

After KATRINA



Shared Challenges
for Rebuilding
Communities



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Edited by
Carol J. De Vita

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The essays in this collection were prepared after *Translating Research into Action: Nonprofits and the Renaissance of New Orleans*, a conference sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations and the Urban Institute, with support from the Allstate Foundation. The essays reflect the discussions that emanated from the conference and extend the dialogue into areas where solid research can inform the debate.

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Introduction

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wreaked unprecedented damage and destruction on the city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region. The facts are all too stark and familiar:¹

- over 80 percent of New Orleans' 450,000 residents were uprooted by the storms;
- nearly 228,000 homes and apartments in the city were flooded;
- roughly 240 Head Start centers serving 7,200 children in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama were closed; and
- more than a dozen hospitals in New Orleans were damaged and thousands of doctors and health professionals dislocated by the storms, leaving the city's health care system in disarray.

More than 18 months after the storms, the challenges of rebuilding communities across the Gulf Coast continue to loom large. The needs are many: housing, employment, child care, schools, transportation, clothing and household necessities, and health care. Rarely has a community needed to rebuild its entire infrastructure from scratch. Yet that is the challenge that New Orleans and other communities across the Gulf Coast face.

To be sure, signs of progress are evident. In New Orleans, a city in which tourism is central to both its economy and cultural identity, more than 90 percent of the hotels were back in business by January 2007, and over 300,000 passengers traveled through the Louis Armstrong International Airport in October and November 2006—roughly two-thirds of pre-Katrina air travel. Although accurate population data are difficult to obtain, public school enrollments for fall 2006 showed an increase, suggesting that some families are returning to the area.

But basic infrastructures that can attract and retain residents are still missing. By the start of 2007, only about 50 percent of the public schools in New Orleans were open, 30 percent of the child care centers had returned, and just 17 percent of the buses in the city were back in operation.² Some parts of the city (the French Quarter, the Garden District, and Uptown) are in a full recovery process, but others—including Lakeview, New Orleans East, and the Lower Ninth Ward—still show only limited recovery.

Indeed, the size, scope, and vastness of the damage pose the most significant challenges faced by public policymakers in half a century. Answers are not easy, but research on housing, early childhood development, community health, asset building, cultural economy, social service delivery systems, and a host of other issues offers models for moving forward.

This volume presents the thoughts of leading researchers and policy experts regarding models and policy considerations that can help guide the rebuilding efforts in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region. The essays were prepared after *Translating Research into Action: Nonprofits and the Renaissance of New Orleans*, a conference sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Nonprofits Organizations and the Urban Institute, with support from the Allstate Foundation. The conference, held in New Orleans on November 3, 2006, brought together local nonprofit and community leaders, government officials, and research experts to discuss issues and strategies for rebuilding the devastated areas of the city. The essays reflect the discussions that emanated from the conference and extend the dialogue into areas where solid research can inform the debate.

The volume is organized into six chapters that address key policy considerations for the area.

- Chapter 1, “Affordable Housing in Healthy Neighborhoods” by Margery Austin Turner, sets forth some lessons learned from communities that have promoted programs to create mixed-income neighborhoods so low-income families are not isolated in distressed communities.
- Chapter 2, “Helping Children and Families Rebuild Their Lives after Katrina” by Olivia Golden and Joanna Parnes, discusses the physical, psychological, and emotional impact of the storms on children and families and the characteristics of effective programs to help them overcome these traumas.
- Chapter 3, “New Orleans Arts and Culture” by Carole Rosenstein, suggests ways that the local arts community—which plays such a vital part in the unique appeal of New Orleans—can be more fully integrated into the recovery process.
- Chapter 4, “Public and Environmental Health Concerns” by Douglas Meffert, Jeffrey J. Thomas, and Robert Wallace, describes the community and environmental health problems that may emerge over time as a result

of the hurricanes and cleanup efforts, and the need to rebuild the health system around small multiservice clinics rather than a single, central hospital.

- Chapter 5, “Rebuilding Assets after Katrina” by Adam Carasso, presents several policy mechanisms that can help individuals and families affected by the storm get back on their feet financially and rebuild their assets; and
- Chapter 6, “Preparing for the Next Disaster” by Carol J. De Vita, looks at ways to strengthen the capacity of nonprofit organizations and facilitate their role in future disasters by ensuring closer and smoother cooperation with government relief agencies.

These essays lay an important foundation for stimulating dialogue among local residents, community leaders, the private sector, and policymakers at all levels of government. They offer ideas not only to develop action plans for rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast but also to address the underlying issues of poverty, inequity, and weak social infrastructures that have been persistent in the area for decades.

Because the challenges are interwoven, reinforcing, and immense, the responsibilities for addressing these issues must be shared by all sectors of society and all levels of government. The nation’s response to rebuilding the Gulf Coast region after Katrina and planning for future emergencies and disasters will be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, calling for common sense, compassion, dialogue, resources, and political will.

For further information, a detailed research bibliography on these themes is available at <http://www.urban.org/katrinabiblio/>.

Notes

1. See Margery Austin Turner and Sheila R. Zedlewski, eds., *After Katrina: Rebuilding Opportunity and Equity into the New New Orleans* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2006).
2. The Brookings Institute, “Katrina Index Update,” January 2007. Available at <http://www.gnocdc.org>.

Affordable Housing in Healthy Neighborhoods

New Orleans and other communities of the Gulf Coast must rebuild affordable housing for both renters and homeowners to recover fully and fairly. Federal, state, and local officials have expressed a commitment to a safe return and a better future for all displaced residents. But without affordable housing options, these commitments cannot be fulfilled because many original residents will not be able to return (Popkin, Turner, and Burt 2006).

If affordable housing is not available, the redevelopment of Gulf Coast communities will be inequitable—because it will exclude lower-income residents, many of whom are black. In addition, the long-term health of the region's economy will be undermined by the absence of a major segment of the workforce. Key workers, including those involved in the provision of health care, child care, and public education may not be able to return, undermining the availability of services needed for a decent quality of life. And the community's vitality will be undermined by the absence of families and individuals who played key roles in creating and sustaining the region's unique music, art, and cultural traditions (Turner 2006).

But neither low-income families nor the communities in which they live will be well served if affordable housing is rebuilt according to the patterns of the past. Historically, subsidized housing policies in cities across the United States have isolated low-income families in large projects, earmarked exclusively for occupancy by the poor. These projects exacerbated racial segregation and isolation, polarized communities along lines of race and class, and helped create concentrations of poverty and distress (Schill and Wachter 1995).

A well-established body of social science research teaches us that concentrating poverty in this way undermines the well-being of families and children, and blights the surrounding communities (Ellen and Turner 1997). Low-income families are likely to enjoy better health and long-term life chances if they have the opportunity to live in safe and healthy communities that offer access to jobs and well-performing public schools (Briggs and Turner 2006). Further, because low-income housing projects were too often poorly designed, built, and managed, they have fueled suspicion and mistrust among low-income families as well as prejudices and fears about subsidized housing. These fears undermine efforts to reshape affordable housing policies just at the time that reform and renewal is needed most.

The redevelopment of affordable housing in greater New Orleans and in other Gulf Coast communities need not repeat the mistakes of the past. Instead, affordable housing for both renters and homebuyers should be incorporated into nonpoor communities. In addition, distressed neighborhoods should be redeveloped to accommodate a mix of income levels. These income-mixing strategies need not—and should not—simply displace low-income residents or discard the communities they have built. Programmatic models and tools are emerging that offer low-income families meaningful choices about where to live. And finally, some low-income families will need extra help taking advantage of new affordable housing opportunities—often because of serious health or personal problems—and this assistance should be part of an affordable housing strategy.

Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities in Nonpoor Neighborhoods

Models and tools that integrate affordable housing into healthy, mixed-income neighborhoods are emerging across the country. All these models can and should be pursued as the communities in and around New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast are rebuilt.

Rental housing developed under the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program can be designed to serve a range of income levels and should be located in nonpoor communities. Although many LIHTC developments are located in low-income neighborhoods and serve primarily low-income residents, this pattern is not unavoidable. Four of ten LIHTC units are located in suburban communities; as of 2000, the average tax-credit unit was located in a census tract with a poverty rate of 19 percent (Freeman 2004). The Housing Authority of New Orleans and other local housing agencies should also allocate a portion of their Section 8 housing vouchers to units in new LIHTC developments, so 25 percent of the newly developed units are affordable and available to households with very low incomes. The LIHTC program targets housing to be affordable for households with incomes at 60 percent of the area median income, while vouchers largely serve families with incomes at or below 30 percent of area median income.

Louisiana can establish an inclusionary zoning program that requires all new housing developments to include a predetermined share of affordable units, which can then be made available for either sale or rent to lower-

income households. In markets experiencing high rates of new residential construction, inclusionary zoning constitutes an extremely powerful and effective tool, not only for expanding the stock of moderately priced units, but also for integrating these units into every community. In addition, some inclusionary units can be purchased by a public-sector agency or by nonprofit housing providers and subsidized further to make them affordable for households with very low incomes (Blackwell 2006; Brown 2001; Pendall, Puentes, and Martin 2006).

Funds from the Home Investment Partnerships Program and Community Development Block Grants can be used to subsidize the acquisition and rehabilitation of small rental properties and single-family homes, bringing them back into active use and making them available for occupancy by lower-income households. Owners of small rental properties face substantial barriers as they attempt to repair their properties. Some may need financial assistance to bring rental units back into active use; others may prefer to sell their properties instead. In addition, some homeowners—who are themselves not yet ready to return—may be interested in renting their single-family properties or selling them to nonprofit housing providers. Grants and low-interest loans to these property owners and to nonprofit organizations can bring more housing units back, at modest rents (Galster, Santiago, and Tatian 2001).

