that affect how vulnerability and resiliency play themselves out.

(For the full version of Burkle’s paper, please visit www.wilsoncenter.org/cusp)

THE FACE OF HEALING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE IN RWANDA: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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Member of the Presidential Advisory Council for President Paul Kagame of Rwanda

The more I learn of positive community actions in times of disaster, the more hope I have that sharing in these results will help nations heal. But what is healing, and how do we know we are engaging in healing? Should we see healing as a destination, as in the French translation *guérison*, which would translate better in English as cured? Should we see it as a journey of mind, heart, and action beyond the elimination of the dis-ease caused by trauma? Should we see it as a door cracked open bringing in light into the darkest moment of a community, a door that could open onto a path of aliveness that was lost or discovered completely anew with the fierceness of having lived in the darkest of times? This paper looks inward at what has helped me get beyond the paralyzing effect of resisting to feel the personal and collective pain of what the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide represents. My experience is a minute view or mirror that represents only the experience of a woman from the Rwandan Diaspora seeking to go on living after disaster. In this paper, I share community and individual actions that are giving me hope that a way forward is unfolding that is growing the healing paths for Rwanda. The paper is broken down into three sections:

1. Individual and collective responses to regain dignity and compassion beyond disaster.
2. Incorporation of new technologies and novel design spaces, in community engagement toward the post-genocide rebuilding effort.
3. Community and government dialogue on healing

For each of us participating in the seminar—whether as an academic, policymaker, practitioner, or community leader—we all share the desire for our skills and life experiences to be of service to the goal of “retrieving the wisdom of those in need: community engagement and healing in times of disaster.” But how do we engage and act in accordance with the lived experience and dignity of others? As I look inward to find how best to approach this important space, I ask myself, What do I bring to the collective that will meet? I am reminded of a story of a grandmother who was helping her daughter care for

her infant with a heart condition. After the operation, four doctors made their daily rounds to the room but would never talk or engage in eye contact with the family. They would come in and take note of the charts and electronic monitors. The infant died, and now a mother and grandmother grieve the loss of a precious child but also the disconnect that separates their hearts from the minds, eyes, hearts, and hands of the doctors who worked very hard to treat a medical condition. Can we open ourselves beyond our intellectual skills to feeling the pain of trauma without becoming lost in it? Would opening ourselves wide open to it make us more compassionate or less able to technically support the healing process? Can we engage effectively if we let others' traumas become part of the fabric of our lived experiences? The perspectives I present in this paper were forged from my grappling with disaster and healing—not theory, but feeling, despair, and hope. My wish is for my words to add to perspectives from academic theory and analysis, policymaking, practitioner and community views, for our collective experiences to produce a community of healing wisdom. . . .

Responding to disaster with dignity and acting in accordance with the lived experience of others brings on an urgency to our capacity to identify best practices and policy to promote community engagement and healing in post-disaster situations. I am reminded of words from my McGill colleague, Nancy Adler: “Do we believe that we have a crucial role to play in shaping society’s future? In shaping its success or demise? Do we really believe we make a difference? Do we believe that what we do matters? How would you research and [learn] if you knew that the future of [your] country and the world depended on it? Do we have the courage to see possibility? Do we have the audacity to be hopeful, and the courage to express our hope within our professional domain?” Rwandans have attempted to have the courageous conversations to do so, whether through the Gacaca courts inspired by traditional



ELIANE UBALIJORO

wisdom, through the design and continued implementation of Vision 2020, or through numerous community actions. I have not attempted to mention all the actions that have been undertaken but only to highlight the ones that I have directly or indirectly witnessed.

Within the last sixteen years, Rwanda has succeeded in realizing impressive economic growth and development in the aftermath of a genocide that killed close to a million people in a hundred days. Rising from the ashes of such horror has been a complex journey of rebuilding community, relationships with neighboring countries, and foreign alliances. The country is making important strides toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals. However, there remain many challenges. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa. Land distribution is extremely fragmented and poses a serious threat to food security in a densely populated country. When he was the British ambassador to Rwanda in 2008, Nicholas Cannon recognized this delicate stage when he said that “Rwanda could go either way—toward peace and development, or overpopulation and strife.”

Healing for Rwanda is still a journey, as the country grapples with conflict transformation, forgiveness, and reconciliation while rebuilding community. Despite opening of spaces for women to participate, the conflicting demands Rwandan women have with high reproductive workloads, domestic responsibilities, and self-esteem issues are still heavy especially for the most vulnerable to violence. This paper has focused on the ways Rwandans are engaging in community development—first as an act of survival, and more and more as a way forward toward healing. It is in these threads that are being woven into a resilient fabric that will sustain communities that I find hope.

(For the full version of Ubalijoro’s paper, please visit www.wilsoncenter.org/cusp)



PAUL BORN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Paul Born

Co-Founder and Director, Tamarack—An Institute for Community Engagement, Ontario

This collection of blogs and annotated list of resources was prepared for a discussion being convened by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Fetzer Institute. The paper has been written in the format of a Web page, if for no other reason than this is how I am most fond of writing these days. I apologize in advance to those for who this is a distraction. This research is best read on an electronic device connected to the Internet.

The nature of this research is not to answer the questions posed but to provide context and background to support the reader's own inquiry. The focus is on three broad areas of inquiry: peaceful society, technology and community engagement, and community participation and governance in times of disaster. These three areas provide the technical aspect of the inquiry. Further to this is the broader inquiry implied in the title, *Retrieving the Wisdom of Those in Need*, which speaks to the sense that there is an intuitive wisdom, an innate energy and talent that can be accessed through community engagement. . . .

By engaging people (*retrieving the wisdom of those in need*) and preparing communities for disaster, we can make a huge difference in mitigating the loss of human life during a disaster event, helping to stabilize the region during the critical days after the disaster, and preparing the human capital needed to rebuild the infrastructure and spirit of an area (*healing*), thus moderating the longer-term effects of a disaster.

1,000 Buses Waiting to Help

In August 2005, a Hurricane struck New Orleans. This disaster captured our hearts and evoked a massive empathy in the world for the plight of those in need. But it was a single picture – that of 1,000 buses parked in neat rows – published as the flooding receded, that turned the staff of the Tamarack Institute from passive observers to passionate and engaged researchers/writers contemplating how we might use community engagement strategies in times of disaster. These buses represented to us everything that was wrong with the formal response in the critical hours of the disaster and the days that followed. Trained and committed people are great assets during times of disaster. To not engage them is akin to forgetting to add the cement to the sand and gravel when building the foundation of a house.

Hurricane Katrina: The Tamarack Story

Before, during, and immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in August, 2005, the staff at the Tamarack office focused on the community engagement aspects related to community preparedness for the storm. We monitored news reports of the disaster and were mesmerized.

Rows of yellow buses

Several days after Hurricane Katrina struck, a picture appeared in the news of a sea of buses that had been completely submerged in the flood. As the waters receded, a thousand bright roofs of school buses, like rows of yellow dominoes, appeared above the surface. At Tamarack, we looked at this picture in disbelief, asking each other how a thousand school buses could be left in place when so

many people had trouble evacuating the city. We wondered who had made the decision to leave them there and not use them in the evacuation.

Our questions prompted us to read the New Orleans Emergency Preparedness Plan for answers, and to see if there were other communities in the world with preparedness plans that might have deployed those buses. During the next several days, these questions emerged for our team:

- If people were engaged – had a role to play, knew what to do, were part of a team – would this have made a difference? Would those buses have been deployed to help people?
- Who “owned” the Emergency Preparedness Plan? Whose job was it to see it implemented?
- What preparations were made? Were citizens engaged? What about the bus drivers?
- How prepared are *we*? What’s my emergency preparedness plan?
- How much can government do alone? What do citizens do?
- Why do citizens become criminals?
- What role do factors like the demographic makeup of the population and the geographic layout play in emergency preparedness?
- Are some countries more effective than others at emergency preparedness?
- What roles do formal and informal leadership play?
- Are there models/stories/resources that we can share?

...The potential for violence and violation of human dignity in times of disaster are high. Survival is a key focus for those in need. For those in author-

... the best form of emergency

preparedness is building a caring society

—not only a society of good citizens but also

one of good neighbors ...

—Paul Born

ity, the need to protect the safety of the majority of people causes a kind of “triage” mentality, in which the dignity and rights of people can quickly be overlooked. However, in times of disaster, many people are prone to want to help not only themselves but also their neighbors. Amazing stories of people rising above their own fears and saving the lives of others arise from nearly every disaster....

It seems to me that places where people know and care for one another will be more resilient than places where this is not true. I suggest that place and connection cause reciprocal action. And I further suggest that collective knowing in a place would provide one of the best chances of survival, if this is acted upon. How might one build such places or prepare such places of resilience?

In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam of Harvard University provides unique evidence that in American life a sense of community and the reciprocal relationships that are bonded through time and mutual interest are in decline. His work provides evidence that when people do not know each other their ability to care and be cared for diminishes.

For this reason alone, the best form of emergency preparedness is building a caring society—not only a society of good citizens but also one of good neighbors, where people know and help each other and live together peacefully and personally in physical place.

Seven Key Elements

I conclude this inquiry by providing a summary of seven key elements described in the Philippines Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) paper, written by Lorna P. Victoria, Director of the *Centre for Disaster Preparedness*.

She cites seven principles that are commonly used and that represent core approaches to mobilizing people in disaster response.

1. *People's participation*—Community members are the main actors and propellers; while sustaining the CBDM process, they also directly share in the benefits of disaster preparedness, mitigation, and development.
2. *Priority for the most vulnerable groups, families, and people in the community*—In urban areas, the most vulnerable sectors are generally the urban poor and informal sector, while in the rural areas, these are the subsistence farmers, fisher folk, and indigenous people. Also vulnerable are the elderly, the differently abled, and children.
3. *Risk reduction measures are community-specific*—Risk reduction measures are identified after an analysis of the community's disaster risk (hazards, vulnerabilities, and capacities and consideration of varying perceptions of disaster risk).
4. *Existing coping mechanisms and capacities are recognized*—CBDM builds upon and strengthens existing coping strategies and capacities; most common social/organizational values and mechanism are cooperation, community/people's organizations, and local knowledge and resources.
5. *The aim is to reduce vulnerabilities by strengthening capacities; the goal is building disaster-resilient communities.*
6. *Link disaster risk reduction with development*—Address vulnerable conditions and causes of vulnerabilities.
7. *Outsiders have a supporting and facilitating role*—NGOs have a supporting, facilitating, and catalytic role. But while NGOs should plan for phase-out, government's role is integral to enable and institutionalize the CBDM process.

These seven principles ensure that responses are place-based and provide significant roles for those most affected. Even when viewing each point independently, it's difficult to argue against the usefulness of any one. To see them as seven principles to be acted upon in tandem, it's easy to see how engaging the wisdom of the people will improve emergency preparedness and mitigate the effects of disasters.

(For the full version of Born's paper, please visit www.wilsoncenter.org/cusp)



UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

2

I'm struck by how poorly we think about planning in the initial moments after a disaster and how long-standing the poor decisions we make are within communities. . . . We need to figure out how to immediately hear the long-term vision of the people we're trying to help rather than just imposing some preconceived plan.

—Matthew Jelacic, University of Colorado, Boulder

Propelled by the dire circumstances of disasters, their own desires to help, and the mandates of their organizations or governments, recovery workers rush in at the earliest possible moment to offer assistance. On the face of it, this seems like a reasonable response. But upon closer evaluation, it is clear that long-term, sustainable recovery requires a deeper understanding of the receiving community and its needs as it perceives them. Without this, misdirected funds and actions can have lasting consequences:

Unfortunately, for the first two months after the earthquake in Haiti, most of the aid didn't go to the marginal communities. It didn't touch the most vulnerable because the assessment of the situation was wrong. They did a kind of drive by assessment. There was no community direct participation. Some traditional institutions do exist in these communities but there was never any kind of serious connections with these local institutions.

—Louis Hervis Marcelin, University of Miami and Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development, Miami

The stories in the adjacent text box, told by Philip Thigo (Social Development Network, Nairobi), illustrate the level of disconnect between the relief workers' and the community members' perception of the problem and what is needed.

THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN RELIEF WORKERS' AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS

I'm going to start with two quick stories—one in an urban setting, and one in a rural area. In Kibera, what we call our celebrity slum in Nairobi, the government and civil society have built houses, so they call it a slum upgrading program. The government moved the slum dwellers to these new houses. In two weeks' time, the slum dwellers rented these houses and went back to the slum. That is my first story.

The second story is about a community where a couple of us were mapping issues of water points. A big NGO built and piped water from the river to the village. After two months, the water pipe was not working. It was actually sabotaged by the members of the community. They continued going back to the river.

What is the moral of these stories?

