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Long Term Recovery in Disaster Response and the Role of Non-Profits

VICTOR B. FLATT*
JEFFREY J. STYS*

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Abstract

The Legal Framework of Disaster Response does not deal as well with long term recovery. In particular, the role of non-profits is unexamined. This paper examines the role of non-profits in disaster recovery and argues for a legal framework acknowledging its important role.

Key words

Disaster; disaster law; non-profit; charity; disaster response; FEMA

Resumen

El marco legal de las respuestas ante desastres no tiene en cuenta la recuperación a largo plazo. En particular, no se analiza el papel de las organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro. Este artículo estudia el papel de las organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro en la recuperación de desastres, y se muestra a favor de establecer un marco legal que reconozca la importancia de su papel.

Palabras clave

Desastres; derecho sobre desastres; organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro; caridad; respuesta ante desastres; FEMA

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* Victor B. Flatt (B.A., J.D.) is the Taft Distinguished Professor of Environmental Law and Director of the Center for Law, Environment, Adaptation, and Resources (CLEAR) at the University of North Carolina School of Law. Van Hecke-Wettach Hall, 160 Ridge Road, CB #3380, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3380 (USA) flatt@email.unc.edu

* Jeffrey J. Stys (B.A., M.P.A) is a principal in Strategic Partner Associates, based in Houston, Texas. 1228 Candlelight Lane. Houston, TX 77016 (USA) jstys@att.net

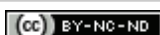


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1. Introduction

In the United States, the laws of disaster preparedness and response can usually be grouped into pre-disaster activities (such as planning and preparing for disasters), emergency response to disasters, and long term response and recovery to the disaster. Short term recovery involves restoration of basic services and provision of temporary housing, whereas long term recovery is focused on the restoration (and possible enhancement) of the built environment to a prior or new stasis. Though conceptually distinct, long term recovery and short term recovery are related in that actions taken during the initial stages of disaster response will affect options in longer term recovery for better and for worse.

Long term recovery efforts usually strive to return the community to conditions that existed prior to an event, or ideally, to a condition that improves upon the social, economic, and natural environments. Long term recovery actions can include repairing or replacing homes and infrastructure, and altering zoning and building codes to lessen the probability of future harm to a location (Eadie *et al.* 2001). In this way, long term recovery is explicitly linked to planning, including planning for alterations in the status quo. Thus, improving long term disaster recovery can improve the adaptability of a location to other circumstances beyond disaster (such as population growth or sea level rise) and is critically important for both disaster issues and general planning.

Compared to short term efforts, long term recovery is considered the weaker link in the recovery picture (Smith 2011). After a location has been stabilized and headlines are over, the work of long term recovery may just be beginning and may fail to proceed in an organized or logical manner.

In the United States, the legal infrastructure of long term recovery is also very different from that of immediate disaster response. As opposed to short term disaster response, long term recovery has historically not been planned comprehensively at the federal level. Aside from the transfer of money for housing replacement, the historic federal response in long term recovery has been limited (Smith 2011). Instead, humanitarian non-profits, states, and localities have taken on the lion's share role of bringing a disaster area back to some sense of normalcy (Smith 2011).

Like it did with so many parts of disaster response, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina shined a spotlight on deficiencies in long term recovery planning. Almost six years after the event, many displaced residents do not have permanent housing or even a settled location (Groen and Polivka 2009, Hsu 2009). Much of the critique for this response has focused on the failure to properly plan before disaster strikes (Olshansky 2006). Since response actions may need to be implemented immediately, and can impact how longer term recovery proceeds, it is particularly important to have pre-disaster planning for long term recovery (Olshansky 2006). The United States Government Accountability Office ("GAO") has emphasized the importance of pre-event planning to avoid or lessen the long term problems so obvious in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (GAO report 2006).

As set out in this paper, our research indicates that non-profits often provide the necessary link between vulnerable citizens and resources that may be made available to return them to their prior lives, allowing long term recovery. Because there is no comprehensive law governing long term disaster response, the degree to which this complex network of entities is able to effectively communicate and work collaboratively can drive the effectiveness of long term recovery.

Pursuant to many of their missions, social service non-profits readily respond to the immense human need caused by natural and man-made disasters. Non-profits are often on the front lines after a disaster by providing immediate and long-term assistance to affected individuals and families. Yet there has been limited research on the non-profits sector's assets, roles, gaps and potential in providing

coordinated support. Non-profits offer incredible assets but too often their efforts, although often heroic, do not measure up to the true potential based on organizational assets. Limited coordination of the sector, limited pre-planning, and unclear roles and responsibilities can severely limit the ability to assist needy individuals and families.