The Housing Choice Voucher program can be administered regionally to maximize the options available to recipients and to make participation more attractive to landlords. Vouchers offer a critical tool for supplementing what low-income families can afford to pay for housing, and an expanded voucher program would enable more families to return reasonably close to home or to relocate in nonpoor communities. Technically, vouchers are portable—recipients can use them to move anywhere in the United States. But when a family receives its voucher from one housing agency but wants to move to the jurisdiction of a different housing agency, the “portability” process is administratively burdensome—for the family, the local agencies, and the landlord. A few urban regions in the United States are served by a single regional housing agency; in several other metropolitan areas around the country, public housing authorities can administer housing vouchers regionwide. These examples demonstrate that it is feasible for a single public housing authority, whether directly or through a contractor, to effectively administer the housing voucher program across jurisdictional lines within a metropolitan region. This approach can help address some barriers to mobility and choice for voucher recipients (Katz and Turner 2000).

Local jurisdictions can implement temporary emergency rent controls and eviction protections to guard against out-of-control rent increases and displacement of current residents. In circumstances where short-term supply shortages and demand pressures create opportunities for property owners to raise rents rapidly or replace lease-compliant tenants with higher-income households, local regulations can play an important role in helping stabilize the market until more normal conditions return. Although some of the earliest rent control programs (implemented during World War II) imposed absolute caps on rents, most existing programs are “second generation” rent control regimes, which allow for annual rent increases based on increases in operating costs. Typically, these programs also allow for rent increases when a landlord makes significant improvements to the building and “hardship increases” for landlords who are not earning a fair return on their investment. Many contemporary rent control programs also exempt new rental housing construction or luxury housing (Keating and Kahn 2001).

Redevelop Distressed Neighborhoods to Serve a Mix of Income Levels

The communities of the Gulf Coast can also look to other cities around the country for examples of how to rebuild low-income communities in ways that are respectful of the original residents but do not concentrate and isolate them yet again.

Many successful examples come from experience to date with the HOPE VI public housing transformation program. HOPE VI is controversial; it has not always been implemented effectively, and redevelopment has not consistently protected original residents’ interests. However, the HOPE VI experience from across the country offers lessons about how to build mixed-income communities and provide real choices and good outcomes for original residents. For example, Seattle established a local commitment to replace every public housing unit demolished under HOPE VI with another affordable housing unit elsewhere in the city. Similarly, Kansas City made a commitment to one-for-one replacement, involved residents in decisionmaking, and created meaningful training and job opportunities for residents in the redevelopment process. In some of the projects being redeveloped as part of Chicago’s public housing transformation, residents negotiated legal agreements that give them a voice in demolition, relocation, and new development (Popkin et al. 2004).

Well-managed public housing can serve as an important source of quality affordable housing. Public housing

has a deeply troubled reputation in New Orleans. And owing to long-standing mismanagement, the Housing Authority of New Orleans is currently in receivership—operating under the direct control of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. But New Orleans cannot afford to give up on the public housing program as a source of housing units with deep, long-term subsidies that make them affordable, even for the lowest-income families and individuals. Chronically troubled public housing agencies in other cities (including, for example, Chicago and the District of Columbia) have been effectively reformed and now manage their affordable inventories effectively. New Orleans should explore receivership models from around the country and begin to rebuild an effective and responsive public housing agency for the city that can then be relied upon to bring back salvageable public housing units fast. Some of these projects may be obsolete and will have to be redeveloped before long, but some could be providing habitable houses and apartments in the near term.

Cities need not rely exclusively on HOPE VI to revitalize distressed neighborhoods. For example, the District of Columbia is building on its HOPE VI experience to launch a locally controlled and financed program for replacing distressed rental properties with mixed-income developments. Because D.C. has a shortage of affordable housing and is experiencing rapid gentrification in many neighborhoods, its New Communities program is committed to one-for-one replacement of all subsidized housing units and to ensuring that original residents can remain in or near the revitalizing neighborhood.

Community land trusts and community benefits agreements can provide low-income residents control over the revitalization of their neighborhoods. Community land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations that provide affordable housing in perpetuity by owning land and leasing it to those who live in houses built on that land. Typically, these organizations are controlled and governed by community members. Residents own their homes (but not the land), and the trust retains the right to purchase the house when and if an owner wants to sell (Greenstein and Sungu-Eryilmaz 2005; Peterson 1996). A community benefits agreement is a binding contract negotiated between a developer and a coalition that represents members of a community likely to be affected by planned new development. In exchange for community members’ support for the project, the developer agrees to provide specific community benefits, such as affordable housing, parks, community facilities, job training, and employment opportunities.

Link Supportive Services to Affordable Housing

Some families need affordable housing plus some support services, in order to be safe and stable. The elderly and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable, but this group also includes households with multiple, complex problems, such as substance abuse, mental illness, members with criminal backgrounds, and domestic violence. Experience teaches that without a combination of affordable housing and supportive services, these vulnerable households are at high risk of distress and homelessness. Again, models are emerging for linking support services with housing assistance, often in small, well-managed developments, but sometimes with services provided hand-in-hand with a voucher (Cunningham, Popkin, and Burt 2005).

Permanent supportive housing can be developed to meet the needs of families and individuals who are otherwise “hard to house.” Although permanent supportive housing is often targeted to single elderly people and disabled adults, it is increasingly recognized as an option for troubled families as well. Supportive housing offers stable housing with subsidized rent in a structured environment that can include substance abuse and mental health services, child care and parenting assistance, adult education and job training, and budgeting and financial education. To be successful, supportive housing has to be very well managed and provide high-quality services.

Similar support services can also be provided in conjunction with portable housing vouchers. The Chicago Housing Authority is now developing and rigorously testing a new program of enhanced case management services for former public housing residents who are having difficulty with both vouchers and new occupancy standards for revitalized public housing. These families will receive sustained services and assistance from staff who have smaller-than-normal caseloads and who are prepared to “follow” families when they move. This assistance is designed to either help families achieve stability in private rental housing (subsidized with a portable voucher) or enable them to meet the criteria for returning to the new mixed-income community being developed to replace distressed public housing.

What Roles Can and Should the Nonprofit Sector Play?

Public subsidies and effective public regulatory policies are essential to an effective affordable housing strategy. And

for-profit developers and landlords clearly have to be part of the solution as well. But Louisiana’s nonprofit sector also has critical roles to play, ranging from the direct provision of affordable housing to a broader commitment to building the public awareness and trust necessary for the success of a long-term affordable housing strategy.

Nonprofits can provide affordable housing and related services for families in need. In cities across the country, nonprofit organizations have become leading producers and managers of quality affordable housing. Nonprofit housing developers vary dramatically in size and capacity, and in the types of housing they build and the populations they serve. Individual nonprofit developers can be most effective when they work as part of a larger network that includes other nonprofits, technical assistance providers, financial institutions, and public-sector agencies.

Nonprofits provide other essential services that complement the development and management of affordable housing. Some may specialize in delivering key services and supports to affordable housing residents. Others provide housing counseling and search assistance to help families find affordable housing in opportunity-rich neighborhoods. And nonprofits have historically played a leading role in detecting and combating housing discrimination through paired testing and investigation of fair housing complaints.

Nonprofits can advocate for public-sector investments and strategies. Affordable housing is one of many priorities competing for public attention and resources. An effective and sustainable affordable housing strategy will require more funding from both the federal and state governments. And—as discussed above—new programmatic and regulatory tools should be created to meet the needs of low-income families and communities. The nonprofit sector can play a leadership role in building civic support for investments in affordable housing, mixed-income development, inclusionary strategies, and supportive services.

This process will not happen overnight, but it is worth the investment of time and energy. To illustrate, in Washington, D.C., nonprofit organizations took the lead in launching and sustaining a multiyear effort to strengthen the city’s affordable housing policies. This effort included research, coalition building, and advocacy, and has resulted in a doubling of city funding for affordable housing, passage of a mandatory inclusionary zoning program, and development of a comprehensive affordable housing strategy that has broad civic support and is being adopted by a newly elected mayor as the “city’s strategy” (rather than the outgoing mayor’s strategy). A sustained commitment by the nonprofit sector has similarly played a central role

in other cities and states where affordable housing has gained substantial public attention and resources.

Nonprofit organizations can help build the trust essential for inclusive affordable housing. In Louisiana today, as in many communities across the country, efforts to replace distressed and isolated housing developments with mixed-income housing and to incorporate affordable housing options into opportunity-rich communities are stymied by widespread mistrust. Low-income communities—neglected and poorly served for so long—do not trust public institutions to protect their interests in redevelopment. And higher-income communities—having seen so many failed projects—oppose the development of affordable housing within their boundaries.

People on both sides of this divide are unlikely to be persuaded by rhetoric alone. Instead, they have to be persuaded by actions that build trust. Nonprofit organizations can begin proving to disparate communities that mixed-income redevelopment can protect low-income residents, and that low-income housing need not undermine its neighborhood's safety or property values. One way to start is with small-scale demonstration projects that show both low-income families and nonpoor communities that new models are both feasible and preferable to the patterns of the past.

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OLIVIA GOLDEN AND JOANNA PARNES

Helping Children and Families Rebuild Their Lives after Katrina

For many New Orleans nonprofits, the well-being of children and families is a core mission. Today, these organizations, along with their neighbors and fellow citizens who care about New Orleans' children, face a three-part policy challenge:

1. Children and families in New Orleans, already often living in precarious situations before Katrina, were deeply damaged by Katrina and its aftermath.
2. Programs that work to heal the kind of emotional and physical damage that children and their parents suffered after Katrina provide high-quality and high-intensity services, coordinated across mental health, physical health, learning and child development, and family support.
3. Yet the capacity of service providers in New Orleans for services of this type and quality is weak, in part because of historic gaps and in part because of the devastating effects of the Katrina aftermath.

