

Concurrent Facilitated Sessions: New Partnerships and Collaborations

DISCUSSION NOTES: Working Group 4

Mandarin Room

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Team Leaders: Ayse Yonder and Suzanne Shende

Facilitator: Nugroho Abikusno

Recorder: Arleen Hill

Participants: J. Landry, N. Weidner, G. Guibert, E. Enarson, N. Abikusno, A. Yonder, S. Shende, L. Orstad, A. Igrambi, A. Hill

Partnerships and Collaborations

Leader Presentations

A. Yonder

Examples of partnerships and collaborations from around the world – common characteristics. Experiences with GROOTS and Huairou Commission working locally with womens groups networks that exist at the grassroots level and organize around disasters as an issue. Groups coming together to support each other and bring together multiple sectors to make resources available to meet the technical and other needs of groups. Information and technical assistance, leadership support, political support provided to overcome and reduce isolation. Also provide contact resources, collaboration began in 1996 and is evolving. Interaction is very democratic – little to no hierarchy. Groups all of which are networks of community oriented groups, from around the world are multi-sectoral. Land security, housing, HIV/AIDS, governance, faith based organizations organized around the priorities of each group. Collaboration relates to work and fundraising. Local dialogs initiated around specific issues to facilitate interaction and learning from each other. Parallel activities – local to local dialogs. Priorities are presented together to the decision-makers, local people speaking for themselves, do their own lobbying with the support of partnerships. Emphasis on the multi-sector perspective and value of bringing together all stake-holders. Training of local residents and grassroots groups to negotiate with decision-makers. To remain sustainable local groups need to take over from the NGOs who start the negotiation process. Huairou Commission acts as an umbrella group that facilitates interaction between networks and individual grassroots and local-to-local groups.

Huairou – best practices campaign as a way to document what groups are doing and to increase visibility of grassroots groups. Another campaign is to have training sessions run by groups themselves to facilitate peer-learning and exchange of different approaches. Recognition, funding and interaction are positive outcomes of campaign. Visibility and networking – creating a community of international grassroots groups – a sense of connection to a movement. With

relation to disasters, Disaster Watch, a group of women surviving disasters and NGO representative go to other countries after a disaster to speak with the government as well as local women to generate peer-learning, provide support and resources and to also begin a conversation and monitor the situation during the aftermath of a disaster. Emphasis is on conversation and suggesting responses that may be relevant to grassroots womens groups in the location facing the current disaster. Local ownership of disaster recovery, preparing to meet with government officials and represent the larger community. Examples of this type of interaction: Turkey, Iran, and India post-earthquake recovery. These types of campaigns benefit both the group providing support and peer-learning as well as the groups receiving the support.

S. Shende

Garifuna Emergency Committee of Honduras (Comite). A member of Huairou Commission and GROOTS (Grassroots Women Networks). afro@hondutel.hn

Partnerships brought many of us here and facilitates the interaction – helping us all to do a better job. The link to social movements as an important factor to focus on and appreciate. (Recall discussion on Day One about the Garifuna experiences in Honduras). Community has a lack of political and economic power, racism and gender inequality, geographic marginalization, rich cultural experiences are characteristics that are important contextual factors of the Hurricane Mitch disaster experience of this community. Partnerships and work within the community was informal at first, neighbors helping neighbors. Creating “Tool Banks” as liaisons – providing a way to strengthen community connection. Women were fundamental to the informal as well as the formal partnerships. Existing grassroots groups were partnered with intentionally with an attempt to cope with the hierarchies. Government negligence and identifying the risk of action, political and economic consequences for example. Links between grassroot groups in Honduras and groups in other countries is an important resource and mechanism for reducing risk and vulnerability. Local groups that strengthen their own communities are then able and eager to reach out to other locations that experience disaster and can benefit from the experience of grassroots groups. Honduras needs new strategies to make the system work – some successful linkages for NGOs. The power structure needs to be considered. Principles of groups include: majority women, democratic participation, long term outlook, community decided development, environmental and cultural protection, mitigation, “Contraparte” (giving back), value traditional knowledge. Goal to make the community resilient to abuses such as dland tenancy, rights, asset protection, community control. Peer learning and exchanges through GROOTS and Huairou are important to note. Jamaican group teaching Garifuna to build hurricane resistant housing as an example of important international partnerships. Partnerships do have clear, measurable, pertinent value and give local residents a voice and credibility.

