



DISASTER & SOCIAL CRISIS RESEARCH NETWORK *ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER*

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A quarterly publication of the Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network of
the European Sociological Association

www.erc.gr/english/d&scrn
susann.ullberg@fhs.se

This is the quarterly electronic newsletter of the Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network. The purpose of the D&SCRN is to promote the study, research and analysis of "natural", "technological" and "social" disasters with a view to contributing to the development of disaster resilient European communities, and preventing or mitigating the human, economic, social, cultural and psychological effects of crises and disasters.

The D&SCRN Electronic Newsletter is published four times a year (March, June, September and December). The previously published newsletters are downloadable at the network's new webpage www.erc.gr/english/d&scrn.

Announcements of conferences, book, film, and CD-ROM reviews, reportage on conferences, disaster diaries, brief articles on best or worst practices in disaster prevention and recovery, commentaries on disasters and crises, human interest stories relevant to disasters, etc. should be sent electronically to the editor, Susann Ullberg (susann.ullberg@fhs.se) no later than the first of the month of publication. Contributions to the newsletter should preferably be written in a concise format (½-1 page long maximum) in order to make reading comprehensive albeit focused.

Relevant contributions from the field of disaster and crisis research, as well as from applied disaster and crisis management practice, are most welcome!

Philip Buckle,
D&SCRN Coordinator
Susann Ullberg,
E-Newsletter Editor



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Editor's Note: All "signed" texts express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor, the D&SCRN or those of CRISMART/Swedish National Defence College.

1) Note from the D&SCRN Coordinator

I have been back in Australia recently and I have started to set up some links between the Australians and New Zealanders I know. I'm aiming at a forum and process for information exchange, research partnerships and combined efforts so that we can multiply our effectiveness. In Australia this process has taken longer than I had expected; people are busy at their day jobs and developing relationships and networks that do not have immediate and practical relevance to the job at hand is difficult, particularly for people working in the civil service, non-government organizations and the private sector. But there is a commitment there and I hope to report on some substantial progress in the next newsletter. Once a node is established I want to expand this globally so that we are all linked more closely.

I've mentioned the need for this before. The necessity to share information and work on common areas of interest, the need to avoid duplication, the need to focus attention on salient issues. I would like this network to be active rather than passive, that is, that we would have in place arrangements for us sharing information regularly. However, only Ilan Kelman has responded to my requests for feedback.

The next ESA conference is on in Glasgow in 2007 and planning for this will begin in earnest shortly. Andrew Coghlan a Vice president of the Executive Board of the Research Committee on Disasters (RC 39) International Sociological Association will be assisting with this. I know Andrew from Australia, he used to be the national training consultant (recovery) based at Emergency management Australia and is now the national manager for emergency management for Australian Red Cross. This is a first step towards increased collaboration.

While in Australia I attended two workshops. The first at emergency management Australia was on warnings for flash floods and the second was run by the water authorities and the Department of Human services examining ways of improving recovery from rapid onset floods. What struck me most about both workshops was the willingness of Australians (I don't want to make this note too much of a plug for Australian and New Zealand, however...The Economist journal recently ran a global survey and determined that Australians are the friendliest people in the world) to engage in critical debate about what they do and their willingness to share information. Even more significantly there is a strong commitment to community based disaster management, community participation in planning and operations and community engagement in setting programme objectives for response and recovery.

I mention this for a number of reasons. This willingness to share is important, the enthusiasm for critical review` of one's own operations is important but engagement with the community is vital.

I don't know why this is so strong in Australia and New Zealand but less strong in some other countries, notably in my experience the UK where the focus is still very much on the uniformed services management of response activities and on hierarchy, hazard management and authoritarian structures that protect the public rather than engagement the community in self-protection. This difference may be due to a society where self-reliance has been necessary as a new nation was established. Or derived from remoteness which also encouraged inter-dependence. It may be the 'traditional' Australian suspicion of authority.