Damage to Children and Families

The immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina damaged children's physical and mental health and well-being. Flooding, crowded shelters, and lack of drinking water and nutritious food placed children at risk for infection, injury, illness, and dehydration. Separation from family members and the destruction of familiar surroundings bewildered and confused young children. Too many children experienced or witnessed traumatic events during their escape from the flooding, including the injury and even drowning of family members. Rescue workers described many young children as withdrawn or hyperactive, depressed, and anxious. Older children, more capable of grasping the gravity of the situation, expressed anxiety about their parents' well-being and the ambiguity of their futures (Abramson and Garfield 2006).

Beyond the immediate aftermath, the damage has continued during the months following Hurricane Katrina. In many families, both parents and children remain in limbo, without permanent homes, settled school situations, or ongoing connections with such necessary services as medical and mental health care, quality schools, and child care. A survey of a representative sample of displaced families living in FEMA-subsidized communities found that households moved 3.5 times, on average, in the six months following the

hurricane, and over one-fifth of school-age children had either not yet returned to school or missed 10 or more days of school in the past month (Abramson and Garfield 2006). Some families are separated and scattered across different locations, while others who have moved back to New Orleans are living in cramped conditions in FEMA trailers. These disruptions make it difficult for traumatized children to heal, and the resulting lack of security can have detrimental consequences on their ability to learn and develop appropriately. Parents' own anxiety and depression stemming from the disruption caused by the storm increase the odds against children's success: unable to steady their own lives, parents may be incapable of comforting and calming their distressed children, a key ingredient in a child's recovery (Golden 2006).

The suffering families and children have endured is even more troubling when one considers the deprivation of many young children before the storm struck. Research in child development has demonstrated that multiple layers of risk can increase the likelihood of negative outcomes for children, impede healthy development, and make it more difficult for children to recover from severe disruptions in their lives (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Children growing up in low-income families are more likely than children from more affluent families to be exposed to stressors that may be detrimental to their well-being and compromise their development over time, placing them at risk of even greater damage from a traumatic event like Katrina. Unfortunately, New Orleans had a very high rate of child poverty before Katrina, with nearly 2 in 5 children living in poverty, compared with a national average of 1 in 5 (Fass and Cauthen 2005). Thus, many children in New Orleans not only endured traumatic experiences from Katrina but also were particularly vulnerable to damage from these experiences.

More than a year after the storm, evidence is emerging that supports these concerns. Vulnerable families and children are experiencing high levels of mental and physical health problems in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and the decimated infrastructure offers little support or access to care. According to the parents interviewed for the Louisiana Child and Family Health Study, a survey of 665 displaced families living in FEMA-sponsored communities conducted in February 2006, nearly half of the households have at least one child exhibiting emotional or behavioral problems that were not present before the storm, including feeling depressed, anxious, afraid, or having trouble sleeping or interacting with others. Chronic health problems among children in the sample are also high: 34 percent have at least one diagnosed chronic health problem, compared with approximately 25 percent

of children nationally. While this population likely suffered from poor health before the storm, these conditions are exacerbated by the devastated health system and resulting inability to access prescribed medications and health care (Abramson and Garfield 2006).

Another survey conducted by researchers at Louisiana State University found that 54 percent of children in 4th through 12th grade displayed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, and 31 percent of children in preschool through 3rd grade showed symptoms that suggest mental health problems, such as headaches, irritability, and frequent nightmares (Lamberg 2006). Parents are also struggling, which does not bode well for children's improvement. Researchers in the Louisiana Child and Family Health Study administered a mental health screening tool to adults in the sample and found that over half the female caregivers scored at levels indicating clinical mental health disorders, such as depression or anxiety (Abramson and Garfield 2006).

Some have argued that, for the children and families faring poorly before the storm, better opportunities are hidden within Katrina's destruction. While some families may take root in new communities and recover from the disruption, recovery remains a difficult challenge for many others. Without an explicit focus on creating a stabilized and nurturing environment for children and families, the problems that have emerged since Katrina will continue to spiral. Young children's ability to learn and develop into healthy adults is embedded in their emotional stability and positive relationships with supportive adults. If children do not heal, many will suffer from learning difficulties and behavioral problems. Lacking positive role models or an outlet for their fear and anxiety, older children may engage in violent activities or flounder in school.

Characteristics of Effective Programs

The type of intervention or program that will help children heal depends on the age group served. Young children may require services that focus on parent and child, while programs that promote a connection to the community and shared values may be particularly beneficial to adolescents. In general, effective programs should fulfill the following criteria:

- **High intensity:** To heal substantial damage, children (and their parents) are likely to need a great deal of attention, meaning both many hours of services and individualized attention. Casual or short-term interventions are likely insufficient to meet serious needs.

- **High quality:** Teachers, mentors, and caregivers must be especially skilled and prepared to deal with children who have great emotional and developmental needs. By providing high-quality care, these adults will help children develop the kind of relationships they need to thrive.
- **Comprehensive:** Effective programs must meet multiple needs, because those needs are closely intertwined for children and families. For young children in particular, mental and physical health greatly influence a child's ability to learn and develop, and therefore must be addressed holistically. For parents, support in stabilizing their own lives may be critical to the ability to help their children heal.
- **Responsive to developmental stage:** Programs should provide developmentally appropriate activities and services. For young children, this may mean actively engaging parents, addressing their needs and helping them provide more supportive care for their children. In addition to engaging parents, programs for older children should promote opportunities to engage in the community, to cultivate a sense of personal efficacy, to develop close and meaningful relationships with peers, and to build skills and abilities (Eccles and Gootman 2002).

Capacity of Providers

Hurricane Katrina had a crippling effect on Louisiana's already-limited capacity to care for and educate its children. Panelists and audience members at the November 2006, LANO-Urban Institute conference in New Orleans emphasized a wide variety of constraints on the effectiveness and quality of services.

First, statewide requirements to ensure young children receive high-quality care are few: there are no early education or training requirements for child care teachers, and teachers are required to undergo only three hours of training a year after hire. Further, the state does not license family child care providers, an often-overlooked setting in which many young children are cared for. Throughout the country, low wages and few benefits plague the child care industry and make it difficult to attract and retain high-quality staff.

Second, since the storm, these challenges have increased dramatically. At a time that children are in the greatest need, facilities remain closed, and many staff have yet to move back. One year after the hurricane, over two-thirds of licensed child care centers that were open in Orleans Parish before the storm had yet to reopen. An overwhelming number of child care facilities were in the path of Katrina's destruction: ten months after the storm, over

half the licensed child care centers in Orleans Parish remained closed and were unlikely to reopen because of severe damage. Further complicating the matter is the extreme shortage of staff. Louisiana's median wage for child care workers is the lowest in the nation; at \$6.55 an hour, it falls below the poverty level for a family of three (Agenda for Children 2006). Faced with a scarcity of workers, other industries, such as fast food, have raised their wages in an effort to attract employees, drawing away potential child care providers. Housing shortages and rent increases have made moving back unfeasible. The challenges are not purely economic, either. Many caregivers are dealing with their own distress caused by the storm and may be emotionally incapable of providing the stable, nurturing influence that young children need to thrive.

At the session, the gaps in programs for school-age children and adolescents were a particular focus. According to Gina Warner of the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership and Dawn Williams of the Children's Defense Fund, parents are desperate for after-school opportunities for their children; schools, particularly high schools, are operating no or virtually no extracurricular activities; schools are also not providing space for co-located after-school programs; transportation to the programs that do exist is a very great challenge for parents; and citywide recreational activities have ceased, leaving youth aimless and unsupervised. Panelists and audience members saw a link between high levels of violence among youth and the lack of activities for them, particularly given the stresses already experienced by youth and their families. Extracurricular programs can also provide social and academic support and help kids develop their interests and abilities, potentially helping to heal the damage done by Katrina and to compensate for the continuing disruptions at school and at home.

Despite this dismal landscape, panelists also called attention to promising initiatives. Todd Battiste, director of Success by Six of the Greater New Orleans United Way, talked about the life course of Success by Six's High Quality Childcare Project. Recognizing that nationally accredited child care programs better prepare children, the three-year project was providing three centers with a mentor and \$25,000 a year to help move them toward accreditation when it was derailed by Katrina. The project has since shifted gears: it has raised additional money and is providing the centers \$75,000 a year to rebuild, with the stipulation that national standards inform the rebuilding process. While the program is still underused, advocates are working to disseminate information about Louisiana Pathways, which offers scholarships to child care workers

for CDA assessment, family child care home accreditation, and college courses in early education. The Louisiana Department of Social Services is also working on developing a Quality Rating System that will provide parents with information to help them make informed child care decisions, offer bonus payments to centers based on ratings, and expand opportunities for technical assistance and training.

An Action Plan

A successful plan to help New Orleans' children and families move forward, succeed in school and in life, and heal the damage of Katrina will have to be very ambitious. Yet a constant challenge for everyone who cares about these issues is the tension between thinking big enough to make a difference yet focusing narrowly enough to get something done. Further, a challenge for the nonprofit community in particular is the intertwined role of public and private sectors in addressing these challenges: federal, state, and (in some cases) local government must work alongside the nonprofit sector if children's lives are to change.

One way to meet these challenges is to pick the early battles strategically, highlighting steps that can build momentum for larger and larger change. One ambitious yet achievable plan would focus on four strategies:

1. **Create intensive services modeled on Early Head Start, Head Start, and other high-quality programs for the very youngest children and their families, building partnerships that eventually reach *all* children from birth to school-age who were affected by Hurricane Katrina.** The reason for targeting very young children is their vulnerability and the consequent extent of the damage, along with the big service gaps now existing. Experience to date in Baton Rouge, which is dramatically expanding Early Head Start through a federal-philanthropic partnership to serve every evacuee child from birth to age 3, can provide practical guidelines.