Examples from Participants:

Example of Grand Bayou as a partnership. Initiated in 2002 following tropical storms and hurricanes. The FEMA response and mental health counseling interaction with the residents of the community who brought together key players in the current partnerships to support the community. A third tropical storm in 2003 which flooded the area strengthened the multi-sector commitment to the residents. Collaboration with architects, engineers, NGOs, residents, academics and practitioners.

Partnerships between communities in Oregon and Ukraine, through a network of sister communities, the red cross was involved in the partnerships as were the local emergency managers and first responder groups. (See details from presentation Day One by N. Weidner).

G. Guibert

Natural Hazard Center commitment of facilitating information sharing and partnerships. Expanding to a grassroots and involve more international voices.

L. Orstad

In British Columbia and Canada cuts in women's transition homes, education and other services is bringing together partnerships. Concern about violence in marginalized groups – women and violence against them. A specific example of increased violence against women after a disaster would be the Lillooet fires and experiences directly related to that event. First Nations, Children and remote communities. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has received money for community policing through social development – an exciting new opportunity to pull local communities involving a cross section of the communities to hear the local voices. Using the RCMP provides a unique opportunity – police know their local areas and the residents of the communities. Need to focus on who we can bring to the conversation.

University Community Experiences:

How do we get academics at the table?

N. Abikusno - Indonesia Experience, academia has a place in facilitating collaborations and informing policy decisions through creating task forces and commissions (or coalitions) to deal with specific issues such as Aging. National Commission on Human Rights and older women in particular another example of where academia does has something to contribute in serving as facilitators. Began from a grassroots initiative.

Discussion after Leader Presentations:

Partnerships and collaborations grow between places and people who share common experiences, for example with the Disaster Watch members. Places and people serve as models of experience. Disaster Watch can build accountability in the recovery phases of disaster response where resources are not always used as intended.

In Grad Bayou we've seen the important of the community giving back to the partners, and that the residents can provide for themselves. That there is an internal commitment to fundraising.

Partnerships in Honduras benefit from recognition/sharing and wealth other than monetary wealth.

Savings groups versus Microcredit. Builds trust and confidence – money acting as the glue to bring a community together. Grassroots women are good with money and good with earning money. Examples of this activity in India and Indonesia – saving and lending grassroots groups. Self Employed Womens Organizations in India and homebuilding organizing. Mitigation as community building.

When talking about partnerships we must also talk about the power issue and voice. Receiving help in the terms of the people receiving the help rather than the terms of the people providing the help. Isolation and powerlessness in disaster response. Even having the meetings that take place with decision-makers to take place in the local community – who does the traveling, sets up a power structure. Power sharing and empowerment is important to consider.

In the Grand Bayou has had to be very careful with the academics that work with the residents because they have a tendency to think they know better. Academics are not being paid and made a long-term commitment to the community, an investment in the community. Publicity associated with the Universities are a challenge as well in the power relationship of protecting the community and not be condescending. Empowering the community rather than doing for the community. Working on the PAR methodology. Acknowledging the existing relationships and also the history and the context. Providing a framework not the decisions.

Important to decide what the goal of the partnership is – matching groups based on goals and experiences. Take advantage of the commonalities. Acknowledge that there are going to be agendas and partnerships need to identify common goals rather than identify the money or resources. Partnerships – what are we trying to accomplish, revisit the goals and achieve the goals.

Partnerships need to listen. In disaster response sometimes you are driving by meeting the immediate needs and revisiting the goals can be lost in that effort. Managing donations and avoiding dependency and equal distribution of the donations can be challenge of grassroots groups as much as external response groups.