Whatever the reason (investigating national differences would be a useful research topic) community partnerships with agencies and governments is surely something we need to foster. The Antipodean models of review, self-critical assessment, frank and open exchange are perhaps templates for other countries. Which brings me back to the need to share and exchange more. I'm open to any ideas.

Finally, I have looked at the list of members and a number of contact details are out of date (including mine) Could you check your listing and send changes to myself at philip.buckle@gmail.com or Nicholas Petropoulos at erc@otenet.gr . Thanks.

Philip Buckle
D&SCRN Coordinator
philip.buckle@gmail.com

2) D&SCRN Webpage Report

🏠 **Updating of information in the *European Sociologist* (Bulletin of ESA).** Although the ESA website information pertaining to the Disaster and Crisis Research Network has been updated as of February 7th, 2006, upon receiving the ESA spring bulletin I noted that I was still listed as the Coordinator. I informed Tuula Gordon, the new Vice President responsible for Research Networks and Elianne Riska, the Editor of the Newsletter, of our 2005 Torun elections and instructed them to note the change in the Coordinating Committee and henceforth to direct all ESA communications to Philip Buckle.

🏠 **New D&SCRN members.** Since the publication of the March 2006 E-Newsletter, the Network has acquired two new members: (1) Tibor Abheuer, of the University of Vienna (tibor.assheuer@gmx.at) with interests in the management of climate changes in developing countries" and (2) Katherine Worboys of "Lessons Learned Information Sharing" in Washington, D.C. (kworboys@llis.dhs.gov). I would like to welcome Tibor and Katherine to our Network and look forward to their active contribution to the Network's activities. Their names, affiliation, disaster interests and full contact details will be posted on the Network's webpage membership list, along with the publication of the June 2006 E-Newsletter in our website.

🏠 **Missing Helsinki 2001 conference papers.** In the attempt to download two D&SCRN Session VI papers (Madhavi Ariyabandu's and Hanna Schmuck's) from our webpage, Tibor Abheuer discovered that they were not available. Checking the webpage myself, I noted that this problem was general and involved almost all the submitted full papers with a "download full paper" indication. However, I recall that the Helsinki full papers were available and downloadable, when our Network changed website hosts (from Northumbria University to the Emergencies Research Center of Athens) in March 2004. I am in the process of finding out what has happened and hope to restore these documents in our webpage.

🏠 **Call for updating of D&SCRN webpage links.** Following a validation of our existent website and e-mail links, I discovered that 18 of the 31 webpage links and several of the e-mails in our links page were no longer active. This does not mean that these disaster organizations have ceased their activities. Most likely they have undergone changes and these changes are reflected in their electronic addresses. An attempt will be made to update the links of existent organizations with ongoing activities. In the meantime, I invite the members of the Coordinating Committee and all the members of the D&SCRN to send us webpage links to organizations, academic and research institutions, civil protection NGOs, periodicals, journals, data bases and networks dealing with social, economic, legal, political and psychological aspects of disasters and social crises. The webpage links should be accompanied by a brief description of the organization (e.g. title, affiliation, country etc.).

Nicholas Petropoulos
D&SCRN Webpage Manager
erc@otenet.gr

3) Conferences Coming Up



IDRC Davos 2006

August 27th – September 1st, 2006

Davos (Switzerland)



<http://www.davos2006.ch/>



Annual Conference 2006

August 30th – September 1st 2006

London (UK)

<http://www.rgs.org/WhatsOn/ConferencesAndSeminars/Annual+Conference/Annual+Conference.htm>

Workshop 50: "Disasters, Development and Generosity"

