

June 6, 2000

## **Reaching Children in Disasters**

***What are the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of youngsters  
and adolescents in emergencies?***

***How can their strengths be utilized and their needs met?***

**Moderator: Dick Krajeski, Church World Service**

**Raquel Cohen, *University of Miami Medical School, United States***

Children in disaster are a major concern throughout the world, and are a very special population. Childcare and intervention in trauma are specialized. With trauma, the age and developmental level of the child affects the trauma experience. Trauma can **last a** long time, particularly in certain circumstances. Spending a long time in a **refugee** camp, for example, can impact brain development as certain brain regions are affected by chronic, intense trauma. We need to be aware of the developmental stages and put programs in place that understand these stages. Children absorb their surroundings and can recover, but someone has to listen. Disaster effects produce a variety of reactions specific to each child. We must understand trauma in terms of biological, psychological, interpersonal and social perspectives. We must attend to the child after the event as well as to the sequel of events. Children need opportunities to draw, **talk**, relive and deal with trauma. We can do this face-to-face in shelters and in families **and** in school groups. The purpose is to restore children's capacity. We should be aware of traumatic reminders and increase children's understanding of traumatic reference, assist with cognitive discrimination and increase tolerance for expected reactions.

**Jonathon Spencer Rose, *Johns Hopkins University, United States***  
**"Children of the Street"**

Children of the street are unique, and their uniqueness makes them particularly vulnerable during disasters. The world's street children have been divided into two groups. The United Nations defines one group as children of the street (a.k.a. Homeless Youth) who have fragmented or terminated family ties, who sleep in street locations, and who are often involved in illegal activities for survival. This is to **contrast** them with children on the street who may work on the street but return to their families and a home. Internationally, there were more than 30 million children who in 1989 met the United Nations definition of a child of the street. Another 70 million children in the world are classified by UNICEF as children on the street. Both populations have **grown** significantly since that time, but no accurate census is available.

Children of the street are particularly vulnerable during a disaster, and are routinely overlooked by government and non-government organizations seeking to provide assistance during disasters. This results in particularly high morbidity and mortality for these children. For example, when Hurricane **Mitch** slammed into Honduras on October 27, 1998 it brought injury, homelessness, and death to many thousands of people. Of all of those people, perhaps the most vulnerable population was that of the more than **10,000** street children in Honduras. Their vulnerabilities included lack of shelter, food and protection normally afforded to non-street children. This disaster provides a clear illustration of the effect disasters or conflict situations have on children of the street especially when they are overlooked. Furthermore, during disaster and conflict situations children, and especially children on the street, become separated or orphaned from their parents or guardians. This creates a new population of children of the street who, because they have not yet developed the survival skills of the previously existing children of the street, are even more dependent and vulnerable. There is currently no government or non-government organization devoted to carrying for children of the street during disasters anywhere in the world. They appear on no list prior to the disaster, during the disaster, or after. As a result, there is no accounting for the number of children of the street lost during disasters.

Children of the street deserve to have the same humanitarian assistance afforded to them as all other victims of a disaster or conflict. This can be achieved through a three-phased approach. The first phase is to objectively establish that there is indeed a need that is not being met by providing a quantitative analysis of the problem. Some of this has already been documented but has not been collated. The second phase has two components. The first component is to develop specific protocols to address the special needs of existing, as well as newly created, children of the street during disaster and conflict situations. The second component is to bring these protocols to existing NGOs and to attempt to incorporate them into the existing organization. If this is not successful then the third phase will begin. The third phase is to develop an NGO that specifically addresses the needs of existing and newly created street children during disaster and conflict situations. This may be eventually absorbed by larger NGOs.

**Kay Goss, Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States**

It is necessary to educate women and children about hazards and disaster prevention if we are ever to develop a hazard-resistant culture. When disaster strikes, the public bears 80% of the burden of response and recovery, and that falls disproportionately on women and children. Women's special strengths include determination to protect children in the face of disaster, and drawing out the unsuspected strengths of children themselves, involving them in whatever is needed. Their involvement reduces the sense of helplessness and reduces psychological trauma. Knowledge about what to do empowers us. It gives us the tools to meet whatever we face. Provide women with the

knowledge and with reliable information and we will reduce the toll of disaster very significantly.

