SEMINAR : Tsunami / Katrina Exchange

Disaster survivors unite across borders to exchange strategies for rebuilding

A seminar on community-driven disaster rebuilding, held at Loyola Law School, Loyola University, New Orleans July 3, 2007

Over the past year, groups of survivors from the Asian tsunami and from Hurricane Katrina (along with their support organizations) have travelled around the world to visit each other several times, as part of a growing program of mutual support across cultures and accross the world. The idea of this on-going exchange has been to give people from some very different parts of the world a chance to compare notes on how they have dealt with the problems of rebuilding their lives and communities after a major calamity, and to find ways of supporting each others' struggles in direct, human and practical ways - based on their very real experiences they have gone through. The first exploratory visit to New Orleans by two members of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) took place in July 2006, and the first visit by a group of Katrina survivors from New Orleans to visit tsunami-hit communities in Thailand and Indonesia took place in September 2006, with another group from New Orleans and Gulf Coast communities following in November 2006.

The tsunami-Katrina exchange, which is a first for many of the groups involved, is being supported by three groups :

- **The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI)** in New York
- **The National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH)** in USA (with a branch in New Orleans)
- **The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)** in Bangkok

In July 2007, the first group of tsunami survivors from Thailand and Indonesia travelled to New Orleans to meet some of the friends they had made on the earlier exchanges and to see with their own eyes how a major calamity like Hurricane Katrina is responded to in the wealthiest, most powerful country in the world. We had all hoped to bring along a group of community leaders from tsunami-hit communities in Sri Lanka and India, but these participants were unable to get their USA visas.

It was during this most recent exchange visit, which happened nearly two years after Hurricane Katrina, that a public seminar was organized to give a chance for these visitors to exchange their experiences and ideas about community-driven disaster rehabilitation, in a more structured discussion, with some of the New Orleans and Gulf Coast groups which have been involved in the exchange.

The seminar was hosted by the Loyola Law School, in New Orleans, and moderated by Professor Bill Quigley, who runs Loyola's Law Clinic and who has been actively supporting the right to return of New Orleans' poorest residents, particularly those people who have been locked out of the city's closed public housing projects. The seminar was held during the July 4th holiday period, so a lot of folks were busy with their families and off on holiday outings. But all the same, we got an enthusiastic audience of concerned New Orleans citizens, activists, public housing residents, representatives from communities and non-profits in Gulf Coast areas and well-wishers from the university. In the following pages, we present the full, transcribed discussion from this seminar.

Key participants in the discussion :

Participants from Thailand :

- **Mr. Maitree Jongkraijug** (Community leader from Ban Nam Khem Village, Phang Nga Province).
- **Ms. Pairat Phangchan** (Community leader from Plaa Katak Community, Phuket Province).
- **Mr. Jamnong Thajitnirat** (He is an experienced free-lance community organizer).
- **Ms. Pikun Sittiprasertkun** (Freelance translator, researcher)
- **Mr. Thomas Kerr** (Publications coordinator with the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Bangkok).
- **Mr. Peter Swan** (Film maker with ACHR, Australian citizen).

Participants from Aceh, Indonesia :

- **Mr. Afrizal** (Community leader from Lam Manyang Village, a fishing village in Banda Aceh, leader in the Udeep Beusaree Network of 26 adjacent villages)
- **Mr. Syaiful** (Comunity leader, Cot Lamkuweh Village, Banda Aceh - Also Udeep Beusaree Network)
- **Ms. Jessica Champagne** (Activist and Indonesian translator. Worked in Aceh, now in Washington D.C.)

Participants from New Orleans, Gulf Coast areas and USA :

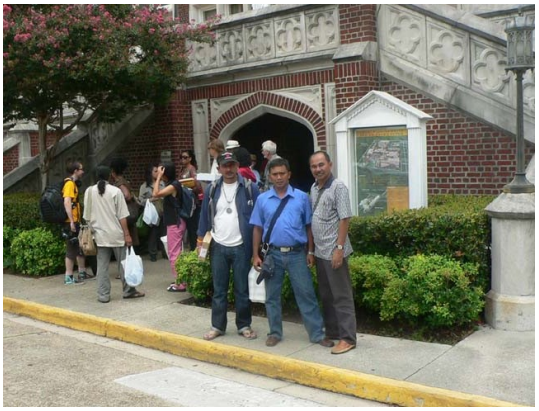
- **Ms. Latosha Brown** (Saving Ourselves Coalition - SOS, Atlanta, Georgia)
- **Mr. Sam Jackson** (from B.W. Cooper Public Housing Complex, New Orleans)
- **Ms. Pam Dashiell** (Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans)
- **Father Luke** (Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church, New Orleans East)
- **Mr. Endesha Juakali** (Survivors Village, St. Bernard Public Housing Project, New Orleans)
- **Reverend Frederick Fields** (Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Pearlington, Mississippi)
- **Mr. Bill Quigley** (Loyola Law Clinic, Loyola University, New Orleans)
- **Mr. Thomas Carton** (NPACH, New Orleans)
- **Ms. Cathy Albisa** (National Economic and Social Rights Initiative - NESRI, New York)
- **Ms. Tiffany Gardner** (National Economic and Social Rights Initiative - NESRI, New York)

Transcript of the discussion :

Bill Quigley : Welcome everybody. This afternoon we're going to be having some dialogue about some of the lessons that have been learned and the experiences that have been shared by people who have gone through two major disasters in different parts of the world - Hurricane Katrina here and the tsunami in Asia. We'll also be discussing the kinds of cooperation that are possible when people who have had such terrible things happen to their communities get together and process those experiences and communicate about them together. I'd like to ask Tiffany to give a brief overview of the Katrina/Tsunami exchange process so far, and then I'll tell you a little about the schedule we plan to follow, and then we'll take it from there.

Tiffany Gardner : I'm so glad that all of you could make it our here this afternoon. First off, I'd like to introduce you to a few organizations represented here today which have been involved in supporting this ongoing exchange between Katrina and Tsunami-hit communities :

- **NESRI** (The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative) is an organization based in New York that deals with the prime human rights principles to US concerns and problems.
- **NPACH** (The National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness)
- **ACHR** (The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights)



The three of us got together and decided to collaborate and to talk about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and about linking the survivors and activists involved in the Katrina rehabilitation with the survivors and activists in the tsunami-hit areas of Asia. The cultures and the social and economic realities in these places are just about as different as they could possibly be, but we all believed that people who have been through the experience of rebuilding their lives after a major

disaster would have a lot to share with each other - no matter where they come from. Really what this collaboration has become is an exchange of ideas, an exchange of strategies, an exchange of coalition-building and an exchange of mutual support.

The first group of New Orleans activists traveled to Asia in September 2006, where they visited tsunami-hit communities in Thailand and Indonesia. Then in November 2006, a second and much larger New Orleans group traveled to Asia, where they also visited communities that were hit by a later earthquake in Indonesia. And this visit by delegations from Indonesia and Thailand is a solidarity visit by our Asian friends. These are folks working on the ground to rebuild their communities and supporting other communities to lead the rehabilitation of their lives and settlements that were destroyed by the tsunami. And we also have representatives from some of the organizations from New Orleans and the gulf coast areas who have been involved in the exchange, including the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, the Welfare Rights Organization in Gentilly, Survivors Village, the B. W. Cooper Public Housing Complex, as well as several others.

We're going to be talking today about the exchange process, but also about lessons learned. And we're also going to have a question and answer session at the end, so we really want you all to be a part of this discussion. We're really looking to keep this a very informal exchange of ideas, so please feel free to engage in the discussion. So thanks again for coming.

Bill Quigley : Our plan is to ask each all the panelists to briefly introduce themselves, so we know who is who, where they are from and what kind of work they are involved in. And then we will be showing a short video about the community response to the Asian tsunami, to set the stage for some if the ideas we'll be discussing. After that, we have a series of questions about the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. We're not going to spend too much time dwelling on the *bad things* that have happened, though, but we want to focus more on the *good things* that have come out of the post-disaster experience in these two different places. Things like lessons that we have learned from each other through the tsunami-Katrina exchange. As we go through these questions, there will be time for questions and we welcome your thoughts or clarifications on any of the issues that are raised. Does that sound OK to people?

Introductions :

- **Prof. Bill Quigley** *(Loyola University, School of Law)* : I work here with the Law Clinic at Loyola University. I am working with a number of organizations in Louisiana and Mississippi states on issues of affordable housing, civil rights and voting.
- **Mr. Syaiful** *(from Aceh, Indonesia)* : I am from the village of Cot Lamkuweh in Aceh, Indonesia. Afrizal and I are leaders in the *Jaringen Udeep Beusaree ["living together"] Network (JUB)*, which is a network of 23 tsunami-devastated villages that came together and decided that we would be able to rebuild better and more strongly if we rebuilt our villages together, and that we would be able to get more from the government if we worked together. So we formed this network of 23 adjacent villages.
- **Mr. Afrizal** *(From Aceh, Indonesia)* : I am from Lam Manyang, another village in the *Jaringen Udeep Beusaree (JUB) Network*, which spans two districts. This is a network that we formed ourselves, not outsiders. Our communities were totally devastated, all our assets were wiped out by the tsunami and we lost most of our family members. We came together to rebuild. I am the secretary of the JUB Network.
- **Ms. Jessica Champagne** *(Indonesian translator, From Washington D.C.)* : Now I live in Washington D.C. but I used to work with *Urban Poor Linkage (Uplink)* in Indonesia, which is the NGO that helped the JUB Network in Aceh get started. Before the tsunami, this NGO worked primarily in Jakarta on organizing urban poor communities. But soon after the tsunami, they went to Aceh and saw that some survivors were defying government orders and were going back to their devastated village land and trying to rebuild, even when the government was still telling them to stay away. So Syaiful and Afrizal are some of the brave folks who were going back and rebuilding and building this network to get the government to change its policy and to rebuild their own homes and harness whatever assistance they could get.
- **Mr. Maitree Jongkraijug** *(Tsunami survivor from Ban Nam Khem Village, Thailand)* : Baan Nam Khem [which means "salt water village" in Thai] was the village that was the worst-hit by the tsunami in the whole of Thailand.
- **Ms. Pikun Sittiprasertkun** *(Thai translator)* : I got involved in the tsunami since the early relief stage, and then the rehabilitation stage. I've worked mainly as a volunteer, but sometimes as a researcher and sometimes as a translator.