This paper reviews and analyzes the experience of one of the authors, Jeffrey Stys, as the coordinator of the non-profit sector's response to Tropical Storm Allison (2001), Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005), and Hurricane Ike (2008). Within his capacity at the United Way of Greater Houston and as a private consultant, he organized three separate long-term recovery efforts. He oversaw efforts after Tropical Storm Allison by convening nonprofit and other voluntary agencies to provide case management and home repairs for low-income and disabled Houstonians. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, he organized a ten agency case management collaboration and unmet needs committee that provided over \$13 million to evacuee families. During that time he also served as the main Human Services representative on Houston mayor Bill White's Disaster Response Committee.

He most recently provided consulting services to five Galveston-based philanthropic organizations on post-disaster funding priorities and assisted in the creation of a local long-term recovery organization following Hurricane Ike. From this vantage point, we can see assets and problems with the operation and role of non-profits in disaster response and make recommendations for improving that role to facilitate long term recovery.

2. Methodology

This paper's commentary and analysis concerning strengths and weaknesses of non-profits in long term recovery are based on the collected contemporaneous notes of author Jeffrey J. Stys in his capacity as non-profit coordinator for 4 different large scale gulf coast disasters (Stys 2011). Because of the nature of the problem and the immediacy of this "living laboratory," there was no pre-planning for specific methodology or human subject review (Stys 2011). While such studies are emerging with respect to planning law and disasters (Smith 2011), as well as review of emergent coordination after disasters (Drabek and McEntire 2002), the random nature of disasters and multiplicity of players makes comprehensive analysis difficult (Drabek and McEntire 2002). We believe that the observations of Mr. Stys, coupled with re-visitation and review of the occurrences at that time with the major repeat players can at least provide anecdotal data to suggest policy and/or legal options to enhance long term recovery by recognizing the roles of non-profits (Stys 2011). Thus, while not a comprehensive study with the normal checks and balances, the Stys review can provide insights and suggestions as to how law and non-profit policy may improve on long term recovery.

3. The role of non-profits in US disaster relief

3.1. Defining non-profits

The U.S. Internal Revenue Code defines more than twenty five categories of non-profit organizations that are exempt from federal income taxes. Although sector wide data is difficult to quantify, the General Accounting Office estimates that the sector's spending in recent years was eleven to twelve percent of the nation's gross domestic product, and that in 2002 it had over 9.6 million employees. The number of charitable organizations completing the IRS Form 990 for non-profit status almost tripled over the last two decades. One estimate is that the federal government funded about \$317 billion to non-profit organizations in fiscal year 2004 (GAO 2007).

There are more than 1.9 million tax-exempt organizations in the United States, a number that has approximately doubled in the past thirty years. Most non-profits are small. More than seventy three percent of reporting public charities reported annual expenses less than \$500,000 in 2005. Less than four percent of public charities reported expenses greater than \$10 million (GAO 2007).

According to Independent Sector, a national non-profit research and advocacy group, about 1.4 million of these tax exempt organizations are registered as 501(c)(3), charitable organizations (Independent Sector 2011). These organizations fall into eight broad categories:

1. Arts, culture and humanities
2. Education and research
3. Environmental and animals
4. Health services
5. Human services
6. International and foreign affairs,
7. Public and societal benefit, and
8. Religion.

Charitable organizations are separated from other types of tax-exempt organizations by their purpose: they must benefit the broad public interest, not just the interests of their members. These organizations fall into two broad categories: public charities and private foundations. Public charities must document that they receive at least one-third of their annual income from the public, a unit of government, or an organization formed to raise money for its support. Public Charities can also charge fees for their services. Private foundations derive most of their financial support from individual, family, or corporate contributions. Foundations are subject to substantially more restrictions regarding the distribution for charitable purposes. Non-profits are generally governed by a governing board model according to state law (Flatt 2003) The effectiveness of such governance structure, however, has been called in question (Flatt 2003).

The charitable organization sector shows broad diversity in terms of services provided. Some organizations deliver a very specific service such as afterschool activities while others are multiservice organizations that provide a wide range of services to individuals and families. All rely on some combination of individual, private foundation, and corporate giving. In 2008, private charitable giving totaled \$307.65 billion, a 2% drop in current dollars over 2007. It is interesting to note that this represents the first decline in charitable giving since 1987 (Giving USA 2009). The GAO reports that non-profits receive significant funding from government sources, but data are limited so a thorough analysis of governmental funding trends for non-profit organizations is not readily available.

For the purposes of this report, the term "non-profit" refers to public charities under the tax code.