There are existing systems in communities that we seem to not understand. Many of us come with our own frames and our own lenses and think that we are bringing change and trying to help the community. But we didn't have a conversation to ask: Did the community really need those new houses, or did they need a water point in the village?

In Kibera, for those in the communities in the slums, their whole life system is there. Their houses are there, as are their places of work. The slums are organized in such a way that the people could have conversations with each other and they could earn a living. When they were moved into those new houses, they couldn't communicate anymore, they couldn't walk together anymore, they couldn't live together. They couldn't talk because we put them in a setting with which they were not familiar. And therefore they preferred to shun that and go back to how they had previously lived.

In the other instance, apparently going to the water point at the river was the only time people could talk. For women, it was the only time before they got married that they could leave their houses. It was the only way that there was continuity in the community. That is another word I want to use: continuity.

The problem is when we NGOs try to create new systems. We do not look at what exists in the community as knowledge. We do not see how to plug our formal thinking into a structure that we may not understand but that we could perhaps simply try to enhance, to provide better services. We think power doesn't exist in those communities. But there's a structure of power. It could be leadership that is not necessarily within the formal context that we understand. The fundamental point is: How can we, even during disasters, connect to these points of power?

—PHILIP THIGO

What leads to such a mismatch of action and need? Recovery work is a “system” with its own assumptions and mechanisms, and as such can sometimes overwhelm or disregard, rather than address, the needs of the people:

We look at violence and disaster as external concepts and not as applied to people like us who are not the first responders—the community; we’re really secondary responders. And our disaster response is actually done with great violence. We come with assumptions, we come with models, and we come with systems.

—*Philip Thigo*

We are in a time of big systems, and big systems don’t ask what do you need; they give to you what they have. . . . What we experienced in the war in Bosnia—the problems were Americans who brought solutions that didn’t fit in our situation.

—*Father Ivo Markovic, Face to Face Interreligious Service and Seminary of Franciscans, Sarajevo*

NGOs often have a set thing that they want to sell, “I want to give you this. How can I figure out how to define your community so that the thing I want to give you will be useful to you?” I think that we need to become more adaptive and creative when we go into communities.

—*Matthew Jelacic*

The seminar participants noted that there is often an assumption that the involvement of an NGO or international entity is essential for a successful recovery effort. In fact, some projects are not seen as sustainable unless an international NGO has an onsite office and runs the program. They spoke of how many good ideas are disregarded because of the lack of international NGO involvement and how this works against local capacity building and ownership of the problem and solution.

In some instances, those who come in with assistance create parallel systems and structures that are more than the local community can support and manage and actually weaken the local systems and governments. Lisa Schirch (3P Human Security and Eastern Mennonite University, Richmond) pointed out that “NGOs often hire the country’s best and brightest at salaries higher than local government or civil society organizations can afford. This can create parallel government structures that can undermine local capacity.”

In the developing world, the local political arena is often excluded from the conversation. The NGOs will come in and go to the community but will not bring in the local politicians. The citizens are torn between aligning with the nonprofits and foreigners with the money or with their own leaders. However fragile and filled with shadows the leaders may be, it doesn't mean they don't have light that they can contribute to the conversation. And when they're not involved, they're not forced to change and transform and then everybody becomes alienated.

— *Eliane Ubalijsoro, McGill University, Montreal*

Richard Stren (University of Toronto) pointed out how this can lead to the general weakening of the role of local governance:

There has been a decline in the ability of the system to respond to people over time. There has been a decline in the ability of government to do anything. That is partly a result of the kind of downsizing of government which is happening all over the world. But it's also partly a result of the disappearance of a good connection between people and the state.

Outside groups typically centralize relief efforts to make them easier to administer, but this often makes them more bureaucratic and less responsive to the needs of the affected community:

If I look at the programs I've been associated with where there has been large-scale foreign funding, I have always felt that they were programs that were developed by accountants. They were not developed by social scientists or even by economists. And that is why they produce these extraordinarily centralized processes of delivery. Governments accept them because it enhances the power of the politicians and of the bureaucracy. If you look at the procedures that are imposed upon those who are supposed to manage these funds, they are beyond their capacity to fulfill those accounting procedures. They actually hire people to fill in those forms and those details.

— *Arif Hasan, Orangi Pilot Project and Urban Resource Centre, Karachi*

Participants described the complicated relationships among NGOs, donors, and the citizens and governments they try to assist. The responders tend to have an institutional relationship with the government—which can make them hesitant to criticize the government for fear that their mission will be shut down. This can also keep them from supporting the new leadership that sometimes emerges during disasters. The new power base can seem subversive,

ENCOURAGING AND ENABLING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND REAL PARTNERSHIPS AMONG NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT

I write this with the perspective of having spent almost fifteen years working on the Astarte Project, which focuses on increasing access to reproductive health care in crisis settings. We believe that working with leaders, communities, and local groups on the ground is essential to making this happen. . . .

This is not intended to argue for an either/or—local versus international NGO (INGO) or government versus NGO—model of disaster response, but rather to encourage and enable community participation and real partnerships among INGOs, local NGOs, and the government. As a recent Merlin report—*Is Haiti's Health System Any Better?*—highlights, this is sorely lacking in the current model of humanitarian response:

“Local NGOs were severely affected by the quake but they still managed to mobilize in order to help others,” said one director of a Haitian NGO. “However INGOs thought they were coming into a complete vacuum—*le vide total*.”

“According to local reports, international medical teams moved in and set up ad hoc operations without much consultation, permission, or negotiation with the government or local health care providers. Any assessments made were localized, focusing exclusively on needs, when a combined assessment of local health worker capacity would have been far more effective. ‘Everybody came,’ said one local NGO manager. ‘They installed themselves as they liked where they liked. . . .’”

“Instead of finding themselves working alongside incoming international teams, local NGOs and health workers were bypassed and sidelined by the wave of INGOs and clinical teams sweeping into their city.”

INGOs were not acting maliciously but rather acting with the very best of intentions. Their priority and mandate is to save lives and to meet the immediate needs of survivors of a catastrophic disaster. It is a chaotic situation, and they are under pressure from their donors (both government and individual) to be fully operational and providing services as soon as possible. There is a real desire to coordinate and complement rather than duplicate services, but the immediate needs and competing demands of INGOs are great. UN agencies and INGOs do not have anyone responsible for ensuring that local and community groups are at the table and that true partnerships are formed or that community voices are heard. This needs to be an explicit mandate of the cluster system / humanitarian response. . . .

I keep coming back to the same question: What will it take to shift the mindset of the international humanitarian community? I consider that a vital first step toward breaking down the existing barriers between relief and development, local and INGOs and the government, and to recognize the critical role of the community in both the response and the rebuilding.

—MERIWETHER BEATTY, JSI RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C., *excerpt from Beatty's seminar paper, "ASTARTE: RESILIENCE AND RESPECT."*



MERIWETHER BEATTY

so NGOs and governments are hesitant to get involved and tend to focus on the old, familiar, and established power brokers. This can be an obstacle to developing a relationship with the citizenry and lead to a toxic relationship with the press, because the NGOs do not want the press to damage their relationship with the government:

In Kenya, we have a history of bad governance. But the disaster in Kenya provided an opportunity for a new and modern leadership to emerge. But the problem with people like us in NGOs, because of the patronage system, we still wanted to work with the old existing power systems. We're not trying to give space or credence to this new emerging power.

In most cases this new power is young and doesn't fit within our frames, into our systems and therefore doesn't even understand our language. The new leadership does not even pretend to want to understand it. There's sort of a spirit that is beyond resilience, it's almost subversive, even disruptive in many ways.

We come in as NGOs trying to tie people to mechanics, to frameworks, to roundtables, to caucuses, to workshops, to seminars, to think, to assess. But the people are saying there are many ways of knowing, yours is not the only one.

They will articulate themselves in many ways. It's up to us to provide those channels. They may not be speaking in this very formal language. They speak in a way that is a challenge to us to provide tools and frameworks to begin to capture that essence. How are we able to measure and capture the history and the memory? How are we able to help articulate that voice in a way so that it begins to inform policies?

—*Philip Thigo*

There is a tendency of people

in the work of relief and rehabilitation, to apply balm to the wounds of poverty and depravation.

But we are not really trying to change the causes of that depravation and poverty.

—Arif Hasan

Problems of scale, process, and speed were cited as some of the key reasons for the disconnect between recovery efforts and the locals' needs. Underlying all these tensions is the responders' assumption that they have a better understanding of what is needed and important.

RECONCILING AGENDAS

What may seem like arrogance is sometimes just the relief worker trying to respond in the best way they know how—a way that has worked in the past—to address the drastic situation and basic needs with little time to perceive the more subtle or nuanced needs of the community. Frederick Burkle (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard School of Public Health), a long-term public health professional, reported that for many years public health groups took care of and protected people, but they did not think to involve them in the recovery effort: “For so long, one of the myths in recovery from a disaster was the fact that we protected the citizens, they weren't even part of the emergency management and the recovery. It was something we were supposed to do around them and yet increasingly we recognize there's much more talent there than we even knew.” Another participant pointed out the following:

So many agencies, NGO's, governments, have their own agenda. They will try to intervene and have the community follow their agenda. From my own experience, I think we have to forget ourselves and focus on the community's own agenda. I think we should have the community assess themselves. Assess not only their needs but assess how prone they are to disaster and how to curb the disaster. We, the NGOs, should just observe, support them, help them figure out the facts, and then let them

LESSONS FROM AN ARCHITECT

I am an architect and planner who has worked extensively with communities. So, when there is a disaster, I am asked by NGOs, community-based organizations, and government and donor agencies to help out. My work has been to find technical and governance solutions for relief and rehabilitation. In this process, I have learned a few things:

1. An involvement and control of the relief and rehabilitation process empowers communities. It improves their relationship with each other, makes it more equitable with state organizations, and highlights aspects of injustice and deprivation that have been invisible. Due to this visibility, they become issues and the need to address them arises.
2. A properly designed community controlled involvement can in the long run create a better physical and social environment and develop employment and entrepreneurship. This cannot happen in the short term.
3. The cheapest and most easily available material for reconstruction of homes and infrastructure is the rubble of collapsed buildings. If tools are provided for its extraction and use, the process of healing and hope begins.
4. The above can only be done through a decentralized system of disaster management, relief and rehabilitation. Centralized systems alienate individuals and communities and obstruct their involvement in post-disaster situations.

—*Excerpt from Arif Hasan's seminar paper, "SOME COMMENTS ON COMMUNITY HEALING IN TIMES OF DISASTER"*

In Kenya, a lot of outside people

came in but they didn't really talk to Kenyans about what they should do. As one person said, "Kenya is too important to be left to Kenyans alone."

—Richard Stren

make their own decisions. Even though [we might disagree with their decisions] we should let them collaborate and manage their own decision. From that collaboration, the community can cope more and more and even plan their own disaster preparedness plan.

—*Bunchar Pongpanich, Buddhadasa Indhapanno Archives and Nakhon-Bovornrat Cultural Group, Thailand*

When the responding agency or organization disregards the priorities of the community, it not only creates negative feelings toward the recovery workers and their efforts, but it also means that the recovery workers are missing a valuable asset—the community itself. By engaging the community and acknowledging their priorities, the responders are also showing respect, a key aspect in relationship building with the community:

We in the agencies who have those roles to respond to disaster and emergencies are ill prepared to deal with the situation. How do we take account of the community's ability to cope, the community's ability to support not just itself but maybe other adjacent or distant communities suffering from the same problems? From my own experience working with U.S. government, UN agencies, and NGOs, I can tell you that when we go into an emergency response situation we're really not prepared to engage the community and bring out their strengths for resilience or coping or responding to the problem. We're not tapping into a major element that could help mitigate the problems.

—*Dennis Warner, Catholic Relief Services, Baltimore*

Somebody said that in New Orleans people wanted us to save their pets, but we knew they needed water. Those are not mutually exclusive desires. Somebody needs to come in and facilitate a balance between that need and

When there is a disaster

there is a collective willingness in the world to do something about that and millions if not billions of dollars flow in. There is an immediate response that isn't just about individual altruism, there's a collective ethos that occurs during a disaster. And when they give they're expecting a humanitarian act to take place.

I think there's something there that we can tap into because people don't want bad development, they want really good development.

