



World Council of Jewish Communal Service
המועצה העולמית של שירות קהילתי יהודי

Communities in Transition
Challenges & Opportunities for
the Communal Professional

קהילות בהשתנות
אתגרים והזדמנויות לאיש המקצוע

Discussion Group Summaries

20 November 2008
כב חשון תשס"ט

Maiersdorf Faculty Club
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem

Coping with External Threats

Thursday 20th November 2008 11:00 – 12:30
Discussion Groups II

Coping with External Threats
Coping with Terrorism

Chair: Baruch Sugarman – Director of Community Work Service, Ministry of Social Affairs & Social Services

Presenters:

Rabbi Bob Kaplan – Director, CAUSE – NY/JCRC-NY. “Coalition building, conflict resolution and community building efforts post the 9/11 terror attacks.”

Dalia Yosef – Director, Resilience center in Sderot. “Example of a community facing ongoing terror and pressure; what keeps a community together and how does it cope and remain resilient as it experiences years of shelling.”

Rabbi Bob Kaplan presented: “Coalition building, conflict resolution and community building efforts post the 9/11 terror attacks.”

Being prepared is the key – make sure you have a system in place prior to the event.

When disaster strikes it is easier to have an existing system and network of diverse leadership which is trained in problem solving, which can quickly be utilized to meet the challenge and start rebuilding. CAUSE’s vision is to enable and assist creation and growth of community-based initiatives.

CAUSE-NY started in response to the Crown Heights riots and the desire to find a way to deal with Jewish/white-black tension. Their mission is to ‘create relationships that prevent conflict.’ But today there is another reality in New York than what existed when CAUSE was first created. New York is multi-cultural – there is a new diversity. This means that **the potential role of such systems is even greater.**

CAUSE looked for an area where different communities could meet without tension. Health care was the answer. **Health care is a key, non-confrontational issue among a majority of ethnic groups. CAUSE therefore chose to use health care as an issue to bring groups together that normally would not sit around a table together.** A health coalition was formed. CAUSE then started to act as a convener, and convinced local government that to share these resources and have coalitions were essential. In the last 20 years 16 coalitions have been formed – health coalitions, community coalitions and leadership coalitions.

9/11 happens. It is a major challenge on the local community. It is the community workers (clergy, receptionists etc.) who hear the tragedy of the people affected first in the aftermath of the tragedy, not the grief counselors or the social workers. CAUSE decided to use the coalitions and conducted seminars on grief counseling triage. Because the system was already in place, and the

coalitions were all connected and communicated with one another and the local communities they could be transformed to meet the needs of the community immediately.

As the example of 9/11 shows us, one can utilize the process of such a system to meet new external threats. By connecting the various communities through health care, one also has access to these communities and their leadership in a time a crisis. This is vital for transmitting information quickly, through the channels that will reach people, and can help minimize the damage.

Preparation is essential to success. Because what we are dealing with is complexity on a day-to-day basis; complexity of structures, assets and events, the system will also have mechanisms within itself, which can be made use of in a crisis.

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Dalia Yosef presented: “Example of a community facing ongoing terror and pressure; what keeps a community together and how does it cope and remain resilient as it experiences years of shelling.”

Over the last eight years Sderot has been hit by over 700 kassam rockets. 10 people have been killed and 500 injured. **70% of the population has symptoms of PTSD.**

There is a feeling that there is no safe place, even your home is not safe. This can be seen especially in the children, who know that Sderot is not a safe place, and are aware of the fact that their parents cannot always protect them. The result of this ongoing feeling is that with each escalation there is a larger circle of exposure. **There is no longer a ‘need’ for an actual kassam in order for Sderot residents to be treated for anxiety.** The warning of a potential kassam is enough. There is a growing number of residents who are in need of psychological treatment. 15% of the population leaves Sderot permanently, leaving the remaining population feeling abandoned, alone. Families and social networks are weakened tremendously.

These are main dilemmas for the professionals working in Sderot:

How do we strengthen a community that is under continuous threat?

How do we cope with the feeling that nobody cares?