Session convenors: Benedikt Korf, Mark Pelling & Katie Willis

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/geography/>

In recent years there has been an increasing awareness in Western countries about the effects of natural disasters, in particular after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, and later Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005. Some of these disasters have generated sentiments of generosity in Europe and North America, while others have attracted much less generosity and donations. At the same time, aid agencies face a number of practical challenges in satisfying the expectations of their donors, to accomplish practical implementation of aid programmes and to move >from relief to development. This session invites papers from a variety of perspectives: First, one may wonder why some disasters attract more attention, generosity and donations than others and what this tells us about the ethical dimensions of generosity and the relation between donors and recipient societies. Second, there are a number of challenges in practically implementing post-disaster aid, particularly with coordinating a large number of private, public and multi-lateral aid agencies with local bureaucracies, NGOs and civil society. Third, it is often difficult to find avenues to foster more long-term commitments towards sustainable development, because relief agencies work in different modes than development organisations. These three thematic areas may be linked: one proposition to be discussed in this session is that the way generosity is practiced and operationalised by charities in the North creates the conditions for specific aid practices in disaster-affected areas.

Dealing with Disasters Conference

Planning, Response and Investigation

20th - 21st September 2006

20th-21st September, 2006
Middlesbrough (UK)

Organized by the University of Teeside Centre for Forensic Investigation and Northumbria University Disaster and Development Centre. This joint conference seeks to bring the expertise of both centers together with regional and government agencies and emergency services personnel to explore and highlight the planning, response, and investigation requirements for dealing with both natural and manmade disasters. More information can be obtained from Graham Thompson, University of Teesside; +01642 342427;

disasters@tees.ac.uk;
<http://www.tees.ac.uk/disasters/>.



15th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine

13th-16th May 2007
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
<http://www.wcdem2007.org/>

4) News & Updates

PROJECT "SEISMOPOLIS"

Project "Seismopolis" ("Earthquake City") (2003-2006), that was funded 75% by the European Community and 25% by national funds, has come to a successful closing with the termination of the pilot phase on 31 May 2006. As this project may be of interest to other countries confronting earthquakes, Nicholas Petropoulos, who is the Director at the Emergencies Research Center in Athens, thought it may be instructive to give a brief report of the results of the pilot project. **The report is attached to this issue of the D&SCRN E-Newsletter.** For further information about this project please contact Nicholas at erc@otenet.gr



Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (The Netherlands) aims at providing research and education on conflict and natural disasters, the relations between these crises and processes of development, and the dynamics of aid interventions during and after disaster and conflict. One of the research programmes concerns vulnerability and responses to natural disasters. Disaster response, including preparedness and early warning, varies from ad-hoc, externally driven and technocratic to responses that are community-based, institutional and geared towards risk reduction. The research explores how disaster responses come about in the interplay between national and international government agents, disaster management and aid agencies and local communities, each with their own values and interests. Starting from the premise that different approaches to disaster risk reduction need to be integrated according to specific situations and must be based on inclusion of different actors, the research aims to unravel the processes that render people vulnerable to disaster, understand the everyday dynamics of disaster response, and contribute to discussions on how to turn disaster response more effective. Two new PhD projects were recently launched in this programme: 1. *Adapting to climate-related natural hazards in building livelihoods in Mutarara District, Mozambique*. This research project aims at understanding how planned interventions on adaptation to climate (change) related natural hazards are framed and locally perceived and acted upon by poor household building livelihoods in rural Mozambique. It is a collaborative undertaking of Wageningen University, Mondlane University, the Mozambique Red Cross and the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Climate Centre. Contact: Luis.Artur@wur.nl 2. *People's vulnerability; 'natural' disasters, conflict and aid in Afghanistan, Indonesia and Philippines*. This PhD entails an interactive research with Oxfam-Novib, ICCO, Kerkinactie and their partners and networks in Afghanistan and Indonesia. The research focuses on how survivors of disasters and conflict deal with risks, uncertainties, insecurity and how they try to make a living in adverse conditions. The research focuses on community-based approaches to risk reduction and aims to guide Oxfam-Novib, ICCO and Kerkinactie in improving their interventions. Contact: Annelies.Heijmans@wur.nl

For further information about Disaster Studies at Wageningen University please check out <http://www.rds.wur.nl/UK/Disaster+Studies>



**Regional Course on Earthquake & Tsunami Vulnerability Reduction
focusing on the use of spatial geodata**

October 24th–November 6th, 2006

Bangkok, Thailand

The course is being jointly organized by the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC-The Netherlands), Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) with funding support from The Netherlands Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The course is also being organized as the pre-symposium training course prior to the 6th Asian Seismological Conference which will take place in Bangkok, Thailand on 7-10 November 2006.