I congratulate Florida International University and the sponsors of this conference and hope *FEMA* can help sponsor the next conference on this topic. I bring greetings from President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and *FEMA* Director James Lee Witt. On the international front, a disaster preparedness memo was recently signed by the President with the Ukraine president. An agreement between *FEMA* and *EMERCOM* of Russia is being discussed. It is very important to build international relationships. One way to reach women and children is to have more female emergency managers. *FEMA*'s Higher Education Project will have a summit the end of June. I think we need some courses directed toward meeting the needs of women and children. *FEMA* is seeking course developers. *FEMA* has outreach programs in schools that are particularly in need of materials. Two demonstration curriculum projects are going on in Maryland and Arkansas. National Fire Prevention efforts include the RISK program that will include natural disasters. Disaster resistant initiatives are ongoing in several universities. A second conference on African American outreach is being held. Materials are being converted into Spanish. *FEMA* is working to expand its materials and programs to meet the needs of our diverse population. Focusing on the needs and strengths of women and children is one step in that direction. [In the questions that followed several positive comments were made about the teaching materials for working with children available in English and Spanish on the *FEMA* for Kids website: [www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids) .]

**Deborah Thomas, *Hazards Research Laboratory, University of South Carolina, United States***

Communicating risk to children prior to a disaster is an important aspect to reaching this group in a disaster. If children have some idea about what to expect and what they should do, they will be empowered and be easier to reach. Examples of very young children using the 911 system in the US illustrate that they can act if provided with the appropriate skills. Children's ability to cope in an emergency is partly influenced by the knowledge that they possess about what they can and should do in the face of adversity. In 1999, the *South Carolina Atlas of Environmental Risk and Hazards* was released on CD-Rom with the intention of educating school-aged children in South Carolina about the types of hazards that could potentially affect them. (Note: the CD can be purchased from the University of South Carolina Press.) The atlas is not only about what hazards impact South Carolina, but also what people can do if confronted with a dangerous situation. In other words, students are informed about what to do before, during, and after a hazardous event occurs. Teachers in South Carolina have expressed excitement about this product, both in terms of its usefulness in creating lesson plans and as a research tool for the students. The creation of materials, such as the Atlas, aimed at conveying information about multiple hazards to children poses some unique challenges. Probably one of the greatest of these is identifying which hazards should be included in the educational resource. Not all

places experience the same hazard potential. Consequently, only a select set of hazards may be relevant. The specific type of educational materials varies by location and should be fashioned in terms of content and style to meet the needs of children in a particular area. The language and information must be appropriate for this younger audience; the intent should be to inform, not to alarm. Further, the graphics and design must also appeal to the intended age group. Another major issue is the dissemination mechanism and delivery of the product so that it gets widely used. In other words, identifying ways to reach children of all ages in a meaningful way is vital. The possibilities range from the high-tech computer program to the low-tech coloring book. However, just developing a product does not mean that the message will reach the intended audience. Successful risk communication also requires identifying potential outlets for the end products. This may involve establishing partnerships with schools, teachers, parents, or even religious organizations. The goal is to create an interesting product that retains the educational message about hazards and to ensure that the message actually reaches children of all ages.

**John Kinsel, *Church of the Brethren*, United States**

Since 1941 the *Church of the Brethren* has been doing disaster relief. In the mid-1970s we moved to childcare and a focus on children under six. We train volunteers to put together childcare areas in disaster assistance centers. Particular training foci include: Who are the children? What are the effects of trauma? What can we encounter at a disaster site. How can we learn to be open and responsive to children? How can we meet children "where they are"? The program is called Cocoon and has developmentally appropriate materials. It is non-directive and includes play, use of paint, shaving cream, play-dough, blankets, books, stuffed animals. Safety and caring are paramount. Sometimes we will send a worker to stand in line for a parent if the child needs the parent with them. The work of children is play in which they develop a mastery of their situation. Some just play, others tell a lot about themselves through their play. But play provides information to parents and caregivers about the effects of trauma on children.

**Carolyn Rose-Avila, *Save the Children*, United States**

I was director for *Save the Children*, an NGO, in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch. Our focus was on health and education. Most NGOs are development-focused. We need to integrate disaster with the work they do -- a switch in focus. People are in new roles after disasters and we need to offer training. Funding for psycho-social assistance is not readily available. Rural communities are often dismissed by aid workers focusing on cities. NGOs and relief workers in Nicaragua found themselves dealing with politics and power situations. Most of the people we were helping were from disenfranchised populations, and many were in refugee camps. They couldn't get land for the people and are just now getting people back to farming. Most rural communities were extended families. Refugee camps had pieces of communities. Families began to

disintegrate. People wanted to go back to work, back to subsistence farming. Bureaucracy often inhibits recovery efforts.