How do we strengthen the family unit when all traditional roles are broken?

How does one remain professional when there is no boundary between the therapists and the patients?

Four years ago there was no leadership and no connection between the various organizations. There was a feeling that everything was falling apart. In 2005 there was an initiative to strengthen the resilience and build a connection between the different organizations. The professional staff started having weekly meetings (daily in a time of crisis), passing of information and collaborating. The community leaders meet once a month. All of this has had the effect that they are taking responsibility of what is going on together. In order to build up the resilience of the community they are doing lots of workshops for the population (for the children, the parents, the families etc.) This gives the

residents of Sderot the tools to cope with the situation and to recognize their resources, their skills and strengths. It has given the population the ability to take responsibility and change their own life.

An important aspect of the increase the resilience in Sderot has been the training of the professionals working in the community. They have been learning, studying, sharing and are now reflecting over – what works in this kind of situation, what does not work?

What we can take away from the example of Sderot it the following:

Taking responsibility helps

Collaboration between organizations is crucial

Continuous learning process

Tailor-made solutions to the specific situation

Importance of support from internal as well as external organizations

Ongoing communication between partners in emergency situations

Strengthening the existing natural communities

Issues raised in the question and answer session after the presentations:

Issue:

Is there collaboration between the various coalitions and organizations that deal with similar issues? For example, is there cooperation between the people working in Sderot with the people who are working with the Gush Katif community? The experiences and knowledge experienced in Sderot are universal and must be shared. It is not enough if the knowledge stays there.

Rabbi Kaplan: We must see outside our own world, and take all the knowledge we can get from other examples. We can create opportunities for sharing, not only through this kind of conference, but also utilize the web and have webinars and virtual forum. We must create mutual learning exchanges.

Yosef: There is some cooperation between some organizations, but this is an area we have to improve.

Issue:

What are you doing specifically in order to strengthen the resilience of the professional staff in Sderot?

Yosef: A number of things:

Treatment for the therapists with an open door policy

Continuous training of the professional staff

Building and sharing together. Taking responsibility together

Ventilation (venting) – we talk about what happens within the professional staff as well as with the community itself.

After the events, we meet up two days a later to share what is going on.

Give relief – take the staff our periodically to get a breather.

Issue:

Professionals are by their very existence leading by example. What do we do when the professionals who are supposed to take care of the community in a time of crisis leaves the community behind?

Yosef: If we prepare the staff in advance of a crisis, the chance that they will leave is much less. We have to prepare the staff for what may happen, and they will feel empowered.

Rabbi Kaplan: It is a problem that many professionals do not know what is expected of them in a time of crisis, or what the system expects. It is impossible to prepare oneself completely for all different kinds of scenarios. What one can do, is to make certain that the system of connectivity will stay in place during such times, and that one through this system can get information, train the people immediately as to what the system expects in this particular case.

Sugarman: Resilience is there, only when there is redundancy. It is crucial that we build in resilience into our systems.

Issue:

How do we raise the funds to create the financial sustainability for these kinds of systems and coalitions?

Rabbi Kaplan: We have to listen to what the system wants. We have to be culturally able, not only in terms of race, diversity etc, but also in regards to the government and other funding sources. You have to know what they want, be able to speak their language and appeal to their goals. You have to make it clear that what a coalition or a collaboration of the sort you are offering is beneficial to their goals. You also have to make certain that the goals of your organization are sustainable and achievable.

Thursday 20th November 2008 13:30 – 15:00
Discussion Groups III

Coping with External Threats
The effect of political threats on Jewish communities

Chair: Richard Benson – Chief Executive, Community Security Trust, UK

Presenters:

South Africa: Brenda Solarsh – Group Social Services Manager, Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand. “The socio-political changes in South Africa: The response of the South African Jewish community.”

France: Jean-Charles Zerbib – Israel Representative, Fonds Social Juif Unifié “Threats facing the French Jewish community and the responses that have proven effective.”

Brenda Solarsh presented “The socio-political changes in South Africa: The response of the South African Jewish community. A community that flourished through difficult times.”