Both the nonprofit sector and every level of government have a role in this initiative. The federal government should commit to the dollar investment required to serve every young child, regardless of income, who was evacuated as a result of Katrina and returns to New Orleans—at perhaps a cost of \$35 million a year beyond the existing New Orleans Head Start grant, depending how many families with young children return.¹ State and local governments could also make contributions, perhaps in kind, such as access to appropriate school space. Nonprofits within and outside New Orleans

should provide leadership and advocacy for the initiative as well as stepping up either as mentors or as service providers who are prepared to offer high-quality programs. For example, a program with mental health expertise but no history of serving very young children might offer consultation or staff training to the lead nonprofit provider.

2. **Build a citywide after-school initiative targeted to adolescents.** The reason for focusing on adolescents is the damage done not only to individual young people but also to the whole community—that is, when teens are at loose ends and potentially involved in violence, substance abuse, and other risky activities, the whole community suffers. Also, teens who are parents themselves may need assistance in developing parenting skills to raise healthy children. Further, as with very young children, large gaps in services for teens now exist.

Nonprofit organizations could provide leadership in conceptualizing and advocating for the initiative, as the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership is now doing through a series of visits to other cities and educational presentations. In contrast to Head Start and Early Head Start, there is no single federal program or funding stream dedicated to these services, so it will be important to draw on the lessons learned by other jurisdictions in developing the funding plan—most likely a mix of federal, state, local, and philanthropic funding, along with parent contributions where appropriate.

3. **Test an integrated and comprehensive vision of services to children and families that links traditional human services to affordable housing, employment, transportation, health, mental health, and education.** Seek to build one or more neighborhood-based service centers that link with housing and related initiatives proposed in chapter 1. The reason for targeting this approach is the universal view of those on the panel and in the audience that the knotty relationships among these issues are a huge obstacle to stabilizing families' lives.
4. **Build the capacity of providers to offer the high-quality services that New Orleans' children and families need by investing—probably at the state level—in staff salaries, benefits, and training that make it possible to meet ambitious standards.** Until nonprofits offering services such as early childhood development, after-school programs, and family support can recruit, train, and keep staff with the skills needed to help troubled families, and until they can hire and keep enough staff to allow for intensive work with just a few children and parents at a time, they will not be successful at reach-

ing the goals of the initiative. Thus, building what is often called the infrastructure for quality is more important now than it has ever been, and Louisiana should take this opportunity to invest resources and raise standards.

This is a key area for partnership between nonprofits and Louisiana state government. The framework for partnership should include a joint commitment to high quality standards, most likely phased in over a period of time, and to higher levels of state funding, directly tied to achieving the standards, for service providers. Louisiana, like other states, is already interested in moving in this direction, but Hurricane Katrina has created greater urgency and at the same time a more difficult problem: the intensified needs of families after Katrina require a higher level of staff skill at exactly the same time that a tight labor market and affordable housing squeeze make it more difficult to attract and retain people. Possibly, a foundation grant might jumpstart innovation and state-nonprofit partnership on this exciting yet challenging issue.

While the challenges facing Louisiana's children and families after Katrina are great, the research suggests real opportunities to turn them around. This four-pronged strategy builds on the evidence, the sense of urgency expressed by the nonprofit community, and the potential

partnership opportunities with federal, state, and local government to offer a route to hope.

Note

1. For the assumptions behind this estimate, see Golden (2006).

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CAROLE ROSENSTEIN

New Orleans Arts and Culture

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, often considered the United States' greatest indigenous art form. It also is home to a distinctive architecture and a Creole culture, cuisine, and music found nowhere else. African American cultural traditions born and sustained in New Orleans—second-line dancing, Mardi Gras Indian pageantry, jazz funerals—are respected and beloved around the world. Because the arts and culture of New Orleans are a treasure, finding ways to preserve and rebuild these American traditions in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita is essential for the vitality of the *new* New Orleans.

Unlike the cultural assets of some other places, those in New Orleans are rooted firmly in its communities. Rather than its museums and symphony halls, it is people, neighborhoods, local organizations, and small businesses that make New Orleans culturally distinct. Many people who make up these communities are still displaced from their homes. And some may remain in diaspora for the near term, some closer to New Orleans and some farther away. One of the most pressing cultural policy challenges in New Orleans today is how to preserve the community-based culture and expressions of communities that are tattered and scattered. The hurricanes and their aftermath wrought irreversible change on New Orleans communities. How can some lines of cultural continuity be sustained, and conversations about the new cultural look, feel, sounds, and tastes of New Orleans be promoted?

Entrenched attitudes and practices will make it difficult for the cultural sector to meet these challenges. Foremost among these attitudes is a steadfast insistence on seeing large arts institutions as providing the bedrock of cultural life. A growing body of research demonstrates that small, community-based organizations and public-sector cultural venues provide significant and inclusive arts and culture services. A focus on rebuilding and resourcing large arts institutions perpetuates both the marginalization of this vital cohort of small, community-based cultural organizations and the isolation of arts and culture from connections to other arenas of public life. Together, these factors create a less equitable, weaker cultural sector—one that can neither meet the needs of the whole community nor effectively advocate for public support.

There are ways to ensure that the cultural sector in New Orleans can be rebuilt equitably while maximizing public benefit. Arts and culture can be expansively incorporated into a wide range of public programs, from education to health care to human

services. Venues that have been shown to be highly inclusive in their arts and culture programming can serve as a focus for rebuilding efforts and resources. And New Orleans' cultural economy can be developed while distributing resources equitably and listening to underrepresented members of the cultural community, such as community-based organizations and individual artists.

Foster Connections between the Arts and Culture and a Broad Range of Public-Policy Areas, such as Education, Health, Social Services, and Community Improvement

The arts and culture typically are not considered very important to core public concerns such as education, community development, health, transportation, and safety. However, research shows that strong connections exist between the arts and culture, and the government agencies and nonprofit organizations whose work addresses these issues. Local government agencies outside the arts and culture are essential for the delivery of the arts and culture to populations such as youth and seniors, through programs sponsored by courts, social service agencies, and police departments (Cohen and Wyszomirski 2002). Schools, social service agencies, and community development organizations recognize the power of arts and cultural programming to foster community engagement and organizing (Walker 2004). Strong connections exist between cultural heritage activities and nonprofit organizations working in education, human services, community improvement and capacity building, and food, nutrition, and agriculture (Rosenstein 2006). By recognizing and fostering these connections in the rebuilding, plans that focus on delivering resources to nonarts agencies and organizations still can provide support for the development of a strong arts and cultural community.

Some effective ways of fostering strong, well-resourced connections between arts and nonarts activities and organizations include the following:

- Creating a concise, coherent, realistic cultural plan that identifies key strengths of the arts and culture and advertises their capacities and benefits to the broader policy community.
- Incorporating specific, targeted cultural policy items into large-scale, cross-sector plans such as the Unified New Orleans Plan.

- Developing a strong, cross-sector advocacy network for the arts and culture that represents all facets of the cultural community.
- Developing and implementing a robust, innovative Percent for Art program for all public building and public works projects.
- Developing opportunities, registries, and employment rosters for local artists to be employed in programs at nonarts venues.
- Developing opportunities for arts and culture organizations, especially small and mid-sized organizations, to connect with nonarts agencies and organizations.
- Providing funds specifically targeted to establishing and sustaining arts and nonarts partnerships.

Redevelop Well-Resourced, Inclusive Cultural Venues such as Libraries, Parks, Schools, Public Media, and Safe Street Corners

Urban Institute research has shown that people are much more likely to attend arts and culture events in community venues such as parks, streets, schools, and places of worship than in conventional arts venues such as concert halls and museums. Moreover, community cultural venues tend to include people who are unlikely to participate in conventional arts and cultural activities. Twenty-six percent of respondents to an Urban Institute survey said that they attend arts and culture only in community venues (Walker with Sherwood 2003). Other research suggests that this kind of community-grounded participation is prevalent among those typically hardest to reach with arts and cultural programs and services—immigrants, blacks and Hispanics, and people with lower levels of education and income (Rosenstein 2005). Initiatives seeking to grow vibrant, inclusive arts and culture must explicitly and actively engage community venues such as streets, parks, libraries, and schools.

Some effective ways of redeveloping strong, well-resourced venues for inclusive, living culture include the following:

- Ensuring that artists and culture bearers have access to public space through open and fair permitting, licensing, and zoning processes and enforcement.
- Establishing an autonomous city commission (such as San Francisco's Entertainment Commission) responsible for decisionmaking about the use of public space for arts and entertainment.

- Building community cultural resource centers for public arts, festivals, heritage, and jazz education (in the model of San Francisco's city-owned, community-based cultural centers).
- Developing opportunities, registries, and employment rosters for local artists to be employed in public culture programs.
- Developing opportunities for local culture bearers to participate in public culture through programs in schools, libraries, parks, and public media.
- Developing networks and alliances of professionals in public culture such as park officials, festival producers, programmers in public libraries and schools, public radio, and television producers.
- Rebuilding strong neighborhood public libraries with comprehensive public arts and cultural programming in every neighborhood.
- Reestablishing arts programs in every school, particularly programs with strong connections to community-based traditions such as marching bands in New Orleans.
- Rebuilding public parks and establishing comprehensive, coordinated public arts and cultural programming in city and neighborhood parks.

