Chapter 12 – Non-Governmental Organizations

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Chapter Objectives

- Identify the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in disaster and humanitarian relief
- Discuss the roles and functions of NGOs working in a disaster context
- Identify career paths in non-governmental and international humanitarian relief work
- Understand the role that volunteers play in nonprofit and international humanitarian relief work
- Explain effective practices for working cross-culturally either as a paid or a volunteer, particularly in contexts and different geographic locations
The Value of NGOs

- Worldwide, the most people affected by disasters could not recover from the earthquakes, tsunamis, famine and drought without the assistance of NGOs.
- NGO efforts address unmet needs and serving as primary response and recovery partners.
- NGO efforts include immediate response to long-term recovery.
- NGOs provide for basic needs (i.e. food, water, shelter, medical, business recovery, job retraining and rebuilding the infrastructure).
Organizational Structures

- **Umbrella**
  - National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)
- **Traditional disaster organizations**
  - Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.
- **Faith-based organizations (FBO)**
  - Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Mennonites etc.
- **Community Organizations**
  - Vary from community to community
- **Civic Organizations**
  - Lions, Rotary etc.
FBO Roles

- Salvage work and debris removal
- Case management and related counseling
- Funding, donations management
- Volunteer labor
- Housing and reconstruction
- Educational outreach
- Temporary shelter to permanent housing
- Advocacy efforts, satellite services for displaced congregations and child care
- Political activity, community organizing, facilitation of partnerships and economic development

Source: Phillips and Jenkins 2008
Church World Services

- Stand on the side of the oppressed through advocacy with and for those most in need
- Seek out unmet needs of survivors
  - Focus on those who were vulnerable and marginalized before the disaster
- Provide a larger vision of life that includes emotional and spiritual care as well as physical rebuilding
- Assist in long-term recovery of those in need
- Restore and build community relationships
Interfaith Growth Stages

- Defined
  - An emergent organization that fosters ecumenical collaboration

- Growth stages
  - Crystallization or emergence
  - Recognition or attempts to gain legitimacy
  - Institutionalization

Source: Ross 1980
Value of Local Organizations

- Community organizations offer emergency managers an important connection to local residents
- Staff and volunteers in community organizations know and understand the local context
- Know who is in need and which households may be falling through the cracks
- Bring expertise emergency managers may lack.
- Community organizations make an emergency manager more effective during all phases of a disaster
Integrating Disability Partners into Emergency Management

- Integrate disability (and/or gender, aging, children, tribal, pet and environmental) organizations into umbrella organizations, particularly those that foster inter-organizational partnerships and relationships, such as NVOAD
- Integrate disability groups into pre-disaster volunteer training and coordination centers and long-term recovery organizations
- Seek out volunteers with disabilities to build a cadre of people ready to participate in disaster relief
- Insure that workshops and training are disability-friendly
- Develop cross-training among emergency management and community disability organizations.
Working Cross Culturally

- Culture is defined as a design for living that influences how and where people live, work and interact.
- Culture is based on language; considered by social scientists to be the foundation on which other cultural components rest.
- Language influences how we speak to each other and permeates our words and the meaning behind them.
Two Approaches

- **Ethnocentrism**
  - Judging another culture from the perspective of your own
  - Often results in inappropriate aid, poor assumptions and ineffectiveness

- **Cultural Relativism**
  - Viewing another culture from their perspective and honoring their views and beliefs
  - Results in more effective aid that is understood within the culture
Inappropriate Relief Efforts

- Assume what people need
- Often deliver the wrong thing
- Inappropriate items go un-used
- Waste money
- Waste time
- Clog delivery systems
Appropriate Relief Efforts (USAID)

- A humanitarian organization with staff in the affected region should request the commodities being offered.
- Commodities offered should not be available for purchase in the affected region.
- Commodities offered must be useable and sustainable.
- Commodities should be adaptable to local technical and environmental conditions, such as voltage, dust, temperature, humidity, etc.
The Best Contribution

- What is the best contribution?
  - **Money**!
- Why is money the best contribution?
  - Easy to transfer; does not clog ports *(Why is so?)*
  - Helps generate local economy
  - Flexible to address unmet needs
  - Empowers local agencies
Fred Cuny’s Classic Question

“Are you the kind of agency that counts the houses you built and measures your success by the number?"

Note: Fred Cuny was an American disaster relief specialist who was active in many humanitarian projects around the world from 1969 until his forced disappearance in Chechnya in 1995.
International Relief Standards

- Damage and needs assessments conducted in-country with the guidance, input and support of locals
- Coordinate with locals and others to avoid duplication
- Do not over-react and assume you know what to send
- Work within established systems that do not overwhelm local capacity to handle donations
- Send what is needed at the right time, to the right place and to the right organizations
Local residents know and understand their own cultures, the local language, the customs that are important and where the impacts are the most significant. After a cyclone, for example, road signs may be down and transportation arteries disrupted. We need local residents to navigate the area.
Strategies for Empowering Locals

- Finding leaders of pre-disaster organizations and arranging a task force or recovery committee
- Allowing those leaders to elect a chairperson they know and trust
- Paying the leaders for their time, because they may have also been affected by the disaster
- Enabling local leadership with technologies that enhance communication
- Holding meetings in the local language
Strategies for Empowering Locals (Cont.)

- Honoring local customs (i.e. meeting structure, organization and how local leaders prefer to interact)
- Top down structure may not be as effective as a local, collaborative and consensus-building model. Insuring people have a voice at key planning, response and recovery meetings
  - This is particularly important for underrepresented groups (i.e. women, minorities and people with disabilities)
- Turning off personal microphone so that locals have a chance to speak or sign
Working and Volunteering

- Take classes about other nations
- Take classes about other cultures
- Learn a second or third language
- Volunteer for a reputable organization known to be an effective, locally empowering partner