- **Ms. Pairat Phangchan** *(Tsunami survivor, Pla Katak Village, Phuket, Thailand)* : Phuket Island is one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Thailand. Phuket also got affected by the tsunami. I come from a small fishing community in Phuket which was affected by the tsunami, but not too severely.
- **Mr. Jamnong Thajinirat** *(Community organizer from Thailand)* : I work with slum people's organizations around Thailand and volunteered in the tsunami areas after the disaster.
- **Ms. Latosha Brown** *(Saving Ourselves Coalition - SOS, Atlanta, Georgia)* Good afternoon. I am one of the founders of a community-based organization called Saving Ourselves Coalition, SOS. We were somewhat based out of Alabama, doing work in Alabama, Mississippi, Lousiana, Georgia and Arkansas. In Georgia and Arkansas, we're working with displaced residents, and in the other three states we're working on the ground with Katrina-affected communities. I had the opportunity - and was blessed - to be able to attend the second trip to southeast Asia. I learned a lot of great things there and I'm glad to be able to be here to share it with you.
- **Mr. Sam Jackson** *(from B.W. Cooper Public Housing Complex, New Orleans)* : My name is Sam Jackson, I'm from New Orleans and I'm one of the organizers in public housing. I also work with a couple of other grassroots organizations such as Survivors Village and C-3. I was on the second delegation to Thailand and Indonesia.
- **Ms. Pam Dashiell** (Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans) : My name is Pam Dashiell and I'm with the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal, and now with the Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development. I was also blessed and wonderfully inspired by being on the first delegation to Aceh and Thailand.
- **Father Luke** *(Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church, New Orleans East)* :
- **Mr. Endesha Juakali** *(Lawyer and school-teacher, member of Survivors Village, St. Bernard Public Housing Project, New Orleans)*
- **Reverend Frederick Fields** *(Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Pearlington, Mississippi)* I'm the pastor in two churches - one in Pearlington Mississippi, and one in Picayune Mississippi. I'm also part of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in the Slyville Louisiana community. Before the hurricane, my home was in Slyville Louisiana. It's only about a ten or 15 minute drive from those two communities where I serve. I got five feet of water in my home, and about ten feet of water in my church in the Pearlington community. The eye of the hurricane passed right over that community, and we are now in the process of rebuilding. I can tell you, we've had a lot of experience with NGOs and volunteer organizations, and they have really come through for us. We know that government doesn't support churches, but through some of the grants that NGOs were able to get from government, they kind of turned it over and used it in the community. And occassionally they would pinch off a little piece for the local church. I was the community about a month after the storm. I lost my home and just about everything I had. And so I was in the same situation as my church-members. I've been living couped up in an 8x24-foot FEMA trailor for the last year and a half or so. And I'm going through all the trials and tribulations that goes with that. But we still saw the need to continue the work in the community.

ACHR's TSUNAMI VIDEO is SHOWN :

*(A 20-minute video produced by ACHR is shown, entitled **"Tsunami Survivors Dialogues : People centered recovery")***
The video shows very briefly the relief and rehabilitation process in three countries – Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia – and how the people themselves are trying to solve the problems after tsunami by going back, by building houses, etc. The way these groups of people are doing this may be different from place to place, but the video gives a clear message that :

- people need to be central in handling both the short-term relief and the long-term rebuilding
- people need to do this rebuilding of their lives and settlements together, with the strength of communities and the strength of their togetherness, not alone, as individuals
- people need to go back to their ruined villages as soon as possible and use the act of actually being there to strengthen their negotiations to secure their rights to be there, to remain on that land.
- we can use a disaster like the tsunami to create new opportunities for rebuilding communities, with greater strength than before the disaster.

Bill Quigley : We have a couple of questions we'd like the panelists to respond to briefly. And then we want to take questions. Since we started a little late, we're going to ask one or two people from the Gulf Coast to respond, and one or two people from Asia to respond.

Question No. 1 :

How are the communities continuing to develop around the issue of being able to get back to their land? That's one of the problems that all of the communities are facing.

Pairat *(From Thailand)* : After the tsunami, the affected people grouped together and we just went back to our land and our communities, without waiting for any assistance or permission from outsiders or from the government.

Bill Quigley : Has anybody tried to move them out once they came back, or is that a continuing fight?

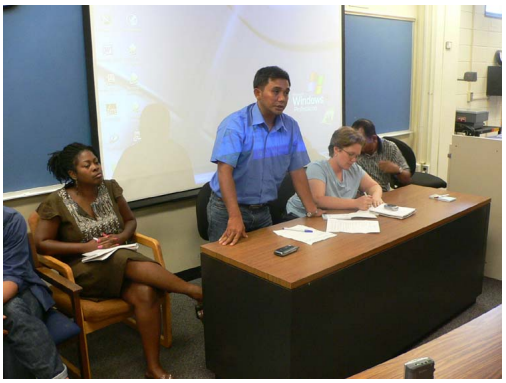
Pairat : My community in Phuket is called Plaa Katak [*"Anchovy Village"*]. It is a small community of only 60 poor households. Most of us earn our living by catching, drying, frying and selling *plaa katak*, the tiny silver anchovies which are a popular snack on Phuket Island. We have rented the land where we stay from a land-owner for about ten years. Right after the tsunami, the landlord came and said he didn't want us to rent the land any longer and he wanted the land back. We had nowhere to go, so we began negotiating with the landowner to allow us to continue renting here for a bit longer. At the same time, we also began to investigate the land ownership rights to the land where we live, which we suspected did not all belong to the landlord. We found that only part of the land really belongs to the land-owner and the rest was public land which he had grabbed earlier. We requested the Governor of Phuket to help us confirm this, but he only agreed to do this after we put pressure on him and staged a public demonstration. Finally, we found that one-quarter of our total village land was public land and three-quarters actually belonged to the land-owner. Then, we began negotiating with the state to get a long term collective lease to this smaller piece of public land. We have now been successful in getting the long-term lease to this public land, and we are rebuilding our community on this smaller piece of land. We may have lost a lot of space, but we gained long-term tenure security.

Latosha Brown : I want to introduce two sisters in the audience who have joined us today. Sharon Hansberries (sp?) and Candice Mendez are here from Mississippi, with a group called *Coastal Women for Change*, which is doing a phenomenal amount of work there.

The displacement of people from their land in Mississippi was a little different than in New Orleans. In Mississippi, nobody came and got the people after the storm, so most of the folks are still there. Some may have moved inland, but most have stayed, and now those people are being pushed out by the casinos and speculators, who are coming in and trying to buy up the land. Landlords have tripled rental rates and public housing projects that weren't damaged by the hurricane are now being taken over by private sector enterprises. In Mississippi and along the whole Gulf Coast, a lot of coastal land that was never seen as prime property has all of a sudden become very valuable and very attractive for development. So even though the people in these coastal communities weren't shipped far away like the folks in New Orleans, they are being pushed out of their communities and off their land in other ways. So in many ways, their fight is more intense now than right after the storm, because the pushing out process is happening more later and more gradually in these coastal areas - *but it's pushing out all the same.*

Sam Jackson : I'm originally from New Orleans, and I was a public housing resident before the storm hit. We all got displaced, but when we got the word it was OK to come back to the city, but as soon as we flopped back the city and tried to get back to our apartment [in the B.W. Cooper Public Housing Project] we found that they had fenced off the apartments, they had put steel bars on the doors to keep us out of there. We had to form an organization in order to get our voices heard by the government that has thrown us out of our places to stay. And there is still just a small amount of people allowed back in the public housing. But we're still trying to fight to get the rest of the people back home. We were just locked out by the government. HANO [Housing Authority of New Orleans] itself put up the gates and the fence to keep us out. If you get caught going in there, you're a trespasser. *It's been a whole lot!*

Afrizal *(from Aceh)* : One of the main problems around land in Aceh is that most of the land there is passed on by inheritance. In both of our villages, about 90% of the people died in the tsunami. So only 10% of the people are left. At the time of the tsunami, I was working in another region and then came home after the tsunami. Many other people had left Aceh because of the long conflict and came home only after the tsunami. So in many cases, the people who actually owned the land had passed away and different family members from other regions were coming. Sometimes there were people who claimed to be family, but there was no proof, no papers, no documents. All the land records were destroyed and all the markers and indications of

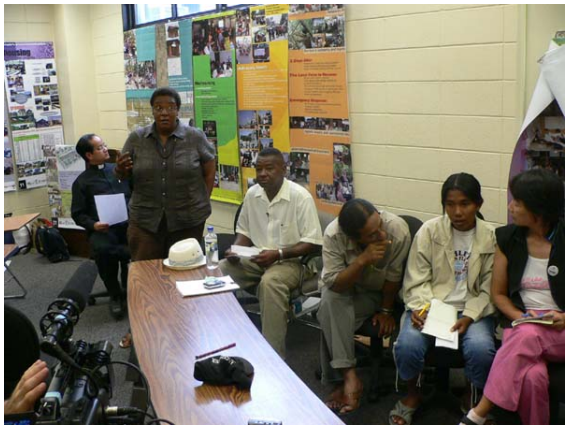


where different pieces of land began and ended were washed away by the waves. A lot of people with good intentions were coming to claim their parents or their relative's land and continue their family tradition. But there were also a lot of people will bad intentions coming to grab land they have no right to, since nobody had any proof or documentation. Also, the office in Aceh where they keep all the land deeds - which has always been a very corrupt office anyway! - was destroyed and all the land records were washed away. So it's been kind of a free-for-all.

That's why the villages in our network decided very early on to map out our own communities, and get help from surveyors to plot out the original land boundaries, as best we could, and to begin matching the old land plots with the families - both the families that were surviving and the families in which everyone had died. After a lot of intense negotiation, we persuaded the government to accept our land ownership maps as official for our villages.

Question No. 2 :

I would like to pose a question that expands on that issue a little bit. Given the problems of people coming back to their communities, and trying to get their own land or their rental land, how have the communities organized themselves? What has worked to bring people together to fight for their rights to return - as a community, rather than one-by-one?



Pam Dashiell : One of the things that has worked to bring people together in New Orleans is rallying around an informed, intelligent, persistent and strong cry for justice. People in New Orleans from all different walks of life have really come together and seen what the inequities are in the post Katrina situation. Our Indonesian and Thai friends described how after the tsunami, there was a kind of gold rush by people of ill will to use the disaster as an opportunity to grab land and push out the poor.