The Johannesburg Helping Hand/Chevra Kadisha is today the umbrella body of the Johannesburg Jewish society. In 2009 it has a budget of 200 million rand.

With the ending of Apartheid, the resources which had previously been distributed amongst a select few, needed to be stretched for everybody. With a non-racial democracy there was a need for redistribution of resources.

The Johannesburg Jewish Society and the Chevra Kadisha met the challenge by changing the way the organization worked (by becoming an umbrella body) and which needs it met.

Most recently the Chevra Kadisha has had to withstand the many difficulties facing South Africa in the past year (2008), and the restructuring of the organization has proven successful.

“Although aliyah numbers are up from 170 in 2007 to 500 so far in 2008, most people do not leave. You grieve, you get over it and get on with things.” **Resilience was a crucial element of the success of the Chevra Kadisha in Johannesburg.**

Amongst the other contributing factors to the successful adaption of the organization Solarsh presented several internal elements: **a strong communal as well as religious leadership; the Lithuanian composition of the community; growth of Jewish identity and religiosity and the overall sense of purpose.** There were also external factors, which contributed to the adaption such as low level of anti Semitism, the fact that their religious rights were protected by the Bill of Rights and a positive political relationship with the government.

Today the Chevra Kadisha provides services within health care, security, employment, finance, housing and education to the Jewish population. In addition to that they also see general social responsibility as very important, and have established several humanitarian projects within welfare, economic relief and education.

One cannot wait for crisis, but have to be pro-active. Preparedness is key to the continued success. To be prepared for what may come collaboration with the broader community and government, leadership and youth training, community security as well as crisis management expertise are crucial components. In order to survive one has to draw on one’s strengths. Important examples of the specific strengths the Johannesburg Jewish community has been drawing on are the ability to adapt, build on resilience and to draw on their Jewish heritage.

Jean-Charles Zerbib presented: “Threats facing the French Jewish community and the responses that have proven effective.”

In order to understand the French Jewish community one has to understand French Jewish history. The very term ‘Jewish community’ is problematic in France. **In France one refers to citizens, not communities, and as such there is no community, only citizens.** Although there were Jews in France even prior to the French themselves, most of the Jewish community in France today arrived in France in the 1960s from North Africa. In this sense it is a very young community, and every year there are new developments within the Jewish sector in the form of community centers, activities and Jewish life in general. So, **although one hears much of the anti-Semitism present in France, there is actually growth and the community is being built up.**

Three events have marked the French Jewish community in the past few years:

October 1990: 1st bombing of a synagogue in Paris. The response was a stark increase of the security for the Jewish community. The reality that terrorism can happen is real.

1994: Chirac stated that the French state took responsibility for the Vichy period of French history. This was very important for the Ashkenazi (older) French community, but also for the North African Jewish community as it ended the rhetoric of the French State is not responsible for what the French Republic (Vichy) did.

September 2000: 2nd Intifada started. Jewish communities all over France were attacked by Muslims. The Jewish community was in panic – **anti-Semitism is yet again the main problem (as during Vichy), but this time it is a new type of anti-Semitism.**

In response to these events the Jewish community of France has had two main answers:

Aliyah:

The aliyah numbers from France in 2005-2007 skyrocketed, but are going down in 2008. New Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy stated that anti-Semitism is the problem of the French state, not just the Jewish community. **Nicolas Sarkozy is creating a France which Jews see as more hospitable,** although whether it actually is so, remains to be seen. **Building understanding and increasing knowledge about Judaism in France:**

A political discourse has been started with the government to achieve a more positive situation for Jews in France. Cultural programs have been started all over France. Local JCCs arrange and organize talks and events to educate the general population about Judaism and Jews. **Coalitions and collaborations between Jews and Muslims** are seen as key to calm and appease the current status of disease and tension between the two groups.

At the end of the day, what we really learn from the current situation in France is that collaboration between organizations, creating a network of understanding and knowledge, and **looking outside one’s own organization are crucial elements to create a response to the external threats to the Jewish community.**

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Issues raised in the question and answer session after the presentations:

Issue: Was it cheaper to unify all the organizations like you did in South Africa? Did you gain financially?