**Frank Zenere, *Miami-Dade County Public Schools*, United States**

Exposure to disaster occurrences has long been part of the human experience. Although, all who come in contact with calamitous events will be emotionally impacted to some degree, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Developmental growth processes greatly influence a child's ability to cope with disaster-related trauma. Reactions of fear, anger, confusion, guilt, shame and grief, all represent the prism of expected responses.

Disaster experiences frequently serve to overwhelm a child's coping ability, much as a tidal wave inundates coastal communities. This emotional overload is exacerbated by the child's minimally developed affective defense system. This inability to deny inability to comprehend, the permanence of death and other multi-level losses, along with early age egocentrism that accentuates feelings of guilt and shame, sets up youngsters for the possibility of enduring trauma reactions.

Underserved communities and populations before the disaster will be underserved afterward. Families, friends and faith are the strengths and protective factors that provide resources. We have to meet children at their developmental age, which may be different than chronological age. The goal is to re-establish family routines, even if they are living in tent cities or shelters.

Adolescents tend to demonstrate emotional reactivity in the form of regressive behavior, behavioral difficulties, depression, school and relationship difficulties and changes in character. Some teens will radically divert from pre-disaster personality traits; the outgoing and active youth, suddenly becomes withdrawn and isolated; the normally reserved and cautious youth may initiate risk-taking behavior. During the post-disaster period, youth of all ages will greatly benefit from well-developed connections to emotionally stable caregivers. Physical closeness and open communication will greatly benefit this process.

Adolescents who have a strong social connection to peer support will also have greater access to express concerns. Additionally, the provision of routine and structure in the lives of youth fosters a sense of comfort and stability. Generally, the increased capacity of youth to cope with disaster experiences will be enhanced by the following recommendations: provide a sense of safety and security; offer opportunities for ventilation and validation of concerns; and assist in predicting and preparing for the future. Youth should be allowed and encouraged to take an active role in the family and community recovery. Assisting their families and helping others in debris removal and physical reconstruction often taps into youth resiliency, and aides in emotional reconstruction as well.

## **Working Across Barriers**

***How are disaster-impacted communities divided  
and with what effects on women and children?  
How can economic, ethnic, cultural, generational, religious  
and other barriers be bridged in practice?***

**Moderator: Shirley Collins, Bureau of Recovery and Mitigation, Florida  
Department of Community Affairs, United States**

**Maureen Fordham, Anglia Polytechnical University, United Kingdom**

Working across barriers means doing socially inclusive disaster management. Social categorization can be an exclusionary practice, an us-versus-them process, and can be discussed as either choice or imposition. Do people choose identity or is it imposed on them, as a "victim" for instance? We need to acknowledge different experiences and needs but avoid the rigid conceptions of identity. Labeling can take away **power** and agency. Pre-existing divisions and structured inequalities can worsen disaster-induced divisions. A term could be coined, such as "disastrogenesis", a negative condition induced by the disaster management process that makes things worse. We need to think about the kinds of communities we create through practice and **planning**: therapeutic or corrosive. Negative effects on women and children include **negative** effects that worsen vulnerability physically, socially and psychologically. I recommend Mary Anderson's book, *Rising from the Ashes* (1989, Westview Press).

Positives include empowerment, group bonding, a new or renewed sense of self **worth**. To bridge barriers we need to identify what we do and do not know, think of **scale** (micro to macro), look at distributions of resources and power. We need to engage in vulnerability and capacity analyses, social inclusion, and participatory approaches. The everyday world, not disasters, creates vulnerabilities and capacities. Here I recommend Robert Bullard's book *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* (2000 Westview Press) and a recent report by Jennifer Wilson and Arturo Yemaiel-Oyola<sup>4</sup>). Decision makers must reflect the diversity of the locality. Web sites are one way to work across barriers, starting with the *Gender and Disaster Network* website: [www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn). Interested persons can join the disaster network listserve on the website.