3.2. Traditional non profit organizations and disaster response

3.2.1. Non-profits involved in disaster response

There are a handful of nationally-based non-profit organizations that have clearly defined missions in disaster response. These have a strong commitment at the national level, and local chapters generally have close working relationships with local emergency management organizations. Among these are: the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the Lutheran Disaster Response, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and the Mennonite Disaster Services (Stys 2011). As organizations formed, at least in part, to respond to disasters, these organizations have assumed various roles in

disaster recovery, including immediate needs, aid, and organizational distribution (Stys 2011). These organizations may work together or with government (Stys 2011). The religious based organizations, in particular, may also work with their local affiliates in long term recovery aid (Stys 2011).

3.2.2. Other non-profits in disaster response

Though such national "disaster" non-profits are important in disaster recovery, many recovery roles (particularly long term recovery roles) fall to more general and local non-profits.

As mission-based organizations, human service organizations deem it their mission to respond when disasters are imminent or occur. Although most non-profits would not consider themselves disaster responders, the vast majority will react after a manmade or natural disaster. For example, if a hurricane warning is issued, a Meals-on-Wheels organization may spring into action with activities to ensure that food recipients are provided several days' worth of non-perishable foods prior to storm landing. Homeless service organizations may make additional bed space available to provide shelter to the street homeless during the most violent parts of the storm. In times of disasters, non-profit agencies face two realities: the needs of existing clients become more acute while at the same time new clients arrive seeking service. These needs and services may be temporary or long term based on the nature and severity of the disaster. Below is a discussion of the characteristics of non-profits that make them an important partner in delivering services to vulnerable individuals and families prior to, during, and after a disaster.

Because human service non-profits provide ongoing support to clients on a whole range of human needs, the resources, personnel, facilities, and services of non-profits can be mobilized quickly in times of crisis. For example, non-profits are generally supported by community leadership and have positive relationships with local elected officials and can be called upon to support first responders. They have buildings that can be used to provide shelter and distribute goods and information. Other tangible assets include communications networks or automobiles that can be used to support vulnerable citizens. Most importantly, they have established relationships with individuals that will likely need additional support such as people with disabilities, senior citizens, and families with limited financial resources.

These existing relationships make service providers at non-profits critical liaisons with vulnerable clients right before and after a disaster, as they make recommendations for disaster preparedness for their clients and complete well-being checks after an event. In general, non-profit professionals are used to working with emergencies, albeit on much smaller scale than a natural or manmade disaster. They are used to responding to human need and finding creative solutions to often very complex situations.

Drabek and McEntire conclude from their review of the literature on multi-organizational collaboration in disasters, that new coordination may emerge from existing non-profits, other organizations and government because of the perceived need for disaster response (Drabek and McEntire 2002). They also note, however, that these emergent organizations face significant problems in coordination and response (Drabek and McEntire 2002). In particular, past literature has focused on problems of goals and communications. The gulf coast disasters demonstrate these problems and also provided a larger scale to look at them and at possible solutions (Stys 2011).

It is important to note that the varying strengths and roles that non-profits play within the community will differ based on the local situation and the specific mission and resources of the agency. Organizations may be solely focused on the clients they serve or they may be more willing to provide new or additional services based on community needs created or exacerbated by the disaster. Despite their assets, non-profits may be limited in their response to disasters.

For non-profits not primarily focused on disaster relief as their mission, there are significant barriers that may inhibit the ability of a non-profit to respond systematically to disasters. First, non-profits within the disaster zone may be unable to respond if their facilities and communication infrastructure have been damaged and if their employees are affected by the disaster.

Secondly, non-profits function on very tight budget constraints. Most non-profits have very limited, if any, emergency financial reserves and have a 'pay as you go' philosophy. Although additional funds may be available after a disaster, there is no guarantee that funds will be available through fundraising, governmental sources, or partnership.

Third, there may be conflict between non-profits and the funding agencies for long-term recovery. This is most true for smaller agencies or those with client-peer leadership, i.e. substance abuse recovery agencies. Many non-profits lack within their agencies a continuity of operations plans and may not have established relationships with local emergency responders. As a general rule, these non-profits do not have the necessary internal planning skills, nor do they take the time to engage in developing relationships with local emergency responders. This can often lead to strained relationships when each sector has unrealistic expectations of the other in its ability to respond during times of disaster.