For detailed course information and course application form, please visit http://www.itc.nl/education/refresher_courses/2006/thailand.asp.

5) Meet some D&SCRN Members

☺ **Christine A. Bevc**

**Doctoral Student, University of Colorado at Boulder (USA)
Graduate Research Assistant, Natural Hazards Center**

Christine's current research looks at the effects of disasters and crises at the organizational and individual levels. At the organizational level, she is looking at the emergent multiorganizational networks (EMONs) following the World Trade Center disaster on September 11, 2001. Her research uses social network analysis to examine how organizations interacted during the initial response following the event. She is also interested in how geographic proximity influences interorganizational relationships in disasters and crises. This organizational level research also extends to examining organizational responses to other types of disaster and crisis events, such as train derailments with chemical spills. Looking at more specific types of organizations, her research examines the use of the military (active and reserve forces) in the disaster response to recent hurricanes along the Gulf Coast and state of Florida and how disasters are socially constructed and framed as war by the media and government officials. This includes examining the debates and suggested government efforts to militarize disaster response in the United States. On an individual, social psychological level, her research explores how researchers emotionally cope in the field while conducting research and gathering data. She is interested in how disasters and crises present unique and dynamic challenges to researchers in the field and how they manage their emotions and professional expectations as it relates to emotion work and presentation of self.

In addition to working towards a PhD in sociology (with a concentration in environmental sociology and disasters), she also works as a graduate research assistant at the Natural Hazards Center, which aims at advancing and communicating knowledge on hazards mitigation and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. She currently serves as the assistant editor for the *Natural Hazards Review*, a multidisciplinary peer-reviewed journal bringing together engineering and social science research on hazards and disasters, and the moderator for Disaster Grads, an international listserv fostering an undergraduate and graduate student community of hazard and disaster researchers.

Her background stems from a Masters of Arts in Applied Sociology and undergraduate studies in sociology, environmental studies, and health sciences from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida (USA). One of the primary reasons she joined D&SCRN was to help expand and contribute knowledge concerning disasters and crises. If you are interested in talking more about any of her research or activities mentioned here, please e-mail her at christine.bevc@colorado.edu

☺ **Bob Pokrant**

**Associate Professor of Anthropology and Head of the Social Science program
at Curtin University of Technology (Australia)
Director of the South Asia Research Unit (<http://www.saru.curtin.edu.au/>)**

Bob Pokrant received his PhD from Cambridge University in 1982 and has taught at Cambridge University (UK), Stockholm University (Sweden), University of British Columbia (Canada), Northwestern University (USA), Ado Bayero University (Nigeria) and Dhaka University (Bangladesh). He has carried out field research in Nigeria, India and Bangladesh.

During 2005, he served on the Working Group on Tsunamis within the Prime Minister of Australia's Scientific, Engineering and Innovation Council. The group's report was presented to the Prime Minister in Cabinet on December 2, 2005. The report examined Australia's needs to safeguard itself from future tsunamis. His main research interests are:

- Fisheries and aquaculture in India and Bangladesh;
- Coastal development in South Asia;
- Disasters and development in post-tsunami India and Bangladesh;
- The global food system and its impact on South Asian societies, economies and environments.

His current project examines the impact of post-1990 coastal management strategies (ICM) on capture fisheries and shrimp aquaculture in Bangladesh and Tamil Nadu State, India. It pays particular attention to government policy shifts in the 1990s towards so-called integrated coastal management (ICM) strategies; to the ways in

which fisheries and aquaculture are being integrated into such strategies; to fishers' and shrimp farmers' understandings of and responses to these strategies; and to the social, economic and environmental impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami on fisheries and aquaculture and on the policy and practice of integrated coastal management.