—Leonard Doyle

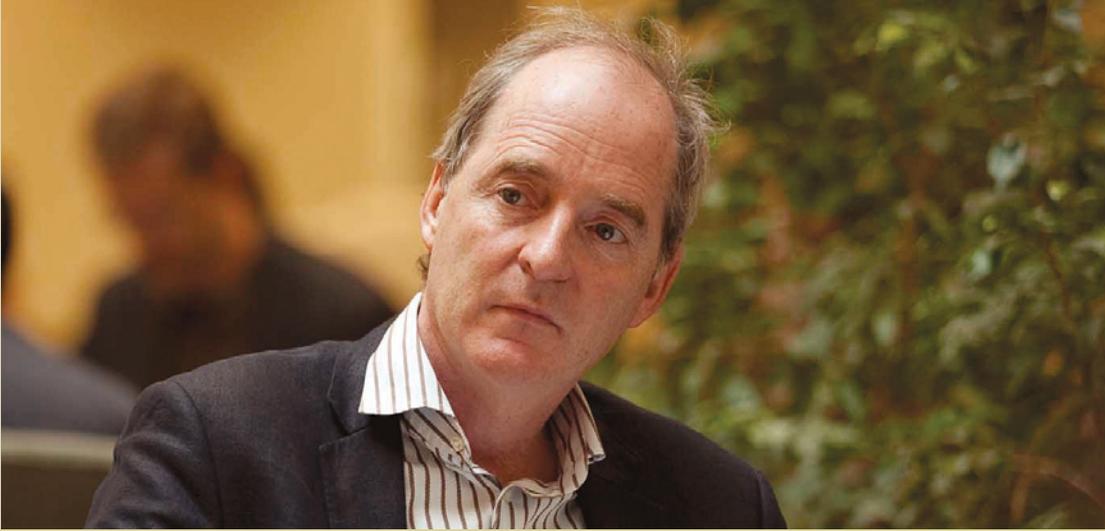
that desire of the community. If they need their pets taken care of, then they need their pets taken care of. We shouldn't judge or limit that. Even if we can't do everything all at once we need to at least respect the desire of the people.

—*Matthew Jelacic*

In her paper, Lisa Schirch described how the lack of knowledge of a community or culture leads responders to discount the local capacity to solve their problems:

While internationals talk about lack of local capacity, I see the opposite. I see local people creating solutions to their own problems. I see internationals, often lacking language capacity or cultural sensitivity and context awareness, come in with a “we know best” attitude that undermines or ignores local capacity. . . . In the chaos following disaster or war, local civil society organizations and leaders are often left out of humanitarian assistance efforts. International military forces, international government assistance, and international humanitarian NGOs descend on the disaster-affected region often without knowing much about what civil society resources exist locally. . . . Often, humanitarian aid presumes a lack of local leadership or resilience. Existing capacity is overlooked or seen as “difficult” to engage with because local civil society may not be organized in a way that makes it easy for outsiders to engage.

As the conversation progressed, it seemed there was a great deal of awareness of the distance between many relief workers and the communities affected by the disaster. In fact, Leonard Doyle (International Organization for



LEONARD DOYLE

Migration, Haiti) pointed out that sometimes there are barriers and obstacles that keep the community from voicing its needs:

Last March in Haiti, a colleague of mine found people who had not received aid and had not had a visit from anybody three months after the earthquake. He found one agricultural outreach chap and brought him to the UN log base which is like getting into an armed camp. He couldn't get him in and eventually smuggled him in through the back of a land rover and had him address the famous cluster section dealing with the conditions of people in rural Cité Soleil. When he asked this chap why he was interested in GPS machines and mapping, his response was "At least nobody will be able to say they didn't know about us. At least we will be able to project our own reality onto a map and say this is where we live and this is where we are." It's quite shocking that you have to go to those lengths to deal directly with the community.

Working across disciplines, agencies need to keep the community engaged in the recovery process:

Quite honestly, I think a little over three decades ago we did fairly well in bringing communities back into recovery and then moving into rehabilitation. But things have obviously changed; we are actually having an increased frequency of large-scale natural disasters and post-conflict issues. I must admit I really thought that we could handle pretty much anything that has come across our table. But we've come to the conclusion recently that we don't have all the answers. Two things have happened. One, very healthily, we have recognized that disaster management is just not a health discipline, it is the first multidisciplinary discipline including social sci-

ences, anthropology, religions, etc. Increasingly we are looking to those elements of society to come up with the answers that we can no longer supply. Things are a lot more complex. We have to move outside of our traditional disaster management assets, look much more, not only with [other disciplines] but certainly the community.

During the 2003 SARS pandemic, the majority of people were actually taken care of by various forms of caretakers in the community that quite honestly the health agencies didn't even know existed. So we have to start including them in disaster planning. Large numbers of the populations on a daily basis get most of their strength from ethnic, religious, even business groups that they're tied to. Yet, we have not really recognized or included them in disaster management or even thinking about them being a form of resiliency.

—*Frederick Burkle*

ENABLING RELIEF WORKERS TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

How do those involved in disaster relief reconcile the need to quickly respond to emergencies and the need to take time to engage the community and understand their priorities? Many of the participants pointed out that it was particularly difficult to ascertain the community's needs when they often lack a prior relationship or knowledge of the people they are there to serve:

Often the outsider is asked to go places where they don't have any long-term connections or knowledge. There is pressure to get it done and the sense that the nuances will be sorted out by somebody else. I'm hearing very much that that's a failing strategy. How do you [take the time to make connections, learn about the community] when there is an overriding pressure to be fast, to see results, in many ways for the right reasons of alleviating suffering in particularly acute circumstances? Is part of the solution to specialize and build that knowledge ahead of time? Does it mean building those links in an anticipatory fashion? Or is it breaking the notion of an immediate humanitarian response versus development?

—*Geoffrey Dabelko*

As Geoffrey Dabelko pointed out, the current strategy is insufficient. However, the changes he puts forth require a significant overhaul of the recovery process. David Kaufman (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C.), picked up on those points:

TEN IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM THE NAM KHEM COMMUNITY

In 2004, the Nam Khem Community, on the Andaman coast of Southern Thailand, was devastated by the tsunami. Thousands lost their lives, only 200 of the 1,566 houses were left and 350 from 420 fishing boats were destroyed. Nam Khem helped themselves by organizing temporary shelters, mobilizing community groups, promoting a saving plan, setting up a community bank, promoting occupational development, reconstructing new houses and developing their community's disaster risk management plan. The Nam Khem Community has ten important lessons to share about community responses to disasters:

1. *The determination and commitment of the people was an important precondition.* The strong determination of the community members to help each other ensured that all members stayed together in the same temporary shelter where they could look after each other and share their resources.
2. *Alliances were built to provide continuous guidance and support.*
3. *Continuous expansion and establishment of community groups,* ranging from the local closely linked coffee shop group to various occupational groups. These provided a common space to relieve stress, a positive way to spend time, a way to prepare for any future disaster and a way to plan effective services and assistance to other disaster-affected victims.
4. *Their eagerness for learning* was reflected in how whenever they found that they did not understand or were unclear about a matter—they would form a study group and search for a mentor who had more experience and knowledge to come and provide advice.
5. *Getting hands-on experience and applying knowledge to action in all involved aspects.*
6. *The mobilization of funds, finances, and a saving plan became a successful community welfare system.*
7. *The consistent and active coordination and communication with all relevant sectors.*
8. *The community has been visionary in developing future sustainable community plans.*
9. *Community disaster management plan* by which drills and constant practice are being conducted so as to reflect commitment and awareness.
10. *Compassion toward other victims,* not being narrow-mindedly focused only on themselves is another imperative characteristic which has grown wider and stronger.

—*Excerpt from Bunchar Pongpanich's seminar paper,
"FROM INSECURE / BADLY AFFECTED TO A STRONG AND MORE PREPARED COMMUNITY: NAM
KHEM, A FISHERFOLK VILLAGE IN THE MIDST OF 2004 TSUNAMI."*

How do you balance

the perceived need for speed by the relief workers with the need for community influence? In the heat of the moment, it's difficult to slow down and spend a half a day talking to community leaders, when your organization is saying you have to get out there and start setting something up.

—Dennis Warner

At FEMA, we are aggressively questioning the whole paradigm behind how we practice disaster management issues in the United States. We are seeking to advance an approach that moves us from what I would characterize as very government centric in its conception to one that is community centric in construction and in orientation. To change to an approach that recognizes that the public is part of the solution first and foremost and has to be part of it in a meaningful way throughout that entire process.

It's challenging because while we are able to get a lot of head nodding to the ideas that we're putting forward when we speak to the practitioner community and the professionals in emergency management, who are largely inside of government, there is a lot less clarity once you move beyond the rhetorical level of dialogue to what does this actually mean that we do differently? What does this mean that we do differently in FEMA? What does this mean that we do differently as a local emergency manager in the United States? How do I interact differently in my job? With whom and around what set of issues and using what set of skills and approaches? There is a tremendous opportunity to reshape the direction of the field and take advantage of the fiscal constraint that every level of government in this country is experiencing. It can either cause us to retrench into what we're most comfortable with, or completely redefine the value curve that we're using in the way we're approaching what we do. I sincerely hope that we do the latter.

Change can be difficult. To be effective, everyone—the communities, governments, NGOs, and the like—needs to be involved in the discussions about what needs to be changed and how to put those changes in motion.



MATTHEW JELACIC AND RICHARD STREN

Participants agreed that it must be a long-term, development perspective, not just a short-term, reactive response.

To increase capacity at the local level, participants suggested that relief workers require their own kind of capacity building. This learning is in part an “unlearning” or letting go of some of their default ways of handling disaster relief, and being willing to explore new ways of interacting with communities. In his seminar paper, Matthew Jelacic wrote of the qualities needed for humanitarian workers:

Effective innovation in design and engineering for traumatic urbanization requires both empathy for the poorest people on earth and a willingness to develop nonconventional approaches to materials, methods of production and their deployment. Humanitarian aid workers, their agencies, NGOs, and contractors must develop both the capacity to hear the social and cultural desires of a community and develop the capacity to improvise effective short-term strategies for care that lend themselves to long-term solutions. . . .

One of the sorely-needed tools to promote community resilience is practical guidance for mitigating conflicts in disaster-affected communities. Despite a wealth of literature on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding, there are few operational guides for assisting humanitarian works in specific sectoral interventions, such as emergency water supplies, housing, camp locations, and so forth, to deal with community conflicts over allocation of resources, ethnic tensions, and security. Current efforts to develop peace-building tools are occurring in long-term development projects. They need to be expanded to short-term interventions in emergencies and disasters.

GRASSROOTS LEADERS CREATE A COMMUNITY FORUM FOR CITÉ SOLEIL

For the residents of Cité Soleil, a large slum in Port-au-Prince, the lack of voice in critical decisions that shape their daily lives keeps them from having a stake in the development projects that have recently been or are currently being implemented. This state of affairs also perpetuates a situation whereby the local government cannot effectively respond to the expressed and pressing needs of suffering communities. A community participatory study revealed, in fact, that despite the countless projects currently being undertaken, community members feel that very little improvement has taken place in their precarious conditions.

These conditions inspired grassroots leaders to come together to create a Community Forum for Cité Soleil. The following objectives were established by the forum:

- Channel the voice of community members so that they can make themselves heard by local, national, and international agencies, and governmental, and nongovernmental institutions.
- Generate a hierarchy of priorities based on the local population's expressed and locally validated grievances and needs.
- Make these priorities the basis for systematic community programs to be implemented by prevailing institutions, with ongoing and direct input from and participation by local residents (as program planners and implementers, not just as recipients of program "benefits").
- Constitute an entity to provide local oversight and ongoing evaluation of the execution of new and existing development programs, and to serve as a permanent conduit for input from the community.

The forum was conceived as an institution to strengthen civil society by including and giving a voice to local associations and initiatives with the expectation of positive actions on the part of local government, international interventionists, and charitable organizations. Further, because it derives its authority from the people who live in Cité Soleil, the forum creates a fully legitimate space for negotiation. The forum especially serves the goal of nonviolent transformation to produce new realities with new potentialities. In the context of human misery and poverty in the community, the forum emerged as a beacon of emerging hope focused on healing fragmented communities. In this, the forum stands as a force for freeing the community from the stranglehold of polarizing social hatred and represents the possibility of reinvigorating a paralyzed condition. By defining new terms of social dialogue, the forum is helping to build resilience in the face of desperation, to temper dangerous urgencies, and to channel the community's collective powers toward building new institutions.

—*Excerpt from Louis Hervis Marcelin's seminar paper,
"TWO TALES: ONE STORY."*

The relief agencies

and the workers need to think about the communities
and the people as their partners, as true stakeholders
in what they're doing.

—Dennis Warner

David Kaufman pointed out that one of the greatest challenges is getting the attention and consideration for what in our hard-hitting, fast-paced, results-oriented time is often seen as inefficient:

We spent a lot of time articulating the tremendous need for the kinds of activities that typically get looked at as inefficient: creating space, creating conversations, creating relationships. In budget crises, these are the first things to go and the last things to get attention in performance measurement matrices. And yet, what I've heard here is that taking the time to do that right up front is what is critical. So the very set of activities that may be crucial for getting more effective outcomes [on the ground] are inherently not viewed as efficient in isolation.