It seems to me that the same thing happened here. And people from all walks of life came together and saw that for what it was and raised their voices and used their bodies and minds to speak out against it. And people from all over the world joined in this as volunteers, volunteers offering legal assistance, volunteers offering their labor and physical work, volunteers to help read the titles and to help those people who were in need. I think in New Orleans, the push-back against that kind of greed and wrongful development has really been historic. One of the main things that struck me when I went on that first visit to Asia, were the similarities to what we've been facing in New Orleans: on day two or three after the tsunami, there was a confluence of private sector interests trying to get whatever they could out of the disaster, at the expense of whoever happened to be in the way. But I think here in New Orleans, thanks in large part to people like Bill Quigley, that greed and that grab has been postponed.

Maitree *(from Thailand)* : There are four steps we followed to bring people together to get back our land :

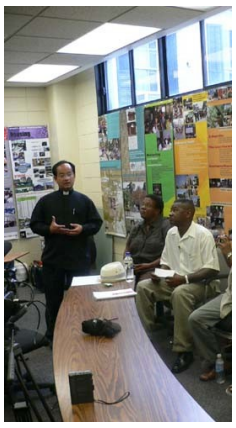
- ***First step: Gather together the survivors in the same place,*** as much as possible, and on their former land, as much as possible.
- ***Second step : Make a complete survey of the pre-tsunami community:*** what did the community look like? How were the land plots and houses laid out? How many people lived there? Who died and who survived? What work did people do? What did people lose in the tsunami and what remains?
- ***Third step : The survivors then make a new community design together.*** Make a proper plan and submit this plan to the government.
- ***Fourth step : Start rebuilding.*** Without waiting for anybody's permission or for big resources or waiting for the result of submitting this plan to the government, we just start building and doing everything by ourselves!

Jamnong *(from Thailand)* : I'm speaking not as a tsunami community survivor but as an NGO organizer. After the villagers began going back and occupying their old land, just two or three days after the tsunami, the role of the NGOs and volunteers like me was to go and support these people and comfort them. People were full of sadness and anger and fear then, and so after people could calm down a little, we encouraged them right away to start thinking about what do they still have: resources like knowledge, abilities, skills, ideas.

But the problems of land conflicts after the tsunami fell into two main categories, and made it necessary to fight on two different fronts :

- ***Conflicts with private or state land-owners*** who wanted to push out the people for business reasons, to redevelop the villagers land commercially as resorts, golf courses, commercial complexes, etc.
- ***Conflicts with the government*** which decided it wanted to move these traditional fishing communities back a certain distance from the coastline, which they decided was a "high risk zone" and therefore unsafe for occupation.

The NGOs helped to link the people in different tsunami-hit communities together into networks and then helped to link these networks with outside supporters: architects, academics, media people, donors and support institutions - all to bring their support to what the communities were trying to do - to get back their land and rebuild their communities.



Father Luke : In our community, we have a very solid leader in Father Vien. When we heard the announcements on the radio on October 5th 2005 that people can come back, he began pulling some of the community leaders to come back. So seven of us - 3 priests and 4 community men - came back to our community at Mary Queen of Vietnam. We thought the church is the gathering place. The church is where we pull the people back. In New Orleans East, we have 6,300 registered parishioners. We have approximately 7,000 people living in our community, before Katrina (this number also includes several hundred Buddhist Vietnamese people).

So the church was the center stage where we can pull back people. Every weekend, we had some student volunteers from California and we had one lady who worked in Washington state who came down to strategize a plan with us. Being able to pull back the people was easier - when the elders in the community knew the priests had come back, they came back too.
You have to look at the history of our culture and our long struggles as a community. Our culture is rooted where we chose New Orleans East as our second home. Our parents, grand parents died and are buried there. So people wanted to rebuild there, in that place, not somewhere else. In 1945, our community had to flee by boat from the north to the south of Vietnam, because of the communist regime outlawed our Catholic faith. Then in 1975 we had to flee again, but this time to America. Through all these migrations, we stayed together as a community.

So for us, Katrina is a minor thing! We have been constantly struggling with natural and unnatural disasters for decades. So to come back to rebuild is something - well, you just come back and rebuild, that's all! I'm very impressed with these people from Thailand and Aceh - after the tsunami hit and washed away everything, they just came back very fast. I went there and I was amazed. But since we understand the Asians always cope like this with natural disasters.

So how do we pull the people back and struggle? There were a lot of rumors that there were plans to forbid rebuilding and turn New Orleans East into a green space. A lot of younger parents knew that if that rumor was true, they would not come back. So the elderly coming back provided the solid ground for the whole community to return. When Father Vien came back, he was very firm that we should just call the people to come back. He understood that if we can pull a large number of people back, the city government would not be able to do anything. And so that's how we organized and pulled the community back. Every weekend, we had hundreds of families driving in from where they were staying in Houston - they just wanted to come back, see how their houses were, start cleaning up their houses after the floods, and to attend mass. We used the mass to pull people back. On October 9th, we had about 270 people at mass. On October 16th, we had about 800 people. By October 23, we had over 2,000 people coming back and attending mass.

Syaiful *(from Aceh)* : Most of the people in Aceh who were affected by the tsunami were coastal people. A lot of them were fishermen. Soon after the tsunami, the government announced a policy that none of these communities would be able to rebuild in their old land, and no building at all would be allowed within 2 kilometers of the shoreline. We knew that we wanted to go back home to our villages, though, regardless of the government's laws. So we looked and saw who was coming out to the ruined villages and poking around, and eventually formed a network of 23 villages which all had the same strong will to return to our own land and rebuild there. So these 23 villages came together and signed a pact that they were all coming home and would rebuild there. Our network was supported by NGO activists from UPLINK, a national poor community support network based in Jakarta. With UPLINK's help, we got funding from outside sources and began having weekly meetings, so when problems came up, we could talk about how to address them and how to work together.
One of the first thing many of us did was to build community meeting places in our ruined villages. These rough structures became important places of gathering in the early stages of our reconstruction, and provided places for people to sleep as they began rebuilding, and they also provided each village with a place to pray and a place to meet.

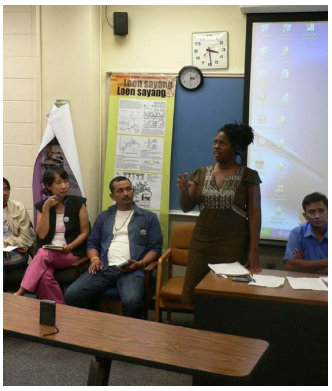
Sam Jackson : When we returned to New Orleans after Katrina, there wasn't anything that anybody could have done. After trying to get back into our places to live, and finding everything locked up against us, it really difficult for us. And it was

difficult to find out how to get the people back together. Well there is a grassroots organization by the name of "C-3" that we formed in and around the issue of public housing, to contact the people that stayed in the community and the people who were displaced all over the states. We tried to find some way to address the system by forming marches and protests and so on, just to get the people's attention that were displaced and to get them to focus on coming back home and taking back their places that were taken away from them during Katrina. We formed this organization and we planned it. Around October 5th, things had gotten a little heated up for us, and for the residents who were displaced. And I give thanks to the allies who were with us to put this protest together and to make this issue of public housing known as it is today.

Question No. 3 :

I'd like to know how the grassroots communities have interacted with the government? And what role the government played in helping or hurting the process? And what the communities have done about that?

Sam Jackson : Everybody thinks the government is OK, but the government's got certain ways of reaching people and certain ways of taking things away from people. What happened with public housing - which is part of the government's activity - was this: in order to get the people back home, the government took these people's places away from them. They're talking about "*preventing concentrations of poverty*", but when they took their homes away from these people, they only put them in deeper poverty. The government told people they could come home, but when the public housing residents do come home, their homes were locked up. So you see them sleeping under bridges and you see them sleeping in cars - and it's still that way today. People from public housing are struggling to get back home today. So I figure like the government's views on humanity sucks, and they really hurt the public housing residents of New Orleans.



Latosha Brown : I guess I want to reflect on the film, when the guy says everybody is upset with the government. That's usually the case where the people have some discord with the government when it doesn't respond. It's really interesting in America, though, because the government works very well for you if you have money. The problem with how the government has responded to Hurricane Katrina is more critical when you look at how it has responded to poor people. It has not responded well to poor people, because our government works for capitalists and for corporate interests. It's not that the government hasn't done stuff - it's done a lot of stuff! - but so many decisions that the government has made have been harmful. But the major interest for the US Government has been to look out for those who have money and make money. In Mississippi, there have been millions and millions of dollars going into developments along the coast, but it's for corporate interests such as casinos. In New Orleans, many of the business interests - even Donald Trump - have this great idea of making New Orleans into a new Las Vegas.

So what has the government in the USA done? We all saw on TV what the government *did not do*. But what makes matters worse is that the things the government *is doing* now are hurting working-class and poor people. So that's the problem. The number one issue is housing. But public hospitals have also been closed, so people don't have access to health care. There are also a lot of issues around jobs, where some folks who were displaced by the storm are out of jobs now while other workers are being exploited.

Maitree *(Thailand)* : There are a few different issues from the tsunami experience in Thailand that I would like to introduce.

- ***Uneven disaster compensation :*** The first issue is the unequal compensation that tsunami victims received from the government. At first, the idea of compensation sounds good. But the problem is the compensation was handled without any proper standards. Some people got compensation and others didn't receive anything at all, while some even got duplicate or triplicate compensation. It wasn't fair at all, and many people who needed the compensation got nothing. By providing this compensation so unevenly, the whole compensation process made for bad feelings among those left out and this created social conflicts in vulnerable villagers already in a crisis situation.
- ***Declaration of high-risk, no-return zone :*** Then, very early on, the government announced that a certain strip of land along the coastline would be declared a *high-risk environmental zone* and nobody would be allowed to return and

rebuild their houses or villages within that zone. For relocating families who had lived in these zones, the government then constructed alternative housing units on plots of land quite far inland from the sea.

What actually happened was that these two issues worked as a kind of *push factor* to get villagers to hurry up the process of gathering themselves back together and going back to reoccupy our original village land and try to rebuild our own communities. These two government policies (unfair compensation and relocation policy away from the sea) showed people very clearly that we couldn't count on the government, but have to help ourselves by grouping together and doing for ourselves. We still requested assistance from the government - it's not like we turned our backs on the government. We could do most of the rebuilding of our own houses on our own, using donor assistance and our own planning and labor. But rebuilding the damaged infrastructure, for example, was too expensive for us to do ourselves - for this we needed the government's help.