Theoretically, the project draws on several research literatures: anthropologically and sociologically informed globalisation studies; development policy and practice research; socio-environmental and disaster study research on resilience, vulnerability and sustainable development; and political-economic and economic geographic studies of global value chains (GVCs), global production networks (GPNs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). It is the first study to compare and critical evaluate the integration of fisheries and aquaculture into ICM strategies in Bangladesh and Tamil Nadu in pre- and post-tsunami contexts.

His most recent publications are:

-Rahman, A., Pokrant, B. & N. Quddus (Eds) (2006): *Shrimp Farming and Industry: Sustainability, Trade and Livelihoods*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd. In press.

-Pokrant, B (2006): 'Globalisation and the international shrimp sector: historical and contemporary trends in production, trade and consumption'. In Rahman, A., Pokrant, B. & N. Quddus (Eds) (2006): *Shrimp Farming and Industry: Sustainability, Trade and Livelihoods*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd. In press.

-Pokrant, B (2006): 'The Bangladesh shrimp export sector: a critical review of the literature'. In Rahman, A., Pokrant, B. & N. Quddus (Eds) (2006): *Shrimp Farming and Industry: Sustainability, Trade and Livelihoods*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd. In press.

-*Does anyone have to die? Report of the Working Group on Tsunamis to the Prime Minister's Scientific Engineering and Innovation Council*, Canberra, 2 December 2005.

In an effort to strengthen our network we want to know you better! Send a brief description about yourself and your work, and do tell us why you joined the D&SCRNetwork.

6) Recent Publications



DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY - EARTHQUAKE RELIEF IN JAPAN, TURKEY AND INDIA

By Alpaslan Ozerdem & Tim Jacoby
2005 I.B. Tauris

Natural disasters have a profound impact upon the societies they affect but one important aspect that has yet to receive attention is how the relationship between state and society is affected in the aftermath of such events. How the state responds to such events can generate powerful forces within society for political, economic and social change. A key objective of this book is to establish comparative categories and conclusions by assessing the impact of severe earthquakes on state development and civil organization. Key topics to be addressed include the relationship between disaster mitigation, preparation, response and reconstruction and the capacity of civil society organizations to scrutinize the state and represent the interests of the citizenry.

Early Warning and Response to Population Movements in West Africa: The example of Guinea Red Cross*

By Hanna Schmuck**

Early Warning for man-made disasters

It is well acknowledged that early warning is considerably reducing the loss of life and property and in general mitigating the impact of disasters. However, so far the concept has rather been highlighted in view of natural disasters, especially for floods, cyclones and recently tsunamis. Less known and therefore financially supported are early warning systems for man-made disasters, such as civil unrest and conflicts leading to population movements. The early warning and response system of Guinea Red Cross is a crucial example that early warning on the arrival of refugees and returnees contribute considerably to appropriate and timely response and reduce the suffering of the displaced. The system also helps host communities to accept and assist the arrivals and avoid conflicts about already scarce resources.

Population Movements are one of the main disasters in West Africa. They are mainly caused by civil unrest or war, but can also be triggered by food insecurity or other emergencies. As per information from the UN in October 2005, the displaced populations - both internally and cross-border - amounted to 1.3 million. Having been confronted with this situation for decades, West African Red Cross Societies have a long experience in receiving and assisting refugees and returnees. The strengths of the Red Cross is its wide volunteer network, their officially assigned mandate and role as auxiliary to the respective Governments and their principles based on neutrality and impartiality. This means that even in remote villages where no other humanitarian actor is established one can find Red Cross volunteers who are trained to assist the most vulnerable irrespective of their political, social and religious background.

The role of the Guinea Red Cross during population movements in the past years is a good example to which extend its activities can both help Government authorities and international humanitarian actors as well as those affected to manage the disaster.