Participants spoke of the need for the professionalization of humanitarian actors, including training that encapsulates the importance of understanding communities and creating spaces to allow for deeper understanding and relationship building:

How do we get more involved and make a positive contribution to the professionalization of humanitarian actors? What could be some common standards for how humanitarian professionals could develop their skill sets and apply them in various situations? A checklist that an external actor could use as they come into a community and then understand more about the community works quite well. But you have to accompany the tool with training. You just can't accomplish everything with a checklist.

—Anita van Breda, *World Wildlife Fund, Washington, D.C.*



DENNIS WARNER

I know from my own experience that some communities are much better at coping with problems than others. I don't know what the reasons for this are, whether it's history or tradition or economic resources. But it's important to know what is the likely response in a country—knowing what it has been or could be should make it easier to somehow plug into it, use it and mobilize it. The challenge is to translate these concepts of community resilience, community engagement, into some kind of practical guidelines that the response agencies can be aware of and use when they go in to provide support. I think this is something we need, something we don't have.

—*Dennis Warner*

Maintaining the trust of a community means that organizations and agencies uphold their agreements:

In New Orleans, the Red Cross came and was offering to help people with building materials. But they said that they needed to a needs assessment of everyone first. So they asked a local organization to help them with this. They acquiesced but only after arranging that if they got the people in to do a needs assessment then the Red Cross had to do a follow up within three weeks. The Red Cross agreed and hundreds of people stood in the rain, waiting to fill out the forms. Eventually 300 forms were filled out. Within three weeks how many of the applications were actually followed up? The answer is zero.

—*Liz McCartney*

This is the problem of outside agencies having a different agenda and being responsible to different authorities. There are lots of examples of groups coming in, getting everyone worked up or starting a process and then

just walking out. How do local people collectively make outside agencies accountable? And researchers need to be held accountable as well. Community members, spend so much time with them, tell them what they know, and often they don't hear from them again.

—*Richard Stren*

A common thread throughout this conversation was the role that donors play and the importance of including them in the discussion.

While many of these lessons have been learned over the years somehow they're still not making it to the donor level. In the evaluations of the chaos of the post-disaster Haiti, the conclusions are actually going the opposite direction.

At the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the office of the UN Humanitarian Aid organizers, the coordinators decided not to include Haitian organizations in their coordination because it was so chaotic to include them. Instead of trying to figure out new structures or mechanisms for including them, they're just excluding them. That's definitely what I've seen in Afghanistan—the exclusion of Afghans in the international community's response and organization. Those of us who see the chaos on the ground see the benefits of going slow to go fast. This fantasy of fast action is similar to the fantasy of the firepower solution. The fantasy of fast action delays the process in the long term. You have to go slow to go fast. You have to include insiders with outsiders in the planning and response. I would love to see some convening of donors to think about incentives and structures for allowing that to happen.

—*Lisa Schirch*

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on the ground see the benefits of going slow to go fast.

The fantasy of fast action delays the process in the long term. You have to go slow to go fast. You have to include insiders with outsiders in the planning and response.

—Lisa Schirch

In terms of how we shift this paradigm, I support the idea of working with funders. In the work that we do, we try to think of shifting the paradigm by being able to demonstrate the value of integrating the environment in disaster response and encouraging others especially on the ground, front line people. But then we also need to target their bosses back at home in Geneva or New York or Port-au-Prince to make sure that they provide support and policies to back up doing something differently on the ground. And we need to work with the international global community, particularly the funders, to make sure that they're a part of that equation as well. I would encourage us to think about how we go forward from here, how can we take a multi-pronged approach to addressing these issues in trying to affect this kind of change.

—Anita van Breda

Participants shared various methods of engaging with communities. Paul Born (Tamarack—An Institute for Community Engagement, Ontario) shared an experience he had with the facilitating technique of David Pecaut, Toronto City Summit Alliance:

David brought us all together to explore an issue. The first thing he did was have us spend several meetings just asking questions, all the questions that could be asked. Then he had some of us take some of those questions away and bring back facts about those questions. When we brought back the facts, we started discussing them.

I sat down with David and said I really like this method because it allows us to have something to work on together and it seems that if we get rid of our questions then we will be able to move on. He said that's one way to think about it. But really what has to happen in these processes is that

THE STAGES THAT PEOPLE EXPERIENCE IN A SITUATION OF DISASTER

It is necessary to have insight into the experiences of disappointed and suffering people, to recognize the situation they are experiencing and the condition of their spirit. . . . In a state of disaster, the solidarity and mobilization of all people are natural reactions. The community comes together around reliable institutions and persons with moral gravity. Community systems like schools, medicine, universities, religions, the media, and humanitarian organizations become more important than politicians. Readiness to help, to encourage people, to reduce fear, and to build unity is strong. People acting in that direction enjoy trust. People declared to be plunderers, thieves, and traitors become extremely endangered. Such mechanisms of decisiveness and black/white thinking are very present in the language of the community.

The chart below, based on experiences from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, illustrates the stages that people experience in a situation of disaster. Each stage is specific and asks for a special method of acting. The first condition is to understand the state of spirit of degraded persons, to be able to address the pain they experience, and to speak and act in ways that are conducive to healing wounds and opening a new perspective—giving hope.

—Excerpt from Father Ivo Marković's seminar paper, "EXPERIENCES FROM THE WAR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 1992–1995."





FATHER IVO MARKOVIC

we have to move beyond what we know. We all enter into a conversation knowing and holding on to something. And we have to move from that to a common knowing. We need a process to allow us to do that. Getting rid of the questions was to help us talk about the facts. Then once you have all the facts on the table, everybody has a common language. Everyone knows the same thing.

Todd Walters (International Peace Park Expeditions, Boston) shared concepts from the field of experiential learning that fit in with the discussions:

The first is the concept of a shared mental model and the idea that to be successful you need everyone on the scene to know what they're doing, what they're responsible for, and what others are doing and what others are responsible for. If you have that shared mental model then collaboration becomes more efficient and the process more effective. The second concept is the idea of an action learning cycle. We do something, we reflect on what we did, then we strategize based on that reflection, and then we try it again using the new strategy. The action learning cycle is something that's continuous over time. The recommendations that emerge through the action learning cycle can start to take hold and change the way that the system is set up, organized and managed.

GOING SLOW TO GO FAST: THE TENSION BETWEEN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

There is also a lack of communication within the disaster response field. The tension between immediate action and longer-term planning is seen in the

It seems to me that what we're talking

about is trying to put the human back into humanitarian. I think what is very important is that we recognize the humanity of both those in need and those trying to serve those in need as a starting point for how we move forward.

—Blair Ruble

general divide between those in recovery work and those in development work. Many participants advocated for a greater link between relief work and development work. For recovery efforts to be successful over the long term, it is important for relief workers to have a sense of the developmental aspect—and for development workers to see the urgency in the immediate relief aspect.

However, there are many aspects of the work and processes that separate the two. According to Dennis Warner, they tend to be different types of people who focus and specialize on different pieces of the problem:

Development workers sometimes look upon the relief people as cowboys: They jump in quickly, do their thing, and then they leave. They don't have to worry about any outcomes or even the mess they may have caused. And the relief workers think the development people simply don't understand how to solve problems in the heat of a crisis situation, that they're simply not in touch with emergency needs. There are constraints that have caused this kind of dichotomy between relief and development. The funding for relief activities usually comes from different accounts than development activities. So it's not easy to merge the two into a seamless whole.

Meriwether Beatty pointed out how this leads to a largely unacknowledged competition between the two approaches:

I think it's important to acknowledge the competition that is inherent in a lot of this. I think that's not something we talked about. There is competition between these different worlds and it's important to break down those barriers. It comes back to what we've all been saying about creating space and coming together in dialogue and discussion.



ARIF HASAN

There is also the need to see the big picture, to understand that recovery takes time and a long-term commitment. Our emphasis on the quick response, and even more the quick resolution, can undermine the long-term effort that recovery requires, on one hand:

It's frustrating for me to see the one-year anniversaries of disasters and the common media question, Why is the recovery process taking so long? Why haven't we come further than we have? In my work my approach has been to say, Why don't we take all this money and energy and apply it so that we're really getting to real, sustainable development? The media is a double-edged sword in terms of the positive and negative contributions it makes to a more sustainable recovery and reconstruction process. We need to work with media and do a better job of communicating why it does sometimes take longer to do the right thing and communicate the threats and risks that we may create if we try to rebuild in two or three or four or five years what may have taken generations to build.

—*Anita van Breda*

On the other hand, speaking from her experience in New Orleans, Liz McCartney cautioned that though it is important to have some perspective of the time it takes for full recovery, some sense of urgency is critical in ensuring that recovery efforts get the attention and financing they need:

In communities that are affected by human-made or natural disasters we have to get enough people back so we can start to create a tipping point, if you will, and then the economy starts to come back. Then the community starts to feel it can take care of itself. With every passing month it gets harder to get to that tipping point. As we think about developing processes or community planning there has to be a tremendous sense of urgency. If



LIZ MCCARTNEY

we look at someone who is in their eighties the amount of time that they have left in their life is just a small slice compared to the amount of time as someone in their thirties.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of creating the sense of urgency while also respecting the process to facilitate communication and discussion, and planning. About two years after Hurricane Katrina, a gentleman who worked for a large and well respected social service agency said to me, "You know Liz, you guys are looking at this all wrong. You're looking at this like we're two years after Katrina." I said, "Sure, because we are two years after Katrina."

He said, "Because of the size of this disaster you have to look at this as if it's six months after Katrina, so we're actually doing okay."

But we weren't six months after, we were two years after. And two years after, we still had people dying every day because of the impact of this storm. We have to get people out of the mind-set that doing post-disaster work is really complicated. It does involve a lot of complex processes. But how do we drill down to the most basic and simple communication that will result in action and response?



SEEING COMMUNITIES WITH EYES WIDE OPEN 3

Assumptions about communities and local governance can be counterproductive to relief efforts. As Louis HERN Marcelin pointed out, by assuming that a community lacks internal politics or that the local governing body suffers from corruption, “we alienate the capacity for the states or local governance or public institutions to transform. We need to map out not only the assets but also witness the lines of fracture” in both communities and local governance—so that what we build on is positive and sustainable. In this regard, another participant had pertinent experience:

I bring quite a skeptical view of the notion of community and quite a scared view of what communities can accomplish when they come together. I run the African Center for Migration in Society in Johannesburg which does a lot of interdisciplinary work on how migration is transforming society and migrants. African refugees are themselves trying to address their own issues either by moving out of a community or by trying to reestablish themselves within a new one. They're particularly drawn by our extensive work on communities or individuals that have been victimized by what could be called xenophobic violence or inter-community conflict.

In urban Africa, there are these very new, highly urbanized cities where you can't really say there's a community. There's a group of people who have come in and are trying to establish themselves. So what does it mean to establish a community? How can you do that in a way that's inclusive and can respond to crisis? How do you involve the government where appropriate? How do you build community institutions as sustainable and inclusive?

—Loren Landau, *University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*

We have to understand that

at a fundamental level we are all human.

We have all the potential for good and bad regardless of our level of education, regardless of the level and nature of power that we have.

—Louis Herns Marcelin

Communities take many different forms, as does their capacity for resilience:

Everyone is talking about community as something that's very much space bound. But if you're talking about how communities deal with resilience, we have to look at diaspora communities. That's not just Liberians living in New York, it's people in rural areas and how they support urban people when there's an urban disaster—providing them a place to go, resources or even just emotional or social support. So I think that the local is useful but that's not all there is. When you're talking about network communities, these networks mobilize through cellphones, through sending information, those are decentered, delocalized communities. If we don't talk about those as a resource for resilience we're missing out on a very big thing.

—Loren Landau

Communities can also be a source of oppression. As Loren Landau pointed out, the decision to move away from such a community can be a form of resilience:

When you talk about power, you talk about oppression, moving somewhere else is a form of resilience. It is a way of getting out of what is a hostile or oppressive situation. We have to recognize that moving itself is a form of resilience. Violence and violent mobilization also builds a certain type of community and a solidarity that's often very unhealthy and based on an ethos of violence or on a bounded notion of community. So when we're talking about community's ability to respond, we have to understand what they're responding to. Some of the same tools and analytical



LOREN LANDAU

approaches might be there but what might be very strong and good in one instance might be very dangerous in another.

Eliane Ubalijoro stressed the importance of recognizing the impact of poverty:

Another point is the issue of poverty and how that affects tensions that are exacerbated by disasters. You can have a place where there's a major disaster happening but if it wasn't a place of poverty the chances of violence happening after the disaster are minimized. But in a case where you have both poverty and disaster—how is that taken into account?

Some countries were irked by the U.S. military coming in to Haiti. But the capacity to have 200 planes coming in every day to Port-au-Prince, when the capacity had been ten flights a day, was amazing. But international pressure came in and said there's too much military intervention so the U.S. had to pull out. But as they pulled out the violence came in and who were the most victims—children and women. So it's important to know how much poverty is there in the space and how much risk associated to violence was putting this in a post disaster and post conflict situation.