Maintain a Balance in Cultural Economic Development between Branding and Vitality, Investment and Equity

Advocates for the arts and culture have moved beyond economic impact studies and, through regional and state initiatives such as "New England Creative Economy" and "Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business," have begun to fully document the arts and culture as an industry, through indicators such as audience numbers, workforce size, revenues, and expenditures. They also map out powerful connections with other industries such as education, high-tech fields, and tourism. But this emerging perspective has not focused on finding ways to help ensure that the benefits of the cultural economy and the responsibilities for preserving and safeguarding artistic and historic quality are equitably distributed. This undermines the long-term ability for the cultural sector to maintain the authenticity and quality of its cultural products. Not only can stronger ties between communities and economic developers, tourism professionals, and convention planners help ensure that cultural products retain their value, research suggests that these ties actually can aid the further integration of underserved communities into market par-

ticipation and community development (Walker, Jackson, and Rosenstein 2003).

Some effective ways of ensuring that cultural economic development is equitable and contributes to sustaining a vital cultural community include the following:

- Undertaking a comprehensive cultural asset mapping process that can account for the cultural assets of every community, particularly focusing attention on assets that communities identify as most appropriate for inclusion in cultural economy marketing materials and programming.
- Funding and aggressively marketing community-directed, neighborhood-based cultural heritage tourism projects.
- Gathering neighborhood-level data on the economic and community development impacts of cultural economic development.
- Developing and providing neighborhood-based business training and technical assistance opportunities for small cultural enterprises.
- Developing business support and career development services for individual artists.
- Developing community-directed mechanisms for assessing, maintaining, and documenting artistic quality.
- Establishing cooperative studio space for artists in the visual, performing, and literary arts.
- Establishing neighborhood-based incubators for cultural enterprise.
- Establishing arts and cultural management training programs at local colleges and universities focused on key local cultural enterprises such as music, cuisine, and heritage tourism.

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DOUGLAS J. MEFFERT, JEFFREY J. THOMAS,
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Public and Environmental Health Concerns

Overtopped levees and drainage canal breaches created extensive flooding covering approximately 80 percent of the city of New Orleans with an estimated 8.86 billion cubic feet of water (LDEQ 2005a, 2005b). It is estimated floodwater depths ranged from several inches to 15 feet in neighborhoods with the lowest elevation. In those latter neighborhoods, floodwaters persisted for two to four weeks after the first breaches occurred. In January 2006, the Sustainability Subcommittee of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission initiated background research and policy recommendations on public health considerations regarding contaminated sediments and soils, mold, and other hazardous materials summarized below (Thomas, Meffert, and Dashiell 2005).

Sediment and Soil

According to state officials, the floodwaters dispersed over 3 million cubic yards of sediment throughout the flood zone (Brown 2005). According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the source of this flood sediment included “historical sediment from nearby water bodies, soil from yards, road and construction debris, and other material” (LDEQ 2005a, 2).

In addition, this mixture of sediment and floodwater interacted with substances from approximately 200,000 motorized vehicles (White 2005), more than 110,000 residential and commercial structures, one “Superfund” site (EPA 2007), and numerous designated and proposed federal brownfield sites. As floodwaters receded, the resulting sediment mixture accumulated throughout the flood area, ranging from centimeters-thick dust to accumulations several feet thick. Based on site inspections and resident interviews conducted by the Sustainability Subcommittee, as of December 19, 2005, sedimentation persists in the flood areas, with accumulations often exceeding one foot on residential properties near the breaches and otherwise commonplace underneath homes and dry cavities throughout the flood area.

Mold

Independent air sampling conducted by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) demonstrated extremely high levels of airborne mold throughout New

Orleans. NRDC collected mold spore samples in 14 locations across the New Orleans area from October 17 to 19, 2005 (NRDC 2006). Nine locations had been significantly flooded. The levels of mold spores in the air were extremely high both inside homes and outside, especially in the areas that flooded.

While there are no U.S. regulatory standards for either indoor or outdoor levels of mold spores, the National Allergy Bureau of the American Academy of Allergy and Immunology considers any *outdoor* mold spore level of greater than 50,000 spores per cubic meter “very high.” By comparison, the Bureau considers outdoor mold counts of 1 to 6,499 “low,” 6,500 to 12,999 “moderate,” and 13,000 to 49,999 “high.”

The spore counts outdoors in most flooded neighborhoods tested by NRDC—including New Orleans East, the Lower Ninth Ward, Chalmette, Uptown, Mid-City, and the Garden District—exceeded the “very high” threshold, including one site in Uptown with a measurement of 81,000 spores per cubic meter. Indoor levels were far worse; the Uptown sampling site measured a spore count of 645,000 spores per cubic meter, and the indoor Lakeview site measured 638,000 spores per cubic meter.

Hazardous Waste and Landfills

The city of New Orleans has numerous industrial and hazardous waste sites adjacent to or within dense residential areas. These sites must be addressed in planning for the redevelopment of the city. While many of these locations are already subject to environmental monitoring or cleanup efforts, post-Hurricane Katrina redevelopment represents a unique opportunity to improve on these processes by developing policies that expedite the return of these locations into commerce or valuable public green space.

Presently, the city of New Orleans has one “Superfund” location subject to ongoing monitoring at the Agriculture Street landfill. But the city has identified over 300 other commercial and industrial locations that may be eligible for federal site assessment and cleanup activities under the EPA Brownfields Program. The locations include numerous abandoned or active neighborhoods and facilities still containing large amounts of hazardous materials, including at least 100 closed service stations throughout the city.

One of the largest of these sites—the former Thompson Hayward Chemical Facility—is of particular concern. Located on Earhart Boulevard, near Xavier University and “Gert Town,” a predominantly low-income neighborhood, this facility packaged and mixed such pesticides as DDT, the herbicide 2,4,5-T (the main constituent of Agent

Orange), and the fungicide pentachlorophenol from 1941 to 1986.

While the city and federal governments launched cleanup efforts throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the remediation was not entirely successful. According to a 1995 article by Mark Schleifstein in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, 2,600 tons of herbicide-contaminated soil reportedly could not be removed because it was too toxic to legally dispose of in any state. Accordingly, in 1996, as part of a \$51.5 million settlement received by neighboring plaintiff-residents, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) was required to implement a remediation and risk assessment work plan for the facility and adjacent neighborhood. To date, LDEQ has not completed this remediation plan.

A physical inspection of the site reveals that Hurricane Katrina not only flooded the facility but also breached its exterior walls. “Gert Town” residents report chemical drums displaced from the facility into the community. In addition, independent sampling by NRDC reports arsenic levels at 20 mg/kg in the adjacent neighborhood—a level 51 times greater than applicable federal screening standards (NRDC 2006). While the agencies have not provided specific information, this facility and neighborhood may be one of the “localized areas” identified by the government as requiring additional remediation.

All proposed brownfield sites within New Orleans might be eligible for assessment and redevelopment funds through the EPA Brownfields Program and the Louisiana Voluntary Remediation Program. As such, the City of New Orleans is charged with the responsibility of submitting proposals for competitive EPA grants, which finance individual site assessments, community-wide site assessments, and site-specific cleanup grants, and provide revolving loan grants. An additional federal vehicle for financial assistance is the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund, which provides low-interest loans to recipients for cleanup activities.

To then be eligible for redevelopment funds, the owner or potential owner of a brownfields site must enter the site into the Louisiana Voluntary Remediation Program.

Summary of Recommendations

Sediment and soil contamination caused by widespread flooding in the New Orleans metropolitan area raise critical public health, economic, and legal concerns that significantly affect the rebuilding process. The challenges to New Orleans post-Katrina are not new. Before the storm there were concerns about soil contamination, fungal and

other air contaminants, and the adequacy of health care for the city's large population of un- and underinsured.

Muddy floodwaters moving through the city, subsequent mold growth, and then construction and demolition have increased the environmental health concerns. The public health system has been seriously damaged by the closure of Charity Hospital and the resulting stress placed on private hospitals; the lack of nurses, doctors, and beds to meet the increased physical and mental health needs of community residents; and a general lack of investment. Rebuilding the public health system of the area is essential not only for addressing immediate health problems, but also for monitoring and treating future health concerns that may result from long-term exposure to environmental contaminants.

Based on the Sustainability Subcommittee's synthesis of research relevant to this topic, and group discussions afterwards, we make the following policy recommendations:

1. Develop and fund programs to monitor real-time levels of fungal spores, endotoxins, asbestos, metals, and organo-chemicals in soils and air in all parts of the city. These programs should be led by local scientists and developed with community participation. A focus on areas where construction and demolition are active should be a priority.
2. Fund local experts and community groups to make the results of the above investigations understandable to citizens, and to communicate those results effectively to the public.
3. Institute procedures whereby citizens can report evidence of continued or nonremediated soil contamination, receive a remediation summary specific to their property, and suggest site locations for monitoring stations.
4. Develop a certification process whereby property owners, lending institutions, and insurers receive a government-issued certification that the affected property has been remediated to comply with applicable federal safety thresholds.
5. Fund cleanup efforts based upon sites identified as sites of concern by the process in #1 and existing data.
6. Provide mold remediation and related safety equipment from government agencies at disaster relief centers, with priority given to distribution among low-income residents.
7. Incorporate architectural and home construction features into rebuilt homes that reduce the incidence of indoor mold spores.
8. Rebuild the public health system not around a monolithic central hospital, but using a model of small multiservice clinics throughout the city. This system should focus on preventive medicine, with serious issues transferred to the central facility.
9. Integrate public services—for example, place health clinics and workforce training, fire and police protection, and schools—in the same facility or in adjacent facilities. This will save on infrastructure and overhead, and support the model of community- and neighborhood-centered activity that has been so successful in the past year.
10. The operators of these programs in joint or adjacent facilities should meet regularly to share successful methods and plan partnership activities to solve community problems.
11. Citywide committees of community residents, practitioners, researchers, and experts should meet regularly to share information on their work, to form partnerships of interest across disciplines, and to serve as a resource.
12. Information produced by these groups should be developed into a language and format that can be understood and used by citizens and policymakers, and should be disseminated using Internet technology. It should also be available in print form, and distributed in public service centers, such as schools and clinics. Partnerships with local media should be used to ensure its wide distribution.