The Guinea Red Cross early warning and response system

Guinea has a long history of population movements and as per UN sources in October 2005 hosting the highest number of refugees in West Africa with still 71,000 mainly from Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. The main refugee influx in recent history started in 1990 with the onset of the war in Liberia followed by Sierra Leone. In 2002, civil unrest started in Ivory Coast and the fragile situation is prevailing whilst peace has been re-established in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Guinea Red Cross Society has a comprehensive experience to assist displaced people. In order to address the issue in a more systematic manner, the National Society has started to establish an early warning and rapid response system for cross-border population movements in 2002 with the onset of the crises in Ivory Coast with the support from International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). So far, 21 "Groupes d'Alerte et Premiere Urgence" (GAPU) - Early Warning and Emergency Teams - have been formed along the borders with Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Teams along the border with Mali are under preparation.

One GAPU consists of 15 to 20 volunteers from communities from or in vicinity of the main entry points. The main tasks are to provide early warning about the number and condition of the arrivals to the Red Cross Branch and Head Quarters as well as government authorities, to assist government authorities in reception and registration, to identify the most vulnerable and assess their basis need, to provide First Aid, disseminate hygienic awareness, follow-up on protection and assist in accommodating and provision of services to the refugees upon their arrival in transit centres until they are transferred refugee camps. The GAPU members are especially trained to assist women, children and sick which form usually the majority of the arrivals.

The role of the GAPU is crucial in a country like Guinea where telephone lines do not exist or are not functioning properly, road

conditions are bad, it often takes days until the humanitarian actors and government authorities are informed about the arrival of refugees, their condition and composition and hence their basic needs. Since the number of arrivals at border entries can vary greatly the information collected and transmitted by the GAPU is extremely important in order to determine and kind and extend of assistance required by the Red Cross movement partners, government authorities and UN and other humanitarian actors. E.g. whilst the border crossing Gouéla with Ivory Coast experienced an influx of up to 3,000 refugees daily, the small town of Bossou had only 200 refugees to arrive in 1989 (that time caused by the war in Liberia).

Experiences: “We were the first ones to assist before other humanitarian actors arrived”

Gouéla is a village at the border with Ivory Coast. It is difficult to imagine with which human tragedies the inhabitants of this scenic village on the foot of lush green rolling hills had to cope with in 2003 when a total of 36,000 refugees passed their first days here as a safe haven from conflicts and massacres in Ivory Coast. With a mud road of 15 km from the next small town of N’Zoo, which during the rainy season can take several hours to reach, it did not have even the basic facilities to assist exhausted people, mainly women and children, who had walked for many days out of the conflict zones from Ivory Coast to reach Guinea. Up to 3,000 refugees crossed the border daily and the GAPU members were the first to receive and assist the arrivals.

“Most of them were in a deplorable condition since they had walked for many days before reaching Guinea”, remembers Cé Iromou, the Team Leader of the GAPU in Gouéla (Photo).

“We were really lucky to be prepared: The GAPU was formed just the week before - we were eight participants in a training course from communities along the border; the training was finished on Tuesday and the first refugees arrived already on Friday”. This was a timely preparedness, as nobody expected

that the GAPU had to apply their learning so soon. The Red Cross volunteers of the GAPU were the first to assist before other humanitarian actors started to arrive three days later.

Today, the GAPU has 26 trained members from originally eight in late 2002. Giving the continuing volatile situation in Ivory Coast and the effectiveness of being well prepared in 2002, it is not difficult to find people interested to become a volunteer for the Red Cross and a GAPU member, explains Cé. From the training received in 2002 the core team has developed its own training guideline and methodology based on that provided by Guinea RC as assisted by ICRC and IFRC, and adapted it to the local conditions and their experiences. However, equipment to be able to comply with the responsibilities, such as First Aid kits and visibility material, along with the lack of transport means, such as bicycles or motorbikes, are the main constraints for Cé and the his GAPU.