Different histories, institutions, and cultures have shaped the manner and speed in which communities experience change:

In Bosnia we have very traditional communities with stable institutions and good mechanisms that are useful for the rebuilding of community. . . . The traditional community is very difficult to change but the changes are very long term.

—*Father Ivo Markovic*



LOUIS HERNES MARCELIN

The idea of community involvement, community participation, community input has been around for a long time. In our context in Haiti, the challenge is to see how do you actualize these things. The society has been completely plagued by fragility at all levels— societal, governmental, institutional, everything. Then the earthquake hit and the cosmology has become fragmented. So how do you reconstitute your world and position yourself within it? And what kind of formal sociality will emerge out of these kinds of crises? In a situation of such compounded levels of fragility, how do you put yourself together as a society? How do you create all the possibilities for politics to happen and the future to be envisioned?

—*Louis HERNES Marcelin*

John Katunga Murhula spoke to the challenges for communities who have excluded from leadership for generations:

I am from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the center of many of the human-made disasters. . . . I'm a strong believer that the quality of relationship of people is key to the capacity for people to sustain and resist disasters and also to pass back to normal life. Africa is an example. After five hundred years of slavery, 200 years of colonization, 40 years of dictatorship and one-party system, today Africa is struggling to find its feet in democracy. The people are cooperating together but they're completely left out by the institutions and their leaders most of the time. How do we create a scenario where that intelligence of people, that wisdom of people, is translated into institutions that can lead us?

In a situation of such compounded

levels of fragility, how do you put yourself together as a society?

—Louis HERNs Marcelin

UNDERSTANDING THE INTANGIBLE STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITIES

The long-term success of recovery work depends in some degree on engaging the strengths of the community. For this, one must understand what resources and strengths the community brings to the table. It is a matter of recognizing that the intangibles are as important, and perhaps more important, than the more tangible things on which relief workers tend to focus:

The difficulties are language, culture, and oftentimes the sense of the outsiders. They don't want to get into too many discussions because the local people will talk about "irrelevant" things. They may want to protect a temple or maybe they're worried about their animals. And of course the relief worker feels that's not the real issue. He (or she) feels that the issue is to get food or medical attention into the community. So poor communication can lead to conflicts between the two parties. How can that be overcome? I don't have the answer but it certainly is not minimized or avoided by not having those communication linkages.

—*Dennis Warner*

We're dealing with inherently social processes and while issues of power are very important so are issues of trust. I've heard some presentations over the past months around how the nature of trust is shifting, at least in U.S. society. It isn't that people trust less but where they place their trust is shifting considerably from large institutions, be they government or private, to networks. People are using networks, their social networks, not just technologically, to navigate the storm of information that we're dealing with every day. The average person is exposed to three times as much informa-

tion every day today as they were in the mid-1980s, and the rate of increase is 30 percent a year. People use their social networks as sentinels, as validators, to try to identify what information is important to them, whether it's accurate and how relevant it is.

They also use the networks as platforms for local action. When we talk about resilience, we're really talking about resilience in a social context, not just in a built environment context; we're inherently talking about capacity for local collective action. We're talking about social cohesion and social trust.

The trust is almost always strongest at the most local point of connection. Even if you're dealing with a virtual network, it's the most local points of connection in that network where trust is strongest. So there is tremendous opportunity there and at the same time, it reinforces Dennis's comment about the difficult challenges for agencies from outside of communities to respond and how important it is that they understand how those communities work, what is that community's DNA and how many different communities are inhabiting the affected area and how are they interacting.

—*David Kaufman*

Once one sees that recovery is part of a social process, it becomes clear that the social, intangible processes and relationships are key to a community's strength and resilience in the face of a disaster. Part of the difficulty of an outsider linking to the strengths of a community is that these intangible strengths, such as a sense of hope, can be difficult to identify.

In his seminar paper, Arif Hasan writes that a sense of hope was part of his community's success: "Perhaps we were successful then because there was hope for a better future, a feeling of euphoria at being free. I often think of this relationship between hope and the rehabilitation process." Father Ivo Markovic also wrote of the importance of hope that is based in the reality of their circumstances:

People must have hope with very realistic expectations and their hope must not be tricked. It is necessary to have insight in the experiences of disappointed and suffering people, to recognize the situation they are experiencing and a condition of their spirit, . . . to understand the state of spirit of degraded persons, to be able to address the pain they experience, and to speak and act, healing the wounds and opening a new perspective—giving hope.

The participants also felt that there is something about the culture in which one lives that helps to enable this kind of transformation. Paul Born shared his reflections on the writings of a participant of the first Wilson Center/Fetzer seminar, John Paul Lederach:

John Paul Lederach and his daughter wrote a book together, *When Blood and Bone Cry Out: Journey Through the Sound Scape of Healing and Reconciliation*, about coming to peace or the reconciliation of a society that has experienced the unthinkable. He wrote about the conditions by which we can come through something. He didn't have answers. But the point that he was making was there was something systemic. It wasn't just about individuals. There was an interconnectedness and a diffusion of the healing that occurs, that becomes part of the new way of thinking, the new way of healing.

Father Ivo Markovic pointed out the important role religions play, particularly local religious leaders, in some communities and how sometimes responders are uncomfortable with connecting to this resource:

I found in our war in Bosnia the religious leaders and organizations were not so much used by humanitarian organizations or institutions from the United States. Compared with the Communists, who saw power over religious and very often after the mass or after prayer, they would come and speak to people. Probably the division between society and the religious makes it very problematical in the United States and Europe. Very often Americans or Europeans go to bishops, to religious superstructures, but the most powerful people in religions are local parish priests, imams, leaders of local communities where people come to pray. Religious groups are extremely important for bringing refugees back to their homes.

Hanmin Liu (Wildflowers Institute, San Francisco) spoke of culture as a critical strength of community.

Culture is oftentimes invisible. We can say it's the way schools and health care operate but actually there is something deeper. It actually forms relationships in community. It forms an innate social order that weaves the fabric of community.



HANMIN LIU

Culture is one of the really strong drivers that moves people forward, that forms a collective will, that leads them to imagine and dream about aspirations that becomes real because it's a collective imagination process. . . . We find the most critical [thing we can do] is to develop a map of community, not a geographical map but a map of the community's centers of gravity. Where are the activities that no one else knows about but actually bring people together? We almost always find these activities are the spiritual and cultural ones, and the gatherings where women are together. There's something powerful that happens in those spaces that helps them with their daily lives. It's that kind of activity that I think is getting lost as we're moving at such an amazingly rapid pace that only the state or large institutions can deal with this pace of change. But these large systems don't have the understanding of what's happening on the ground and they don't see the power of culture that has been formed for so long and has been cultivated over time.

Another part of this resilience can be found in the wisdom and experience of the community's elders:

Does a community's resilience help it to recover quickly from disaster? I believe that it does. After Katrina, I finally evacuated to Houston and met with members of my community in Houston. An older man about seventy-one at the time, stood up and he said, "We migrated from North to South Vietnam in 1954 with nothing and we build up our life. In '75 we migrated again to this country with nothing and we built our life. We shall build it again." And for me in reflecting on this I was very happy that Katrina hap-



FATHER VIEN NGUYEN

pened in 2005 rather than 2015 when the older generation would have passed on because their response really set a model for the younger people. . . . So they set the example. The young people look at them and are amazed and I think we can feel safe that we can rebound for another thirty years or so, the next generation.

—*Father Vien Nguyen, Catholic Priest and social activist, New Orleans*

I love what you're saying about intergenerational communication because they've been through the unimaginable and so they can give us hope in terms of what can happen. There is nobody in my family over fifty left, and a lot of people in Rwanda are like that. One of the issues I have is: How do we ensure youth have that hope to say you know we're going to get through? And so one of the things I've been doing is trying to link young Rwandans with communities that have gone through the unimaginable and the first instance was looking at Jewish elders who had gone through the Holocaust.

—*Eliane Ulubajoro*

Anita van Breda spoke to how connecting to a people's culture can create an environment for success:

In our program, a lot of our successes have been around connecting to people's culture, to their heritage, in making an emotional connection and reaching people's souls as part of their response and recovery process.

PAYING ATTENTION TO INTANGIBLES

In my experience, the tangibles are very often given due attention to the detriment of the relational dimension of response strategy to disasters, especially in cases of human-made disasters such as war. For example, in the wake of the volcano eruption in Goma, East Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2002, aid workers witnessed what they called “irrational behavior” by Congolese people. They first, instinctively, sought refuge in Rwanda when the Nyiragongo volcano erupted, threatening the total destruction of the town. They then returned almost immediately after only 24 hours to their unsafe Goma town rather than being recipients of humanitarian emergency assistance in the host country, Rwanda. Congolese preferred to face the risks of an active volcano than enjoy the safety offered by their Rwandan hosts.

In its report on the eruption, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) gave some of the reasons for this apparent “irrational behavior.” The report states that “salient issues informed the population’s reaction to the eruption: significant segments of the population of eastern DRC largely view the Rwandan Patriotic Army as an occupying force. The flight to Rwanda was a move to a hostile location; the population reversed course as soon as they judged it safe to return home. . . . The behavior of the population seemed to be irrational given the volcanic activity, but . . . the decision to return [to Goma] after 24 hours was irrational in light of the information available at the time, but it was completely in line with the political situation.” In the same report, OCHA confessed that “many Goma-based staff admitted that in the chaos that followed the eruption, they lost sight of the political realities and were surprised by the quick return.”

It was evident that the “political realities” were characterized by the deeply strained relationships between the Congolese people and the government of Rwanda as well as the rebel group that was controlling their territory. Trust is the first casualty of a violent conflict. The Congolese did not simply trust the good intention of their neighbors because of these broken relationships. In other words, the tangible issues such as relief aid, attending to the wounded, setting up of shelters, distributing water, food, and the like were attracting the attention of the aid workers. They lost sight or neglected to factor in their response strategy the state of relationships between Congolese locals and Rwandan government as well as the RCD rebel administration. . . . adequate conflict or disaster preparedness require both the visibility of tangibles (institutions and systems) and the intangibles (social capital). A good dosage of both will guarantee greater resilience of the community in times of shocks and crises.

—*Excerpt from John Katunga Murhula’s seminar paper, “INSTITUTION BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION FOR A PEACEFUL AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY.”*



CAROLINE KIHATO

RESILIENT INDIVIDUALS

A community's resilience is also based on the strengths of remarkable individuals who are able to step beyond their personal pain and suffering to find forgiveness and a way to move on and be a part of a community:

Being in the Rwanda diaspora in Canada, living on the outside of genocide, I didn't know if my parents, anybody in my family, was alive or not and I had to continue every day. And I thought if they are dead, I have to forgive those who killed them right now because if I don't I cannot do my work. I'm not going to die, I'm here. I'm going to have to move on in my life no matter what, but I have to recognize that whoever killed and whoever was killed, both lived dehumanizations, so we're all victims of violence.

It made me realize the practice of discomfort, of welcoming within me the enemy and saying I'm going to hold him as much as I will hold my loved one. If I can do that I can have a discussion with whoever makes me feel uncomfortable and that will allow us to move forward. . . . If you can bring that into your heart whatever happens, genocide, disaster, you are holding on to your humanity, you're holding on to respect for nature. You will open up to the insecurity that comes with the disaster or the conflict and whatever it brings. It will not be comfortable but you will open to it and as you open to it you are bringing in peace. . . .

There's an expression Mandela uses, the idea of hoping your enemy is going to be killed by the venom you carry inside—is like drinking poison every day and hoping the person you're upset with will die. It really comes down to you can stay there or you can forgive. There is no choice about it if I want to go on. If I want transformation I need to choose hope. And if I choose hope I have to bring everybody in.

—*Eliane Ubalijoro*

ACCIDENTAL ACTIVISTS

Disasters can bring out “accidental activists”—those from within the community or from the outside who give of themselves in remarkable ways. These people come from all kinds of backgrounds and experience. In some ways, you could say that disasters bring out the best in people:

I'm a Roman Catholic priest by vocation and training and am a parish priest in New Orleans. I'm also an accidental activist by way of Katrina and the BP disaster in the Gulf Coast. The question for us is how can we armor our community to be self-determined and self-sustaining if something like Katrina happens again. We're working on creating a community health center, creating our urban farm so that we don't have to wait for Winn Dixie or someone else to come in to sell us the food.

