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People with Disabilities in Post-Disaster Situations

By Tim Karpoff

A GFSC friend in the Netherlands, Albert van der Ploeg, works with the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development (DCDD: www.dccd.nl). He asked how GFSC's approach to psycho-social reconstruction includes people with disabilities. Both our organizations endorse inclusive, community-based approaches, and the explicit inclusion of persons with disabilities in rebuilding community capacity, social networks and self-reliance.

Albert has helped GFSC expand our awareness of particular concerns facing persons with

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Facilitation Processes for Disaster and Crisis Intervention

By Viv McWaters

[originally written to the Australian Facilitators Network, and reprinted here, with permission]

My views on disasters and the role of facilitation have been both reinforced and changed completely as I reflect on the two-day GFSC Facilitation Processes for Disaster & Crisis Intervention workshop I've just completed. I'll come back to what that actually means in a moment.

GFSC, is a voluntary group of committed and passionate people who provide a way for facilitators like you and me to make a contribution with our facilitation skills to disaster preparedness and recovery. It is ambitious, it's altruistic, it's voluntary, and organic. While GFSC appears to have a North American focus - it really does not, at all.

Gil Brenson-Lazan, together with Mike Kane and Erness Wright-Irvin, both professional facilitators and Hurricane Katrina survivors from New Orleans, conducted this workshop. Their stories will remain with me for a long time

There were about 14 workshop participants - from across the USA, Canada and Australia. Some highlights:

- Haiti-born Suze describing the chronic trauma of Haitian people living in the United States;
- Scott sharing some of his experiences as a 9/11 (World Trade Center) survivor;
- Erness recounting her initial denial that there was any urgency to leave as Hurricane Katrina bore down on New Orleans;
- Mike describing how it was living with friends and his coping mechanism of either extreme activity or total inactivity.

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People With Disabilities, continued

disabilities in post-disaster situations, and has introduced us to several organizations with particular skills in this area. We are grateful for this information, and would like to pass on some of it to you.

- Among the poorest people in the world, 15-20% are disabled.
- 6 out of every 10 people with disabilities are overlooked during disasters.
- (Too) many times post-disaster plans separate people with disabilities from family and friends, making the disaster even more traumatic.
- Many disaster management agencies plan from an abled person's point of view, and do not take into account the feelings, survival skills and perspectives of people with disabilities.

Addressing the needs of people with disabilities is not merely a health concern; it is an issue that includes social welfare, education, employment as well as income-generation considerations and accessibility issues relating to transportation, infrastructure, shelter/housing, and access to water and sanitation.

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

CBR is a strategy within community development for rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, and social inclusion for all children and for adults with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of the people with disabilities, their families and communities and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services. Over 25 years old, the framework and principles of CBR have been summarized in a 2004 Joint Position Paper of the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Labor Office (ILO). Recently, these and other organizations have worked with people with disabilities to overcome past negative images associated with the term "rehabilitation," and CBR is now understood to be explicitly inclusive of people with disabilities. The 2004 Joint Position Paper may be obtained at bookorders@who.int.

International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)

The IDDC is an informal consortium of 15 international non-governmental organizations based in European countries. Its aim is to promote the rights of disabled people through the sharing of information and expertise. IDDC is committed to promoting inclusive development. For more information, go to www.iddc.org.uk.

Handicap International

Co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, Handicap International (www.handicap-international.org) promotes the needs of disabled people in countries affected by poverty and conflict. It provides both emergency relief and long-term development support. Some key conceptual and practical points they offer:

- Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are particularly vulnerable in emergency situations as they find it especially difficult to cope when their environment and support systems are dramatically altered. It is therefore important that aid workers and the community are aware of the rights and needs of PWDs and the importance of considering these needs during emergency situations
- PWDs are equal members of the community and as such, should participate in community-based activities in order to ensure their needs are met. PWDs participation in planning disaster management and risk reduction activities of disaster management and risk education activities throughout the decision-making process will ensure an equitable and effective program.
- Working through a rights-based approach to consider specific needs of PWDs will benefit the entire population and improve the situation of other vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, children, pregnant women, women-headed households, and the poor.
- Not all organizations can focus on disability issues to the same extent. However, several guidelines for increasing organizational capacity include:
 - ♦ *Mainstream PWDs within the organization* to ensure that disability is included as a

cross-cutting issue in all activities and projects.

