

## *Alternative intervention models: Mitigation strategies and programmatic approaches*

What are the planning and programming opportunities for responding to disasters in such a way as to promote development and for working toward development in such a way that vulnerability to future disasters is reduced? The three papers in this section describe approaches that have been effective in specific contexts that are suggestive of approaches with wider applicability.

Franklin McDonald describes the experience of establishing an Office of Disaster Preparedness in Jamaica. He discusses the ways in which those involved set priorities and, even at the national policy level, he emphasizes the necessity of enabling local communities to develop their capacities to meet their own immediate emergency needs in a crisis event. He notes that education and training are central to this effort in increasing public awareness of potential hazards and responses, in providing expertise in specific skills and in integrating development and disaster issues into basic schooling.

Robert Gorman and Melvin Foote recount the experience of their agency, Africare, in Seguenega, Burkina Faso. During the 1970's drought, Africare with many other agencies, came into this area with emergency food and other supplies. As the crisis subsided with the advent of rains, Africare remained to work with the people in infrastructure development and management training which seems, even as the new drought has worsened, to have had an important effect in limiting the disastrous effects of the current crisis.

Corrine Johnson analyzes four programs of the American Friends Service Committee for their effectiveness in reducing long term vulnerability of the people with whom they work. She notes many important dilemmas that face the small private agency as it approaches its work this way, but points to the vivid possibility and necessity of enabling people to meet their own crises.

## *Establishing a national program of disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention: The Jamaican experience*

Franklin McDonald

Office of Disaster Preparedness  
Kingston, Jamaica

In 1980, the Government of Jamaica formally established a national focal point, with full time staff, to promote action to reduce the effects of future disasters or emergencies on the Jamaican population and economy. I was asked to work on the establishment of this new organization, called the Office of Disaster Preparedness (ODP), and this presentation describes the process which led to the formation of the ODP and also sets out our early operations, experiences and approaches.

### **JAMAICAN DISASTER HISTORY**

Over the last few years of recorded history, Jamaica has experienced many natural disasters (including earthquakes, hurricanes, and a variety of other meteorological problems) as well as some caused by man. Jamaican history is in fact full of incidents illustrating the linkage between disasters and development.

Let me remind you of one of these, the real story behind the Mutiny on the Bounty. Not many people know that it was influenced by hurricanes which between 1780 and 1786 struck Jamaica (seven times in six years). These successive hurricanes devastated food crops and it became difficult for the island to import food staples from outside, because of the American War of Independence. With the British and American rebels at war, Jamaica had very limited food supplies and many thousands starved to death. The answer to this problem proposed by the planters and supported by the British Government was to introduce a new range of food and tree crops from the South Pacific into the island to mitigate the food shortages arising from the hurricanes and wars. Captain Bligh (whose family owned land in Jamaica) was chosen to bring the precious breadfruit to Jamaica, and he pressured his sailors so much that they finally mutinied providing Hollywood with material for several films. Unfortunately the underlying link with disaster induced food shortage and the successful introduction of new food crops to the West Indies is often overlooked.

Since these experiences, we have had many hurricanes and earthquakes, and our understanding of their causes and effects has improved. Nonetheless when in 1979 parts of Jamaica experienced thirty five inches of rain in twenty four hours (seventeen inches falling within one six hour period) most of the infrastructure was severely affected. This flood event caused our disaster response mechanism to collapse totally.