**Kristina Peterson, Church World Service, United States**

Children are a key to bringing people together and bridging barriers. Things that work to bridge diversity and disaster context include: a holistic response that looks at the

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, Jennifer and Arthur Oyola-Yemaiel. 1998. "Emergent Coordinative Groups and Women's Response Roles in the Central Florida Tornado Disaster, February 23, 1998." Quick Response Report. Boulder: Natural Hazards Center.

family unit; working on safety issues for children, addressing health issues, along with food and shelter. In an example from Dayton, Ohio, we worked with black and white encounters in school districts, finding that the bridge that brought families together was concern over child safety. The kids wanted a place to play, so we led efforts to create a day camp with both groups for 10 weeks.

We cannot and should not avoid addressing pre-existing conditions. This is essential. Issues of resources, time, transportation and jobs go to the heart of recovery. We need to build trust with truthful, forthright information, not withholding information from victims and families. We must interpret vocabularies of disaster for people: terms, acronyms, possibilities and resources. We need to listen to what people say they want and need, not what we think they do. We need to be an advocate, standing beside and with women. It is import to engage in conflict resolution when needed. The development of indigenous leadership is vital. We can move clients from recipient to co-worker and leader by creating opportunities and choices.

Positive steps to help women and children while working across barriers include: creating a neutral center for children to play, providing an opportunity to interact across lines of diversity, opening schools and camps as family centers, and creating weekend retreats for parents and teachers.

#### **Dave Neal, *University of North Texas, United States***

I see a number of approaches in order to work across barriers. Generally, I propose that we must define the notion of "victim," and we must create new knowledge for more and improved training and hiring practices within disaster relief and other types of agencies.

As we move forward on the topic of disaster on women and children, I believe we **must** pause on one important topic. Specifically, we need to focus, develop and improve our ideas about disaster victimization. For example, except for Russell Dyne's paper on the concept of role and disaster.<sup>5</sup>, researchers and practitioners have not explored deeply the definition of "disaster victim." Thus, as we move forward with this conference's topic, we must also establish a definition or definitions of "disaster victim." Consider these issues that I believe we must answer. How do researchers define "disaster victim? How do practitioners define "disaster victim?" How do relief agencies and others define "disaster victim?" How do disaster victims see or define themselves as "disaster victims?" How do response, relief, and recovery efforts create or exacerbate victimization? How can we manage the possibility of multiple realities of "victimization?" Can disaster victims exist even if "victims," disaster organizations, and/or government agencies do not define or declare an event a disaster? In summary, the process of understanding the vulnerabilities of women and children is tied directly with broader issues of defining "victim."

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<sup>5</sup> Dynes, Russell. "The Concept of Role in Disaster Research" in Dynes, R., B. DeMarchi and C. Pelanda (1987) *Sociology of Disasters*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

No one effort will bridge in gap regarding the issue of women and children being victimized by disaster. Rather, multiple efforts can provide a synergy for success. Three related steps, noted below, have been shown to be effective in bridging this gap. They include: Continued new and expanding training courses to sensitize people in disaster organizations to the special needs of women and children; continued and improved diverse hiring practices that reflect victimization patterns; continued and more research on victimization that provides new and better information for training; new and better information regarding hiring practices; new and better theory and research.

In conclusion, I believe that a clearer understanding of "victim" from multiple perspectives (e.g., practitioners, victims, researchers), combined with improved training, hiring practices, and research, can help us bridge the gap across barriers. The approaches I mention here, I believe, can also be integrated with the many other ideas that we will discuss during the workshop.

**Lourdes Meyreles, *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO)*, Dominican Republic**

Meyreles spoke about FLASCO's work in the Dominican Republic after Hurricane Georges, and about experiences working with women. The Caribbean region is at high risk to hurricanes and includes vulnerable populations due to exclusion and unequal access to resources. Women tend to be heads of households, a phenomenon that has increased fourfold in recent decades. Most poor households are headed by women and a woman is often the only adult responsible for children. In dual-parent households, women are the emotional foundation. Gender barriers must be eliminated for effective disaster management to work. Experience has shown that if the response effort is inclusive of women, once included, they will take leadership roles.

"Ser Mujer", an effort post-Georges has been evaluated. All community members were included such as children and single women. This group contacted funders for reconstruction housing, schools, educational programming, waste disposal, clean up, inter-organizational coordination and health initiatives. Community members, especially males, changed their views of women. It was mentioned women created better relationships with local authorities and this experience proved women's capacity for leadership.