These policy recommendations seek to use what has worked in our recovery efforts (community action with input from scientists and other experts), and to build on local knowledge and expertise to develop a new New Orleans that is socially sustainable and whole.

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ADAM CARASSO

Rebuilding Assets after Katrina

Increasingly, people are recognizing that opportunity-oriented policies should play a larger role in helping less advantaged families progress toward achieving middle-class levels of security, protecting against financial instability, and building assets. Indeed, Hurricane Katrina revealed the vulnerability of families that do not have such assets as vehicles, savings, or housing insurance to fall back on in times of crisis. The category 4 hurricane that hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast August 29, 2005, displaced 1.5 million residents, flooded 204,500 homes and apartments,¹ and propelled a 13 percent drop (277,049 workers) in Louisiana's overall labor force between August 2005 and August 2006 (BLS 2007).² Further, 75 percent of those hardest hit were nonwhite and tended to live in situations of concentrated poverty (Brookings 2005; Berube and Katz 2005).

Policymakers encourage people to accumulate assets over their lives for various reasons: saving for retirement; hedging against unemployment or other income shocks during working years; and advancing economic status through acquiring a car, an education, or a home. The people of New Orleans who played by the rules and built up assets were nonetheless sideswiped by Katrina's devastation; many saw their long-term economic status placed in jeopardy by lost jobs, homes, and businesses.

Two broad questions are raised about the government's role in buffering the area's population from future catastrophic losses of capital. First, what policies can be put into place to help restore or rebuild capital to those in the region who have lost possessions or livelihood? Second, what policies would encourage reinvestment in the region while also helping to insure against the capital losses from future disasters? Because asset accumulation typically varies by income level, an important distinction is how these policies would address the needs of people at low, middle, and upper incomes.

Factors Influencing Net Worth

Before we can understand what was really lost, we first need to get a sense for how net worth is distributed across the population. If we look nationally, we see distinct patterns of net worth by demographic characteristic: age, income, education, race, family structure, and housing tenure. As seen in table 1, those who are older, white,

Table 1 Distribution of Median Net Worth in the United States by Demographic Characteristics

(thousands of 2004 dollars)

Demographic	Category					
Age	< 35 \$14.2	35–44 \$69.4	45–54 \$144.7	55–64 \$248.7	65–74 \$190.1	> 75 \$163.1
Income	1st quintile \$7.5	2nd quintile \$34.3	3rd quintile \$71.6	4th quintile \$160.0	5th quintile \$617.6	
Education	HS dropout \$20.6	HS grad \$68.7	Some college \$69.3	College grad \$226.1		
Race	Nonwhite \$24.8	White \$140.7				
Family structure	Single-headed \$40.0	Couple ^a \$155.4				
Housing tenure	Renter \$4.0	Owner \$184.4				
Median household income, 2005 (Census)	New Orleans \$30,711	United States \$46,242				

Sources: Adam Carasso and Signe Mary McKernan, "Portraits of the Assets and Liabilities of Low-Income Households" (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, forthcoming) using the 2004 Survey of Consumer Finances; and the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007.

HS = high school.

^aMarried couple or cohabiting.

married, at higher income levels, have more education, and own homes tend to have *much* higher median net worth than those who do not have these characteristics. Put another way, those who are lower-income, less-educated, single, and renters possess a small fraction of wealth—or often, nearly no wealth at all—compared to the more advantaged. Unfortunately, comprehensive wealth data are not available at the state or local level. But, since the net worth of a household is generally proportional to its income and since median household income in New Orleans (\$30,711) is a third lower than the U.S. median (\$46,242), we may infer that the residents of New Orleans—particularly, those with less income and education—have far less net worth than is indicated by the national data in table 1. (For a caveat, please see point 3 below.)

Because statistical data for New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region after Katrina are not yet available, we cannot directly analyze the situation; however, four assertions seem likely.

1. The primary means of insuring assets are already available from private and government sources. According to the Insurance Information Institute, some \$40.6 billion in private claims has been paid on lost homes, businesses, and vehicles in the six states touched by Katrina.³ While these insurance claims will often not reimburse people for their full losses, existing insurance structures are the first line of defense. The options considered below are intended to backstop current mechanisms.
2. The most likely and widespread capital losses were physical assets such as homes, cars, and local businesses, rather than paper assets such as bank accounts or pension savings, although further accumulations in pension plans might be frozen after the loss of a job or decimation of an employer.
3. While many disadvantaged victims of Katrina likely lacked much in the way of financial capital assets, homes, and businesses, New Orleans had an atypically large share—particularly in the lower Ninth Ward—of low-income homeowners who had inherited their homes, owning them free and clear, and thus not holding the homeowners' insurance mortgage lenders would require (Popkin et al. 2006). These families saw their wealth completely wiped out.
4. Lastly, new policies to help restore lost capital and help insure against future losses should target low- and moderate-income families who lost *all* their wealth in addition to middle- (and perhaps upper-) income households who were more likely to have owned (higher value) homes and businesses and suffered larger capital losses.

Policy Options to Explore

Although a comprehensive policy platform for restoring and preserving assets and wealth is beyond the scope of this essay, we suggest two areas—prolonged unemployment and housing—where new government policies can distinctly improve the balance sheets of afflicted households. Importantly, these policies encourage using existing or newly created assets to replace lost capital rather than financing current consumption, which can instead be addressed by temporarily expanding a number of social safety net programs like cash welfare, health care, Food Stamps, and housing assistance.

Prolonged Unemployment

The unemployment rate was estimated at 12.1 percent in the three months following the hurricane but quickly fell as many persons dropped out of the labor force and likely left the area, falling to 2.9 percent in July 2006 before rising to 4.3 percent by December 2006. According to the Louisiana Recovery Authority, \$1.02 billion in unemployment insurance was paid between September 2005 and July 2006—\$677 million from state coffers and \$342 million from federal disaster assistance funds—to about 340,000 claimants, *above and beyond* the usual number of claims. Additionally, as of July 2006, an estimated net 266,000 persons had left New Orleans for other locales in Louisiana or other states in search of either temporary or permanent employment.

Given the prolonged length of unemployment after the hurricane, government policies might seek to address cases in which one or both breadwinners have lost jobs and are running out of unemployment insurance; these workers most likely also lost such benefits as pensions and health insurance. Under less drastic circumstances, families that hold assets can draw down these assets in times of financial instability. After Katrina, however, families may have lost most of these assets as a result of the hurricane, may not possess sufficient amounts to span prolonged spells of unemployment, or be limited by existing rules on the transfer of funds across certain asset classes (e.g., cashing out a 401(k) or IRA to buy a new home or pay for an education).

Allow workers to claim the EITC and child tax credit based on previous years' employment. Workers who lose their job midyear or remain without employment for most of the year following a disaster could lose not just income from work but also important work supports including the earned income and child tax credits, which may provide a

low-income couple with two children \$5,000 or more in a given year. Affected workers should be allowed to file for tax credits according to the most favorable earnings records available, even if these are from a year or two before the catastrophe. In addition, options to channel these tax credits into unemployment insurance accounts (described below), home finance or rebuilding, or other assets should be made available.

Establish unemployment insurance accounts. Currently, payroll taxes paid by employers and contributions made by states finance unemployment insurance (UI).⁴ Creating unemployment insurance accounts would require individuals to make specified contributions from pretax wages into private accounts (managed either by government or the private sector). Although many administrative and investment issues would need to be addressed, these mandatory accounts would allow breadwinners to accumulate capital reserves over time that can help replace lost earnings and extend the duration of regular UI. If individuals become unemployed before building a sufficiently large fund, the government would loan them the resources. (A portion of the proceeds from the EITC and child tax credit could be used to seed these accounts.) Workers would gain title to remaining funds in these accounts at retirement, or the government would forgive the loans if people retired with a negative balance (see Lerman forthcoming).

Allow individuals to draw down pension accounts for vocational purposes. In the same way that hurricanes and floods might permanently change the course of a river, they have the power to realign local job markets. Workers who remain or return to the affected areas may find that their former employers or even industries no longer exist. New vocational training may be necessary. This policy would allow workers who reside in federal disaster areas to either draw down or borrow under very favorable terms against their accumulated savings to pursue new job training and education opportunities.⁵ Importantly, since depleting retirement savings costs workers tens of thousands of dollars in forgone savings and clouds their retirement security, it should only be allowed when other means of financing an education (such as Pell grants or education tax credits) are unavailable to them or insufficient.

Housing

Katrina took a toll on the region's housing supply. Across the New Orleans metropolitan area, for example, 204,500 homes and apartments were flooded, about 60 percent of which were owner-occupied dwellings. Many of the dislo-

cated have moved in with friends and family, relocated to another region or now live in temporary shelters (for example, nearly 82,000 FEMA trailers were in use in August 2006).⁶ Recent data on the extent of rebuilding efforts are generally unavailable. However, some 660,000 homeowner claims have been settled in Louisiana for \$5.2 billion, or less than \$8,000 per claim.⁷

The loss or uninhabitable condition of so much housing has placed upward pressure on the price of the surviving housing stock, particularly in those areas desirable to live, and may do so in the future as more former residents return to New Orleans. Conversely, homes that withstood Katrina and the flooding but are in neighborhoods decimated by the storm or cut off from vital city services may have dubious value and, from an economic perspective, may not be worth rehabilitating at this time.