Questions to address:

1. Are the experiences and lessons learned described by the leaders applicable in our countries/regions/organizations?
 - Insure we are matching partners with common goals among the stakeholders (partners and community). (ie. More than money driven)
 - Similar missions and long-term partnerships as well as immediate or project based partnerships that are more short-term collaborations.
 - Ethics of partnering.
 - Levels of partnerships and commitments.
 - Power dynamics of partnerships (for example full partnerships with all actors sharing equal power and providing the resources to maintain equality).
2. What would have to be done differently to make this work?
 - Establish criteria for partnerships based on interests and goals.
 - Respecting and not disrupting the identity and integrity of the community.
 - Facilitate empowerment processes of communities to respond to their own needs internally.
 - Insure benefits and direction by the community.
 - Proposals by groups to access funds and not exploit communities.
 - “Do no harm”. How do we define harm? What is the impact of interaction, attention, and resources?
 - Balance and respect traditional knowledge with access to “modern” info.
3. What are policy needs in this area?
 - Insure that marginalized have access to post-disaster resources.
 - Access to information collected about communities post-disaster.
 - Community mapping and survey work by local residents. Access of information to negotiate with the local government. Value the community’s abilities to collect information and design programs.
 - Accountable to community. Transparency.
 - Allow communities to self identify.
4. What changes need to be made in practice?
 - Consider relationships in the community that exist before the partnerships.
 - Do not concentrate resources in the hands of outsiders/external consultants/experts.

- Recognize the informal groups and associations that exist in the community. Acknowledge culture and traditions.
 - Support formal roles to the internal grassroots groups to do the work and research and design programs for their community.
5. What are gaps to implementing policies?
- Disconnect between government and grassroots groups.
 - Disconnect between funders and community organizing.
 - Disconnect between existing community politics and power relations.
 - Vocabulary, language, power relations, education levels, experiences, access to everything, misconceptions and perceptions about grassroots capacities and capabilities, scale.
 - Mismatch between short term and long term needs and commitments.
 - Disconnect between goals.
6. What are the constraints we will encounter in making changes?
- Funding, lack of flexible funding to sustain efforts and initiatives. No money to invest in operational costs for community or training.
 - Lack of acknowledgment of informal grassroots groups.
 - Geopolitics and interests.
 - Local government politics, in some cases.
 - Lack of incentives to develop programs and publications tailored to grassroots experiences and needs.
7. What resources are required to implement policies? Are these available?
- Funding (private donors, grants, world bank) that have agendas and constraints that may match with the community priorities and capacities.
 - Experts, internal and external. Connectivity and linking experts.
 - Grassroots groups and energy that meet community needs.
 - Technical support, information that meet the needs of the communities.
 - More than construction, need jobs and community solutions.
 - Shift of mindset to acknowledge and accept all the above points (see 1-6).
 - Less lip service more evaluation and standards to monitor efforts and processes. Apply not just talk about gender.
 - Develop assessment tools.
8. What are opportunities that lie ahead?
- Working with the existing partnerships.
 - Peer learning.
 - Developing new partnerships and networking.
 - Future disaster learning moments.
 - Availability of experience sharing and exchange of effective ideas and strategies. (for example: Disaster Watch, Peer exchange by Huairou Commission, Neighborhood preparedness projects in Oregon and Ukraine, and Grand Bayou, LA)

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- 9. What do we need to recommend for the call to action and implementation strategy?
 - Involve community residents in the *academic* work and research conducted in their community. Give back in a way appropriate to the specific community.
 - Equal partnerships and equal goals.
 - Consider/insure equal power relations.
 - Equitable distribution of resources and support within community.
 - Resource allocation benefiting the partners based on needs.
 - Respect and reward community ability to collect information and design programs.
 - Support formal roles of community women's groups in recovery processes, information gathering and dissemination and training.
 - Transparency and accountability to local groups.
 - Flexible funding to encourage sustainable, short and long term projects.
 - Grassroots women should benefit from and direct partnerships.
 - Respect and incorporate culture, traditional knowledge.
 - Acknowledge existing relationships within the community.
 - Concentrate resources in the hands of the local residents – without imposing outside interests/goals.

 - How?
 - Use existing tools such as: Peer learning, Disaster Watch, neighborhood preparedness, best practices, etc.
 - Develop new tools.