There are significant cultural and tactical differences that can exacerbate the strife between non-profits and emergency responders. First, emergency response organizations function under clear command and control models. There is a clear leader and chain of command. As individual organizations, non-profits have clear organizational models but in most communities there is little *sector* coordination. Larger communities may have thousands of non-profits but there is no single central-organizing structure. When coordination efforts are attempted, there is a priority on consensus driven action and equal access to input into the process. Although there is clear benefit to this model, it is time consuming and not necessarily effective post-disaster when quick, decisive action may be needed. This decentralized model can be a strength when working with vulnerable individuals but can limit the efficacy and efficiency of overall response efforts.

With a few notable exceptions such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, experiences with the major gulf disasters show that non-profits are rarely included in the regular disaster planning events of local jurisdictions. Although this is changing ever so slightly, there have been challenges in getting non-profits to take an active role in planning. As mentioned earlier, non-profits often do not have the necessary skills nor do they believe they have the time to be involved in planning efforts. For example, the HUD "Sequence of Delivery" has voluntary agencies as key organizations at the beginning and end of the disaster recovery process (Cahill *et al.* 2009). The role of these organizations has been determined by a government agency, but they are likely to be left out at the local level of the planning processes and resource decisions.

4. Unique role of local non-profits in short and long term recovery

4.1. Local non-profits in the disaster zone

Local non-profits in disaster zones provide a variety of services to existing and new clients before and immediately after a disaster. The scale and scope of assistance provided will be greatly influenced by the resources of the organization and the existing client base. Most organizations will engage in several general activities that support those affected by the disaster. Common roles of non-profits include:

- Assisting by providing up to date information pre and post event
- Assisting with FEMA forms for those with limited literacy or English proficiency

- Distributing donations – clothing, food, other supplies
- Monitoring vulnerable clients and notifying authorities if there is a dangerous situation

The chart below lists types of services provided in the days immediately after a disaster by a variety of non-profits. Some non-profits may provide more than one of the services listed below and many provide multiple areas of support. A discussion of non-profit roles in long term recovery is addressed below.

4.2. Immediate and short term non-profit response

Type of Service	Description
Senior Services	Well being checks, ensure that clients who do not have ability to travel to distribution points have food and supplies delivered
Child Care	If facilities allow, provide additional spaces for children of emergency providers and other critical personnel who are part of the response
After School/Youth Programs	May extend hours to accommodate children who are not able to attend school regularly due to damaged facilities
Food Pantries	Greatly increase distributions of food and water, may act as official distribution points for emergency food and supplies. May provide direct financial assistance for lost wages, sheltering cost etc.
Medical Providers	Increased patient visits due to disaster related injuries or closure of other medical facilities
Providers for Individuals with Disabilities	Do well-being checks on clients, make arrangements for those who need electricity for medical equipment or storage of medicines
Mental Health Providers	Provide on-scene mental health services and be of service to other agencies as they find individuals that need services
Homeless Providers	May make additional beds available prior to the event
Community Centers	Act as distribution points for food, water, supplies and information Act as source of information for non English speakers or people with low literacy levels

4.3. Roles and issues for local non-profits in long-term recovery

After an initial disaster, non-profits react to support the needs of clients and other vulnerable citizens. However, their presumed roles and responsibilities for long term disasters often leads to confusion and sometimes hostility since no clear definition of "long term recovery" exists, with clear divergence in what Emergency Managers and Non-profits consider long term recovery. The Department of

Homeland Security has "Economic and Community Recovery" as one of the thirty-seven Technical Capabilities (DHS 2007, p. 567). This capability covers many aspects of an overall recovery process but does not address specific roles for non-profits or mention the need to support vulnerable citizens.

FEMA representatives regularly state that "all disasters start and end locally." This means that FEMA expects local organizations to complete the recovery process for vulnerable citizens. FEMA representatives often tell local communities that long term recovery lasts "between three and five years." In the consultant's experience this is accurate as recovery efforts from Tropical Storm Allison (2001) had recently wrapped up when Hurricane Katrina (2005) hit the Gulf Coast. The federal government is empowered to coordinate all disaster relief efforts, including volunteer, state and local efforts. This includes providing technical assistance to local governments for the provision of essential services¹ and assisting with the distribution of supplies (42 USCA 5170(a)).

FEMA will deploy Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VAL) to declared disaster zones. These individuals are generally the point of contact for non-profit agencies. They are also important in educating non-profits on their potential roles in long term recovery (Stys 2011). There may be variation in the quality of these individuals. In general, VALs with extensive experience can be true allies and supporters of long term recovery. They understand the federal resources that can be used to support the local community and see themselves as a support to the overall long-term recovery efforts (Stys 2011). Others that appear to have been trained on their role after FEMA became a part of the Department of Homeland Security have not been as effective. They may not understand federal resources or may simply not feel it is their role to communicate such information (Stys 2011). They appear to approach communities with differing agendas and do not understand their role of supporting local community organizations in their efforts. For instance, VALs may wait to be asked for resources when, in reality, local communities do not know what to ask for. Much of this confusion may be because neither the government, nor localities understand what their roles in long term recovery are (Stys 2011).

