

POWER AMIDST RENEWAL:

Foundation Support for Sustaining Advocacy After Disasters



POWER AMIDST RENEWAL:

Foundation Support for Sustaining Advocacy After Disasters



Credits and Acknowledgements

Alliance for Justice thanks the Foundation of the Mid South for their early and substantial support that made writing this report possible. We also thank the Marguerite Casey Foundation and the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation for the funding that makes it possible to print and distribute this report.

Power Amidst Renewal was written for Alliance for Justice by Linda Usdin, a New Orleans native. It was edited by Holly Yeager, a freelance writer based in Washington, DC, and Alliance for Justice staff: Nan Aron, president; Sue Hoechstetter, senior advisor, Foundation Advocacy Initiative and Advocacy Planning & Evaluation who led the project for AFJ; Doug Lakey, senior director of Advocacy Programs; Abby Levine, legal director of Advocacy Programs; and Kevin Fry, communications director. Several interns, including Sairah Anwar, provided invaluable assistance in the production of this report. The photographs were provided by a variety of sources (each picture is identified), but we particularly thank Jim Belfon, an independent professional photographer who provided most of the pictures in this report. Originally from Harlem, New York, Jim is currently based in New Orleans. He is also the founder and director of the Gulf South Photography Project, a community-based photography school that provides service learning classes and workshops to children, young adults and senior citizens throughout the Gulf Coast region.

About the Author

This publication was written by Dr. Linda Usdin with the help of Alliance for Justice staff. Linda Usdin began her professional life as a community organizer in North Carolina and Virginia. Dr. Usdin has maintained a focus on community-based development and has held senior positions on international and domestic community development projects. She is a native of and lives in New Orleans, and works extensively with community-based organizations, foundations and government agencies to insure the equitable transformation of the Gulf Coast region.

Before the hurricane and levee breaches, Dr. Usdin worked for local and national foundations as a program development and evaluation consultant. In addition, she has taught courses for the South Central Public Health Leadership Institute, the Centers for Disease Control, and Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Dr. Usdin served as the lead strategic planner for a citywide violence prevention initiative in New Orleans, and has facilitated planning processes for groups such as the National Network of Public Health Institutes, the Louisiana Public Health Institute, and Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx.

Dr. Usdin has a B.A. from Duke University, a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley and a DrPH from Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The focus of her academic work has been on the planning and evaluation of community development and change initiatives.

About Alliance for Justice

Alliance for Justice (AFJ) is a national association of over 100 organizations dedicated to advancing justice and democracy. For over 30 years, AFJ has been a leader in the fight for a more equitable society on behalf of a broad constituency of environmental, consumer, civil and women's rights, children's, senior citizens', and other groups. Alliance for Justice believes that all Americans have the right to secure justice in the courts and to have their voices heard when government makes decisions that affect their lives. Through its Advocacy Programs, AFJ provides training, resources and tools for nonprofits and foundations to enable them to advocate legally, confidently, and effectively to make our democracy work for all.



Jim Beifon

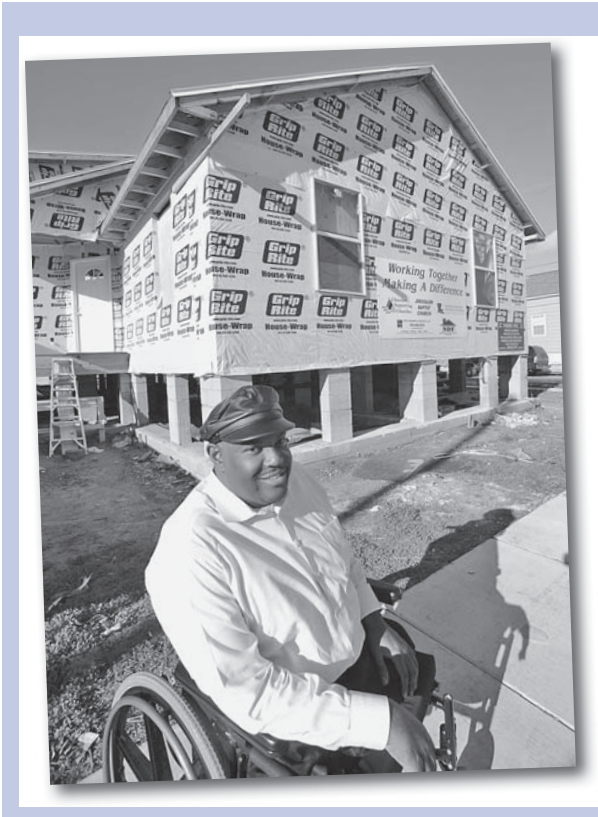
“In the Gulf Coast there is a new breadth of advocacy sophistication that we want to continue to nourish. It’s critical that we as funders help nonprofits continue to grow in the long run following any disaster.”

Cynthia Renfro, Marguerite Casey Foundation

Introduction

In 2007, Alliance for Justice commissioned the writing of *Power Amidst Chaos: Foundation Support for Advocacy Related to Disasters* to illustrate the importance of advocacy by the nonprofit sector to ensure that recovery after a disaster is equitable and effective. Playing an active role in the formation of public policy is essential if foundations, advocates and other community leaders are to accomplish their goals. But in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we saw that local nonprofits and the residents they represent were often not included when crucial policy decisions were being made, leaving many voiceless in the immediate recovery process.

In *Power Amidst Chaos*, published two years after the hurricanes struck the Gulf Coast, we detailed a set of principles for foundation support of effective disaster-related advocacy. These principles were developed from lessons described in the report. They speak to the need



Jim Belfon

for foundations to support advocacy before, during and after disasters in order to ensure that those most impacted have a voice in the recovery. The principles remain important, and are reprinted as Appendix B.

Now, five years after the crisis and three years after the first report, we revisit the Gulf Coast to assess the landscape and see what more we can learn. Specifically, have the principles articulated in *Power Amidst Chaos* been followed? Has advocacy in all its forms taken its place as an integral part of the region's nonprofit "toolkit?" In what ways have foundations and nonprofits been effective in advocating for the systemic changes that were long needed in the region, and exacerbated by the disasters? Most importantly, what remains to be done and what lessons can we learn three years later to guide our planning for the next five years and beyond?

