

# November Newsletter

## What's Inside

### Opportunities to Serve in Your Own Community

How we can change our altruism to action...

### Who Are Our Clients?

If GFSC were a relief agency, a training program, a coordinating entity, a facilitation service, a collegial network or a think tank, the answer would not be so difficult. Since GFSC is a bit of "all of the above"...

## Serving in Your Own Community

by Deb Starzynski



The headlines are bold and, this year, seem to come one on top of another.... with disasters and tragedies occurring around the world. When disaster occurs far from home and loved ones we empathize, sympathize and wonder how to help. When it's closer to home, we feel shock, dismay, worry and helpless, wondering what we can do.

It often takes a tragedy to mobilize our altruism to action, although I believe that is a normal human reaction. One of the values that connects us as facilitators is the desire to 'give back' to 'contribute to making things better' and old-fashioned 'desire to help.' While there is much that can be done by volunteers to help in these situations, our purpose at GFSC is to equip facilitators and local networks of facilitators to respond to local needs. We provide materials, information and support for facilitators to apply knowledge and techniques. We do not mobilize teams of facilitators from around the world to respond to global disasters or crisis situations. What we do is equip facilitators to respond to a variety of local needs, not just in crisis situations.

When I meet with many of you at conferences, there is great interest and desire to volunteer. Yet many speak of frustration in how to get started and how to serve. For those of us fortunate enough to live and work in societies where we have a strong support structure through governments, NGO's, community groups and corporate support to the community, we wonder what we can do in our "corner of the world.". As the conversation progresses, we speak of how to start, who to contact, what are the unfulfilled needs in our communities.

Our facilitator skills can benefit many different kinds of groups in planning, building collaborative relationships with other organizations and the community, engaging community leaders and members. Many non-profit organizations struggle with defining projects, roles and relationships. Many would appreciate helping hands while others would benefit from coaching.

As individual facilitators we can donate our skills, energy and time to many worthwhile organizations. As a local group of professionals, we can assess local situations and create our own projects to address needs which are not being met. Many agencies would like to invest more of their time into meeting local needs and providing direct service. Find out what needs aren't being met and consider organizing a local team to take it on. Connect with local volunteer organizations and find out what's happening in your area and where there is need.

## Virtual Mentoring

For those of you with internet connections, as part of our Virtual Mentoring services, we can provide a virtual gathering place on our Hot Conference platform. If you would like to arrange to use this conference "space" for volunteer facilitator work, planning, support, sharing concerns and exploring options for specific projects, please visit the [GFSC website](#) for more information on how to reserve this space.

The GFSC Mentored Pathways program provides access to specific areas of facilitation, community development and conflict resolution in addition to Disaster & Crisis Intervention Facilitation. Through Mentored Pathways you or a local group will have access to the materials and support to apply to your situation.

While the media is full of headlines that call us to action, why not connect with other facilitators and professionals in your community or region, to discuss local needs and interests. You can sign up as a GFSC volunteer and join the GFSC Mentored Pathways program where you can develop knowledge in areas that you can put to service in your community.

Please visit our website to read more about Mentored Pathways and consider other ways you can volunteer with GFSC. As a young and growing organization we could use help in a number of activities such as fund-raising, marketing, communications and translations. If you are looking for ways to get more involved combining facilitation and service, consider GFSC. Please visit us at <http://globalfacilitators.org>.

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### **DCI Workshops 2006**

We like to be prepared and we would like you to be prepared, too! We are in the process of developing our schedule for delivering Disaster and Crisis Intervention Facilitation workshops for 2006. These workshops are designed for experienced facilitators and/or those who use facilitation skills regularly in their work. If your agency or organization would like to sponsor, organize or participate in a GFSC DCI workshop, please contact BJ Diamond, [sec@globalfacilitators.org](mailto:sec@globalfacilitators.org) by 5 December 2005.

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## **President's Message WHO ARE OUR "CLIENTS"**

**By Gilbert Brenson-Lazan**



If GFSC were a relief agency, a training program, a coordinating entity, a facilitation service, a collegial network or a think tank, the answer would not be so difficult. Since GFSC is a bit of "all of the above" the answer is more complex. Our

conversations with the outstanding group of professionals at the IAF European Facilitators Conference last month, plus the rash of recent tragedies (and requests for services) in several continents has brought to the forefront for us the complexity of who we are and what we do, and of the need to organize ourselves and operate as a complex adaptive system, letting our strategies emerge from a combination of adequate structures, processes of synergy generation and contents with great diversity and inclusion.

Are our clients the victims of man-made and natural disasters (sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two)? Or their families? Or the facilitators that work with them? Or networks of local facilitators? Or other institutions that also serve them? Or the profession of facilitation itself? Or society in general? Or the volunteers themselves? Yes on all counts.

- We serve the victims and their families with web-based and hard copies of materials for grief management and post-traumatic stress management processes.
- We serve the facilitators and other professionals that work with them, providing materials, disaster intervention models, F2F and virtual training, on-line group and individual mentoring.
- We serve local networks of volunteer professional facilitators that want to organize and prepare themselves for future service to their communities.

November 2005

Page 3

- We serve NPOs and other organizations and groups that want to be more effective serving others.
- We serve the profession itself with the development of new models and materials, and the GFSC volunteers themselves with a means to “give back” or “pay forward”.

It is always amazing to me that some people insist that there is nothing to do in their own community and they want to help people in need elsewhere. While that desire is most certainly noble and well-intentioned, I differ with its basic premise. I do not know of any community in the world that is not a potential target of some kind of natural disaster. I do not know of any community that doesn't have NPOs with great needs for support in their own organizational development and lack the resources to pay for a professional facilitator. I do not know of any community that doesn't need tools, models and expertise for community development. If nothing else the, last couple of months should have taught us that.

Please join us in our on-going commitment to build the capacity of communities to work through their challenges and create sustainable solutions, through the development and support of local networks of volunteer facilitators worldwide.

Warm regards,

Gil

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**Your donations help** offset volunteers' expenses, workshop costs as well as the distribution of materials. We appreciate all contributions. You can safely donate online at: <http://globalfacilitators.org/donation.html>.

Or you can mail a check to **GFSC**, c/o Lenny Diamond, Treasurer, 11 Sequin Road, West Hartford, CT 06117 USA.