**Jean D'Cunha, Independent Researcher and Gender Consultant, Thailand**

Women are socially constructed to be weak, to be rescued, which reinforces gender stereotypes and women as dependent recipients of disaster relief. Gender must be seen as interactive with other social categories. In Bangladesh, a poor country with high illiteracy, large numbers of female-headed households, poverty, and a rigid division of labor in both public and private, strict segregation and decreased mobility, women (especially Muslim women) are at risk. In the 1991 cyclone, in some instances women did not get warnings because men did not relay the warnings to secluded



women. Some women procrastinated leaving the house, waiting for husbands -- and died with their children. They feared sexual harassment on the way to shelters and being labeled loose women. In that delay, they perished due to gender roles. More women than men died trying to save themselves and their children. Some men went to shelters and abandoned their families. Women found it harder to climb onto rooftops since it is not a familiar, routine activity. Cultural values dictate that women's modesty include cumbersome clothing and long hair that impedes quick movement and swimming. Some women stayed in the waters due to their clothes being torn from them. Shelters were too distant and while en route women had to care for children, parents and livestock. Shelters were not gender or culturally sensitive. There was no sex segregation, no privacy, no separate toilets, and sexual harassment occurred. Problems by pregnant women (standing in knee deep water), lactating and menstruating women were not addressed. Post-disaster work loads for women increased. They did not get relief items and were hesitant to go to male distributors. Land and housing often were tied to ownership, but women do not own.

We must ground our work and build on women's strengths. In South Asia some initiatives include joint ownership of houses, involving women in management and volunteerism at the grass roots levels, and enhancing women's access. Empowering women creates new role models, challenges traditional boundaries, and sustains communities.

**Discussant: Susanna Hoffman, Independent Anthropologist, United States**

There is a false bifurcation between culture and society, which are actually very tied. Social organization is an expression of culture. Women, locally, bring in 50-80% of the economy all over the world and are economic providers, whether it is with goats, eggs, chickens, crops, etc. Women feed men, yet remain invisible. A number of themes resonated in this session: having more female managers, understanding scale, categorizing and identifying by outsiders, separating women from who they relate to, defining women as victims, and issues of bifurcation: male/female, race/ethnicity, urban/rural, organized and not organized, private/public, and visible/invisible. The more we make a hue and cry, the more change can happen.

**Discussant: Marian Burns, Greater Miami and the Keys Red Cross, United States**

Partnerships are key in breaking barriers. We cannot work in isolation, but must seek the local community's input. The Red Cross is local, not just national in the U.S., with 1300 chapters. They want research, and to take it to the community. The Red Cross is trying to increase its diversity. Let's work together. Let's use the internet to connect. Find a mentor and be a mentor, especially to a girl.

## **Building on Women's Strengths**

***What best practices exist for gender-equitable disaster work?  
What factors facilitate and limit their implementation?***

**Moderator: Brenda Phillips, Texas Woman's University**

**Sarah Bradshaw, *Puntos de Encuentro/ICD*, Nicaragua**

**"Impacts and Interventions: A Gendered Analysis of Post-Mitch Nicaragua"**

The issue of the role of NGOs in reconstruction and their ability to compensate for weak governments has been brought to the fore in the Nicaraguan context, given that reconstruction, to the extent that it has occurred, has been largely via national and international NGOs.

Two key data sources exist on the impact of interventions for reconstruction post-Mitch. The first, the Social Audit, was a large-scale household survey undertaken in the regions affected by Mitch, seeking to present the needs and opinions of the people directly affected by the disaster. This initiative was promoted by the *Civil Coordinator for Emergency and Reconstruction (CCER)*, an organization that emerged soon after Mitch and encompasses more than 300 national NGOs via established NGO networks. The evidence provided on reconstruction initiatives has been used by the CCER in their advocacy role to highlight the inefficiency of the Government and to promote an alternative people-centered vision of reconstruction: a vision that places as central the need to change existent unequal relations of power. A more in-depth study of four communities affected by Mitch undertaken within *Puntos de Encuentro*, a national feminist NGO and member of the CCER, complements this survey evidence. It focuses on the impact of crisis and reconstruction on gender roles and relations within households.

The studies highlight the differential impact that crisis and reconstruction interventions have had depending on sex, age and position of the person in the household (head or partner). The evidence highlights young people as those who most feel that the situation has improved. Apparent success at gaining access to available resources for reconstruction would appear to explain this. Female heads of household also emerge as a group that has had greater access to reconstruction; however, the extent to which female heads are really benefiting from this access in terms of their longer-term more 'strategic' needs is questionable. Finally, the seemingly greater negative impact of crisis and reconstruction on the position of young female partners/wives within households suggest this as a group for concern.