For instance, the work of non-profits in long term recovery may be seen in opposition to the government role, i.e the government provides financial aid with restrictions, and the non-profits assist the vulnerable public with understanding and managing the restrictions. With respect to long term recovery, non-profit agencies focus on helping low income and other special populations with case management services and home repair (Stys 2011). This includes assistance directly to clients and managing volunteers that want to assist. For many citizens, dealing with the paperwork of insurance claims and FEMA forms is overwhelming. Quality case management involves an initial assessment, client created goals, and assistance in finding resources to meet goals. In the example of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, case management played a key role in helping people establish themselves in Houston by assisting them to find appropriate housing and employment, and in getting children enrolled in school or assisting the family to move back to the New Orleans area (Stys 2011). In other disasters, case management has focused mainly on home repair. Most home repair utilizing volunteer labor is focused on owner-occupied units of low-income disaster victims. There is an effort to assist the family to use personal resources wisely and identify other available financial assistance. There are national groups that can send teams of skilled volunteer labor for extended periods of time for home repair activities. These volunteer teams need varying levels of financial support. Some groups bring not only labor but financial support for needy families while other groups may need local support for housing and meals.

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 5170(a)(3).

No matter what level of financial support they bring, the volunteer teams need clearly identified clients that have been locally "approved" for volunteer building support. The "pre-work" of home repair process that is handled through case management is an analysis of the family's income, scope of damages, and third party payments for damages. As each family and volunteer group is different, each home must be matched to the appropriate volunteer group. This non-profit function of volunteer management is labor intensive but was a significant factor in stretching financial and human resources after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (Stys 2011)

Non-profit agencies involved in long term recovery need those resources clearly defined where case managers can bring a client's "unmet needs." These are needs that remain after all family resources and other support in the community have been exhausted.

One unique model from the gulf coast disasters that provided a cornerstone of effective long term recovery was the creation of a "common pool" of funds administered by one agency participating in the long term recovery (Stys 2011). All agencies that are performing case management are able to approach the fund for their specific clients. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, the United Way of Greater Houston raised money and Neighbor Centers Inc. provided financial controls. An Unmet Needs Committee made up of various experienced case management supervisors oversaw the committee's day to day operations. The fund allocated almost \$2 million in local funds and \$10 million in funding from the American Red Cross. Ten agencies that were working within the collaborative were able to approach the fund (Stys 2011). For many families, it meant an additional sum of money to complete the home repair process. For other families it meant funds for replacing necessary work tools that were destroyed in the disaster. For this function to occur, a centralized agency must have a dedicated source of funding and a clearly defined process that can be used for these needs.

The process can be further complicated by how the federal response agencies have set up the processing of claims. For instance, with Hurricane Ike, FEMA sought to hire victims of the Hurricane (many from minority and low income communities) who, while having connections with the locality, were not well trained in how to take in and process the information for disbursement of funds. While FEMA was meeting one need of recovery (providing employment), it was failing in another (providing efficient services to those in need).

This type of long-term recovery is at least a three to five year commitment. Identifying needy clients, available financial resources, and volunteer labor is often a slow and arduous process (Stys 2011). It is best handled within a well-defined recovery system. The challenge for most communities is that the system needs to be created within the chaos of the post-disaster world. Even without the challenges of the disaster, creating a recovery organization is a challenge in most communities. In Houston after the massive urban flooding of Tropical Storm Allison, it took community organizations more than six months to work out a suitable recovery structure. Up to that point, many organizations were working at cross-purposes and duplicating efforts. Recovery systems must be a collaboration of many different organizations as no one organization has all the resources needed to be successful.

As noted above, the experiences of the gulf coast provide contrasting lessons concerning the effectiveness of local non-profits in recovery depending on organizational planning. Thus, systems and organization present the most pressing issues to address as non-profits coordinate with other long term recovery groups, organize, launch operations, and work to ensure that vulnerable citizens are able to recover from disasters (Stys 2011).

5. Creating systems collaborations with non-profits

The Gulf Coast disasters demonstrate that post-disaster communities that have an existing coordination mechanism for non-profit organizations are generally better equipped to design and implement a long term recovery response (Stys 2011). Large local and out of state philanthropic organizations are more likely to make large scale financial investments in established collaboratives or consortium of non-profit organizations. These groups can effectively communicate the needs of their organizations and clients and devise innovative solutions often better than single organizations. Communities that have a centralized convener of the non-profit sector can offer a location to begin discussing the needs, assets, and a structure for long term recovery.