For the majority of families, home equity is the largest single source of private savings. Former homeowners in New Orleans may have difficulty getting sufficient reimbursements from their home insurance policies, particularly where flooding occurred. And, the prospect that other weather-related disasters await in the future may discourage many individuals and families from remaining and rebuilding in the area.

According to the American Housing Survey 2005, the median home value of owner-occupied housing units in the New Orleans metropolitan area was \$141,600, while median household income of homeowners was \$57,347 and median housing costs were \$13,836 a year (\$1,153 a month), or 24 percent of income. As a point of reference, the national median value in 2005 was \$122,000, but this includes rural as well as urban areas. Importantly, nearly 40 percent of homeowners paid 30 percent or more of their income in housing costs (mortgage payments, repairs, and the like). According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), fair-market rents in New Orleans (for a two-bedroom unit) had risen 30 percent between 2000 and 2005 and were up 45 percent between 2005 and 2007. It is difficult to say how much of this recent jump reflects nationwide trends toward higher rents and how much it reflects local shortages in housing supply.

In housing policy, it is common to discuss policy solutions that affect the demand side (renters or homeowners) or the supply side (builders or landlords). HUD, in coordination with local housing authorities, offers and administers both demand- and supply-side subsidies, with varying levels of effectiveness. In chapter 1 of this volume, Turner discusses the need to rebuild new, mixed-income affordable housing *citywide* so revitalization in the wake of

Katrina will not reproduce the same pattern of deeply concentrated poverty that prevailed before the storm. The options laid out below mostly dovetail with Turner's recommendations although they emphasize homeownership more narrowly.

Implement a housing choice voucher applicable both to renters and potential homeowners. HUD, in close conjunction with local housing authorities, could offer a subsidy to renters and those wishing to own a home again to cover the difference between what they can afford and what it costs to make current market rent or mortgage payments. This would expand the income eligibility of the current housing choice voucher program that now serves only those eligible to participate in the Section 8 program.⁸ The voucher program would be tenure-neutral; for those desiring to own a home (again), however, the voucher could be made flexible to subsidize a down payment on a home, monthly mortgage payments, or some combination of both for lower-cost homes.

Couple housing assistance with an expanded EITC. Current demand-side subsidies offered by HUD could be offered through a new "super" earned income tax credit available to disaster victims. Policymakers could consider current levels and growth in fair-market rents and commensurately raise the EITC's credit value and extend the phaseout points of this new EITC to markedly higher incomes,⁹ so a meaningful number of affected residents could be helped. The credit would give individuals the choice of renting or owning. Since the credit is paid as a lump-sum tax refund to those who claim it, it would be particularly useful for those wanting to make a down payment on a new home or address modest repairs on a current residence. With some nontrivial administrative tweaking, the EITC could appear monthly in workers' paychecks and ease the burden of paying the rent or mortgage. As discussed above, this EITC could be based on prior-year earnings for those tax filers who have been out of work for the past year. (A multipronged approach that would combine an expanded EITC with minimum wage hikes and targeted housing vouchers is described in Katz and Turner 2007.)

Former homeowners could leverage the value of the land they still own. The continuing rise in rents indicates real estate still has value. In neighborhoods where rebuilding is likely, homeowners can sell their land—with the proper regulatory safeguards in place—to private or non-profit developers. In conjunction with the inclusionary zoning policy that Turner outlines in chapter 1 or a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) made available to homebuilders, landowners might leverage their remaining

asset into a new home. In neighborhoods where short-term rehabilitation or redevelopment is in doubt, former homeowners could sell their land to the city or specially designated housing authorities and so finance the purchase of a new home elsewhere in the area.

Allow individuals to draw down pension accounts for housing. As described above, this policy would allow individuals affected by a disaster to either draw down or borrow under very favorable terms against their accumulated savings to finance a down payment on a new home or repair an existing home.

Finally, consideration must be given to *where* new housing construction or rehabilitation is done. Because of the *certainty* that major flooding will befall the city again at some point and the enormous costs to the private or government sectors that provide insurance—and to those who pay the premiums—land-use policies must be an integral part of rebuilding strategies.

Conclusions

The aftermath of Katrina clearly illustrates how a single catastrophe can wipe out a lifetime of work and savings if the proper safeguards are not in place. While private insurance and federal disaster relief and grants will continue to be the primary mechanisms for getting individuals and families back on their feet, current policies can be strengthened through the policies described above. The focus of these approaches is on getting people through long periods of unemployment and rebuilding such tangible assets as houses. Shoring up such financial assets as bank accounts, securities, and pension plans is not addressed since it is assumed various types of record keeping can keep these assets secure.

A fundamental question for policymakers at all levels of government is how far-reaching should such asset protection policies be. One focus might be to cover some fraction of capital losses for low- and moderate-income families, bearing in mind that these families tend to have little in the way of assets or net worth to begin with, unless they happen to own a home. Another approach might be to extend these policies to the middle class, which is the bulk of any city's workforce. Or, should such policies also address upper-income earners—allowing that even they cannot privately insure against truly devastating disasters—as

they provide the jobs and capital that underpin local economies? Naturally, the more people eligible under a new government policy, the more it will cost. Yet, these might be fruitful avenues to explore to help the Gulf Coast region rebuild, reinvest, and reestablish itself.

Notes

1. See the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) web site, <http://www.lra.louisiana.gov>.
2. Labor force data for the New Orleans metropolitan area are not yet available for the months after August 2005.
3. See the Insurance Information Institute's "Hurricane Insurance Fact Sheet," <http://www.iii.org/media/updates/press.760032/>.
4. Economic theory argues that even while employers pay the actual payroll taxes that finance UI, workers bear the cost of these taxes in the form of lower wages.
5. Nationally, slightly less than half of workers participate in an employer-sponsored pension plan or an IRA, so this option may provide limited benefit for lower-income households.
6. See <http://www.lra.louisiana.gov>.
7. See <http://www.iii.org/media/updates/press.760032/>.
8. A major shortcoming of the present housing choice voucher program that needs addressing in any new policy is a disincentive for local housing authorities to match desiring recipients with homeowner-ship opportunities because of inadequate administrative resources.
9. In 2007, the EITC for a married couple with two children reaches a maximum of \$4,716 before beginning to phase out at 21.06 cents for each dollar earned above \$17,390.

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CAROL J. DE VITA

Preparing for the Next Disaster

As Hurricane Katrina roared ashore on August 29, 2005, it quickly became apparent that the scale and intensity of the storm was greater than any previous disaster in the past 50 years. More than 90,000 square miles of land were affected—roughly the size of Great Britain—and almost 500,000 homes were destroyed or damaged in Louisiana and Mississippi. FEMA estimated damage at \$37.1 billion—roughly four times higher than the costs associated with the World Trade Center attack and the Northridge, California, earthquake (Louisiana Recovery Authority 2005).

What was most apparent in the first few days after the storm was the lack of effective coordination among groups providing rescue and relief services. Thousands of people were stranded at the New Orleans' Super Dome and on bridges and overpasses leading out of the affected areas. Although the National Response Plan, issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security roughly nine months before the storm (December 2004), outlined the roles of federal agencies and charities in national emergencies and disasters, these structures and mechanisms were overwhelmed and broken down by the magnitude of the hurricane. In particular, the two central designees—FEMA and the American Red Cross—held differing views about their roles and responsibilities under the plan, creating tensions between the two organizations and inefficiencies on the ground (GAO 2006).

What has been less well documented—but instrumental to relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast—is the role of faith-based and community groups, which stepped up to the plate to provide critical services to people in need. By some accounts, the response of these nonprofit charitable groups is considered more effective than those of government agencies at either the local, state, or federal level.¹ Indeed, a telephone survey conducted by the Public Policy Research Lab at Louisiana State University about 10 weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit found that Louisiana residents rated faith-based and nonprofit groups as most effective in responding to the storm, whereas government (federal, state, and city) was rated least effective.²

Not only were nonprofit and religious groups among the first to respond to the storm during the rescue and relief phases of the post-storm cleanup, they continue to play important roles in the rebuilding efforts. In November 2006, Habitat for Humanity began construction on its 500th hurricane recovery home, with a goal of building 1,000 homes by mid-summer 2007. Tens of thousands of volunteers from

across the United States and Canada have given untold hours of labor in the Gulf Coast to help clean and rebuild the region.

Given the significant contributions that the nonprofit sector has made at all stages of rescue, relief, recovery, and rebuilding, what would it take to better coordinate and work with the thousands of groups through the nation's disaster preparedness system? This is the question that government and communities across the country need to address to better prepare for future disasters. Although the needs of every community and situation will differ, strategic steps can be taken in two broad areas to strengthen local response systems and facilitate relief and recovery efforts. These include (1) improving coordination among nonprofit organizations within local communities, as well as between the nonprofit sector and government, and (2) building capacity of responding agencies so they are better equipped to take part in emergency situations.

Improving Coordination among Nonprofits and with Government

For many nonprofits, the outpouring of services and generosity after hurricanes or other emergencies is consistent with their missions and traditions of helping people in need. But the nonprofit sector in New Orleans, like many other places, is highly fragmented in the number and types of organizations working in the community. Many nonprofits are isolated from one another and are not accustomed to working together. Similarly, many nonprofits do not work with government and have neither the desire nor the capacity to seek government grants or partner with government agencies. While we often admire the independence and resilience of nonprofits, this go-it-alone spirit can present challenges during an emergency when coordination and communication are essential.