This update comes in the context of a new disaster, the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. This devastating accident, which has caused the worst oil spill in American history, has afflicted the same region that suffered after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the levee breaches, and the flooding throughout the Gulf that followed. It is a powerful reminder of the vital importance of advocacy at times of disaster. Most significantly, in the early response to the spill, we can see signs of how the civic infrastructure that has been developed as a result of the Katrina recovery efforts has led to a more active and robust response to this latest challenge to the Gulf Coast and its residents.

In this new report, the answers come from the ground, from the people who have been working in the region as well as the national organizations that have partnered with local organizations and practitioners. What follows are contemporary observations and lessons. The lessons are for the 21st century and offer recommendations for advocates and funders working in new environments. They are about collaboration, regionalizing advocacy agendas, the integration of advocacy into the missions and everyday operations of nonprofits, the sometimes conflicting agendas of national foundations and the local foundations and nonprofits they are supporting, and, most pointedly, the timing and duration of support needed for effective advocacy.

Advocacy can take many forms, from meeting with editorial boards to lobbying government officials. It includes: community organizing; voter education and engagement; developing community leadership; conducting needs assessments and polling; researching key issues and potential solutions; developing plans to reform broken systems; and other methods for speaking out

for the needs of a group's members, constituents and clients. In all these forms, advocacy allows for the collection and dissemination of community voices, provides a way for ordinary people to get involved in shaping their neighborhoods and cities, and enables them to express their views on government policies—and push for change.

Activists and advocates on the Gulf Coast are charting new directions in several ways. They are helping to redefine effective governance, using new media tools and engaging communities with a new sense of civic power, to push for more open and accountable institutions. The changes can be seen in their work in the criminal justice system in New Orleans, regional work on equity and inclusion, environmental justice efforts by a partnership that includes the United Houma Nation and residents of the Lower Ninth Ward, and the work of housing advocates throughout the region, among others. This follow-up report is based on interviews with foundation and nonprofit staff and activists working in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (see Appendix A). We are pleased to have the opportunity to share some of their stories.

As one of the nation's leading organizations encouraging and supporting advocacy by the nonprofit sector, Alliance for Justice recognizes that what is happening in the Gulf Coast has important ramifications nationwide for nonprofit organizations and the foundations that fund them. Much can be learned from the growing work by nonprofits to organize local communities to be active participants in policy decisions in the wake of the disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and now the BP oil leak. These hard-earned lessons have important ramifications for support of advocacy in general—both during disasters and in more normal times—and should be shared with all those who seek to strengthen communities and promote change.



Jim Beifon

Looking Back: Setting the Stage

Immediately following the 2005 storms, foundations from around the country rushed to the Gulf Coast to help mitigate the impact of the hurricanes and subsequent flooding. There is no question that local foundations and existing organizations in the Gulf Coast played (and continue to have) critical roles, especially in terms of delivering services and meeting immediate human needs after the storms and flooding. However, some of the national funders were initially frustrated by the historically weak civic infrastructure in the region and had difficulty in identifying local partners. They wanted to make a difference and struggled to understand the depth and breadth of the disasters. As described in *Power Amidst Chaos*, at times this resulted in foundations making decisions without sufficient local input or forming partnerships that didn't last.

Meanwhile, people living in the region were recognizing that government at all levels wasn't effective at meeting their needs or even responsive to those needs. They quickly came to understand that recovery was going to require historically unprecedented levels of civic engagement and coordination. New groups formed and new coalitions coalesced around critical issues. People began to organize and advocate around key environmental, educational, criminal justice, housing and infrastructure challenges. Over time, they have begun to have some success.

Occasionally, organizations formed after the storm faced resistance from some of the established nonprofits which traditionally had served as gate-keepers for resources. Sometimes

these older groups were entrenched in the systems that had failed to help people after the disasters. National foundations without eyes and ears in the region sometimes had trouble bridging the tensions between groups during their efforts to encourage advocacy efforts

Many of these new organizations and collaboratives have had to lay basic foundations for their work. Some groups that were started after the storms are still emerging. Their intent to develop the capacity to engage their constituents around public policy issues is competing with other urgent needs such as engaging and understanding their constituencies, developing their boards and governance, developing and implementing advocacy strategies, raising funds for immediate needs, and developing diverse revenue streams to make their organizations sustainable.

The evolution and sustenance of these emerging organizations is essential to strengthening regional capacity. Although some philanthropic organizations are phasing out their Gulf Coast support, continued national and regional assistance is especially critical to build on the cautious progress made in developing strong organizations that will represent diverse Gulf Coast communities. Unquestionably, diminishing or eliminating that support threatens all the progress that has occurred.

Continued national and regional assistance is especially critical to build on the cautious progress made in developing strong organizations that will represent diverse Gulf Coast communities.



A New Environmental and Economic Challenge

Nearly five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast, another disaster is unfolding in the region. The April 2010 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig has brought new troubles to a region that was so devastated in 2005. The oil spill hit residents—and the region’s small businesses—just as some organizations that provide post-storm assistance were winding down their work. At the same time, after an initial influx of funding, some foundation support for developing collaborative efforts and advocacy capacities in the region has been reduced or phased out. This has been challenging for many groups intending to take their advocacy to the next level and is a particularly worrisome development in the face of new demands brought on by the spill.

The latest disaster also highlights the changes that have occurred in the region within the nonprofit sector. Thanks to the capacity built in response to the 2005 floods, some of the more active groups are in a better position to organize their communities and ensure that they are part of the dialogue with decision makers crafting a response to the latest challenge. For example, as Gordon Wadge, co-president of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans reported to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, the organization now has two full-time employees working on emergency preparedness and response. They spend much of their time building relationships with other nonprofits, government officials, local business and others so that they are in a much stronger position to represent the needs and interests of local residents.

Other advocacy groups that took leadership after the storms are again front and center raising public awareness and influencing government programs. The Louisiana Bucket Brigade released

a 10 page report challenging some of the Environmental Protection Agency's data on the air-quality following the oil spill. Women of the Storm, founded after Katrina and Rita, launched a national media campaign in 2010 entitled "Restore the Gulf." They are collecting signatures on petitions to help convince Congress and the Administration about the need for significant funding for restoration of the Gulf Coast. The Equity and Inclusion Campaign, also founded after the storms, mobilized quickly and visited Congress in May, 2010 to discuss the region's needs following the April spill. These are just some of the groups that have responded quickly to the crisis.