Solarsh: The amalgamation of the South African services was very painful and took place over a 10-year period. It was difficult for the individual organizations giving up independence and being taken over. Coming together gave gains and losses, the individual organization loses a little, but the overall organization became much better. Coming together most certainly increased the total number of services. **It is unclear, however, whether it was cheaper to consolidate all the resources.**

Issue: Did you look outside your own community to solve the problems at hand? Did you look at what other communities have done in response to similar situations?

Solarsh: The South-African community did not 10-15 years ago look outside of their own organization. Today they are continuously in contact with other communities and organizations.

Zerbib: Sometimes there is a problem you need to respond to immediately, and there is no time to look to other places for examples of behavior and response. The critical situation sharpens the mind and makes one focus to solve the problem. In aftermath of the initial critical situation one starts preparing for the future and then one can look to other communities for examples of solutions.

Thursday 20th November 2008 15:15 – 16:30
Discussion Group IV

Coping with External Threats
Preparedness and Response

Chair: Danny Pins – Director, Division for Immigrant Integration, JDC-Israel

Presenters:

William Daroff – Vice President for Public Policy and Director of the Washington Office, UJC. “Creating guiding principles for intervention and prioritization in emergency situations.”

Prof. Mooli Lahad, PhD – President, Mashabim Community Stress Prevention Center, Tel Hai Academic College. “The role of coalitions: challenges facing the attempt to develop coalitions in the psycho social field.”

Conclusion and next steps:

Talia Levanon – Director Israel Trauma Coalition

William Deroff presented “Creating guiding principles for intervention and prioritization in emergency situations.”

Coalitions are key to pushing forward the agenda of the UJC. One could not do it if one only has oneself to rely upon. There are many aspects of this, but the main elements are the support and continued approach. **One of the strengths of the UJC, is that it works as a convener and can coalize with other organizations when something happens and can try and ensure that there is preparedness ahead of time.**

In the wake of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, domestic preparedness was sorely needed. As a result, the government and non-profit sector started looking at domestic preparedness in a new light. The UJC used their vantage point as a convener to set up two new projects: National Non-Profit Security Grant Program. The idea behind this is that the **non-profit sector is a security target, and needs additional security support and infrastructure.** This was lacking, and with this grant program non-profit organizations stand stronger and safer. Emergency managing system: Through this system local institutions can communicate with one another as well as with local and federal government before a crisis happens. When a crisis happens, the system is already in place.

The fact that we do not coalesce our needs until crisis befalls us, and we do not really understand the impact until it has happened makes a cohesive community response crucial in an emergency situation. It is therefore necessary to have the cohesiveness in place prior to the crisis.

In response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the UJS has raised \$25 million, which were distributed between two different projects, one internal and one external. Through the internal project the New Orleans Jewish community received support. The external project focused on the communities along the Mississippi River that were affected. In collaboration with the Mississippi Mental Health Coalition, this project focuses on mental health.

The lesson to be learned in the aftermath of 9/11 and Katrina is that we need to break down the walls between the various non-profit and government organizations. Coalitions and collaboration are the way forward. **Emergency preparedness has become a major issue, and we have to prepare the communities. In order to help this process forward the UJC is creating an emergency preparedness handbook.**

The key aspects of emergency preparedness are the following:

Having plans in place

Talk through scenarios

Know who is in charge at all time, in the various scenarios

Work through issues ahead of time

Have as many modes of communication as possible

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Prof. Mooli Lahad presented: “The role of coalitions: challenges facing the attempt to develop coalitions in the psycho social field.”