- ◆ *Sensitize staff, volunteers and managers to disability through exposure to organizations already involved with PWDs.*
- ◆ *Train community-level disaster management agencies and community volunteers on disability issues.*
- ◆ *Train grassroots level staff on how to identify PWDs and their specific needs, referral resources, and including disability issues in disaster management planning.*
- ◆ *Provide rehabilitation training for NGO staff and volunteers, e.g., the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) offers training to become a Community Disability and Handicap Resource Person (CHDRP).*
- ◆ *Recruit professional staff who have specialization in disability, e.g., physiotherapist, occupational therapist, Braille teacher, etc.*

For anyone involved in disaster management, including facilitators, *Handicap International* also offers practical tips for working with persons with disabilities:

- Always respect the dignity and wishes of PWDs as you would anyone else, whatever the disability.
- Be patient with psycho-socially and intellectually impaired persons and do not treat them as if they cannot understand, as this is often what creates violent behavior.
- Consider a disabled person as the best expert about his/her disability; always ask the person with disability for advice how best to meet his/her needs.
- Always try to find the regular caregiver or family member of a person with disability, as they know best how to manage that person's special needs.

We hope to continue to learn from people and organizations who share similar values and principles as GFSC. Thank you, Albert!

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Facilitation Processes, continued

These personal, first-hand stories make televised news reports come alive with a potency that is rarely possible via the media. And we all had stories to tell – maybe not of the same scale as 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina – but personal disasters nonetheless which underscore our common human experiences and needs.



I'd always assumed that the immediate post-disaster recovery was best left to experts, with facilitators coming in to help with longer-term reconstruction of communities. Boy, was I wrong! And I'd also assumed that disasters meant only the all-too-regular large-scale natural and human-induced disasters. Wrong again! And I thought that the role of the facilitator began only after disasters. I was wrong on all three counts.

The experts, the recovery teams, the bureaucrats – everyone – is traumatised by disaster and have similar, but different, needs according to their circumstances. And yes, that includes us, as facilitators, too. Facilitators can contribute straight away to building the foundations for faster and more effective recovery.

While there will always be a need for facilitation around large-scale, high profile disasters, there are everyday disasters too, happening in organizations and communities. Understanding the psychological and social impacts on individuals and groups helps us, as facilitators, to respond better and more appropriately.

And for me, the most exciting of all, is the potential for facilitators to help build resilience and local capacity in groups and communities so that, if and when disaster occurs, the group or community is prepared for psycho-social reconstruction.

Now there's a term you may not have heard before. It simply means the reintegration of individual with community/group needs. During chronic or after acute trauma, individuals respond by reverting to survival mode. The longer individuals stay isolated and looking after themselves, the more likely they are to become dependent and adopt dysfunctional strategies to cope and suffer secondary crises.

This workshop is a part of the GFSC "cascade" approach: experienced facilitators train and/or mentor community and group members about group resilience and capacity.

Wow – the potential in Australia is huge:

- ♦ Imagine, for example, communities being aware of and understanding their own needs and responses to bushfires, floods and cyclones.
- ♦ Imagine farming communities responding to drought as a chronic trauma and breaking down the dependency cycle that develops from our current approaches to drought assistance.
- ♦ Imagine existing community groups, of any sort, being aware of the impact of crisis or change, and able to actively seek appropriate support rather than take what's offered by the authorities.
- ♦ Imagine our indigenous communities avoiding secondary crises such as substance and personal abuse, suicide and despondency.

The model developed by GFSC explores all of this and much, much more: individual needs and responses, leadership styles, approaches, skills, what to look out for and, importantly, crisis intervention techniques – building rapport, the power of language, debriefing after a critical incident, building group resilience, identifying suicide risk and referral (there are some things well outside the realm of facilitation and should

be referred to professional therapists), avoiding conflict escalation (note: this is not the same as "avoiding conflict"); caring for ourselves and developing personal resilience.

Why facilitation? What do we bring that others don't to these situations? It's simply really – an understanding of the innate power of groups, the importance of participation and the belief that groups have the resources, within themselves, for whatever it is they need to do for survival, recovery and growth.

As I have personally gained an enormous amount of new understanding, skills and insight, I wanted to share some of my experiences with you, the Australian Facilitator Network (and personally debrief by writing this), so thanks for providing the space. I'm interested in your feedback too. I'll be talking with GFSC about opportunities for us to deliver this workshop in Australia. If you or your organization is interested, please let me know so as I can gauge potential interest.