Less than two weeks after the explosion, advocates from across the region, representing a wide array of interests and constituents, were tapping their existing networks. They held long conference calls each evening to identify needs and issues and develop strategies to address them. Local advocates organized community meetings in the bayou region for maritime workers and their families which were attended by federal officials. Just a month after the deadly accident, and only three weeks after the spill became apparent, a team of 10 seasoned advocates from the Gulf traveled to Capitol Hill to attend congressional hearings and meet with legislative staffers, providing an alternative narrative to BP's well-funded version of the situation on the ground.

One clear lesson from the Gulf experience is that building the capacity for advocacy is not a short-term project.

This latest challenge in the Gulf Coast provides another reminder of the importance of advocacy at times of disaster. It also highlights the reality that while much has been accomplished, the nonprofit community and its ability to serve its constituencies is still developing. There is more work to be done to build a sustainable infrastructure to support ongoing advocacy that can secure lasting change. One clear lesson from the Gulf experience is that building the capacity for advocacy is not a short-term project.



Getty Images

After Chaos: Observations on the Gulf Coast Five Years After the Hurricanes

The pace of change and increased levels of community involvement in civic life in the Gulf Coast region over the past five years are impressive. As the five-year anniversary of the hurricanes approached, people were eager to share information about current, evolving, and planned systemic changes. It remains to be seen, however, how the added tragedy of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will alter the dynamic of community engagement and advocacy in the region over time and affect the observations and conclusions detailed below.

The observations described in this report are based on interviews and other conversations with advocates, funders, and other community leaders, conducted in the first half of 2010—almost five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the region.

1. A New Culture of Civic Engagement is Taking Hold

Much has changed in the Gulf Coast since the storms hit in 2005. Organizations and activists have begun to organize their communities, develop coalitions, and advocate around key environmental, educational, criminal justice, housing and infrastructure challenges. After a sometimes uncertain start in the region, many national foundations have found local partners able to implement effective advocacy efforts.

Some of the local capacity changes are profound. Sharon Hanshaw, who started Coastal Women for Change after the 2005 storms, says, “We knew we needed to do something, our community was being devastated, but that meant we had to do things that we had never done before. You need to tell officials what your community needs, but you have no idea how to speak before city council. We weren’t trained to do this. It is amazing to see people doing things that they have never done before. We have never raised money, designed programs, done advocacy, and now we have to do it all at the same time.”

Despite the existing challenges, such as inadequate financing, training, and staff, examples abound of increased capacity for people to speak out and push for policy changes to meet the region’s needs.

Richard McCarthy, executive director of marketumbrella.org, a New Orleans-based group that advocates for local farmers and public markets as central elements of sound economic development, says the 2010 oil spill highlights the remarkable shift. He notes that “People are more actively involved in civic engagement, more cynical about power, and not as defeatist.”

McCarthy points to the Vietnamese farming community’s swift reaction to the latest crisis. “The community is more confident now and is speaking up loudly to BP about getting their share of jobs following the oil spill,” he says. They gained that confidence after joining with allies to push for the closure of a landfill on a nearby bayou because pollutants were leaking into their farms after Katrina.

Responding to substantial communication, socioeconomic, and cultural barriers, Boat People SOS (BPSOS), in collaboration with partners like the Foundation for the Mid South, community- and faith-based organizations, and government agencies, has provided relief and support to underserved Southeast Asian communities along the Gulf Coast for the past five years. Already struggling to recover from the recent natural disasters, communities in the Gulf Coast region, including a large population of approximately 30,000 Vietnamese refugees and immigrants, are now facing the immediate and long-term effects of the BP oil disaster. As Quynh Nguyen, program manager, Boat People SOS, reports: “The shrimping and seafood industries, which provide livelihood to approximately 80 percent of the Vietnamese-American populations in the Gulf, are now severely crippled. BPSOS is mobilizing our resources to the region and working closely with government agencies and national advocacy groups to address the needs and concerns of our communities.”

National foundations in partnership with local funders have played a central role in growing and strengthening the capacity for advocacy in the region over the past five years. According to Ivey Allen, president of the Foundation for the Mid South, nonprofits that might not have considered themselves as advocates now see the importance of being a voice for their community.

She cites as one example the Steps Coalition, which received initial support from the Jewish Funds for Justice, the 21st Century Foundation, Ms Foundation for Women, Oxfam and the Unitarian

“It is amazing to see people doing things that they have never done before. We have never raised money, designed programs, done advocacy, and now we have to do it all at the same time.”

—Sharon Hanshaw,
Coastal Women for Change

Universalist Service Committee. “In Mississippi, the Steps Coalition, a group of relatively small organizations, many in nascent stages, have come together to push for their community and speak before city councils and at neighborhood meetings,” Allen says. “People are more comfortable going to local meetings and becoming more aware of learning what is going to happen before it occurs, rather than reading about what has happened after the fact. They are also more willing to sign on to policy documents of others working in related areas.”

*“First people said to themselves,
‘Don’t worry, the government will help
us. Then, ‘Where is the government?’
Now they are saying, ‘WE are the
government.’”*

—Mary Rowe, Blue Moon Foundation

“People have learned to ask for more—they used to ask for small potatoes—now they are asking to have a voice in how dollars are being allocated or to be seated at the table,” Allen states. “People are engaging in more strategic conversations.”

Working through coalitions to leverage and amplify the power of individual organizations and activists has become a crucial way for nonprofits in the region to represent the interests of local residents. For example, the still active Equity and Inclusion Campaign, launched by Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation to more formally organize residents and organizations, has become a powerful force in the region. “More people are aware of how policy at all levels affects the other work that they do in the community. When needed, nonprofits get involved,” explains Jainey Bavishi, former director of the Equity and Inclusion Campaign. “People have more savvy to step into that world when it is important. Experiences with state-based coalitions (like the Louisiana Housing Coalition) have built capacity in the nonprofits. People realize that all the levels of government are inter-related and that everyone needs to be talking to each other even if they are doing policy work at different levels.”

One of the ways that local nonprofits are maintaining energy for this important work is by integrating it into their day-to-day operational work. Luceia LeDoux, a program director at Baptist Community Ministries (BCM), sees growing support for advocacy among nonprofits working in many areas, including health, education, and criminal and social justice issues.