- ***On-going land grab :*** There is still the on-going issue of powerful businessmen and politicians trying to grab the land back from the coastal communities. Most tsunami-affected coastal villages have been able to return to their original land and rebuild, but their struggle to get secure, long-term tenure on their land is still going on. The reason is that Phangna and Phuket provinces, which were badly hit by the tsunami, are two of the most heavily touristy parts of Thailand, and the land these villages occupy is now very valuable and many eyes are on it.

Question No. 4 :

The Asian tsunami and hurricane Katrina did a lot of bad things. Did these two disasters create any opportunities for good things in our communities?

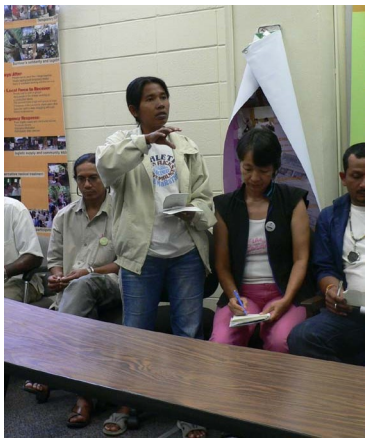
Sam Jackson : After the storm, we all organized a grassroots organization, and then we had to go way to the other side of the world to see how the tsunami worked. I think it was a great opportunity for me to go over to southeast Asia to see how the people over there organized after the such a big disaster. What we had to do on that trip was to understand the differences between the tsunami and Katrina. The tsunami was similar in a lot of ways to what happened here in New Orleans. Katrina displaced a lot of people, well but so did the tsunami.

And we found that basically, it's the same as here: the people got displaced and they had to struggle hard to get back. But over there, they worked so quickly. The folks in Indonesia and Thailand worked real great together - they got together, they organized their communities, they got the people together and they just went right to work. But here in New Orleans, we couldn't do that because a lot of our people were still displaced, and people had a big problem about how to get back into the city to get their places back. So here in New Orleans and in Lousiana, we are very slow, and until today, we are still slow and our elected officials are not doing too great. They're giving out good news about how well the city is doing, but for certain communities and certain people in the city, the disaster is still going on. So those people in Asia, I really give it to them: they work well.

How can we get our people back home? Well we're starting something now. A bunch of us got together and we decided to fix up a place for people to stay, so they can come back to the city. We're working on the first couple of units of transitional housing to help folks come back. We're all doing this together, all of us who went to see the tsunami.

Latosha Brown : I've got four quick thoughts. What Katrina did in the US is that it revealed the truth about the way things are here in the US, and the truth is always good. So even though we might not like it, it's always good.

1. ***The storm revealed that we've got some fundamental problems in our government.*** Because even those of us who donated for the tsunami, none of us - none of the citizens of New Orleans or Mississippi - ever imagined that the US government would respond to its people that way. So it was a wake-up call.
2. ***The level of grassroots work going on the ground has really taken off since the storm.*** I've not seen this amount of this kind of work going on in years, and I've been an activist in the region for fifteen years. There's a lot more activity going on the ground.
3. ***Even though we like to think that the gulf coast was a great place before the hurricane, it wasn't.*** We had persistent poverty in Mississippi and the largest working poor class here in Lousiana. So I think that Katrina opened up opportunities for us to deal with issues of poverty and race that we were just kind of ignoring or not dealing with before the storm.
4. ***With this exchange alone, it's created opportunities for us to build some global relationships around these issues of poverty and displacement and disasters.*** This is important because there is an arrogance here in USA that as Americans, we have the answers, and that we don't need to connect with other people's struggles around the globe. But we should connect with those struggles, and this exchange is opening up a chance for us to connect with brothers and sisters around the globe who are going through what we're going through.



Pairat : ***"We didn't know we had this power."*** The tsunami was an opportunity for us because it gave our community and gave me a chance to learn about how much power we already have within us - the power to do redevelop our community by ourselves, without waiting for outsiders or for the government to do it for us. We didn't know we had this power. It took the tsunami for us to realize we had this in us all along. We learned how to negotiate for secure land, how to do our own community planning, how to design and build our own houses. And we organized a savings group and set up a revolving fund with our savings to help villagers in community with loans to start their small businesses or improve their fishing equipment. We use part of the interest earned on the loans to make a community welfare fund, to help people in need with health care expenses, school fees, emergencies. In the past, we just waited for answers to all these problems from the government. But now, after our experience with the savings group and the community planning, we can also provide for our own needs.

Maitree : The power of networks : I want to add one thing to what Pairat was saying. Another important thing that happened only after the tsunami was the networking that we built. It started first with just a few small groups of people in one tsunami-affected community, then the next-door community joined, then from clusters of communities to the whole province, and then between communities in adjacent provinces. Before very long, we had a strong network of tsunami-affected villages in all six affected provinces - over 400 communities are part of the network. By forming themselves into networks at provincial and regional levels, it gave villagers more back-up and more confidence to submit their own reconstruction plans to the government: plans not just for rebuilding one single community, but plans for redeveloping the whole area, including many communities.

Forming networks was one of the most important factors in helping poor fishing village people in Thailand to retain their original land. Without the power of their networks, most of these communities would definitely have been pushed out by business interests and disappeared forever. So we also learned to experience our own power - not only as individual communities - but as a network. And this network power gave us the strength to dare to go forward, step by step, to deal with many other issues besides land - issues which were not such an emergency, such as environment, jobs, welfare and others.

Afrizal (Aceh) : The tsunami opened up Aceh again and ended the conflict. As many people may know, Aceh was already a conflict area before the tsunami hit. A civil war had been going on for decades between separatists in the province and the Indonesian army. There had been constant strife between Acehnese people who wanted to have an independent nation, and the government of Indonesia which wouldn't allow that. For years, the province of Aceh had been closed, foreigners couldn't come in, journalists couldn't come in, human rights groups couldn't come in. And it was very difficult to get news out of what was happening in Aceh.

With the tsunami, and with the international attention that came with it, we finally got a peace agreement. That was a major step forward for us. Also, people from all over the world were able to come to Aceh, and even people from other parts of Indonesia could come and see what was happening. So we could also get assistance after the disaster from all over the world.

Father Luke : But from the disaster also comes some new things for our community. I think we all know that any disaster brings plenty of bad things. Our community had an elderly woman who died in her house during Katrina. I was in Houston to monitor all the temporary shelter arrangements of our community members there. I was ticking off the names on the list, and the family contacted me asking about that old woman. So our pastor was running around to all the places where the parish members had been evacuated - to Florida, Missouri, Atlanta, Arkansas, Houston - to try to find out where this one missing person was. She was about 70 years old. After three weeks, he came back to New Orleans East, with the permission of the police, to search for her, and he found that she had died of malnutrition in her house. The family was very hurt by that, but I was the one who buried her at the cemetery in Chalmette.

But from the disaster also comes some new things for our community. I think in many ways, our community is moving above and beyond the situation that existed before Katrina :

- ***Increasing involvement in politics :*** What came out of Katrina was that our community evolved into a political aspect. Thirty years ago, very few of the Vietnamese community people were involved in the government level. Thirty years ago we kept silent, and lived our own lives quietly, for our own. Now, the storm created a new energy. Now we have our own people getting involved in government. In California, Vietnamese people run for city council or mayor, but we hadn't gotten much involved much here in New Orleans. There was also a new awareness among the

community's youth, so the youth would participate in community activities, and getting involved in politics. Before, they just went to school, they never thought of becoming politicians, only pharmacists or doctors. On October 23rd after the storm, we had about 500 petitions requesting NTG (?) to pull electric power there, but we couldn't do it. We needed our councilwoman, Ms. Cynthia Lewis (?), to help us with that, and she helped us to get our power back in the second week of November.

- ***Elderly housing :*** Thirty years ago, we wanted to build some special housing for the elderly, because the elderly need to be taken care of, but we couldn't do it. So after Katrina, we decided to build some senior housing. Now FEMA and other assisting organizations came in, and we put our minds together to build some senior housing, which will be built in the church-ground.
- **Neighborhood business revitalization :** We want to giver the business district in our community a face-lift.
- ***Community garden and market :*** We want to make a big garden and make a farmer's market which sells produce and fresh food out here in New Orleans East. We want to make it bigger and well-known, for people from the city and tourists to come.

Question No. 5 :

It's been more than two years since the tsunami, and we're coming up on the 2-year anniversary of Katrina. What advice would you give other communities, based on your experiences of what you have done so far? What lessons have you learned that you would like to share with other communities?

Syaiful (Aceh) : ***"In Aceh, what brought solutions and what made us able to solve these problems was COMING TOGETHER."*** This has been a very useful meeting and we have got to learn about a lot of problems that really need solutions, all over the world. In Aceh, what brought solutions and what made us able to solve these problems was coming together and forming groups. This is the main thing we learned and the main thing we have to share. These problems are too big for single people or single communities to solve by themselves. That's why things have been able to move faster in some places than in others.

What we think really needs to happen here in New Orleans is that people need to come home, people need to do whatever they can to bring everyone else home, and people need to fight for their city, and fight for the city to be fixed.

Jamnong (Thailand) : We've seen that all over the world, just about anywhere you go, the government is usually strong. And the US government may be the strongest government in the whole world. But in situations like this, where the government is so strong, it tends to make the people weak. When governments are strong enough to deliver what people need, there's no motivation for people to deliver things for themselves, no need for them to be strong in themselves. When any kind of disaster occurs, it is usually the weakest, most poor, most vulnerable sectors of society that suffer the most, that have the least ability to help themselves, and these groups have no choice but to request help from the government.