Border officials appreciate the Red Cross and count on the volunteers in times of emergency. “The Red Cross provided enormous help for us during the war in Liberia, when hundreds of refugees arrived every day”, explains a police-man based at the Liberian border. He points to a pile of papers where all entries are listed and it is through the Red Cross that the authorities knew the basic needs of the refugees, their origin and hence their intention where to go afterwards as they were from eight different countries of West Africa.

A GAPU is a multidisciplinary team which assists Government authorities, NGOs and international organisations also in peace times during the regular cholera outbreaks by disinfection of water sources and dissemination of hygienic and health awareness. Activities during non-refugee crises are very important to keep the team alive and the communities and government authorities aware of its existence.

** This article is based on field visits and interviews by Dr Hanna Schmuck working as the Disaster Management Coordinator for West & Central Africa for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) from July 2004 to April 2006.*

*** Since May 2006, Hanna Schmuck is the Head of the German Red Cross Regional Delegation for Southern Africa, based in Maputo/Mozambique. She completed her PhD in Social Anthropology in 2000 with a research on local-indigenous knowledge on floods and river erosion in Bangladesh in comparison to western-engineering approaches.*

Relocalising Disaster Risk Reduction

*By Ilan Kelman, * Eric Karnes, Michael Brownlee & Lynette Marie Hanthorn*

As one item within our vast portfolio for bringing disaster risk reduction to the community level, a new approach termed "relocalisation" has emerged. Relocalisation means re-establishing activities at the local level (re-local-ise), reversing the trend of centralisation and larger organisations. Diseconomies of scale, rather than economies of scale, are employed. In the case of disaster risk reduction, relocalising means ensuring that disaster-related activities occur from the local level, bottom-up with external guidance where useful. One example is maintaining local caches of emergency supplies rather than expecting external assistance after an event.

Relocalisation originated in concerns about "peak oil", the time when the extraction rate of oil -now expanded to all fossil fuels—reaches its maximum, leading to an increasingly restricted supply of fossil fuels used for energy and electricity. Crises envisioned include food supplies being reduced because of limited transport to supermarkets; blackouts during hot and cold temperature extremes where electricity generating plants depend on fossil fuels; and emergency services being unable to respond promptly. Relocalisation aims to make services such as food, energy, manufacturing, and disaster risk reduction more locally-based so that they will be minimally affected by fossil fuel restrictions and any other sudden or long-term crises.

In August 2005, in Colorado, U.S.A., Boulder Valley Relocalisation (BVR) was founded as a local residents' group to plan for the effects of peak oil and other crises on the Boulder Valley community, northwest of Denver (see <http://www.boulderrelocalization.org>). Eight BVR subgroups were created, each tackling

one aspect of relocalisation, including food, energy, and the economy.

The Crisis Preparedness Group (<http://www.ilankelman.org/relocalisation.html>) defined its mandate as "to provide information on and to recommend actions for preparing for crises which could result from peak oil as illustrative of relocalising general disaster risk reduction". Based on BVR's template for all subgroups, five steps are involved: 1) Disaster risk reduction resources in Boulder Valley were inventoried and disaster events and conditions which would be particularly affected by peak oil were identified; 2) Future crisis scenarios were developed and solutions to avert these scenarios were brainstormed; 3) Ideal and realistic visions and goals were listed; 4) Specific recommendations for action along with concrete proposals are being detailed; 5) The results will be integrated into a Master Plan for Relocalising Boulder Valley.

The results emphasise that the main strength of relocalisation is reinforcing the already-established approach to disaster risk reduction of developing local skills and capabilities. Relocalisation should complement, not supplant, other approaches. By introducing a new factor, that of peak oil consequences and related crises, relocalisation engages a sector of the community concerned about fossil fuel limitations and can place that concern within the context of all disaster risk reduction activities.

**National Center for Atmospheric Research,
Boulder
ilan_kelman@yahoo.com*