There are **many challenges in managing coalition projects. We will look at these challenges with specific examples from the cases of Beslan and Sri Lanka.**

September 1st 2004: **Beslan school hostage crisis**

1100 hostages of which 355 were killed and 700 injured. The project was funded by JDC and ITC. **The project comprised of people from ITC, CSPC, ICPT, Sela, Contact and hospitals Schneider and Tiva. The format consisted of a fact-finding tour, developing plan and concept, recruiting partners, discussion of the plan and concept and creating a bilingual team.**

December 26th 2004: **Sri Lanka tsunami**

35 322 dead

21 411 missing

516 150 displaced

The project was funded by UJA Federation of New York and the Joint. The team consisted of a massive list of partners. **The goal of the project was to develop and train the local personnel, especially the mental health staff, as well as strengthen the knowledge and skills of the local providers.**

Although these two cases are seemingly very different, many of the challenges remain the same. One of them being the **difficulty of managing a coalition in a battlefield.** This is then exaggerated when the people working together come from all over the world, from different cultures and they then again are working in yet another, unfamiliar, environment in co-operation with local staff.

Everybody comes to such a situation with good intentions, but one still has to work through bias and superiority perceptions. **Understanding and respect for the other people in the team is crucial and has to surround not only the work within the coalition, but also the work with the local staff. A genuine commitment to empower the local staff is very important. Openness to local norms and capabilities as well as the willingness to accommodate this is key to a good working collaboration. One should focus on the resources in the community one is working. Although it is important to assess needs and resources, it is better to focus on which resources exist. Often in such a project the needs are unending, and it becomes difficult to focus. By directing the focal point of the project onto the resources it becomes more tangible and positive.**

Within the coalition team one should try and maintain the following:

It is important to keep openness to discrepancy and disagreements between the professional staff.

Shared responsibility for shared fame

Make space for different cultures amongst the staff

Make sure to after work make time for cohesion (team) building. Remember that you need to create the team while running the show

Some solutions to the challenges: **One needs to have a steering committee**, so there is a clear divide and boundaries. **Only have one project leader to the project. It is crucial to have somebody be responsible to keep track of what has been agreed upon with the local team.** This avoids any confusion between the incoming professionals and the local staff, as well as making sure that yet again the communication is kept straight and clear. **Ongoing communication with the local staff is fundamental to the project's success.** Remember to make the time for daily processing session for the staff and be flexible about giving and receiving feedback. **Translating materials to the local language is significant to the involvement and inclusion of the local staff. And finally, the stubborn support of the local personnel and their training as well as their process of becoming independent is critical for the success of the project.**

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Talia Levanon: Conclusion and Next Steps

The question is not if it will happen, the next crisis. It will happen. The question is what and when and how to be prepared. Our purpose of this track was to create a forum for models based on universal principles, on systems that can be adapted and used in other and new situations. One of the serious problems facing us as professionals is that **most systems in place for crisis do not look at long-term needs. They look at how to solve the immediate crisis**, but do not look beyond.

The lesson learned today is that usually when thinking ahead, one thinks back to the last crisis that happened. We learn from that past event and prepare for what to do if that happens again. Now we know that **we need to prepare for the unknown.** We need to prepare our community, our leadership, our professionals, our system for that which we have yet to experience.

We have to continue to develop collaboration and sharing. There have been suggestions of doing things online, of creating forums etc. We need to see to it that these ideas move forward and become a reality. Just like we have been saying that coalitions, cooperation and collaboration is crucial to the success of our communities and the threats they are facing, working together will make all of us be stronger, better prepared and more resilient.

Thursday 20th November 2008
Coping with external threats

Reoccurring issues throughout the day:

The importance of coalition building and collaboration. This was stressed again and again. With that came also the underlying notion that **preparedness is key to functioning well during a crisis.** And for a community to function well during a crisis **there has to be a system in place, or a system has to be erected, so that communication can be shared, and the community can continue to draw on its strengths.**

To build up and continuing developing resilience is essential.

Adaption and innovation, the ability to see which things have to change and act upon it. To be able to recognize and adapt our organizations to new situations and events.

To train the leadership, the professionals working in the community and the youth is of utmost importance.

To become more developed and sophisticated in our manner of collaborating and sharing information.

To start using the Internet as a resource and tool for our cooperation.

In a time of crisis use structures, strengths and coalitions which exist in the community.

Flow of communication, be it between various organizations, the government and the organizations or between the various communities, is of utmost importance.

Look for strengths within the communities themselves and build on those.