Viv McWaters, Erness Wright-Irvin, Mike Kane

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2006 GFSC Board

- Lenny Diamond, President
- Tim Karpoff, Vice President
- Marieann Shovlin, Secretary
- BJ Diamond, Treasurer
- Gil Brenson Lazan, Mentored Pathways Program Coordinator
- Karen Brill, Member at Large
- Parcia Sansary Gomez, Regional Coordinator for Latin America

DCI Workshop Schedule

August 7-8, Oakland, CA

Co-sponsored by **GFSC, Center for Strategic Facilitation, Facilitator U.** and **Community at Work**

Sept. 12-13, Chicago, IL

Co-sponsored by **GFSC** and **ICA-USA**

Planning for 2007: Australia, Canada

For more information and registration, go to <http://globalfacilitators.org>

Request a DCI Workshop

Interested in a workshop in your area? We've had requests from Australia, Asia, Europe (United Kingdom and Sweden), and other locations in the Americas (Atlanta, GA; Toronto, ON). If you, your agency or organization would like to sponsor, organize or participate in a GFSC workshop, please click

http://globalfacilitators.org/workshops/workshop_request.htm

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Mentored Pathways™

The GFSC continuous learning model, Mentored Pathways, offers GFSC volunteers readings, resource materials, monthly internet conversations and opportunities to share experiences and techniques with other volunteers all over the world.

If you are interested in becoming a GFSC volunteer, complete the volunteer form on the GFSC web site and you will receive the Mentored Pathways information. Questions? Contact Gil Brenson-Lazan, Mentored Pathways Coordinator, mp@globalfacilitators.org.

GFSC at IAF North American Conference 2006

We thank everyone who stopped by the GFSC booth at the IAF Conference in Baltimore, MD. We enjoyed meeting each and every one of you and thank you for your interest, suggestions, and support. Since we depleted most of our workshop flyers for Oakland, CA (August 7-8) and Chicago, IL (September 12-13), we look forward to seeing you again, really soon!

And thank you to all who purchased raffle tickets, supporting our workshops.

Congratulations to the Winners of GFSC Workshop Raffle

1st Prize: Free Registration for a GFSC workshop - **Linda Mather**

2nd Prize: \$75 Gift Certificate for a GFSC workshop - **JR Holt**

3rd Prize: \$50 Gift Certificate for a GFSC workshop - **Brenda Leiker**



Lenny & 1st Prize Winner, Linda Mather

We look forward to your participation at one of our future workshops!

Volunteer Job Board

Workshop Planner: experienced in planning workshops and/or training events. Responsibilities include working with GFSC leadership to locate venues and sponsors, supervise specific DCI workshop plans and maintain budgets. This can be done on a local or regional basis.

Database Manager: experienced in designing and implementing databases (Access or SQL) to manage volunteers and contacts; responsibilities include researching parameters and selecting an efficient collection, storage and retrieval system.

Database Administrator: experienced in entering contact information, database maintenance and searches; responsibilities include collecting and reporting contact information and entering it into the GFSC database on a regular basis.

Librarian: perform online research, request permission to reprint and summarize articles for inclusion into the GFSC Virtual Libraries.

Marketing Assistant: experienced in public relations to write and send press releases and other marketing materials.

If you are interested in any of the above, contact sec@globalfacilitators.org

Worldwide Communications

Kiosk and Hot Conference support GFSC and can support you, too, with the best in web hosting and communication.

Hot Conference and Kiosk are proud sponsors of GFSC. Operating in more than 119 countries and with 35 years of experience, Kiosk provides our web hosting and a variety of internet tools. Hot Conference provides its industry-leading Web Conferencing Software so we can communicate with our volunteers and local networks throughout the world.

If you host a website and/or would like to reduce your long distance charges and improve

communications within your organization, please consider Kiosk and Hot Conference. By signing up using the link on the GFSC web site (<http://www.hotconference.com/GFSC/partners1.php>), 25% of your Kiosk-Hot Conference fees are donated to GFSC. GFSC benefits every month for as long as you are a Kiosk-Hot Conference client.

This is an easy, cost-effective way to improve your communications while supporting GFSC's continuing development of materials and workshops, as well

as our Mentored Pathways program, supporting volunteer facilitators worldwide.

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Viv McWaters, Australia



Marieann Shovlin, Tim Karpoff, Lenny Diamond

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We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please write to Marieann at sec@globalfacilitators.org.