In the last two years, she reports an increase in specific strategies to build grassroots capacity so that local communities can have real input into decision-making around complex issues. One of BCM’s most active efforts has centered on convening and supporting groups involved in many aspects of criminal justice reform. LeDoux attributes this greater focus on advocacy to the fact that the storms and their aftermath stripped away any illusion that the existing social systems were adequate for truly helping those most in need. It became clear that massive changes were needed, but people had no confidence that those in power would make them without organized pressure and widespread community input.

Mary Rowe, who worked in the Gulf Coast for the Blue Moon Foundation before moving to New Orleans, believes that the storms and the failure of government to adequately address the disaster has led to a change in the relationship between government and the public. According to Rowe, people perceived that the failures in support systems and services were failures of public policy and, by extension, the government, and citizens could no longer afford to take a passive role. Advocacy, then, became a necessity. “First people said to themselves, ‘Don’t worry, the government will help us,’” Rowe says. “Then, ‘Where is the government?’ Now they are saying, ‘WE are the government.’”

2. The Focus of Advocacy has Shifted

The focus of advocacy in the Gulf Coast region has shifted over time. Initially, efforts were centered on specific issues, such as levee protection, housing, education, and criminal justice reforms. These efforts still exist but many advocates have broadened their approaches, working to build collective civic power that can be applied to systemic economic, health, and justice issues.

In New Orleans, advocates and other activists are working together in a new group called the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance. This group includes a watchdog organization, a public law center serving both Tulane and Loyola universities, local organizing groups, civic organizations, a community data center and a new journalism effort called The Lens NOLA.

The Coalition's goals are to help build the capacity for increased community involvement in civic decision-making, to increase access to data, to reinvigorate local investigative journalism, and to push for structural and policy changes that will make governance more accountable. The group is one of many diverse efforts around the country aimed at increasing government transparency. The Open Society Institute (OSI), which is providing initial funding for the work, sees this combination of organizations working together in New Orleans as unique and promising.

The Foundation for the Mid South has also recognized the power of collective organizing and has supported efforts to link diverse identity groups around common agendas. One example is the Steps Coalition based in Mississippi, a group that takes its name from the steps leading up to people's homes—often the only remnant of what had existed before the storms, and a symbol of the common plight linking everyone along the Gulf Coast.

Members of the Steps Coalition have advocated on behalf of increased funding for low-income housing, allocation of Community Development Block Grant dollars, placement of sewage treatment plants, coastal restoration, and other issues facing residents along the Gulf Coast. They have testified before the state and federal legislatures and recently joined with other members of the New Orleans-based Advocates for Environmental Human Rights in Copenhagen in publishing a full-page ad in *The Copenhagen Post* urging President Obama to take 10 more steps for a climate change treaty to protect the human right to a healthy environment. This type of community organizing did not exist prior to the storms.

Several groups now active in advocacy have formed in the past year or so, and are still in the early phases of organizing. One of these

Dear President Obama,

As Gulf Coast residents in the United States who survived Hurricane Katrina, we have experienced how strong storms and coastal erosion can kill and injure, make people homeless, and separate children from parents.

You have traveled more than 4,000 miles (6500 km) to Copenhagen. We are counting on you to take 10 more steps for a climate change treaty that protects our human right to a healthy environment.

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
www.ehumanrights.org

1. Recognize and protect our human right to live in a healthy environment.
2. Reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide to below 350 parts per million.
3. Transition to a clean energy economy that supports alternatives for workers employed in carbon-intensive industries and communities that rely on such industries.
4. Prioritize improving the environmental, health, educational, and economic conditions in communities that suffer from the impacts of carbon-intensive industries.
5. Ensure that vulnerable communities, and women from vulnerable communities, are included in all levels of decision-making on climate change policies.
6. Support the climate resiliency of indigenous and poor communities in the U.S. and around the world by fostering sustainable land use and building materials.
7. Ensure that climate change adaptation policies are aligned with the U.N. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
8. Prohibit racial and ethnic discrimination and gender inequality that can result from governmental preparation and response to disastrous weather events.
9. Require best practices in coastal restoration, reforestation, flood protection, and disaster mitigation in the U.S. and around the world.
10. Require best practices in water resource management to remedy the depletion and impairment of this resource from rising temperatures and unsustainable development.

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights



Jim Beifon

is the Black Brown Coalition, created in New Orleans to build on commonalities among people of color. The Black Brown Coalition grew out of the recognition in communities of color that tensions, especially between African Americans and Latinos, were exacerbated by labor policies and practices that followed the 2005 disasters. To hasten the rebuilding effort, the federal government relaxed labor laws, facilitating immigrant labor while contributing to widespread labor abuses that depressed overall wages.

The Black Brown Coalition develops joint policy statements and uses other tools to reframe the challenges that are common to people of color in the region and works to build trusting relationships and improved communications among them. Their work and collaborations within communities is helping ensure that often-marginalized people work together to enlarge their share of the economic pie, not fight each other over the leftover slices.

In Mississippi, Visions of Hope enhanced community resiliency and furthered its mission to build strong and stable communities in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina through performances and workshops offered by a multi-racial, sociopolitical improvisational theater accompanied by follow-up dialogues. The facilitated discussions immediately following performances helped to break down barriers to understanding and promoted diversity and coalition building. As one workshop participant said, “A voiceless person is a powerless person—and I am quite sure that everyone here has a voice. So if we voice ourselves together, we can speak to those leaders who we voted in and let them know that we are going to vote... And we have to set that example for our children that we can make change, so that they don’t give up hope.”

3. Advocates Across the Region are Working Together

One of the most notable and potentially transformative aspects of the advocacy work that followed the storms has been the increase in regional collaborations. The devastation vividly illustrated that the challenges posed by the disasters were not bound by state lines. Racism, poverty, and environmental issues are regional, as are challenges related to nonprofit capacity and the need for governmental services. People working throughout the region realized that their ability to address these challenges was strengthened when they worked together through robust regional links.