5.1. Coverage by voluntary organizations active in disaster (VOAD)

In recent years, there have been active attempts to organize organizations that have disaster response as part of their mission. These groups often form Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) groups. Local VOAD groups often have representatives of the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army and local representatives of national faith-based groups. Each local VOAD is structured differently, some are formal 501(c)(3) organizations and others are not. Each VOAD has the mission of improving pre- and post-disaster communication, cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. It is important to note that in most situations the VOAD does not respond to events, individual members respond based on the organization's mission and resources.

Local VOADs often play a role in providing a forum for the development of an appropriate long term recovery response. In the consultant's experience they are not well equipped to handle the organizing and operational needs of a long term recovery.²

5.2. Common issues in long-term recovery

After a disaster, participating local and national non-profit organizations may create a Long Term Recovery Organization (LTRO). The LTRO is charged with carrying out the specific functions involved in long term recovery efforts. There are several serious challenges with forming a LTRO. First and foremost, putting together a mission-based organization of various organizations in a time of chaos is likely to be a new experience for most organizations involved. Basically, a critical organization has to be created "out of nothing" quickly in the midst of chaos. As an "organization of organizations" the LTRO needs to create a very intentional balance between collaboration and a focus on accountability. This is an unusual non-profit organizational model, and in most communities there may be little experience or expertise in working through the complex issues of developing a functioning organization.

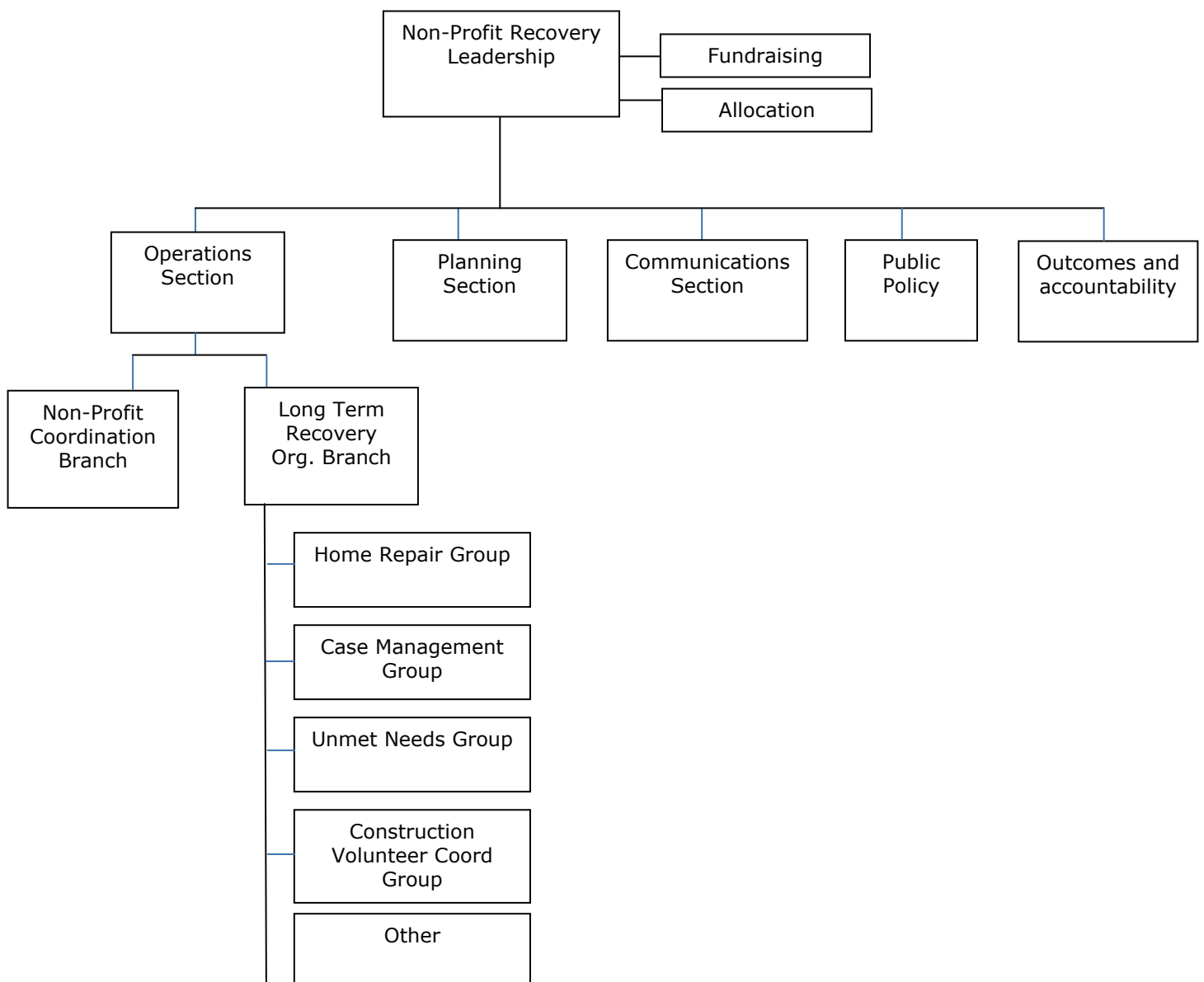
The Long Term Recovery Organization is dedicated to performing certain tasks. Figure 1 shows an organizational structure that was based on experience with Texas-based disasters. This organizational chart represents a way to structure a recovery or other community problem solving effort. This model attempts to increase the effectiveness of the *overall recovery system*. The system supports the overall recovery and those organizations and individuals working within the recovery. In the consultant's past disaster experience, it is the system efforts that often do not receive adequate support and hamper overall recovery efforts. It's important to note that these sections do not need to be specific employees paid by the leadership group. They could be leadership committee members or