The studies also suggest that while most reconstruction has occurred via NGOs, these projects are not without problems. More importantly there is evidence that reconstruction projects appear to have a negative impact on relations between men and women in households, in terms of both increased levels of conflict and violence.

Further the presence of reconstruction projects in general appears to create demand for psychological support, a demand that may often go unmet due to lack of resources. The need for more integrated reconstruction projects that address practical, **strategic** and emotional needs is thus clear.

The evidence also presents a dilemma for those working from a gender perspective. While some women suggest that the situation in terms of male/female relations has actually improved post-Mitch, a closer look highlights two issues for discussion. First, the trend post-Mitch for men to turn to religion appears to have promoted a positive, if cosmetic, change for the better. Second, the inclusion of 'masculinity' training with men in some reconstruction packages seems to be having an equally positive, although possibly more fundamental impact. While the first raises a question about to **what** extent can and should such openings be used, the second raises questions around the channeling of scarce resources toward men in post-disaster situations.

**Wayne Westhoff, *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, United States***

The CDMHA has will have money available to fund projects beginning in September. Information will be available via its web site: [www.cdmha.org](http://www.cdmha.org). This is a joint effort between *Tulane University* and *University of South Florida*. We want to build partnerships with the money. Funds come from the *US Congress* and *Department of Defense*. We concentrate on the Americas, excluding Canada, and focus on countries and areas under the Southern Command of the *DOD*. An example has been rebuilding bridges in Tegucigalpa with transporting materials to sites. We conducted 650 **flights** into Puerto Rico. The Center offers education and training (conference support, distance learning, graduate courses), communication, and research funding. Last year we gave \$400,000 to projects. Projects must focus on the Americas. Other themes are partnering, and social and behavioral research. Proposals should be for \$30,000-\$50,000 in funding with a possibility of up to \$100,000.

**Lynne Cameron, *Neighbors 4 Neighbors, Channel 4, Miami, Florida, United States***

It is important to work with reporters. Watch the media. If a reporter covers an **issue** that you want to address, contact that reporter. After Hurricane Andrew, a **female** producer decided to use a phone bank to connect people in need with donors, and *Neighbor 4 Neighbor* was born and continues today. We connect people and resources. I urge you to educate the media and work with reporters, particularly **female** reporters who are more likely to cover home and family issues. It is important to prepare and empower the community by working with local media, building a relationship with the media prior to impact, helping with information dissemination, and educating the media about disasters before they strike.

**Lynn Orstad, *Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada***

My role as practitioner is to interpret research at the local level, with a special focus on battered women. It is important that we incorporate women into emergency management. In our training, we have given 10 courses with 300 people; 90% have been male. Teaching about how women are made invisible in emergencies has been successful. Fifteen emergency managers have made contact with women's organizations in 15 communities. It's a good start -- the key is to start doing something.

**Discussant: Brigitte Toure, *Centre de Recherche et de Documentation en Economie de la Sante (Paris), France***

It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm and energy here. It is clear we need to use a gender methodology, with gender tools. We need to avoid the top-down approach and include women. We need to disseminate information, lobby and influence governments and include women. In Africa, there is a lack of research, information and coordination and it is difficult to put things together. The success in British Columbia is very important, a concrete success.

**Discussant: Bruce Netter, *Catholic Charities, United States***

Netter told a joke to make the point that men need to be included as part of the solution. Several men were quite active in the conference and he encouraged the group to seek to find and encourage supportive men, and to educate the others on gender issues and include them in initiatives.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**Funding for this conference was provided by the *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the International Hurricane Center, the US Department of Agriculture, and the Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance.***

**Special thanks to the staff of the International Hurricane Center and students from Florida International University who assisted with this project, including Nicole Dash (research associate), Anthony Peguero, Cecelia Derby, and Jennifer Wilson (sociology graduate students), Betilde Munoz (political science graduate students), Arturo Oyola-Yemaiel (recent doctoral recipient in sociology), and Scott Caput, Maria Cano, and Yvonne Lima from the IHC.**

**Our special appreciation goes to the staff of the beautiful Miami Beach Ocean Resort for their able assistance in making the conference a success and our stay a pleasant experience.**

**REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS  
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