- **What I'd like to suggest to the people in this city or in any country - whether they're under a strong or a weak government - is that we all have to exercise our ability to rely on ourselves, and never stop exercising that self reliance. We don't need to wait for a disaster to happen to work on building this back up.**
- **I hope this won't hurt anyone's feelings here. In Thailand, when we heard about the Hurricane Katrina, we felt so much sympathy for those people who were going through the same thing we did here, but we believed that the American government would take good care. The USA, after all, is great, it's the biggest, richest, most powerful country in the world. The US is like the world's big brother, and so we believed that within a month, all the people in New Orleans would be OK. But now it's almost two years since the storm, and when we come here to visit, what we see is a kind of fresh disaster scene.**
- **What we've learned now is that the people - whether from poor or rich countries - are in the same situation. We cannot do anything but help each other.**

Maitree : I have five suggestions for the communities here, to ensure that you will be able to help yourselves and to stand on your own feet :

- ***Build community data :*** The first one is that the communities need to know about their own data base.
- ***Gather together and work together :*** Keep exercising activities which gather people in the community together into groups that work together and help each other. Always exercise this helping-each-other concept of doing things together and helping each other - no need to wait for a disaster to start this.
- ***Prepare and submit your own development plans :*** The communities should prepare their own redevelopment plans for their neighborhoods and submit these to the government - plans that come our of your own aspirations and ideas. Don't wait for the government to prepare its plan for your neighborhood and for your future, which will definitely not be what you want.
- ***Build networks to beef up your negotiation power :*** Build networks between groups, within neighborhoods, across the city, across the state and the region. That networking is necessary to create a stronger negotiation power for getting the government to support your ideas, for getting resources, for bringing the city back in ways that belong to you.
- ***Monitor the government's plans :*** It's important to keep well aware of what the government is planning, so you can negotiate with them (or fight with them!) about aspects of those plans which affect you for better or worse, or which are unjust.

Latosha Brown : I want to thank the delegation from southeast Asia. On the trip, I had a hard time because I realized that even though our disaster here was huge, it was nowhere near the scale of what we saw in Asia, in terms of loss of life.

- ***Lessons about democracy and self-reliance :*** But I guess the other lesson is this: we are thought in the US that what we have is called a democracy, which means that we are supposed to be the government, *and the government is us*. We pay very high taxes here - taxes on everything: to go to school here is very, very expensive. Sometimes the government here will use our tax resources, but then tell us to be self-reliant! But that is our money. So many of us understand that while America is going around the world saying *"You need to be a democracy!"* we're not being treated as democratic participants down here in New Orleans, and the resources for rebuilding are being treated not as *ours* but as *theirs*. I feel that we'll continue to have these struggles, because we can't just let the government off that easy! Even though I do believe there should be a foundation of self-determination, part of self-determination is getting the resources that are ours in the first place.
- ***Lessons about networks :*** We did learn that grassroots networks do make a difference.
- ***Lessons about regional misunderstandings :*** I don't know if this is happening in southeast Asia, but one of the challenges that we've got to get over in Katrina is this regionalism. If you go into New Orleans, the folk in New Orleans say all the people in Mississippi got the money. And if you go into Mississippi, Mississippi folks think everybody in New Orleans got the money. I'm serious. And it's a constant struggle that keeps us from operating together *as a region*. I didn't see the same thing in Indonesia, but that's a lesson we've learned and something we're trying to get away from.

Father Luke : We can't wait for the government to help us. We ourselves will work it out, we'll take the initiative. If we had waited for the government to do it for us in New Orleans East, then power would not have been restored to our neighborhood, water would not have been restored when it did. So we have to create our own strategy and just work out among ourselves, and work together and bring together. We can't wait for the government to determine what to do. If we had waited for the government, New Orleans East would be a very different place now. We have to take the initiative.

Pam Dashiell : Restoration of protective wetlands that help mitigate these disasters : One of the things that I really got in Thailand and Indonesia was the veneration for the wetlands there, and the care in how one of the first steps villagers took was to restore the wetlands which had protected them from the tsunami. In a lot of parts of the country, and especially in my part of the country, here in New Orleans, when people hear anything about wetlands, green thinking or habitat restoration, they say *come on, give me a break!* But it was really brought home to me in a way that was completely new, just how important that part of protection is. With the levees more than anything, it is the underlayment and how the destruction of those things is really a form of environmental injustice, and how the restoration and protection of a community is the bedrock of environmental justice. That is something I couldn't help getting in Asia - how people care for and nurture that which cares for and nurtures them in the immediate environment. That was a revelation for me.

Maitree : To create a strong community, don't wait for a disaster to occur. This is something we have to keep working on every day, as part of our lives. Why? Because many of the disasters nowadays in our countries are not coming from natural causes at all, but more often from the wrong policies of the government and big business, which is causing all kinds of trouble in our environments. And if we are ever going to get rid of these wrong policies, we can only do it with strong local communities and strong networks of those communities, which have a better alternative of how to do things, and can lobby for those ideas to the government.

Question No. 6 :

How did this exchange between two very different, disaster-hit parts of the world help you, as you went back to your communities and took up again your reconstruction work? And how could we use these international linkages in the future? What kind of potential is there for continuing this exchange process?

Endesha Juakali : **I think that the number one lesson for both the Asians and the Americans has been that in most cases, not only was the government *not* the answer, but the government was *the problem.***

We learned very early on in Asia that even though they had this catastrophic loss of life, the government looked upon the tsunami first as a disaster, but more as an opportunity. It was the same in New Orleans. Once they got past the concept of people being dead, the next concept was how do we use this to take this very valuable land and make it work for the rich, the powerful and the greedy. I think that was clear in New Orleans that before Katrina, and in 1965 in Hurricane Betsy, a lesson was learned.

We've known for 40 years in New Orleans that the levees were not going to hold. And the key to it was, how do we minimize the damage, so if people die, it's primarily poor people and people how color that would be doing most of the dying? Of course they did not anticipate that nature does not distinguish between rich and poor, or black and white, or yellow or brown. So I don't think they understood the impact that the hurricane would have on areas like Lakeview, or that this thing could not be contained within the selected socio-economic group that they wanted to eradicate. I'm pretty sure that the government had no problem with killing us.

And when I say us, I'm talking about poor, black public housing residents. They were complicit in the overall concept, as Richard Baker said right after the storm, *"We could not get rid of the public housing in New Orleans, so God did it for us."* Or, when Alphonse Jackson, the head of HUD (the Housing and Urban Development, national government) said that *"New Orleans will never be majority black again, because black people didn't own anything, so they have no reason to come back."* At first, I had no problems with being categorized as a refugee. That did not insult me because it was true that we were refugees of a war, and it was a 40-year war that the government has waged on poor people, on people of color, on progressive people who want to see a new world - a world with justice, a world with honesty, a world of people who look more toward who you are and not what you have. Katrina just gave them an opportunity to continue this war in a way that they could (as Pontius Pilot said) wash their hands of whatever happened, and blame it on Katrina.

Let me say this: I was immensely impressed by the Asian culture. I thought that the concept of self-determination was clear and obvious among people in Asia. And those of us in America who thought that the role of government was to help us or to serve us, we learned a lesson that many people in Asia had already learned: that the government has no intent to help us, or to help us come back.

We were in the mangrove forests, where we had met with people whose whole community had gone underwater after the tsunami. And they had not filed any court cases to promote the government helping them. And I was very curious, *why don't you guys file a suit in the court?* And their thing was, well if we file suit, we're going to lose, and then the government could use the suit as a method of saying well you're wrong, because you went to the court and the court said you were wrong. So they decided that they would continue the battle, based on their grassroots movement, and then the court wouldn't be another thing to be used against them. It was clear the court would never help them.

Starting by just picking up sticks :

We came back initially feeling that the court was a viable option, but that the grassroots movement - the people's movement - had to be the total focus. We met people who right after the storm understood that they were going to try to take this land and build resorts and hotels, so they just started picking up sticks and rebuilding their houses with sticks and bricks and discarded pieces of whatever was lying around.

They knew they needed to be in possession of that land, no matter what the home looked like. They knew they just needed to be there, and put their body and their family back on that land that they had occupied for generations. They knew clearly what we didn't know. While we were waiting on FEMA, waiting on the Red Cross and waiting on the Salvation Army in New Orleans, they were just picking up any old sticks and stones they could find and rebuilding their lives.

So I came back from Asia clearly understanding that the people must rely upon the people. I learned that we did not have time to worry about the government, we did have time to wait on FEMA. And we did not have time to wait on some rich philanthropic person to give us anything. We learned that we needed to just start picking up stuff and rebuilding right now. And Asia clearly brought that home.

I came back with a definite spirit of greatness and a total reliance upon the power of the people - your neighbors, your wife, your children. When I came back, I really felt that the cultures of Thailand and Indonesia were cultures of self-determination. And even though we say self-determination over here, they actually mean self determination. And it really just enhanced my spirit very much.

Afrizal : *(... a bit missing on the tape here).* One other thing that is interesting about what happened in Aceh is that here in New Orleans, people had different kinds of insurance. In Aceh there is no culture or history of people having insurance. So the tsunami in Aceh had a kind of leveling effect, where people who used to be very rich became very poor after they'd lost everything in the waves.

Maitree : Another five things we learned from the exchange :

- The more people who can gather or group together, the more negotiation power we will have.
- Keep an eye on your own government - whether a big or a small country.
- One of the first things that we would like to do after we return home from this trip is to pay more attention to the women and youth in our communities. Here we find a lot of women who have become core community leaders.
- The more exchange trips that we have, the more friends we find and the more power I feel.
- Don't think of the law as the solution to everything. We ill also find good solutions in the way of life and the culture of people.

Latosha Brown : I just want to share one experience. When I was in southern Thailand, I was doing a presentation about what happened here. One of the things I said was that people were put on airplanes and spread out throughout the country. There were probably about thirty different nationalities in that room, and there was silence for a few seconds after I said this. Then the room burst into laughter. And it took me back - what did I say? And later, I had a sister from India to interpret what had happened for me. First of all, a plane ticket is an amazing thing, but the idea that the government would spend money to put families on a plane, and the idea that we would actually get all the different members of our families on different planes going to different places - all this was so outrageous that they could only laugh!