—*the Reverend Vien Nguyen*

I am from Thailand. After twenty years of practice as a medical officer and a local government administrator, I moved to the university. But I found it was not me so I resigned and prepared to engage in the spiritual life of the Buddhist monastery. Then the tsunami came to the Indian Ocean. I entered the world full time for three years with the villagers and friends in southern Thailand. We set up a coalition of local citizens and a national and international network. We worked with the officials of villages for about 100 communities. We assessed their needs and helped people from all around the country to first live there and then support what they need as they identified, such as boatyards, houses, rebuilding the community. After four years, we returned boats and houses to around 50% of the people, much more than what the government has done. Now I go back to spiritual activities with the Buddhist but continue to advise friends in Thailand in all kinds of disasters.

—*Bunchar Pongpanich*

I used to be a teacher for decades but now I am running the Burundi Leadership Training Program which has been launched by Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2003. We have been working with leaders at the top level, including politicians, high officers from the army, from the police, from the media and so on. One lesson I drew from that experience is if we want the society to change we have to pay

more attention to the community at the local level. That's why we tried to develop some small projects that try to improve the governance at the local level.

—*Fabien Nsengimana, Burundi Leadership Training Program, Burundi*

I live and work in Karachi in Pakistan. I'm an architect and planner. I have worked with the Orangi Pilot Project which is a project that is supporting local communities in building their neighborhoods. The project reaches out now to more than three million people who built their own sanitation systems. In addition I work for the Urban Resource Center which is a research and advocacy organization. Both of these organizations have received considerable acclaim for the work that they have done with the poor. When any disaster takes place they get involved. So I have worked with droughts, with floods, with earthquakes. . . I always tell the rural communities I work with that I give them the knowledge of 200 years to people I work with but they give me the knowledge of more than 2000 years. And the coming together of these types of knowledge is what really brings about a change.

—*Arif Hasan*

I work a lot in the inner city of Johannesburg and particularly with immigrant women who have come from the rest of the continent and experience exploitation, poverty, police harassment and abuse because of their legal status. After the 2008 xenophobic violence, I was involved as a volunteer working in refugee camps where the women were housed at the time. I've crossed over from being an objective social scientist and I'm in the process of developing an initiative that provides these women a socially responsible, sustainable way of gaining an income. I'm at the initial stages of this process and would like to hear more about what other people here can teach me about this kind of initiative.

—*Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa*



ENHANCING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

4

How do you convey dignity or respect? Respect is in every single choice you make all day long when you're in somebody else's country.
—Lisa Schirch

Respect. It's not a word that I've heard involved in disaster management conversations very much. And yet I think it's a very powerful word.
—David Kaufman

WISDOM, DIGNITY, AND RESPECT: LISTENING AND COMMUNICATING

As David Kaufman pointed out, coping with disasters is inherently a social process—thus social cohesion and strong relationships are critical for a community's ability to recover from a disaster. Relationship building is key to understanding a community's strengths. And key to relationship building is establishing trust and respect. First and foremost, one needs to recognize that communities have wisdom and should be treated with dignity and respect. The truth of this resonated deeply with the participants, though as Kaufman shared, it is not something that is given a lot of attention in the disaster relief field.

Lisa Schirch spoke about how respect or disrespect is evident in every action:

How do you convey dignity or respect? Respect is in every single choice you make all day long when you're in somebody else's country. It's about what you're wearing, what you're eating, where you're staying and who you're interacting with. Everything is either conveying respect or disrespect. We need to be aware and have the humility to recognize that our actions are being interpreted either as respectful or disrespectful. Building dignity into international responses requires a lot of analysis and listening to figure out what is being interpreted as respectful or disrespectful.

Key to trust and relationship building is the ability to listen. The points raised by David Kaufman on the social processes in community, Blair Ruble on the social spaces of community, and Hanmin Liu on the cultural and spiritual spaces of community are essential to the recovery process. From the outside these aspects may not be immediately apparent—so careful listening and open communication becomes crucial to identifying and understanding these elements of the community:

I think respect is a crucial aspect in working with communities attempting to recover from some disastrous event. It's respect on the part of the outsiders for the local wisdom, the local ideas, and the local desires for immediate relief. But how does one foster or generate a sense of respect between the outsiders and the affected peoples? I would think that communication is a major vehicle for doing this and can take many forms. It might be simply listening to whoever comes by and letting them speak their mind. It may be more formal mechanisms of some kind of local council or finding leaders of local organizations. Communication has to be established if a sense of respect is to be engendered in the minds of the relief workers and to be perceived in the minds of the people who are affected by the problem.

—*Dennis Warner*

Lisa Schirch described the kind of dissonance that often occurs when there is no real listening:

Harmonizing responses to disasters is a challenge. If you think about Afghanistan there is obviously incredible dissonance between the Taliban's voice or the key that they're singing in and the key that women's groups are singing in. So if it's a song, the song doesn't mesh. That's internal dissonance. But then tribes of NATO also have dissonance with each other—and the international community comes in with their own song, without first listening to see what key the local people are singing in. They haven't listened to see whether it's harmonizing or not. It's not helping the situation when the international community comes in discordant with each other and lands on local discord. So I think this idea of social capital—your ability to build bridges across divides—it's kind of like, can you listen to somebody else's song and start singing in a way that is in tune with them or harmonizes with them?

In his seminar paper, Fabien Nsengimana shared how building a sense of trust and treating people with dignity was particularly important in coming to the aid of people suffering from a sociopolitical conflicts. An excerpt from his paper appears in the accompanying text box.

THE TOUGH ROAD TOWARD THE OTHER

Burundi, my country of birth, is a small country nestled in the heart of Africa. Rwanda to the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west, and Tanzania to the east constitute our borders. With the first two of these, Burundi has often become a theatre of sociopolitical conflict. The country's history has been particularly marked by cyclical political crises, of which the longest and most deadly began with the assassination of the first democratically elected Hutu president—after three decades of Tutsi presidents. This crisis of 1993 resulted in thousands of deaths, refugees, and internally displaced persons from all social strata. The largest numbers of victims were among the Hutu and Tutsi, the two ethnic majorities in the country. Thank God, during the past five years large numbers of the refugees and internally displaced have returned to the fold. . . .

In order to help people, particularly those of the local communities, to gradually recover from the aftermath of war of which trauma is one of the most significant manifestations, first and foremost they must be treated with respect. For these are worthy beings, however low the level they may occupy on the social chessboard. The members of these communities like those of state structures all suffer to greater or lesser degrees from the trauma caused by the conflict/catastrophes. . . .

Without serious intervention, members of these communities run the risk of agonizingly slow healing from the catastrophes which overwhelm them. Personally and collectively, they are in desperate need of the support of sustainable peace initiatives. One can only emphasize how indispensable is the commitment of each player in the process of healing of memories and the research for lasting solutions for past or emerging conflicts.

In this perspective of treating all persons with dignity from the conviction that each one has an invaluable contribution to make in improving the

individual and sociopolitical situation, the ongoing plodding steps to narrow the gap particularly at the grassroots level will determine the results of efforts to minimize the impact of catastrophes. New technologies of information and communication must also play their part in reducing the distance between individuals and superstructures of the state and grassroots community. More specifically, they must serve as supplementary channels of expression in addition to direct contacts for the needs of people so that they feel they are fully appreciated actors in the process of moral and physical reconstruction.

Personal examples or those inspired by government initiatives shared in this dissertation show the demanding requirements of any work aimed at helping populations to quickly overcome the evils caused by conflict. The decision to act may require a superhuman effort to shake hands with a former enemy and carry out a constructive dialogue with him based on the shared need to coexist. But such management of post-conflict situations also requires that those responsible have the capacity of clear-sightedness and love for their people who are often very far from the heart of the decision-making spheres. Without that, it is virtually impossible for those responsible for the reconstruction of a country in all its dimensions, to be truly at the service of the people who need to be reconciled with themselves in order to be genuinely committed to the positive and sustainable evolution of their society. With daring, determination, and perseverance, the difficult walk toward the other—for a rapid moral rehabilitation of victims of conflict—becomes possible.

—*Excerpt from Fabien Nsengimana's seminar paper,*
“*THE TOUGH ROAD TOWARD THE OTHER: IN THE INTERESTS OF RAPID MORAL
REHABILITATION OF VICTIMS OF CONFLICT.*”



MEGAN SCRIBNER

To have more opportunities to listen, we need to create and support spaces for conversation. Fabien Nsengimana further explained how dialogues in his country, led to important tangible results:

In Burundi, the first thing we did was to go and meet with local communities to assess what their real needs are. It has been very important to create a safe space in order to let them be free and very open while discussing and expressing their needs. We then planned our project on the two main needs they raised, development on the one hand and the governance on the other hand.

For the development concern it was essential to try to help them think of what they could implement as new techniques for farming to protect their soil and their field. This gave good results, a woman told us that the results of the practice of the new techniques gave her the best crop at the end of an agricultural season. That affected her neighborhood because other people started imitating what she has already done. That is one illustration toward where the dialogue must lead. We have no tool to do dialogue for dialogue's sake but do dialogue to solve concrete issues.

In the context of governance, the people expressed a real need of how to be connected with the district administration. Within Burundi there is a district law which says that the district council has to invite the members of the most basic structure at the grassroots level twice a year to his meeting but that does not occur. At the end of our day with them, they realized that it is their right to ask for that meeting in order to express their needs. And then they wanted to go to election and elect directly their administrator. So that is one of the example of how the need expressed has met an answer, a response.

The thing that struck me most

in our small group is that a lot of us spoke through stories and the stories were more or less a notion of testimony.

This is something missing in the whole narrative of disaster management. It's always the statistics; they totally miss all the stories. I think we need to find a way to begin to put that narrative back into the recovery.

—Philip Thigo

It strikes me that the point about the need for spaces to have the voices heard could be translated into practical suggestions for mapping and then proactively communicating this information to those who could facilitate and support those kinds of efforts. Some of the processes that you're talking about are within the same family of facilitating a dialogue. We have found in our context at the Wilson Center, that that's still something that the folks who were providing the resources to make things happen still see as kind of fuzzy, unaccountable. They say it's a process, it's not an end, and so how do we know we're succeeding when just getting together and talking?

—*Geoffrey Dabelko*

Matthew Jelacic brought up how simple ways of being together can begin to create relationships between the responders and the community:

One way to do that is to eat together and to take care of one another. While that might be difficult in a severe crisis like an earthquake. . . . The desperate desire to save people while removing people from rubble is obviously real. But I think the disaster mentality of a lot of first responders precludes actually taking care of a community. It enables them to claim control. Taking the time, this richness, this idea of ritual underscores, the need for creating safe spaces which many other groups have mentioned.

At the end of the session, Blair Ruble offered his thoughts on what he had heard from the participants:

Everything you have talked about are issues in everyday human existence. I think one of the things to keep in mind is what you talked about turns out to be very, very hard.



LISA SCHIRCH

We're all embedded in institutions. I don't know much about your institutions, but I suspect that communication is one of the ways in which your work breaks down. We don't really know how to have meaningful dialogue with one another. Everything you talked about takes work. And unless there's a recognition of that work up-front, it all very easily gets pushed aside:

- You've talked about creating long-term meaningful relationships between people who come in from the outside and people who are in need.
- You've talked about listening, about creating spaces in which people can find their voice.
- You've talked about the importance of foresight and promoting foresight.
- You've talked about holistic approaches.
- You've talked about the importance of dignity. I think every group in some way came back to the important point of dignity.
- You've talked about promoting a kind of collective or common knowing.

All these things take time.

One of the biggest issues that seems to be emerging is that you have people coming in from the outside who are responding to a very different matrix, a different sense of product, than the people whose lives need to be put together with some sense of urgency. It may be all right for an outside organization to wait before responding because they have other demands. But for the people who stood in that line in the pouring rain it's too much.

It seems to me that what you're defining is an arena which is fraught with potential disappointment as is often the case in human relationships. And in order to overcome that there needs to be flexibility. There needs to



BLAIR RUBLE

be a dynamic response. There needs to be understanding that learning has to take place on both sides, a kind of “call and response” process.

But without the acceptance of a “call and response,” you can’t develop the true partnerships that are needed to have meaningful long-term improvement. And without that meaningful long-term engagement there is a sliding back that you’ve all described, into a kind of perpetual, pernicious pattern.

As I listen to this, on the one hand it’s depressing because you’ve described an environment which is going to take many people devoting a lot of effort to change behaviors in many different arenas in order to make progress. But on the other hand, it also seems to me to be heartening and refreshing because you’ve basically described part of the human dilemma and these are problems everybody has to work on every day all the time.

I think what ultimately you’re saying is when you’re dealing with either post-conflict or post-disaster situations you’re dealing with human beings. And you have to start with the humanity of those human beings on both sides in order to move forward. Maybe that’s a big message that can penetrate a little bit.

HELPING A COMMUNITY KNOW ITS STRENGTH: ASSESSING AND MAPPING

A recurring theme was the importance of listening to the communities and assessing their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Part of this means being open to the many ways that people communicate, recognizing that wisdom and experience are often shared through stories.

