

“Hold down de Roof”  
Developing A Psycho-social  
Response To Post Disaster Stress  
In Grenada

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# Critical Contextual Issues

- Population 80,000
  - Grenada's experience of hurricanes
  - Grenada's history with traumatic events – Revolution and Invasion
  - Devastation of 90% of housing stock
  - Majority of schools affected
  - Community centres damaged
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# Critical Contextual Issues cont'd

- Devastation of several businesses and places of work which severely impacted the economy and employment
- Devastation in the agriculture sector and the eco-system
- High levels of unemployment with differentially higher levels of unemployment among women e.g.. The devastation of the nutmeg pools

# Critical Contextual Issues cont'd

- Reliance on external funding for recovery
- Lack of an efficient coordinated response
- The Agency for Reconstruction (ARD) developed as an interventive and coordinating body and limitations therein
- The paucity of reliable data on both pre and post Ivan circumstances of persons and households
- Capacity issues in the social services
- The push to respond concretely to the needs of the population

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements

This assessment was conducted in the first quarter of 2005 – some 4 – 6 months post hurricane Ivan

Impacting factors: Micro level

- Evidence of resiliency in the population
- Several persons were still experiencing recurrences in traumatic responses
- The housing situation of a significant percentage of the population was still dire and many were living in makeshift situations.

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements

- Many persons had not been reached in debriefing
- There seemed, in some cases, to be a predisposition to wait on the government or other response bodies for assistance
- Communication on accessing information was sometimes confusing or not available

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements

Impacting factors: Systemic and policy issues

- The magnitude of the task put considerable demand on the already scarce resources in the Social Sector (as well as other sectors).
- Challenges in the coordination of responses

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements

Impacting factors: Systemic and policy issues  
cont'd:

- Multiple interests (donor and assisting groups) and interventions and different philosophies of helping
- Many of the interventions continued to focus on emergency responses and with less attention placed on psycho-social developmental needs

- Developmental initiatives seemed uncoordinated and sporadic and not necessarily culturally relevant.
- There seemed to be little involvement of communities in developing these programmes
- Several donor and response agencies had been working in the community and turfs were firmly established.

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements cont'd

What had been done:

- To enhance the critical shortcoming of trained personnel, a creative alignment of several social sector response arms incl. NGOs, departments of Government and the SGU formed a committee chaired by the Ministry of Social Development, to facilitate a psycho-social response . Results:
  - Debriefings in several areas
  - An indigenous 3 tiered system of counseling support
- Agency for Reconstruction and Development (ARD) commissioned situation analysis
- ARD workshop on the way forward in trauma management

# Assessment of the Population needs and service requirements cont'd

Some challenges of this committee:

- The latitude to act independently available in the immediate aftermath of the Hurricane, was impacted as normalcy of functioning was regained and other work demands competed for attention
- Staffing limitations did not allow outreach in rural communities. This was a major concern

# The ARD Community Caravan: The Concept

The Community Caravan was intended to respond to three central issues:

1. The need to provide some form of culturally relevant therapeutic intervention to help persons deal with the trauma
2. Enhancement of resiliency:
  1. informational needs
  2. Skill development – solution construction and problem solving
3. Data gathering at the community level (from a survey fatigued population) re: needs for programming decision making

# The Concept

*The Caravan was intended to be a moving amalgam of services addressing the psycho-social (incl. informational and skill enhancement) needs of persons particularly in rural districts.*

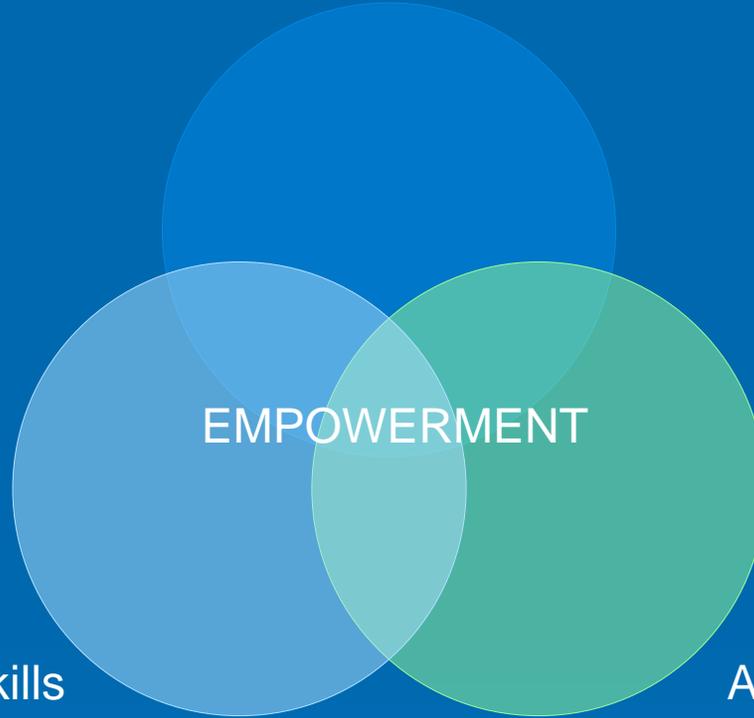
Three pronged methodology:

1. Arts-in-Action approach - Playback theatre – therapeutic intervention
2. Workshops – opportunities for discussion of frustrations, shared problem-solving
3. Information fair – info. on many aspects of rebuilding

# Development and implementation processes

- ❑ Creation of an interagency committee to refine the idea and to develop, plan and assist in implementing culturally relevant programme
- ❑ Community consultation and involvement in shaping each caravan
- ❑ Provision of funding opportunity for community groups in a supporting activity
- ❑ Mobilization at the community level as well as agencies working in communities

Emotional/Trauma release



Enhanced coping skills

Access to information



# Lessons

- Collaborative and participatory processes are key. They are slower but necessary
- Party politics is intimately interwoven in community intervention and needs to be negotiated
- The push for tangible results may create a tension to abandon process. It is very important to be clear about and believe in the process
- The criticality of clarifying the intervention, its role and intent and in understanding when it is necessary to give up some elements so that programming work can continue

# Lessons cont'd

- Negotiating time, space, political agendas at governmental and agency levels requires sophisticated negotiation skills, patience and a win/win philosophy
- Turf protection has to be both respected and challenged. Community involvement and development provides a critical agenda for addressing this tension
- Being idealistic on a limited budget has its challenges

# Lessons cont'd

- Cultural relevance requires us to consider deeply the perceptions, traditions, beliefs etc of the community. It does not absolve us however, from the responsibility for gently introducing the new so that the community's framework for problem solving and solution construction are broadened and enhanced

# Challenges for a Disaster Curriculum in Social Work Education

- ✓ Consideration of integration of the approaches – micro, mezzo and macro
- ✓ Any disaster programme should address both vulnerability reduction and resiliency enhancement
- ✓ Teaching multi-level assessment – build on tradition of exploration of multiple impacting factors



# Challenges for a Disaster Curriculum in Social Work Education cont'd

- ✓ Developing a body of interdisciplinary knowledge which requires us to explore multiple intelligences in problem solving/solution construction
- ✓ Encouraging other disciplines to take these courses so that we begin to create teams of professionals



Thank you