- ***Some Asian strategies don't translate to USA realities :*** There were a lot of things to learn from Thailand and Indonesia and from some of the work that's being done there by the communities. But there are also some real harsh realities here in the US that make some of those Asian ideas impossible over here. You can go squat on a piece of land in the United States and you might be in a federal prison for twenty-five years - I'm serious. This is a very highly-regulated society we live in here. So there are some specific challenges we have with that.
- ***The culture of communities is very different here and there :*** The trip also let me know just how intact communities are in Southeast Asia. Well that is not our culture here - we'd like to believe we are a society of strong communities, but we're really not, at least to that extent.
- ***Is there a fundamental difference between how we view the role of government here, and how the Asians do?*** On some levels, there is a trade-off: people here in the US will accept higher taxes and will accept being regulated because they have a higher expectation from the government and what it will deliver. And that's a big difference from what we saw in Thailand and Aceh, where there isn't much expectation from the government.
- ***Self determination is also under threat by the larger forces of globalization and capitalism :*** There is a need for us to be self-determining, but the powers-that-be that are preventing us from determining our own lives aren't just operating in the United States - they're operating in Indonesia, they're operating in Africa, they're all over the place. There is a much larger issue we're dealing with here about who controls our lives, our communities and our local constituencies. People are being displaced all over the world to make way for powerful business interests, and the displacements after Katrina and the Tsunami are just one part of this. So even if we just fix up our own communities, if we don't deal with the larger issues of what globalization and capitalism are doing, then all of us are going to have some serious problems. I think there is a lot of good work going on, but I hope that none of us should leave it at the level of only fixing up our own community. Because we see communities being fixed up and then taken and stolen! We even heard this story in southeast Asia.

Questions from the audience :

Now what we're going to do is open up the discussion to questions from people in the audience. I know the people here in the room have experiences as well, but we want to be sure to take full advantage of having these folks with us from half way around the world, and get their responses and reactions.

QUESTION from Tiffany Gardner : ***This question is for the folks from New Orleans. You talked about some of the lessons that you learned having gone to Asia. If you could speak a bit about how you've been able to collaborate with each other, as a result of the trip?***

Pam Dashiell : One of the real benefits of going on the trip was spending a lot of time with people who we're not usually with. That trip was the first time I had met Father Luke. I had met Endesha years before in completely different circumstances. And Viola Washington, who is not here today, was also someone new to me. Although I've got to say, there has not been specific physical collaboration on things, but all of us who went on that trip know that we are here. And we do see each other from time to time. And we do work together.

- And yes, the Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development and the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association are planning to have a friendship dinner next week with the Mary Queen of Vietnam community.
- Tomorrow, I'm going to go to the Survivor's Village demonstration for reopening the public housing at Duncan Plaza, opposite City Hall.
- And yes, I hope that Endesha and Father Luke, and everyone here will come to the Holy Cross levee for the fourth of July event tomorrow night. You can see wonderful fireworks from there.

That's been a really positive benefit from the trip. As far as the collaboration on the transitional housing, I've not been able to do that on that particular Saturday. But I'm certainly willing - as are other people in the community - to come out and help.

You know we all have our own interest groups and everything. But when people within those interest groups start seeing collaboration with other groups, and see that it's not a big bad bear, that it's nothing that's going to hurt you and that it can only help - that's a positive benefit too.

Endesha Juakali : The transitional home concept we're working on together came directly out of the experience we had with one village we visited in Aceh.

That village was totally wiped out by the tsunami, and they didn't have any homes at all. And they made a decision to rebuild the village. And the question we had was how do you decide which home is going to be built first? And what they did was they decided who to build for first according to need - whomever need the house most badly, they went first with families, with women with children and with large families first. And they just decided they were going to rebuild the village, one house at a time, by determining who needed the house the worst, and building that house first. Then when that family got in, the team village would then go on to the next home, based upon need.

So our concept with the transitional home that's being fixed up now (primarily by Viola's Welfare Rights organization, which already had a damaged structure available for renovating. Sam Jackson is doing most of the physical work - and he's doing a great job. Nathalie is helping us find grant funds for the building materials and Vicky is going to help bring in some workers to do the finishing). The idea was that all of us would just chip in different ways and do that one home, through Welfare Rights, and get a couple of families in there. And then those families, along with the rest of us, would then help to build the next transitional home, based upon who needed it next to that family. And we're going to have to rebuild neighborhoods in New Orleans one home at a time, one block at a time, one section at a time. Like they say it in Aceh, the way to decide on which home is first is to decide which family needs the help the most, help that family and then go on building based upon that need-based criteria. But the concept of determining which home is going to be built first, strictly by which family needs it the most, came from our direct experience that we had in Aceh.

QUESTION from a woman in the audience about the revolving fund in tsunami-hit communities in Thailand :

Maitree : Savings groups and revolving funds in Thai communities : The idea of a revolving loan fund started from people's own pockets. The members of the group in the community agree on what is the minimum amount of money that they want to save and how often. They take it from their own pocket, so initially, it's people's own money, put into a communal fund for everyone to make use of. And then, if possible, the groups can negotiate to get additional capital from outside - from NGOs, from donors, from the government, from CODI - to increase the fund and increase their lending capital.

When people put the two sources of money - from within the community and from outside - they have their fund. Then they set their own rules and criteria which work for them. For example, a group may decide that members have to deposit a minimum amount of savings regularly for at least six months before they can qualify for taking a loan, to demonstrate a good savings habit. Most groups opt to charge a very small amount of interest - say 4 or 5% per year. The reason for charging interest at all is to give the group a small margin to finance their administrative expenses, and if the fund from interest becomes big enough, they can set aside some funds to set up a special community welfare grant fund for members. The rules are not set by anybody outside, but by the members of the savings group.

A revolving fund which is owned and managed by a community has several benefits :

- The first benefit is that the fund can help improve the incomes and strengthen the economic position of the members.
- Revolving funds in Thai communities are also increasingly providing social welfare benefits to their members.
- A third benefit of revolving loan funds - and the savings groups that are an integral part of them - is not so obvious, but as important: revolving funds and savings groups provide people in a community with many opportunities to come together, to get to know each other and care for each other better, to undertake joint activities which make their collective spirit stronger - all through the mechanism of the revolving fund.

The fund doesn't have to be big. A revolving fund could start with very small capital - just 10,000 or 20,000 Baht (US$ 250 - 500). For example, in my village of Baan Nam Khem, we started two years ago, after the tsunami, with just 10 or 12 people and only about $20 in collective savings! Now two and a half years later, we've ended up with 10 million Baht (about $290,000). And the members are all poor villagers who mostly lost everything in the tsunami. Small becomes big very quickly.

QUESTION from a man in the audience : (tape unclear) I was wondering if in Indonesia, with the tsunami, did they have a mandatory evacuation order for the city, like they did here? And did they try to drive people out of their homes even though they didn't want to leave their homes in the disaster area?

Afrizal : No warning with the tsunami! The tsunami hit very suddenly and unexpectedly, without any warning at all, on a beautiful Sunday morning! There was no storm, no build-up, no warning. So there was no time for anyone to evacuate anybody or to say you need to leave your homes.

2-kilometer "no build zone" : But what happened after the disaster was that the government declared an area within two kilometers of the shore to be a no-rebuild risk zone, and told people who had lived in villages and settlements within that zone that they couldn't go back. And our network of coastal villages, along with friends from the Uplink Network, had some negotiations with the government about this, but then we just went back to our villages anyway! With or without permission, we intended to reclaim our land and rebuild our villages. And for the most part, there was not any significant military effort by the military to get us to leave, once we had reoccupied our land. In some of the villages that were seen as bases for the separatist movement, though, there was a more militaristic effort to prevent people from resettling. They really wanted to get people into the cities and out of the forests and rural areas, as a strategy of controlling people. But at that time, the hills behind our villages were still armed resistance fighters, and many of them were coming down, looking for lost loved-ones and deciding to start rebuilding their lives in their former villages.

And eventually, we were able to persuade the government to cancel the 2-kilometer policy. We said, this is our family's land, we need to be back there in these 23 villages in our network. And part of our strategy in getting the government to change its mind was to develop ways of making that strip of land "safer" by using environmental means: planning escape routes to the hills, replanting mangrove forests and bands of fields and forests between villages and sea, to act as a buffer, planning safer, earthquake-proof houses.

QUESTION from Latosha Brown : Were there mental problems people experienced after the tsunami disaster, and how did you all deal with that?

Syaiful : The tsunami was really one of the greatest and biggest natural disasters in the world. In Aceh, we had children who lost everyone in their families. We had people who had lost huge numbers of relatives. But the sadness of a tragedy - even on this scale - did not overpower people. This may be partly because Aceh has been involved in a civil war for decades and people have been going through troubles and loss and violence for a long, long time.

Also, something that was really important was that the suffering after the tsunami was shared. Nobody was alone. Being in the community and seeing that there were others suffering also, or seeing others whose losses were even greater than ours - all this was a way of really knowing that we weren't alone, that we were together in this.

Jessica Champagne : Getting active in rebuilding is the best therapy of all. I would add that that was one of the focus points of Uplink's work in Aceh. A lot of other groups were coming into the disaster scene and doing traditional kinds of counseling and therapy to people struggling with their losses. But Uplink's approach was really to go in and say, if people are sitting in relief camps with nothing to do and no way to go home, there are going to be more serious problems. And the kind of intense trauma that people were experiencing - where they just could not function for days and days - was clearly not going to go away in this environment of hopelessness and inaction. So Uplink right away began working with those who wanted to go back and worked with them to bring more people into the movement to go back to their villages, and tried to figure out how everyone could be involved actively in helping. There were all kinds of activities besides house building - things like traditional healing, massage to help deal with people's injuries and to bring some warm human contact to help heal their physical pain and sickness as well as their emotional trauma.

QUESTION from Cathy Albisa (NESRI, New York) : Why this assumption that the choice is either engagement with government or self-reliance?

Throughout this entire exchange process that I have been able to observe, I've found it interesting that there seems to be this tension between the concept of self-reliance and the concept of holding government accountable to its obligations. But what I have observed from all of your work - both in Asia and in New Orleans - is that actually, organizing the community in a self-reliant fashion has put the community in a better position to negotiate with the government. Rather than necessarily cutting off any dialogue with the government and going totally self-reliant. Because you do dialogue with the government: you negotiate with the government on land tenure, you negotiate on resources for rebuilding. (To Father Luke) You even negotiated with the government for electricity - you didn't start getting on a stationary bike to generate electricity for your people, you negotiated it!

- It's interesting that there seems to be this assumption that somehow you have to chose either a government-engagement strategy or a self-reliance strategy. It seems to me that the difference really is, do you choose just a policy strategy, where all you are doing is engaging with the government without the community? Or do you choose a community strategy, which requires strengthening the community, making it self-reliant in order to negotiate with the government and try to make it honor its obligations.
- ***Does anyone see these two as being mutually exclusive or mutually reinforcing strategies?***

Latosha Brown : "Self reliance" is a term that is manipulated in the USA to justify eroding decent social programs that help the poor. I don't feel there is tension around that. But the political reality in the US has been that every single major social program the government runs has been attacked and eroded under the guise of "*self-reliance.*" The current political reality in the US - from welfare rights to housing - it's the *"pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps"* mentality. So the tension is more about how that term *self-reliance* is manipulated and abused and exploited here in the US - by the government and the conservatives to attack every single decent social program that helps poor and working class people in this country. I'm from the deep south, and the African American communities here have a long history of being self-reliant, because the government hasn't worked for us.