When understanding what strengths and assets make for resilient communities, it is important to know that much of the strength is based not just on the tangible things that one can easily measure, but more often on intangibles.

Many of the participants worked with communities to help map these intangible assets. Several participants shared their experience and resources from many fields for mapping these assets. Paul Born shared how his organization helps communities to recognize their assets and how to incorporate these assets into a plan of action for fighting poverty:

Every community is different. You just can't come into a community and assume that all the assets of a community are the same. Assets have a lot to do with how things get done. We identify the assets (people with gifts) and then bring the assets into the conversation.

When we seek to build a collaboration in a community we first do an assessment, a history of collaboration in that community; we do this both informally and formally. The communities uncover stories of groups coming together across sectors to collaborate. The second level that we consider is, What kind of leadership can we attract to the roundtables we want to form to lead the initiative? If we can get the kind of multi-sector leadership that is seen as having the power to bring about change then we know that there is a higher probability that the change that they want to see will occur. The third one is, What's the history or background of the issue we want to collaborate around? How easily can it be brought to the agenda of that community? Then we move quickly to form a plan that is different from the current plan.

Todd Walters suggested that there is an opportunity to learn from peace and conflict impact assessments:

They work within the community to identify all of the stakeholders, uncover their relationships with each other and bring to the top some of those

We need to move the focus away

from needs assessments to needs and capacity assessments.

The environment should be a part of both the needs and capacity assessments. The environment is related to a lot of crises. So the environment, a healthy environment, needs to be part of the solution as well.

—Anita van Breda

community-based power structures that may not be immediately evident in the first aspect of the needs assessment. It allows us to be able to understand where any sort of intervention occurs and how that will ripple through the community based on all the relationships of the different power structures. That's a crucial point in understanding the way that community resilience will operate in different contexts.

The environment plays a key role in the health of a community and the subsequent impact of a disaster, therefore a healthy environment needs to be part of the solution and part of needs and capacity assessments. Geoffrey Dabelko pointed out the challenge of having people connect the issue of climate change to development and disaster relief. Climate change can seem remote to the day-to-day concerns of communities:

Where we're struggling is how to bring the climate change world together with the broader concerns around development and then peacebuilding. How do we connect the worlds of environment, natural resources, and development in the context of conflict affected countries? When we spend more time looking at the climate issues we get to the neglected areas of adaptation which is, in many respects, connect to these questions of resiliency. And will hopefully help bring down what has been largely UN level negotiations about setting targets and timetables, that are awfully remote, to how these issues play out as both threats and opportunity in the field.

In Anita van Breda's experience, efforts have been most successful when they've developed partnerships with the local communities.

I'm with World Wildlife Fund and I manage a program called Humanitarian Partnerships. The goal of the program is to use environment conserva-



ANITA VAN BREDA

tion and natural resource management to reduce risk and vulnerability in a disaster. We started this program in 2005 with a partnership with the American Red Cross after the Indian Ocean tsunami. We worked with them for five years to use environment and natural resource management focused on shelter, water and sanitation, livelihoods, and disaster risk reduction. Since the completion of that partnership we've been able to apply this approach to other situations including the 2008 earthquake in China, more recently in Haiti, and for the Pakistan floods last year. The premise of the work that we do is that you have to have healthy resilient ecosystems in order to have healthy resilient communities. There are ways to integrate the environment in the humanitarian response, [such as] our green recovery reconstruction training tool kit and program. I am very committed to training the next generation of practitioners so that this idea that the environment can be used for a disaster response isn't so foreign or scary or unusual and that it becomes a way of doing humanitarian work. I have to be honest and say that the most success that we've had over the last few years has been because we've been able to work together with communities and do good community organizing. That's where we've actually had the most success for communities, ecosystems and for the reconstruction process.



ARIF HASAN, RICHARD STREN, AND PHILIP THIGO

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY: AMPLIFYING THE VOICES

5

*T*echnology has been able to teach us that communities are not voiceless, they are inaudible.
—Philip Thigo

There are a number of ways that technology helps to give voice to communities, fostering engagement and resilience in daily life and in response to disasters. Advances in technology, particularly social networking and the internet, have created new avenues for direct communication and organizing—within the community itself and between the community and the disaster relief efforts. With these new communication tools, communities are not as dependent on the media for getting the word out:

The inventors of Facebook or Twitter probably never suspected that the creation of these social networks would ever lead to liberating popular uprisings. People have now discovered alternative channels of free expression. People have regained their power! Such social networks help in building relational social capital by linking people, sharing information, and creating a virtual community of people who share a common vision. They also help create some forms of resilient communities that can withstand repression and mobilize resistance.

—John Katunga Murhula

Philip Thigo spoke of how this new technology also enables a community to map its strengths:

Whether in conflict or even post-conflict reconstruction, technology gives us a possibility of having a collective history but also collective memory. I spoke in a conference where communities were able to map what was important for them and bring it to the public domain: This is who we are and

These tools, such as the technology of crowd sourcing, if thought through properly have great potential for direct engagement with ordinary people. Not the gang leader [or someone else more visible], but the quiet communicator hiding in a tent behind them. There is the potential for these people to go beyond the traditional hierarchal structures of organizations.

—Leonard Doyle

what we are saying, therefore you, the government, have to interact with us within this space. In that sense technology begins to enable communities to say we exist.

Todd Walters pointed out that the new forms of technology communication enable the community not only to communicate but to prioritize their message and audience:

Technology is providing a new channel for voices to be heard. Collaborative mapping initiatives allow the community to choose whether they want to use it or not and what message they're going to convey. In that way, the community is prioritizing and identifying the key pieces of what they want to convey.

Leonard Doyle shared how a simple letter box has proven to be a surprisingly effective way of giving voice to people in the internally displaced person camps in Haiti: “We’ve been completely overwhelmed by the volume of really elegant and beautiful letters written by supposedly illiterate people, people who are completely outside the economic and political network. . . . What we’re rolling out across the country is an attempt to give ordinary Haitians, ordinary society, a voice.”

Technology provides us with many more ways of communicating. But as Philip Thigo and Leonard Doyle pointed out, having the technology is not sufficient to create change; we have to figure out how best to use it for communication:

Technology is either disruptive or transformative. It can be disruptive in that it destroys livelihoods or transformative in challenging the dominant

THE POWER OF 5,000 LETTERS FROM THE DISPLACED OF HAITI

Under a blazing Caribbean sun, Sandra Félicien stood in front of a crowd of impoverished people, who like herself, have been homeless since the earthquake of 12 January 2010. After spending months living in tents or makeshift shelters, their patience was at breaking point. . . . The crowd's anger subsided a little as Sandra explained that one way to seek change was to appeal for help through letter writing. Near Sandra's tent, a simple wooden information booth, complete with "suggestion box" placed there by the International Organization for Migration. . . .

There are now more than 140 such information booths scattered among the 1,300 camps, where more than 1.5 million homeless people had been living since the quake. The booths are a spin-off of a program funded last year by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives to encourage two-way communication with the displaced. Because as many as 50 percent of Haitians are illiterate, it was uncertain how they would react to the invitation just to write letters. But days after the booths were installed, the letterboxes began to fill up. In one case, more than 900 earnest letters were dropped into a booth in Cité Soleil, the poorest of poor neighborhoods, over three days. The deluge of letters were a glimpse into the often-hidden, harsh, and precarious life being lived by an estimated third of the population of the capital Port-au-Prince. . . .

Amid the flotsam of emails and text messages that dominate modern life, these poignant letters had an authenticity that is hard to ignore. . . . The 5,000 letters from the displaced of Haiti—a living blog—in effect were all read and catalogued. Urgent cases received a quick response; others became part a "crowd-voicing" effort to listen to those who had been displaced by the earthquake. This grassroots effort is now being transformed into a nationwide anticorruption and aid accountability system that will encourage people across Haiti to write letters or make phone calls if they feel aid is being diverted or stolen.

The aim is to encourage a "national conversation," encouraging a flow of information between affected communities, humanitarian actors, and local service providers. Trust in the media is in short supply in Haiti, but radio is still believed by 38 percent of the internally displaced person population, compared with a trust level of 15 percent for local authorities.

—Excerpt from Leonard Doyle's seminar paper, "IT'S GOOD TO TALK, BUT BETTER TO LISTEN: THE TANBOU PROJECT HARNESSES PEOPLE POWER TO COMBAT CORRUPTION IN HAITI."

Community engagement should be

community based. But when we discuss about technology, it tends to be from the outside. We tend to go for the major and the mainstream; we forget the local or minor alternative that may be more useful in a situation like that.

We need alternative technology that is appropriate for each locality and each community.

—Bunchar Pongpanich

discourses of how people think, how people reflect on many issues. Our experience is that technologies, especially those developed within the disruptive model of challenging paradigms such as Open Street Maps, are developed within a very different logic, not in the mainstream linear model of technology innovation. It is a more democratic way of developing technology because it gives communities a space.

—*Philip Thigo*

How do we communicate with a population who are highly urbanized, increasingly uneducated, and without the kind of family structures around them to help transfer education from one generation to another? We really need to think about how are we going to communicate with these kinds of populations. If we don't think about how we communicate with people, we risk never communicating with them.

—*Leonard Doyle*

In his paper, John Katunga Murhula shared how mobile phones have made an incredible difference in many places in Africa. He was particularly intrigued by how this technology can lift up role models, to highlight those that in other times would never be known:

In Africa, several countries have been using the mobile phone as one of the tools for election monitoring and to avoid the calamity at the end of the electoral process that we have observed in many countries. It has been a very good tool to create conditions for conflict prevention.

These technologies can create role models, which is one of the things missing in conflict situations. These role models are not given space. I love the paper that my sister Eliane brought, of those who took the decision



JOHN KATUNGA MURHULA

to protect their so-called enemies and save their lives. Those are for me the heroes that will be elevated as role models. Probably beyond official recognition but give them a position in the society where they are visible and everybody can connect with them. That's probably [the best answer] to how we transform the people from one mindset to another mindset.

Technology should be adapted to meet the needs of the community, not the other way around:

When most people think of technology, they think of communication technology, but I was thinking of technology for infrastructure and delivery of services. I want to start out by saying technology is the easy part. Being an engineer I know. If you define your condition, your parameters, your dimensions, you turn the crank, you get the right answer. The problem is we don't often know what the conditions and the parameters are.

Let's take the example of housing. Most emergency response experience has been developed for rural areas over the past fifty, sixty years. There is very little experience for major disasters in urban areas. In Haiti about six months after the earthquake, there was an attempt to develop camps outside of Port-au-Prince where upwards of a million homeless people could be temporarily relocated until something was done with the housing situation in the city. These sites were to have all the services, water, food, medical care, etcetera.

Well, it turned out that very few people wanted to move to these camps because there was no transportation. At the camps, they were sort of isolated, with no way to get back to town. There were no jobs. No way to protect your house and any property that was left inside of it. So this



TODD WALTERS

whole idea of developing external relocation sites, temporary or whatever, simply didn't work.

—*Dennis Warner*

Mobile technology personalizes a voice. You can draw the very distinct individual voices because communities again are not homogeneous. How are we able to use technology, to tap into those voices as indicators of conflict? How is technology able to respond immediately to conflict but then ensure that that power still remains in the hands of the community even after the big humanitarian relief organizations have gone? How do we transition the technology into the hands of the locals. Whether it's a voice, whether it's a text, whether it's an e-mail, whether it's a suggestion box, whether it's mapping—technology enables us to write a collective history without losing sight of what is important, the element of community.

—*Philip Thigo*

There are many advances in technology beyond the communication field. As Matthew Jelacic pointed out, it signals a larger change in the infrastructure needed, leading to a leaner, more adaptable style that is not as dependent on large systems to build and operate:

I love the metaphor of cellphones for all technology, for all recovery work. Now we rely on major engineering companies with vastly expensive amounts of engineering and construction. As we move forward we need to strongly question the necessity of large-scale infrastructure. If we think about how cell phones have taken over, we're no longer putting land lines in countries; we're putting in new cellphone towers or radio towers. We should be able to innovate the technologies necessary for ways for moving water collection, food, to allow for autonomy and movement, but also to



DAVID KAUFMAN

give them the responsibility and control over collecting their own water or removing their own waste rather than relying on the state or, unfortunately, more commonly, private companies.

Eliane Ubalijoro mentioned how other new forms of technology provide an opportunity for communicating what is happening on the ground in way that is informative and easy to understand:

I often find that people get overwhelmed by reports. There's too much information and they don't have time to read it all. One research program I'm involved in brings cameras to women in rural areas in Rwanda and asks them to take pictures of what they see are their problems and their solutions. Then we'll invite government, NGOs, and private industry to see the exhibits of the pictures with a brief explanation. As researchers, we know what the government, the NGOs, and private industry say the issues are and what they think are the solutions. This highlights where the gaps are in a way that will be embedded in people's minds. So that's one way in my research we're using technology to amplify the voices.