As the aftermath of Katrina demonstrated, emergency systems were not in place and relationships had not been built to facilitate smooth coordination of services, especially with major government agencies charged with coordinating relief efforts. Many small nonprofits had never worked with government before the storm, and officials in government agencies had little experience working with these grassroots groups. This lack of two-way interaction hampered the relief and recovery efforts.

While government has the funding and structures to oversee the allocation of funds and the procurement of resources, community-based nonprofits and church-related groups have the trust and confidence of community mem-

bers to know what is needed and whom to help. Building on these complementary strengths is critical for improving the emergency response system in the Gulf Coast and across the nation. Models exist for improving coordination not only during a catastrophe, but also before a crisis so plans can be in place and activated when needed and relationships can be built and sustained over time.

- **A collaborative network of partners.** An important step to enhance coordination of relief and recovery services after a crisis is to bring nonprofit groups together long before the crisis so they know each other and can develop plans for working together in emergency situations. One very successful model for working together emanated in the Washington, D.C., region after the 9/11 attacks. Nonprofit leaders in the region established a task force after 9/11 and developed plans to facilitate a coordinated and effective response to future emergencies. The task force was composed of both nonprofit leaders and government agency representatives. As a result of these efforts, the D.C. region now has a model for case management with established standards for participation and guidelines for sharing data that is accepted by five major social service agencies, a plan for scaling-up volunteer efforts when needed, and clear standards for soliciting and handling monetary and in-kind donations (Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington 2005). Not only does this approach build essential structures for guiding a relief and recovery effort, it also builds the personal relationships needed to facilitate cooperation during a crisis. These collaborative networks should include the full spectrum of nonprofit providers—large and small, faith-based and secular—to help ensure a coordinated response effort.
- **The international model of service delivery.** After a disaster strikes, it is essential to identify areas of need and quickly direct relief operations to these areas. Because international relief organizations often use decentralized decisionmaking and service delivery, they tend to be more nimble than relief operations that rely on “command and control” models. International relief agencies put staff on the ground as soon as possible after a disaster subsides to identify appropriate providers and deploy resources rapidly and flexibly in a quickly changing environment. They work closely with small, local providers who can direct them to the most vulnerable areas and quickly establish relief operations. This approach draws on the organizational strengths of the relief agency and the local knowledge and community trust of the nonprofits. As the nation works to build a

responsive and effective system of disaster preparedness and relief operations, international relief agencies might provide an instructive model for enhancing coordination between government agencies and local nonprofits.

Building the Capacity of Responding Agencies

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita affected virtually all nonprofits in Louisiana and Mississippi. Some, like those in Baton Rouge and Montgomery, have been serving significantly more clients because of the influx of evacuees. Others, although damaged by the storms, are able to continue operations, albeit at a reduced level. Still others, including charities in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, have been physically destroyed (Auer and Lampkin 2006).³ Restoring and expanding the capacity of the nonprofit sector, particularly with an eye toward disaster preparedness, is critical for a region prone to natural disasters. Based on communities that have recently coped with major disasters, such as Oklahoma City, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C., the following four components need to be considered in creating an effective response system for New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region.

1. **Information.** During an emergency, collecting and sharing information is key to greater efficiency and effectiveness. Currently, most communities lack a mechanism that can facilitate the flow of information in real time. For example, systems need to be in place that can receive information on needs from the field, track who is providing what type of assistance and where that assistance is being given, and identify the gaps that need to be filled. The system needs to be easy to use so community groups of all sizes can tap into it and keep the flow of information up-to-date and accurate. While no one can predict the exact location or needs that will surround any given disaster, well-constructed networks and databases can facilitate response time and the delivery of appropriate services after a disaster occurs. Among the components to consider are these five:
 - directories of nonprofits and community-based services that can be called upon during emergencies;
 - establishment of a 211-type referral system accessible to case managers, intake specialists, and the general public for locating services;
 - standardized intake forms that can be shared across programs and services, thereby reducing the administrative burden on victims of the catastrophe;

- communication systems to identify where and what types of help are needed during the early stages of the emergency; and
 - recruitment systems to scale-up the number and types of volunteers that can be most effective in a particular situation.
2. **Training.** Plans that only exist on paper are unlikely to be effective during an emergency. Training is essential so everyone is familiar with basic parameters of the emergency plan and with their roles and responsibilities within the system before an emergency arises. Periodic training can be fruitful at all levels. For example:
 - Nonprofit leaders—whether from large social service agencies or small faith-based and community nonprofits—should be familiar with basic government procurement procedures. In an emergency, everyone has the potential to be a responder.
 - Officials in government agencies, such as the Office of Emergency Planning, need greater familiarity with the nonprofit sector and its capacity to comply with government regulations.
 - Volunteer centers need to periodically review emergency procedures and train their volunteer corps in emergency response techniques.
 - Periodic emergency drills might be conducted to bring all systems together to test and fine-tune their interactions.
 - Community residents need to be informed *before* a disaster strikes about the emergency plans in place and the potential resources likely to be available during a crisis. An informed public is critical in facilitating rescue and relief activities both during and after a crisis.
 3. **Written agreements and plans.** Meetings and goodwill statements are not sufficient to establish a workable disaster preparedness plan. Developing formal agreements and memoranda of understanding helps legitimize the arrangements and facilitate their implementation when an emergency arises. Such agreements can help direct resources toward building the capacity of nonprofits and governments for responding to future crises. Here are some examples:
 - A basic plan for addressing disaster situations, created with input from local nonprofits, government agencies, businesses, and community residents.
 - Memoranda of understanding to clarify and/or formalize procedures such as use of a standardized intake form, or warehousing and distribution of in-kind donations.

- Designation of nonprofit organizations that are “pre-credentialed” to provide service immediately after a disaster hits. During the Katrina disaster, many nonprofits had to wait to be credentialed or authorized by the Red Cross or government agencies to provide shelter or other services to victims of the storm.
 - A system of purchase orders or contract agreements issued by federal or state agencies for nonprofit providers, similar to those currently in place for businesses, to facilitate the full and early participation of nonprofits in relief and recovery work. Currently, such mechanisms do not exist, making it difficult for nonprofits to obtain payment for services that they provide to residents who have been displaced from the storm.
 - Guidelines for soliciting and managing financial donations. To gain and maintain the trust of potential donors, it is essential to have transparency to ensure that funds are being used appropriately and effectively. Most funds go directly to larger nonprofit organizations such as the Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity, leaving many local nonprofits with little access to funds from individual donors outside their local area.
4. **Strong organizational structures.** Responding to a disaster the size and scale of Katrina required the work and cooperation of many players at all levels of government and within the nonprofit sector. But the structures currently in place need to be bolstered and enhanced to adequately address future emergencies. Both government and the nonprofit sector can take steps to strengthen their relationships and increase overall capacity of the emergency response system.
- FEMA should stress to local communities the importance of having good information and referral systems, like a 211 service, and help communities build and maintain such systems. After any disaster, it is critical to have a directory of providers and services in the local area that can be used as a starting point for launching and coordinating rescue and recovery work. Many communities lack the resources to create and regularly update such a system. Yet these directories and information/referral systems are a critical piece of infrastructure needed by FEMA and local responders during and after a crisis.
 - The role and responsibilities of the Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL) within FEMA should be made clearer. FEMA has relationships with large nonprofit groups, but because disasters affect local areas, it must be able to tap into the knowledge and expertise of the smaller local and regional groups within a state. The VAL is a critical link between FEMA and these local nonprofits. Because the VAL cannot know every nonprofit in a state, it needs to work with state nonprofit associations and regional umbrella groups, which routinely work with many small and local nonprofits, to help coordinate the relief effort. After Katrina, the division of responsibilities between the VAL and the state and local nonprofits was not always understood in the community—a situation that added to the confusion of the crisis situation. The VAL must keep local residents, nonprofits, businesses, and government officials informed about what is being done and what gaps remain to be filled so local groups can better fill the gaps and develop realistic expectations of the course and progress of relief and recovery activities.
 - Communities need to create structures that can more readily help them prepare and respond to emergencies. The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster has been a critical resource in the aftermath of Katrina, providing volunteers and facilitating communication and coordination among an array of relief and recovery efforts. But it cannot do it alone. To better prepare for future emergencies, communities might create a coordinating council or planning body that brings a wide array of groups together to engage in planning and preparedness exercises—including small grassroots groups, faith-based providers, and state, regional, and national nonprofits. This type of structure might serve as a focal point for building networks and collaborations among nonprofits and faith-based groups throughout the region and encourage groups to talk with each another before a crisis hits. But just as crucial is the need for the coordinating council to serve as a liaison between the nonprofit community and government. Nonprofits and government function quite differently, and they sometimes fail to understand their different cultures, expectations, and use of language. Having a locally based coordinating body that serves as a bridge between nonprofits and government before an emergency arises can greatly facilitate and enhance the communication and coordination of activities of these sectors during a crisis.

With the many competing demands for rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, disaster preparedness

could well slip downward on the priority list. But given the region's geographic proclivity for natural disasters, plans for rebuilding the region cannot ignore the pressing need to be ready for future incidents. However, it will take resources and persistence to develop and implement an emergency preparedness plan. Such changes will not be accomplished through a single meeting or a single statement. The responsibility lies with many levels of government, with the nonprofit and faith-based organizations that work in the region, and the people who live in the Gulf Coast states. Only through concerted and persistent efforts will the capacity for meeting future disasters be built.

Notes

1. See for example Pipa (2006) and Carafano and Weitz (2006).
2. The survey used a 10-point scale (1 = not at all effective; 10 = very effective). Louisiana residents rated faith-based groups at 8.1 and nonprofits at 7.5. FEMA and other government agencies received scores of 5.3 or lower. The survey findings are available at <http://www.survey.lsu.edu/projects.html#2005fla>.
3. See also Lampkin (2005).

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