Endesha Juakali : I think the issue of dealing with the government is more of determining what are going to be the factors that motivate the government to sit down at the negotiating table with you? Maybe some people would think that the government would sit down at the table with you because you are an American citizen, and because there was this natural disaster, and because that should be the normal role of a government to come in and help. I think Katrina has clearly put us in a position where we understand - without a doubt - the Machiavellian phrase, *"It is better to be feared than to be loved, if one the two must prevail."*

All of us think that we want to sit down and get the government to help us, and that probably the government should understand that its role should be to help us. But we're clear now that you're going to have to kick the government in the ass, in order to get them to do that. So the question is how to you motivate the government to do that? "Self reliance" doesn't say that you don't want any help from the government. Self-reliance is saying

we're going to make this happen, with or without the government. And if the government doesn't help us, we're going to kick their ass until they understand that they're supposed to help us.

The government is not our friend, so you have to take a strategy with the government that's not a strategy of coexistence because of a moral understanding of your problem, but a strategy that we have a right, we're tax-payers, we're American citizens and even though you don't want to help us, we're going to make sure that you do what you're supposed to do, based upon us fighting for what we're entitled to.

Afrizal : Stong organizations doing strong work in an area like Aceh are a good way of influencing government policies over that area. hen we organized and we have an organization, we know that there are many interest groups that come to bear on the government: the interests of the rich, of businesses, of personal interests. When we organize, we can move forward without the government, whatever their policies are. But if we can make our organization and our work strong and prominent and visible, we can also push so that the government's policies will be more pro-people, will better consider the culture of the people who actually live in that area.

Jamnong : It's possible for communities to show the government how to do its job in a pro-active way, instead of just protesting, finding fault and waiting for their bad plans to come down on us. The relationship between the people and the government is more or less the same in different countries. But what we would like to emphasize here is the need to rearrange the relationship between people and their governments before any disaster happens. We usually expect the government should do a good job, but if they don't do so, then we have to also change our way of interacting with them - we have to push them, but we have to do so in proactive ways. We should not push them only by protesting and scolding them and demanding things but by showing them the right way to do. Instead of waiting for the government to do their own job, we better start by ourselves. But at the same time, we have to keep putting pressure on the government to serve our needs. But in the past, it seems like whatever the government did to us, we had to accept it. But since the tsunami, we've realized it is possible to almost direct the government to respond to our own needs. We can change the government by ourselves! In Thailand, we have a couple of success stories to illustrate this:

- ***Government gives villagers land tenure :*** One year after the tsunami, we were successful in requesting the government to give secure land tenure to many of the communities under threat of being displaced from their traditional land by capitalists after the tsunami.
- ***Government budgets go straight to communities for the first time :*** Usually the government budget, even for an emergency situation like the tsunami, usually has to go through the government system, with all the steps and all the bureaucracy. They never release funds directly to the communities! But after the tsunami, we have fought against this issue and finally had some success - so some government budget goes directly to the affected communities to use and to manage themselves.

We all want to change our government's behavior, right? There are different ways we can do this:

1. ***You have to do some kind of pilot project which shows the government and the public another model, another way of doing things.*** It's not just talk or just ideas in the air, but you have to do something on the ground, show something real and physical that people can see and touch and understand. If your alternative pilot is clearly something that works, then you will be in a much stronger position to win support for expanding the pilot into something larger-scale, and to get funding and government support.
2. ***You have to communicate with the media and get the media on your side***, so that you can make the larger public aware of your struggle and aware of the issues, so you can use public pressure on the government to change it's behavior and to support what people really need, what people are trying to do.
3. ***And the trick is that you have to bring out the issue at the right time,*** to the right media, and link with the right officials and politicians and support groups who can actually contribute something to building your alternative model. These useful links are extremely important for building a base of support on many fronts.

Guy in the audience : "The Trumpet" Publication on hurricane issues and on the Tsunami-Katrina exchange process : I want to thank you all for coming to town and putting our gulf coast problems on your radar. I want to tell you all each time we've have a chance to share these experiences, there are things that we've gained. After the earthquake in Kobe, Japan, we learned the same message, that affected communities have to take control of putting forward their own message, they have to publish and disseminate their own story. So we have begun to do that here also. I bring that up because I want to bring to your attention that we have a newspaper here, *"The Trumpet"* **(Website : www.NPNnola.com, e-mail: thetrumpet@npnnola.com)** and we're publishing a four-month series on tsunami-gulf coast exchanges. So you are all welcome to read the copies we've brought with us today, and to contribute to future issues. The last issue talks about a recent trip to India that some gulf coast participants went on.

QUESTION : How have you dealt with the sometimes corrupting and divisive force of post-disaster funding and NGO do-gooding? I think that there is one thing that has been left out of the conversation. It has been brought up by a few of the Asian visitors, and it was brought up in the video. My question is about varying levels of success and varying levels of working with government, varying levels of networking that have helped. But could you talk a bit more about the role of the NGOs and the international NGOs in the disaster reconstruction process? On the way up here in the car today, we were talking about a new book that has recently come out, and which is very popular, called The Revolution will not be funded. In this community, we are being inundated by well-meaning organizations, and we are finding that the funding they bring is a highly corrupting and divisive and cooptive force that is preventing more holistic, grassroots-based approaches. So I'd like to ask, especially to the Asian participants, how did NGOs and INGOs and funding has impacted your work? And how have you resisted or succeeded in working with funding?

Jamnong (Thailand) : In Thailand, we got a lot of donations from the private citizens, from private sector businesses, from local and international NGOs and from the big international relief agencies. In cases where these donations were made directly to communities or to local NGOs, it was easy and very flexible to distribute properly and utilize fairly. But the greater portion of these donations went to the Thai government, and when the government controlled the donor funds, it was *very difficult* to take this money out of the government system and use it in ways people really need. Because the government system is so stiff with bureaucracy and has so many steps, so many layers of approval and delay, and so many opportunities along the way for the money to just disappear.

- ***One example : Donations to local NGOs versus donations to the government.*** We got some donor money from the US (from US-AID or some other US organization?). That money went directly to the local NGOs. In Thailand, all of our local NGOs were all very well-networked with each other after the tsunami, to ensure no community got left out and to minimize duplication of relief and rehabilitation support. And in our experience, the NGOs could use the money and implement that budget very fast and very well in bringing direct and immediate benefit to the people. But the donation from former US President Jimmy Carter's Foundation, on the other hand, went to the government, and it took a long, long time before the government finished having its ten seminars and 20 meetings to finally decide how to use that money!

Maitree (Thailand) : Even the assistance that our communities received from the local NGOs fell into two different types:

- ***Some NGOs passed the donor budget directly on to the communities***, in response to the immediate needs that the community identified, and helped the people to set up systems for managing the money themselves.
- ***Other NGOs working in the tsunami areas had their own mandate or their own work-plan or focus of assistance.*** Some only worked with migrant workers, some only with Christian victims, some only with women and children, some only worked on primary education or only with orphans, others only provided sanitation and drinking water systems, etc. In these cases, many were obligated to follow the plans outlined in their own funding proposals, and they were not free to use the money more flexibly to respond to affected people's need in a more holistic way. Sometimes, the assistance these groups offered was not suitable to the situation or it didn't respond to what people really needed. For example, the funding assistance may come only to help people build houses, but it cannot be used to build roads, drains, water supply, electric lines and the basic infrastructure that makes those houses habitable! So people end up with houses, but can't live in them!

Afrizal (Aceh) : There were a great number of international organizations that came into Aceh after the tsunami. And we do want to say thank you for everyone in all those organizations for coming and for their good will in trying to help. But maybe there are some things that could be better about the systems these organizations follow to do their relief work. What happens is that all these international organizations bring with them their own systems and their own working culture and agendas. And that's what they use, without paying much attention to the local systems or local ways of doing things. And that can be create conflict among local communities.

- ***For example in Aceh and in most of Indonesia, there is this tradition of mutual assistance called goltong royong (??) where community people just come together and do what needs to be done in their community, to help each other.*** This system is used in agriculture, in house-building, in religious festivals, in larger community repair and infrastructure projects. Right after the tsunami, a lot of groups came in and instead saying *let's do goltong royong*, they said *we're going to pay you to clean up the rubble in your own neighborhood.* It seemed like a good idea - it brings in capital, it gives people at least some kind of minimum-paying jobs at a time they most desperately need to earn. But these kinds of "cash-for-work" schemes quickly create a new culture in which people think that they should be paid for whatever work they do to rebuild their lives and communities. So later on, when community leaders try to start getting cleaning and rebuilding work going in their villages, a lot of people ask, so where's the money? This has caused a lot of problems.

Jessica Champagne : I would also add that with a situation of devastation on that huge scale, as happened in Aceh, you do have this rediculous problem of coordination between all the groups trying to help. I'm sure you saw this here in New Orleans also, and there end up being all kinds of mis-matches between aid and needs. For example, US-AID comes in

saying, *We have a school-building project and we are going to build a school in your ruined community*, when the reality is that all the children in the village died, and the immediate need is not for a school building at all, but for houses, infrastructure, etc. But they build their damned school anyway because that's their mandate, so the villagers end up using it as a very nice warehouse for their building materials for a few years! Or else they say, *We're going to build a school right here, in this spot*, while the community people say, *but we haven't gone through a community planning process yet.* And so the donor says, Well, do you want a school or don't you? It sounds silly, but this kind of thing happens all the time.

I think that one thing that having this strong network of 23 affected villages has done, is that these people had a greater negotiating power to say to these various donors, this is what we DO need, and this is what we DON'T need, and this is how the aid should be handled, so it ISN'T problematic and divisive.

QUESTION from man in the audience about the effect of the tsunami on health care in Aceh : My name is Ben Gordon, I'm a community health worker here in New Orleans, trying to bring back the public health care system in this area. I spent five years in the Philippines myself, and so I understand the very diffiucult job that the translators have - I struggled with the language myself. I have a question for the delegates from Indonesia. I know that the city of Aceh also had its health care system devastated by the tsunami. Where did you go when you were sick or injured before the tsunami, and then after?