A notable example of this is the Equity and Inclusion Campaign, which was originally a project of the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LDRF). Now independent, the Campaign is a coalition of local, regional and national activists, organizations and community members working across Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. In addition to LDRF, the Campaign is funded by the Ford Foundation, the Foundation for the Mid South, and the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

“The regional relationships that were formed through the Equity and Inclusion Campaign helped with other advocacy efforts as well,” Bavishi, the Campaign’s former director, explains. “Our training, our trips, and our meetings included people from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. In the summer of 2009, in Biloxi, Mississippi, officials tried to do away with FEMA trailers and there was a big push by Hope Credit Union (based in Jackson, Mississippi) with tremendous support from Campaign allies in Louisiana and Alabama, and national allies that led to a six-month extension.”

Before the Campaign, Bavishi says, “Federal advocacy was splintered. After, there was a more unified agenda. It helped legislative staffers when there was a unified ‘ask.’” Their efforts are having results; the Campaign was the lead advocate in obtaining \$73 million in permanent supportive housing vouchers in June of 2008 as well as \$50 million for project-based vouchers in Louisiana.

The value of these regional relationships was seen in the days and weeks following the Deepwater Horizon explosion. Almost immediately following the spill, organizations in the region that had already established collaborative relationships began meeting together to develop a response to this latest, man-made calamity in the region. These included the Steps Coalition, the Equity and Inclusion Campaign, Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health, and Oxfam America.

Advocates moved quickly, with a regional meeting to deal with the policy implications of the oil spill. “The immediate needs and the scope of needs were really wide; we could see that we needed to be proactive rather than reactive in our advocacy,” says Monika Gerhart, director of policy and government relations at the Equity and Inclusion Campaign.

Other examples of regional advocacy efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita abound. Among these are the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act, an ambitious effort to pass federal legislation creating 100,000 jobs to help rebuild the public infrastructure on the Gulf Coast, and the Gulf Coast

“The immediate needs and the scope of needs were really wide; we could see that we needed to be proactive rather than reactive in our advocacy.”

—Monika Gerhart,
Equity and Inclusion Campaign

Sustainable Communities Network, which brings together three dozen community leaders from vulnerable coastal Mississippi and Louisiana communities to form regional strategies for building healthier, more sustainable communities.

4. Gulf Coast Advocacy is Bringing Real Results

As an advocacy culture has taken hold within Gulf Coast nonprofits, organizations are beginning to achieve important results. The power of advocacy can be seen in the new Quality Start program for childcare in Louisiana. With foundation support, childcare providers and advocates in New Orleans formed the Rebuild Collaborative in late 2007 to reconstruct childcare centers destroyed by the disasters. But as the new projects were being constructed, the partners started talking about wanting to do more, and saw an opportunity not just to rebuild childcare centers, but to improve them. As Nancy Freeman, executive director of the private, New Orleans-based foundation Institute of Mental Hygiene, reports: “Advocates called attention to the problem of the lack of childcare facilities in the wake of the levee failure. This added support to the state of Louisiana’s overall efforts to improve the quality of childcare through the implementation of the state-wide Quality Rating and Improvement System.”

“We felt that it was important to integrate more fully into the local community rather than just bringing national expertise. It was important to show that we understood the long-term nature of criminal justice reform efforts and that no external models could be imposed. The political, cultural, economic aspects of the community are integral to reform.”

—Jon Wool,
Vera Institute of Justice

The Rebuild Collaborative was the vehicle for coordinated work to advocate for the underlying policies necessary to improve the quality of the centers. According to Annie LaRock, director of national philanthropy for the United Way for the Greater New Orleans Area, the “Rebuild Collaborative recognized that if we had to rebuild childcare centers, we should rebuild them at a higher level. We couldn’t do this without strong advocacy capacity at the state level to improve standards and provide incentives for centers to improve.” National funders, such as the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, provided money to develop training, incentives and other tools for the centers, so they could improve and be included in the state’s Quality Start rating system.

Changes have reached even some of the most isolated communities. Brenda Dardar Robichaux, the former Chief of the United Houma Nation, talks about the cultural change she has seen in her community in the wake of the storms. “We had always just been a passive community, not spoken in one voice, and concentrated on just taking care of ourselves,” she says. “In terms of environmental challenges, we had little successes along the

way... [but] recently, the Louisiana Recovery Authority asked us to write our own hazard mitigation plan. This is the first one to be written by a tribe and encompass multiple jurisdictions.”

The New York-based Vera Institute of Justice, whose funders include OSI and Baptist Community Ministries, opened a New Orleans office in 2006 to facilitate its work on criminal justice reform. Its director, Jon Wool explains, “We felt that it was important to integrate more fully into the local

community rather than just bringing national expertise. It was important to show that we understood the long-term nature of criminal justice reform efforts and that no external models could be imposed. The political, cultural, economic aspects of the community are integral to reform.”

The organization and local advocates have been successful in helping to reduce the average time from arrest to the filing of criminal charges from more than 60 days to just five. In addition, Vera has been instrumental in staffing the Criminal Justice Leadership Alliance which is charged with developing and implementing a series of criminal justice reforms. The initiative involves a wide range of stakeholders, including the police department, the District Attorney’s offices, public defenders’ offices, the City Attorney, the City Clerk’s offices, and judges from the criminal and municipal courts.

5. Awareness is Increasing about the Importance of Measuring Impact to Support Effective Advocacy

As groups and advocates have become more sophisticated, they have recognized that they needed to develop measurements and generate evaluative information to support their advocacy for both funders and policy makers. In cases like the Primary Health Care Stabilization Grant managed by the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI), both the funders and community partners recognized the importance of developing accountability measures. This Medicaid grant supported the use of a team-based model for the delivery of healthcare services. Under that model, teams are led by personal primary care physicians who follow their patients, making it unnecessary for low income individuals



Jim Belfon



Jim Beifon

to rely on hospital emergency rooms for services. Clayton Williams, former director of health systems development for the LPHI, says that the federal and state governments funded capacity building for local groups and tied funding to service delivery results. This led participating organizations to seek to increase their effectiveness and their abilities to collect, analyze, and disseminate information about the results of their work in order to leverage more government funding for their programs.