² Often times, federal authorities will use the term VOAD as a term of art for non-profit agencies active in disaster response. This can be confusing as many non-VOAD members will also activate after a disaster.

subcommittees, community volunteers, or strong non-profit organizations. The central point is that someone (or some organization) must assume leadership responsibility and create and support clear lines of communication with all components of the recovery process leadership team.

In addition to the specific LTRO functions, it is important to create a forum for all non-profit organizations to learn about disaster related needs and resources. After a disaster, programs are created, funding becomes available or disappears, and new needs emerge. The forum is a centralized place where all of this information can be shared with the non-profit community. This may take the form of a weekly or monthly meeting or a regularly updated website. Although this may seem obvious, it is one of the most overlooked yet effective tools in getting information to those who work with vulnerable clients.

5.3. LTRO organizational model



5.4. Developing an effective long term recovery organization

Essentially, most long term recovery organizations are “virtual” organizations made up of non-profit service organizations. They usually do not establish physical offices and have few, if any, staff. Foundational documents such as mission statements

and by-laws must be developed. Yet more importantly there needs to be effective leadership who can convene the key partners, help members identify key principles, and establish cultural norms of work. These "softer" skills are especially important in working with varying personal styles and organizational cultures that inevitably make up a long term recovery. Effective communication skills are critical in motivating members and dealing with inevitable conflicts. Leaders should be able to communicate effectively as well as implement structures such as regular meetings, communications networks, and organizational charts to ensure each partner can easily see how the entire recovery effort fits together and relates to outside organizations. Key LTRO Functions Include:

- Fundraising and Allocation Decisions.

Financial resources are a critical component of long term recovery success. Individual organizations will bring financial resources but the LTRO will need to identify funding and ensure that funds and results are accounted for. In the consultant's experience, it is best to develop a leadership group that has the responsibility for raising money and making resource allocation decisions. This has been a successful model as long as there is clear and consistent communications with the operational aspects of recovery.

- Accountability of all partners.

As an organization of organizations, it is critical to set up accountability between and among functions of the LTRO. This is challenging within a non-hierarchical organization. Once again, it is important to have formal reporting structures in place, but it is also important to build a culture of accountability.

- Research and data.

For long term success, it is important to have the research and data to clearly identify the scope of the existing need. This can be used to communicate with outside stakeholders to attract financial resources. Data is also needed to identify potential clients that need assistance. It is also important to quantify and communicate the scope of work that has been accomplished. Individual organizations are used to doing this but there should be a quantitative report of work accomplished by all of the members of the LTRO. Data reports that can be effectively communicated will likely attract additional outside resources

- Communication/Publicity.

The LTRO needs to be able to communicate with the public and government agencies effectively. This may seem obvious but it can be difficult since the LTRO is collaboration of many organizations. There can be confusion and conflict over who the organization's spokesperson is and how member organizations may or may not be highlighted. Yet, without this function, the recovery can be hampered as the general public or other stakeholders may believe the efforts are completed or severely inadequate.

- Public Policy and Government Relations.