Afrizal : Revival of traditional village-based healing systems and traditional herbs : In Aceh, there was not a great health infrastructure before the tsunami. It's possible that the system is actually better now, because of all the aid that has come in. But one thing that has been strongly promoted by our 23-village JUB Network is a return to traditional medicines that have been pushed out or seen as invalid or not useful, compared to standard more modern medicine. That doesn't mean we're rejecting the hospitals, in case we need it. But each family in our communities is being asked to plant two medicinal trees, or plants which have some traditional herbal value, as a start. The idea is that before you try the hospital, you first draw upon the traditional wisdom within the community, using these kinds of herbal alternatives, and use that. So it's a supplement to the health care system, not a substitute. But it's a supplement that we control ourselves and which becomes an important aspect of our community revival and self-sufficiency.

Bill Quigley : For this last half-hour, we'd like to show the short trailer of the film that NESRI is making about the tsunami-Katrina exchange. But before we do that, does anybody have any concluding remarks?

Pam Dashiell : This panel itself has been a very informative thing really bringing home lessons that I learned, as well as the lessons that people in the different delegations learned on the trips. We all think differently. I can't wait to see you all tomorrow at the Lower Ninth Levee for fhe fourth of July.

Father Luke : I'd like to give thanks to all the people I know here - as well as the people I haven't met yet - who have all given help, directly or indirectly, to the people who have been affected by the tsunami, as well as Katrina. I think both Katrina and Tsunami brought us to a level of a human family. We are not isolated, we are not individualized. We are in a larger community, we are in a human family in the world. And I think through the trip to Asia, it kind of expanded for me the effectiveness of the tsunami lessons. There are people over there who have suffered so much more than us - imagine in Aceh they say almost 300,000 people died! These are human lives, and human dignity! Here, we struggle, we fight in the law courts for our human rights. But look over there, the fragile human beings were kind of swept away by the natural disaster. And I think it expands our hearts to a wider world.

Also, by having their networks, they are able to know the world wider. So they have much more links to the wide world. I came to one of the villages undergoing rebuilding in Thailand, and amazingly I met students from Europe - France and Germany - who came to help the villagers build their new houses. This looked familiar to me over there. We are connected as a human family, and it enriched our hearts to meet others who suffer, but it's also bonded for human love. That's my closing remark.

Reverend Fields : I just need to add one more thing. I also was one of the delegates on the second visit to Thailand and Indonesia. And after seeing what I saw there, and then coming back home and looking at what we had with Katrina. Katrina was bad. But I guess when I compare the two disaster situations, we only had 1,800 people in our community before the storm hit. And you all lost a lot more people than that in just one village! And now we might have 1,100 or 1,200 people back in the community. Our heart was hearting for the few lives that we lost, but we can imagine what you are going through, what with the great loss you have had to go through. We certainly feel for you, and for the trials and tribulations that you have been through in your struggle.

Maitree : Thank you first of all to everybody. Especially to the volunteers from US who came to help our tsunami housing construction projects in Thailand. And thanks for the financial support from the US - both from private donations and from the government. And thanks for everyone who has given us support to be here today with all of you.

Peter Swan (ACHR Thailand) : I am Peter Swan, I'm with ACHR on a voluntary basis. I wanted to just say that this networking process, which has been described over the last couple of years since the tsunami took place, has made an impact on the modality through which UN agencies are working on disaster relief. And that's very important because they work on a very large scale - I'm talking about several major agencies. These UN agencies came to Thailand and Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and they observed this growing networking process in action, in tsunami-hit areas. And they started to take up this kind of methodology: instead of treating victims of natural and man-made disasters simply as being helpless recipients, they've started to move down to the affected communities and ask them what they want.

Which was of course the biggest mistake that all the disaster work that I've seen over the last 30 years: nobody ever bothered to ask the victims what they needed. These agencies and donors assumed they knew what was needed, and assumed that these victims were so traumatized and debilitated that they would be happy to take whatever was given to them. But that was a big mistake. A lot of the post-disaster relief that was done for major earthquakes, like in Armenia and in Gujarat, they started to take a more community-based approach. Now the main approach with UN-HABITAT, which is doing a lot of work in post-conflict and post-disaster areas is to go to the communities. They are still stuck with government - government still remains a barrier, because as a UN agency, they have to deal with the government. But they have broken through that wall of assuming that they know what people need.

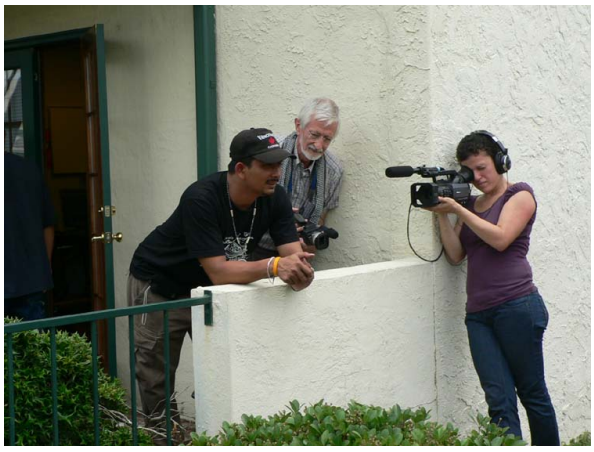
They used to fly in "trauma councelors" by the dozens. But what we see is when affected communities are active in looking at their problems and dealing with them in collective ways, a lot of those needs look after themselves. You don't need to bring in highly-paid specialists to councel people about how they feel after a disaster. The neighborhood, the church, the mosque or the temple - these indegenous factors play a very important role in bringing people together, and out of despair and into a more hopeful, more active rebuilding mode. That's another benefit of the kind of networking that goes beyond just one community or one village.

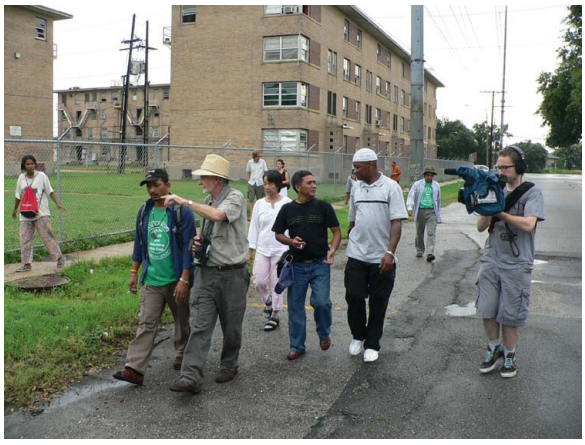
Afrizal : Thank you so much all of you for inviting us here to take part in this seminar. We never could have imagined that we could come here to the USA, and that we could meet with people who have been through a lot of what we have been through in Aceh. And if there is anything that we have said or done since we arrived, which gave some unclarity or mistake, we want to apologize.

Bill Quigley : Please join me in thanking the people who have come here to be part of the panel. (Applause). OK, we're going to screen a trailer of a film that is being produced by NESRI in New York.

NESRI's KATRINA/TSUNAMI EXCHANGE TRAILER is shown :

Tiffany Gardner : This is from a documentary that we're working on, that talks about the Katrina - Tsunami exchange that has been taking place. This is really a couple of three-minute trailers of what will hopefully be a longer documentary. We actually have the film makers with us today - Michelle Stephenson and John Stuyvesant.





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1. Mr. Maitree Jongkraijug (Community leader from Ban Nam Khem Village, Phang Nga Province). This is the seaside town most badly affected by the tsunami, and Maitree was one of the key leaders in helping to organize survivors after the waves, and to set up the large relief camp outside the town. Maitree is also the chairman of the Ban Naam Khem Community Bank, which was set up by poor and landless tsunami survivors. We visited the Community Bank office during the first Katrina-Tsunami exposure visit, with Endesha.

2. Ms. Pairat Phangchan (Community leader from Plaa Katak Community, Phuket Province). This is the small land-rent community we visited on the second Katrina-Tsunami exchange, which produces the dried tiny sardines. This community was only mildly affected by the tsunami, but after the crisis, were threatened with eviction. With support from the Phuket Community Network (which was formed and became strong through the tsunami rehabilitation process), they have negotiated to collectively lease a piece of public land adjacent to the community, and are now building their new houses.

3. Mr. Jamnong Thajitnirat (Experienced senior free-lance community organizer). Jamnong was one of the key people to help organize the survivors in Phangnga and Phuket provinces, in the chaotic hours and days after the tsunami. He was especially active in helping set up the people-managed relief camp at Ban Nam Khem. He's a real strategist, this guy, and an excellent community organizer.

4. Ms. Pikun Sittiprasertkun (Freelance translator, researcher) Pikun has been consistently involved in the tsunami rehabilitation process from the first day, first as a volunteer, researcher, translator and organizer. Pikun was our translator during both Katrina visits, and so she also has a good sense about the issues in New Orleans and the gulf coast.

5. Mr. Thomas Kerr (Publications coordinator with the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Bangkok). Tom is an American citizen, and has helped to prepare English-language documentation to disseminate lessons and breakthroughs of the community-driven rehabilitation process after the tsunami in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Aceh and India.

6. Mr. Peter Swan (Film maker, Australian citizen). Peter (Irish Citizen) has worked as a consultant with ACHR for many years, to help prepare video films about various community development and community exchange programs, and prepared a documentary film about the first Katrina-Tsunami exchange visit in Thailand and Aceh. Peter will come along on the New Orleans trip to film the exchange. Peter does not need a USA visa.

Participants from ACEH, INDONESIA :

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1. MR. AFRIZAL *(Only the one name on his passport, in the Indonesian style!)* Afrizal is a community leader from Lam Manyang Village, a fishing village in Banda Aceh, Aceh, which was completely destroyed by the December 26, 2004 tsunami, killing 70% of the village's population. He has been one of the key leaders in the Udeep Beusaree Network of 26 adjacent villages which have planned and carried out the rebuilding of their villages.

2. MR. SYAIFUL *(Only the one name on his passport, in the Indonesian style!)* Syaiful is a community leader from Cot Lamkuweh Village, another fishing village in Banda Aceh, Aceh, which was completely destroyed by the tsunami. He has been one of the key leaders in the Udeep Beusaree Network of 26 adjacent villages which have planned and carried out the rebuilding of their villages and restoring of their economic and cultural lives.

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