“Both national and local foundations recognized how innovative the work was and contributed funding to develop quality improvement, evaluation and outreach components,” Williams explains. “To design the most effective plan for the primary care delivery system, the Commonwealth Fund gave \$50,000 to bring together expert panels to advise on the payment methodology, evaluation and a quality improvement program. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation then gave a grant to train primary health care providers to familiarize them with the new systems and procedures. And locally, Baptist Community Ministries gave \$300,000 to do an outreach campaign because this represented such a new way of delivering and receiving care, with so many new sites, resources, that we needed to do media to advertise the network. In addition, the Commonwealth Foundation put one million dollars to fund the evaluation of the work.”

By being able to prove the value of this patient-centered model of primary care, local advocates were able to successfully negotiate with the federal Medicaid agency to use the available funds for increased incentives for this delivery system.

The results have been dramatic. “We now have 40 certified patient-centered medical homes—more than any other area in the country,” Williams says. “The expansion, stabilization and improvement of the primary care safety net has not been done at this level in any other state.”

6. Local Foundations are Playing a Critical Role

The infrastructure and resources of local philanthropy in the Gulf Coast has historically been limited. Prior to the storms, it was less focused on new models of philanthropy that provide funding for community engagement and public policy. However, significant changes have been made since the storms hit the region.

The Foundation for the Mid South (FMS) strategically focused on expanding the capacity of nonprofits in the region. This was accomplished by investing in and expanding the reach and capacity of the region’s statewide nonprofit associations (Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations, Alabama Association of Nonprofits, and Mississippi Center for Nonprofits) and other organizations that help build local capacity. Both existing and new organizations benefited by receiving training, resource development and capacity building. This support helped to serve and build the capabilities of local nonprofits that are now at the forefront of regional advocacy. For example, the FMS-funded Mississippi Center for Justice has expanded their organization since the storms and is representing thousands of families in the court system with a lawsuit aimed at gaining public benefits intended to help them recover their houses. The FMS also hired a new president in 2006, Ivey Allen, who is committed to advocacy.

“Best efforts to improve conditions of low income people in the community will fail unless you include some support for advocacy, community organizing, and other civic engagement efforts.”

—Albert Ruesga,
Greater New Orleans Foundation

Likewise, the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) hired a new president and CEO in 2009, Albert Ruesga, who is committed to civic engagement and policy change. Ruesga says that it is important to communicate the “idea that advocacy is not only about social justice, but also about effectiveness” and that this pragmatic argument is an important component in changing the culture of nonprofits in the region. As he states, “Best efforts to improve conditions of low income people in the community will fail unless you include some support for advocacy, community organizing, and other civic engagement efforts.”

Ruesga says GNOF has made two important changes in the last few years to encourage more local nonprofits to organize their communities and represent their interests in shaping public policy. First, the group’s general grantmaking program is now focused primarily on supporting advocacy, including research that supports community-based advocacy and other forms of civic engagement. Even the direct service support GNOF provides is given with an eye towards strengthening this work. Secondly, the foundation’s board has a new public policy committee, charged with shepherding resources and amplifying the foundation’s voice on issues that are important to the communities it serves.

The Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LDRF), formed after the floods in the fall of 2005, recognized that advocacy was the only vehicle for delivering substantial changes in traditionally marginalized communities and for building permanent capacity. In fact, according to Flozell Daniels, LDRF’s president and CEO, the Foundation “decided to incubate the Equity and Inclusion Campaign to develop the framework and structures to promote advocacy by traditionally marginalized communities.”

LDRF has taken many steps to encourage advocacy work among its grantees. The Foundation’s policy work began with a series of meetings during which its grantees worked together to identify key issues facing their communities and the policy developments that would “achieve positive systems change,” Daniels says. “This process has allowed the Foundation to support a policy agenda owned by our grantees, built from the ground up.”

“Local foundations can help us to continue to hear the voices of people and groups that have been affected by events as we plan our future work in the communities. It is by supporting local foundations that we invest in the pipeline of new philanthropic leaders.”

—Linetta Gilbert, Ford Foundation

In addition, since its creation, LDRF has provided critical training and capacity building to help nonprofits “begin to see that advocacy should be a part of their mission-based work,” Daniels says. LDRF’s Community Engagement Portfolio is designed to create opportunities for citizen participation in government decision-making processes at the local and state level by providing training, strategies, leadership development, and informational tools. For example, they brought nonprofits together with elected officials responsible for critical recovery policy decisions. Other times they provided information on government budget development, congressional committees, and community planning. All of these efforts enable Louisiana nonprofits and the citizens they serve to meaningfully engage in policy decision-making processes.

Significantly, some of the national foundations also recognized that the disasters provided an opportunity to build local philanthropic competence. Local foundations were more likely to hear and understand what was needed to support people on the ground. Furthermore, local funding partners were seen as being best able to identify and provide the additional funding needed to sustain change.

Linetta Gilbert, senior program officer at the Ford Foundation, acknowledged the importance of investing in local funders. “We need to help position local philanthropies to have both the knowledge and the appetite for continuing to fund advocacy and to become advocates themselves among local private funders. Local foundations can help us to continue to hear the voices of people and groups that have been affected by events as we plan our future work in the communities. It is by supporting local foundations that we invest in the pipeline of new philanthropic leaders.”

7. National Foundations are Instrumental in Changing the Nonprofit Culture to Include Advocacy

The Deep South, including the Gulf Coast, has often been a region that is isolated from other parts of the country. As a result, after the disasters of 2005, some of the national foundations did

not have trusted partners in the region and relied on national and regional intermediaries to help understand the situation and guide their grantmaking. Regional and national groups were eager to help, and in some cases found a good fit between their mission and the needs along the coast. However, in other cases, area residents felt that national groups were more focused on building their own organizational strength and experiences rather than supporting local capacity.

Over the course of the recovery period, national foundations have implemented diverse models in an effort to engage the local community and help guide their grantmaking. This includes working through local organizations and people in the period following the storms by hiring local consultants as advisors; embedding national philanthropic staff in local organizations; making grants for additional staffing in local organizations; and convening diverse groups from along the Gulf Coast to help develop priorities. These methods all have potential to deepen understanding of local situations at the national level as well as to build local capacity.

Some of the specific funder strategies that have been effective include:

- putting funder representatives on-site in the region rather than coordinating from national offices (e.g., the Rockefeller and McKnight Foundations);
- participating in teams that included local residents and organizers (e.g., the Ford and Ms. Foundations); and
- providing specific training for local community leaders and organizations to enhance their ability to engage in advocacy and empower communities (e.g., the F.B. Heron, Hill-Snowdon and Ms. Foundations and the Needmor Fund).