Loren Landau pointed out that the technology doesn't necessarily have to be new to be useful to a community, sometimes it's a matter of getting access to the technology and the story it tells:

We could also look at some of the older technologies of government, including statistics, and make sure that those are collected and then enable the poor or other communities to access this. Local governments are often afraid of their own statistics and of having them seen because they're a standard by which they can be held accountable. It's a technology that is hun-



FABIEN NSENGIMANA

dreds of years old. It's very simple, but getting people to use it is not. But it's one of the areas where experts from outside can play a very important role. When you show people a pie chart showing where the money is going, that's something people can understand very quickly. We need to look at some of these older standard technologies of governance and think about how those can be used to give a voice and to be used against people who might otherwise not do what we'd hoped that they would do.

NOT EVERYTHING IS THE GIFT IT SEEMS TO BE

Sometimes what seems new and innovative can over the long term actually create more problems than it solves. It is critical to understand the implications of the "improvements" before moving forward with them. Liz McCartney told the following cautionary tale from New Orleans:

As I was listening to this conversation one of the things that kept coming to my mind was the advancements in different fields and how the introduction of new ways of doing things can initially be seen as a really positive thing but in the long-run can end up being very negative. For example in New Orleans, in the early 1960s the government said, "We're going to figure out a way to get from point A to point B a lot faster. So we're going to cut a shipping channel from the Gulf of Mexico into the industrial canal in New Orleans and that's going to save everyone lots of time and lots of money." They called this shipping channel the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet or the Mr. Go. Over the last forty years, this advancement has introduced a lot of salt water that ultimately caused the complete and total degradation of the wetlands in New Orleans and in turn caused flooding in New Orleans East in St. Bernard and in the Lower Ninth Ward. And

while that was happening there were all these wonderful advancements in building technology in the New Orleans area. A lot of single-family homes were built slab on grade because it was less expensive and the homes went up faster than a lot of the traditional homes in New Orleans.

And so as the wetlands were being destroyed and these wonderful slab on grade homes were being built, it was sort of the foundation for what was going to come forty years later which was Hurricane Katrina. There were areas that got fourteen feet of water where homes were no more than ten feet tall and everybody was submerged. Thanks to all of these wonderful, new technological advances that came into New Orleans that were going to make everybody's lives easier, more affordable and all in all happier. So we all need to be mindful that when we talk about technology we're not just talking about communication technology but all types of technology. And communities need to assess both the short- and long-term implications of the new technology that we're embracing today but tomorrow could end up positioning communities for what happened in the New Orleans area.

SHARED INSIGHTS

The following are some of the insights and suggestions that were shared from small group sessions:

- Provide opportunities for people to help themselves by recognizing opportunities to empower the people. The local NGOs and the local survivors, community members, and neighbors are essentially the real first responders. The first responder from the local level is inherently a culturally based

response. The international community is a second layer and needs to recognize this and step back to provide the space for that culturally based response to take effect.

- Interpersonal relationships are really the strength of community resilience and key for people to be effective first responders. If there is not a direct relationship with and between your neighbors, then the motivation to help is much lower. Those interpersonal relationships are really the glue that gives the community the ability to be resilient and make that culturally based response.
- Understand that a community's priorities evolve over time and to be flexible. It is a dynamic process and not just something that can be planned at the beginning and then implemented straight through. It is important to listen to the changing needs and have the flexibility to adapt to them.
- Appreciate that things can happen at many levels—local, national, and international—at the same time. Understand the scale (national, regional, or local, or all three simultaneously) on which you are working and recognize that the size and the scope dictate the type of intervention and opportunity to be able to work effectively. The effects that are felt on one level ripple through the other levels and have all sorts of additional effects.
- Recognize that one of the ways communities voice their needs is through their actions—through riots, through demonstrations, and through public presentations of events or causes.
- Tap into existing networks at multiple levels simultaneously so that you are able to have inputs and outflows of information from the local, regional, national, and international levels. Create linkages between the survivors and the government and the international community coming in, so that all the different stakeholders are informed about what is going on.



GEOFFREY DABELKO

- Work on disaster risk reduction before a disaster happens; this work builds the resiliency of a community's members. It enables them to be prepared to deal with a disaster but also to recognize that steps need to be taken before the disaster to reduce the impact.
- Community mobilizing is key. It is necessary to understand the contextual constraints within which you are working—not just the local context of how it operates and who the actors are—but the constraints, whether it is overpopulation, ecological marginalization, or issues of land ownership. You need to understand all those pieces to operate effectively within those constraints.
- Design an exit strategy: When do you leave? How do you determine what that end date is? What things need to be in place? Define up front what the exit strategy means, so that everyone involved locally and internationally is on the same page. Understand what you all are trying to accomplish and when you all are going to be transitioning over to a locally coordinated response.
- Have local intermediaries as part of the implementation process: Build legitimacy, trust, and accountability within the communities so the programs are accepted and able to help strengthen local capacity.
- Be aware of the dangers of potential nepotism or benefits being distributed inequitably.
- Develop a communication strategy: an inward flow of information—a listening-based strategy—that allows for the existing mechanisms to be more effective in communicating what is happening from all of the different organizations and people that are involved. Because of the potential for misinformation and rumors, it is very important to develop this strategy.



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- Information dissemination is critical because it involves realizing that the disaster response is really a form of development. Look at the piece not with a short-term lens but within the context of the longer-term framework and the ultimate goal.
- Integrate the top-down approach and the bottom-up approach. The first responders and the networks are at the local level, and in many cases the funding and the expertise are at the international level, so we need to create linkages between the top-down and the bottom-up approaches and among the different levels within society—the national, local, international, and regional, as well as government, NGOs, corporations, and religious leaders.

CLOSING REMARKS

I think the most important thing in today's entire conversation has been the word "trust." It's important to define what trust really is. What is trust and how do you establish trust.

—Arif Hasan

Blair Ruble offered closing thoughts that both captured the heart of the conversation and pointed everyone to a simple and elegant way forward:

When we think of community as an object, we have a lot of difficulty talking about it. Maybe the process we're talking about is much more simple than we make it out to be. We ended up at a place where it became very clear that community is really a social process. It's a process of building trust, it's a process that somehow ties people together, so that they're not just thrown together and pursuing their own individual survival strategy but somehow those survival strategies link.

What I hear a number of you saying in different ways is that there need to be opportunities in post-conflict and post-disaster environments for protected opportunities for seemingly aimless contact—at the coffee shop, the water pipe, where people are thrown together—places where people have to come together seemingly without purpose, but in coming together actually create opportunities to build social trust and social networks. (In North America, we may think about this in terms of social networking media; but for most places, we're talking about environments where such media and the technology may be a bridge too far.)

What I take away from this is, if you want to begin to build the power of the community, one of the first things that needs to happen is there have to be protected opportunities for aimless contact. And "aimless" contact can include people coming from the outside who are also trying to engage in community.

APPRECIATION

Each of the Woodrow Wilson Center / Fetzer Institute seminars was a remarkable gathering, filled with rich discussions and yielding deep insights and much goodwill. The extraordinary participants generously shared their wisdom and insights and engaged each other in meaningful conversation. We thank each one for their papers and participation in the seminars and hope that they were as enriched by the seminar as we were. Our thanks to the thoughtful people who first came together and saw the potential in this partnership: Lee Hamilton and Michael Van Dusen of the Woodrow Wilson Center and Mark Nepo and Deb Higgins of the Fetzer Institute. And to those at the Woodrow Wilson Center and Fetzer Institute who helped to design and facilitate these remarkable gatherings: Geoffrey Dabelko, Lauren Herzer, Mark Nepo, Blair Ruble and Megan Scribner. And to those who created the documents and Web sites to capture these stimulating discussions: Lauren Herzer, Diana Micheli, and Megan Scribner.

SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS AND PAPERS

The seminar papers were written in response to the three papers by Frederick M. Burkle, Eliane Ubalijoro and Paul Born. All these papers can be found in full on the Woodrow Wilson Center website, www.wilsoncenter.org/cusp.

MERIWETHER BEATTY, Reproductive Health for Refugees Project Director, JSI Research and Training Institute, Washington, D.C. Seminar Paper: *Astarte: Resilience and Respect*.

PAUL BORN, Co-Founder and Director, Tamarack—An Institute for Community Engagement, Ontario, Canada. Seminar Paper: *Community Engagement for Emergency Preparedness*.

DR. FREDERICK M. “SKIP” BURKLE, JR., Senior Public Policy Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Senior Fellow & Scientist, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard School of Public Health. Seminar Paper: *The Limits to Our Capacity: The Realities of Community Engagement, Resiliency, and Recovery in Twenty-First Century Crises*.

GEOFFREY D. DABELKO, Director, Environmental Change and Security Program and Coordinator, Global Health Initiative, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

LEONARD DOYLE, Country Spokesperson, Haiti, International Organization for Migration. Seminar Paper: *It’s Good to Talk, but Better to Listen: The Tanbou project harnesses people power to combat corruption in Haiti*.

ALLISON GARLAND, Program Associate, Comparative Urban Studies Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

ARIF HASAN, Chairperson, Orangi Pilot Project, Founder and Chairperson, Urban Resource Centre, Karachi. Seminar Paper: *Some Comments on Community Healing in Time of Disaster*.

LAUREN E. HERZER, Program Associate, Comparative Urban Studies Project and Environmental Change and Security Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

MATTHEW JELACIC, Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Colorado, Boulder. Seminar paper: *Retrieving the Wisdom of Those in Need: Community Healing and Engagement in Times of Disaster, Paper Contributions*.

DAVID KAUFMAN, Director, Policy and Program Analysis, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C.

CAROLINE WANJIKU KIHATO, Senior Research Fellow, School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

LOREN B. LANDAU, Director, African Centre for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

HANMIN LIU, President and CEO, Wildflowers Institute, San Francisco, California.

LOUIS HERNES MARCELIN, faculty member, Department of Anthropology & Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Miami Chancellor, Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development, Miami, Florida. Seminar paper: *Two Tales: One Story*.

FATHER IVO MARKOVIC, Seminary of Franciscans, Sarajevo, Bosnia; Director, Face to Face Interreligious Service. Seminar paper: *Retrieving the Wisdom of Those in Need: Community Healing and Engagement in Times of Disaster Experiences from the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995*.

LIZ McCARTNEY, Director, St. Bernard Project and Urban Innovation Fellow, Tulane University, New Orleans.

JOHN KATUNGA MURHULA, Regional Technical Advisor for Peacebuilding and Justice, Catholic Relief Services, East Africa Region, Nairobi, Kenya; Former Executive Director, Nairobi Peace Initiative – Africa. Seminar paper: *Institution Building and Social Cohesion for a Peaceful and Resilient Community*.

FATHER VIEN NGUYEN, Catholic Priest and social activist in the Vietnamese community in New Orleans, Louisiana. Seminar paper: *Post Disaster Recovery and Prevention from the Perspective of the Vietnamese Americans in New Orleans*.

FABIEN NSENGIMANA, Director, Burundi Leadership Training Program, Burundi. Seminar Paper: *The Tough Road Towards the Other - In the Interests Of Rapid Moral Rehabilitation of Victims of Conflict*.

DR. BUNCHAR PONGPANICH, Director, Buddhadasa Indhapanno Archives and Nakhon-Bovornrat Cultural Group, Thailand. Seminar Paper: *From Insecure - Badly Affected to a Strong and More Prepared Community: NAM KHEM, a fisherfolk village in the midst of 2004 Tsunami*.

BLAIR A. RUBLE, Director, Comparative Urban Studies Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

LISA SCHIRCH, Founding Director, 3P Human Security; Professor of Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University, Richmond, Virginia. Seminar paper: *Building Consultation Mechanisms for Local Civil Society Participation and Leadership in Disaster Response*.

MEGAN SCRIBNER, Editor, Consultant, Fetzer Institute, Takoma Park, Maryland.

RICHARD STREN, Emeritus Professor of Political Science and Senior Advisor, Cities Centre, University of Toronto, Canada.

PHILIP THIGO, Program Associate, Strategy and Partnerships, Social Development Network, Nairobi, Kenya.

ELIANE UBALIJORO, Adjunct Professor of Practice for Public-Private Sector Partnerships, Institute for the Study of International Development, McGill University, Montreal, Canada; Member of the Presidential Advisory Council for Rwanda president Paul Kagame. Seminar Paper: *The face of healing in the Aftermath of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, Personal Reflections*.

TODD WALTERS, Executive Director, International Peace Park Expeditions, Boston, Massachusetts.

DENNIS B. WARNER, Senior Technical Advisor for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Water Resources Development, Catholic Relief Services, Baltimore, Maryland.

ANITA VAN BREDA, Director, Humanitarian Partnerships, World Wildlife Fund, Washington, D.C.