Government organizations must be considered partners in the recovery efforts. Outside of FEMA, there are substantial funding sources that should closely align with LTRO activities. In past disasters, Social Service Block Grant funding has been an important source of funding for recovery efforts. The recovery team will be required to build relationships with government entities to inform them of current efforts and needs but also to have an impact on allocation decisions. Additionally, it is important that government efforts facilitate and enhance the abilities of the LTRO and not block or interfere with them.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Additional disaster planning for non-profits

Continuity of Operations: These plans help organizations plan for the continuation of critical services after a disaster. Every organization should have a plan of how to protect human and physical assets. It is especially important for non-profits to consider developing continuity of operations plans as demands for their services will increase after a disaster.

Community Planning for Recovery Operations: Every community should identify the key organizations that will be needed to implement an effective recovery. These groups should discuss likely roles and responsibilities and can begin to identify key leadership and functional gaps.

6.2. Additional connection to emergency response organizations

Non-profit organizations should communicate with local emergency planners and responders. For communities that have had disasters, non-profits should engage in after-action reporting and share these results with emergency responders. In this way, they can be invited into the planning process. The non-profits may also engage in a conversation about how to better handle appropriate 'hand-off' of potential clients. Emergency responders will often find people needing more help than they are authorized to provide. There should be a formalized way to ensure individuals do not fall through the cracks. Approaching this before a disaster may help minimize some of the problems of organizing during the emergency.

6.3. Official communication networks

Among non-profits: Communications networks are critical during a disaster. It is best practice to develop these networks prior to a disaster. This network will look different in different communities. It may be a physical place everyone agrees to meet at a specific time period after an event, a list of current names, address and phone numbers or website that can be activated on short notice. It is important to develop this mechanism prior to an event. Of course, these can be used on a regular basis outside of a disaster event.

Between non-profits and emergency responders: Emergency responders have the latest information from federal, state, and local authorities. It is important that all shared information comes from authenticated sources. The relationship should be based on two-way communications. The non-profit sector is important in providing information to emergency responders that can be used in rumor control and in providing information to individuals who are in life-threatening situations. Again, communications networks should be set up a head of time.

Between non-profits and federal and state disaster action and funding agencies: Generally, federal and state governments administer many of the grants and funds that can be used for long term recovery. Non-profits usually have the most information about the needs of the community.

6.4. Long-Term recovery organizational structures that ensure efficacy and accountability

Long term recovery is a commitment of time and resources. Many organizations want to be of assistance but cannot commit to the process. The resources of many organizations are needed, but the involvement of so many groups can lead to confusion and frustration. It's important to have a clear leadership structure, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a structure for horizontal and vertical communications.

6.5. Funding

Private dollars should be used to develop effective delivery models, meet initial needs, and lay groundwork for public funding. Private contributions generally come into a disaster stricken community quickly after a disaster. Government funding may not hit the ground until many months after the disaster. Long Term Recovery efforts should focus on putting up effective response systems quickly and on communicating with government officials. LTRO and non-profits can create the platform for effective programs to meet community needs. Generally, government funding is greater than privately donated dollars and the non-profit sector can greatly multiply their impact by making sure government funding meets the needs of local citizens with effective programs.

Pre-event governmental planning funding for non-profit coordination should be considered and implemented.

6.6. Recognition of non-profit roles in law and regulation

Because of the importance of non-profits in providing unmet services and enhancing the effectiveness of government disaster response (both short and long term), federal and state disaster planning and response laws and regulations should provide a legal and regulatory mechanism for effective coordination of roles, responsibilities, and funding, as well as pre-disaster planning.

For instance, disaster recovery regulation could recognize the role of non-profits in assisting citizens with securing government aid, and then provide training and pre-event certification for certain of these non-profits to do this more effectively. This could curb the current adversarial nature between government entities that are to provide aid to citizens and the non-profits that seek to assist them in receiving the aid, and create more efficient and effective use of limited funds.

7. Conclusion

The mix of law and regulation governing disaster preparedness and response, particularly long term response, is broad and in flux. In addition to government responders, in the United States much of the needs of a community in recovery are met by non-profits. These non-profits have the information on the most vulnerable citizens in a community and know how best to effectively coordinate and disburse aid. However, the recent disasters in the Gulf Coast show that there is much confusion about roles and coordination among non-profits, and between non-profits and other organizations. Steps taken over time between an early disaster and a later disaster provide a way to analyze how non-profits operate, and what can be improved. Our research sets out what we believe is the problem, and how it can be improved.

In many ways, the research is specific to the United States in that the U.S. utilizes non-profits more than other developed countries to provide services to vulnerable populations. Nevertheless, international humanitarian aid often comes through non-profits as well, and the need for coordination and planning between these organizations and governments seems apparent from many recent international disasters.

We hope that the study of non-profits continues and that these recommendations may assist in disaster response, and in particular long term recovery.

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