Jim Belton

Leadership development and community organizing have also been funding priorities. Examples of Gulf Coast leadership development initiatives in the last five years include the Gulf Coast Fellows (initially managed by The Rockefeller Investment Foundation) and the Gulf Coast Funders for Equity’s Small Grants and Technical Assistance Fund, which includes support for grassroots leaders. The Ford, W. K. Kellogg, and Annie E. Casey foundations supported executive-on-loan programs that placed local and national staff within New Orleans city agencies and local foundations to help build local capacity. They also promoted valuable learning experiences for local leaders and activists who traveled around the country and overseas to work with colleagues.

“Locally, more focus is on human needs and not as much on regional and state level support for advocacy. Local and regional foundations are overwhelmed with human misery and needs—they can’t always think about long-term approaches.”

—Jim Brandt, Public Affairs
Research Council of Louisiana

Local advocates such as Jim Brandt, president of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, explain that national foundations were critical in supporting innovation. According to Brandt, “National foundations have led the way. Locally, more focus is on human needs and not as much on regional and state level support for advocacy. Local and regional foundations are overwhelmed with human misery and needs—they can’t always think about long-term approaches.”

Relationships between local and national foundations can be challenging. This is especially the case when, as some advocates reported, foundations that are interested in funding local advocacy also have their own agendas. Along the Gulf Coast, occasionally there were disparities between the national funders’ advocacy goals and those of local groups. As Ruesga of GNOF pointed out, “National agendas can be overwhelming and context is everything.”

Local foundation infrastructure may be thin, but many have clear ideas of what needs to be done.”

These potentially conflicting agendas were sometimes reconciled by the local and national foundations taking time to identify local needs and the aspects of the work that the national foundations were most committed to supporting. The Ford Foundation is using this approach with their new Metropolitan Opportunities Unit which is working in partnership with GNOF to develop a shared analysis and theory of change. Ford is building upon the information from GNOF to determine what should be supported. This process is possible because the two foundations have built trust through a relationship formed over time.

Central City Funders Collaborative is another model of collaboration between local and national funders. The effort, launched in 2007, is led by two local philanthropies, LDRF and the local philanthropic office of JP Morgan Chase, and marks the latest development in a long evolution of strong community engagement work and deep relations between the funders. The collaborative now has 21 public, private and corporate funders at the table. As LDRF’s Flozell Daniels explains, “Through this collaborative we have been able to create an understanding of how to align resources around key areas: youth and education, housing, organizing and advocacy, and healthy communities. This has resulted in coordinated funding and the ability of local funders to serve as advisors to national funders.”



Jim Belfon

Gulf Coast Fund grantees, advisors, and donors gather in Barataria Bay at the home of the Louisiana Bayoukeeper on May 19, 2010 to discuss the emergency response to the BP drilling disaster. www.gulfcoastfund.org

Through its work in New Orleans, OSI showed how a national funder could use an understanding of the local environment to support community engagement and social change. Much of the political agenda in New Orleans gets advanced through arts and culture, and, for the African-American community, social aid and pleasure clubs play a central role in that dynamic. There are more than 60 of these neighborhood-based groups, and some have been active for more than 100 years. Today, these social clubs provide social service support such as health screenings and school supplies and uniforms for neighborhood children. They also organize parties and trips to raise money for their annual parades, which draw thousands of attendees. The clubs knit the community together by providing much needed resources as well as social events, all of which help to maintain relationships among the members and their extended families.

After the storms, the clubs helped displaced residents relocate back to New Orleans. OSI funded programs that targeted the “culture bearer” community, providing rental and mortgage assistance as well as healthcare and legal assistance. “People may think that the OSI money was going to costumes but OSI was thinking outside the box, understanding that the clubs could also advocate for the community and promote social change,” according to Deborah Cotton, formerly with the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance and currently a blogger covering second lines and brass bands for *The Gambit Weekly*.

8. The Nature Of Collaboration Is Complex And Changing

After the 2005 disasters, foundation support for organizational capacity-building enabled nonprofits to develop collaborative efforts. These collaborations were important contributors to the increase in advocacy in the region. Over time, the nature of some of these collaborations is changing, making it critical to ensure that as the coalitions change the ability to engage in advocacy remains.

Gulf Coast Funders for Equity's (GCFE) collaboration with the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers is an example of funders working together to better understand how to make thoughtful investments in times of crisis. GCFE facilitated a dialogue about the changing complexities of recovery with on-the-ground leaders. According to Samantha Bickham, coordinator of GCFE, this collaboration allowed funders to make strategic investments that could be leveraged and have an impact at the grassroots level with community-based organizations and at the grassroots by helping those groups influence policy. Further, according to Ruesga of GNOF, "They provide great opportunities for funders to get involved who might not know how to dive in otherwise."

Following Hurricane Katrina, another strong collaborative enterprise emerged on the Gulf Coast linking together mental health providers with primary care providers: the Mississippi Coastal Primary/Mental Health Collaborative. It includes service providers, faith-based organizations, counselors, and others, and is a venue for sharing information and training as well as encouraging partnerships. The organization was recently highlighted in *Minds Matter*, a Foundation for the Mid South document on mental health.

The nature of some of the collaborations is changing as time passes, funding is redirected, and circumstances change.

While many collaborative entities came together fairly easily and continue to function well, some of the coalitions were somewhat "forced" partnerships. LeDoux, of Baptist Community Ministries, has seen collaboration promoted in cases where it may not necessarily be the best strategy. For example, after the disasters, many funders mandated collaboration among organizations as a prerequisite for funding in the belief that this was an essential strategy to prevent redundancy and encourage greater effectiveness. In some cases, this led to difficult partnerships that were not

necessarily workable or effective.

Furthermore, the nature of some of the collaborations is changing as time passes, funding is redirected, and circumstances change. In years four and five, many of the grants have been reduced or phased out, severely restricting funds available to nonprofits for collaborations, through which much advocacy work has been done. Collaboration is time-consuming and as nonprofits face tighter budgets and the need to focus more narrowly on their specific missions, groups have less resources for collaboration.

The Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation launched the Equity and Inclusion Campaign in 2007 to coordinate grassroots leaders from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, and to jointly pursue mutual objectives at the federal level for a full and equitable recovery. Bavishi, the former coordinator of the Campaign, says, "People definitely see the values of collaborations, but sometimes collaboratives break down because it is hard and time-consuming."



Jim Belfon

“Effective collaboratives have to deal with tough issues and be idealistically aligned,” she adds. “They break apart around issues of race and class often. The Equity and Inclusion Campaign of LDRF put a lot of time into relationship building—traveling together, including team-building elements in every meeting.”

Some in the region see movement toward a less formal, but not necessarily less effective, level of collaboration. “Sustaining a collaborative is intensive work,” LeDoux says. “The sharpness of individual organizations’ efforts can get blunted. Collaboratives can siphon off funds that could have gone to help organizations in the belief that a collaborative is the best way to go when this may not be the case. The best collaborations may be ones that are not as formal, but involve organizations that deliberately select to work together on finite issues.”

Bavishi also sees changes in collaborative efforts in the region, and notes coalitions that operate on a more informal, infrequent basis may not necessarily hinder their effectiveness. “National groups are pulling away as time passes, other disasters occur, or they have to cutback due to the economic crises,” she notes. “Sometimes collaboratives exist at a lower level—but if there is a common issue or crisis, they mobilize. This may be an appropriate level of functioning.”

Ivye Allen of FMS reached a similar conclusion: “Collaboratives still exist, but may function in a looser, less formal manner... they exist, and mobilize when needed.”

How this dynamic will play out is unclear, especially given the need for collaboratives to develop trusting relationships over time if they are to be effective. Newer efforts such as the Black Brown Coalition and the Gulf Coast Sustainable Communities Network (which links community leaders from Mississippi and Louisiana working on building sustainable communities) may offer important insights as they mature.

Conclusion: The Advocacy Structure is Tenuous, and Needs Continued Support if it is to Endure and be Effective

As the robust response of advocates to the Deepwater Horizon disaster illustrates, the desire and ability of the nonprofit community to engage their constituencies to weigh in on public policy issues in the Gulf Coast has increased dramatically since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit in 2005. As Dwanda Moore, a Gulf Coast program officer for FMS states: “With the recent Deepwater Horizon disaster, it is apparent that the Gulf Coast has organizations who are advocating for their communities. Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we have seen tremendous growth in the capacity of nonprofits, but recognize that support and resources are essential to the longevity of advocacy during and beyond disasters.”

“Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we have seen tremendous growth in the capacity of nonprofits, but recognize that support and resources are essential to the longevity of advocacy during and beyond disasters.”

—Dwanda Moore,
Foundation for the Mid South

However, building and strengthening advocacy capacity takes time, happens slowly, and only occurs with experience, patience, and sustained investment. Developing the capacity and ability to engage in effective advocacy is a long-term process. While not discounting the growth that has occurred over the past five years, Lucas Diaz, executive director of Puentes New Orleans, a Latino community development group, explains that “most local organizations don’t have the skill sets to do advocacy at a sustainable level. Training is a part of this, and not a one-time deal. There has to be a systematic approach with available and supportive groups on the ground.”

He went on to say: “Often advocacy tends to be slapped on—when it needs to be well thought out over time. It is important to find more allies to build advocacy. Unless funds are long term, people move on after non-sustained funding ends. Most foundations don’t understand what an appropriate window is for funding advocacy. Three years isn’t enough.”

Even organizations with strong financial support have faced cutbacks in recent years, as their initial funding runs out or is reduced, and funders look to move on to other challenges in other places. It also remains unclear whether the ties that have been established among national foundations, local/regional foundations and local nonprofits represent structural changes that are intentional and sustainable or are merely situational and personal. As Cynthia Renfro of Marguerite Casey Foundation comments, “We have to find a way to keep our relationships there alive and continue to grow local resources.”

But, as the Gulf Coast experience shows, while the strength of those ties may be uncertain and financial support may be declining, the work is not done. In many cases, it is just ramping up as groups gain the confidence and capacity to be effective advocates and reach more individuals in need of access to policy makers. Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ), for example, with foundation support from FMS, Ford Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and others, set up an office on the Mississippi coast entirely for the purpose of responding to the needs of those affected by Katrina. With that office, they were able to help 1500 individuals obtain FEMA benefits, Mississippi housing grants, fight contract fraud, get insurance benefits and more. They helped even more individuals return to their homes or obtain new homes by influencing state policy that lifted the cap for housing recovery assistance for low income people from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

According to MCJ's president Martha Bergmark: "The need for Katrina-related advocacy continues. Mississippi still has not expended almost half of the federal recovery funds allocated. We are still in litigation and settlement negotiations over the state's decision to redirect \$572 million intended by Congress for housing recovery to expand the state port at Gulfport. Meanwhile, more than 5000 families categorically excluded from the state's housing recovery program have yet to receive assistance. Our effort to secure equitable treatment of these families is just one example of the continuing recovery needs we must address."

Jackie Jones, who has been the lead organizer with the Industrial Arts Foundation, says, "It is the capacity-building that gets us to advocacy success. We are organizing displaced citizens and other citizens to build capacity but the training piece has to be there too," she explains. "Attention to capacity building and advocacy is necessary to maintain our successes."

Local advocates are still working on many fronts, most dramatically now on the oil spill crisis. Residents in the Gulf, and the nonprofit organizations through which they are organized, now face dealing with the long-term ecological disaster, increased regional vulnerability, and associated economic development and workforce re-training needs that are monumental in scope.

As Gerhart of the Equity and Inclusion Campaign explains, "We're already working at full capacity on hurricane recovery. We have this expanded workload and this new crisis and most organizations have less funding and less staff than they had before."

The oil spill has brought a new set of demands—one that the region is better able to handle than it was five years ago, but one that requires resources nonetheless. The work of the last five years represents first-time efforts to install an advocacy culture within marginalized communities. To reduce philanthropic support now would undermine the progress made in many communities throughout the Gulf Coast. Now is the time for sustained funding, for national funders to support active and capable organizations and the advocacy efforts they are undertaking.

"It is the capacity-building that gets us to advocacy success. We are organizing displaced citizens and other citizens to build capacity but the training piece has to be there, too. Attention to capacity building and advocacy is necessary to maintain our successes."

—Jackie Jones,
Industrial Arts Foundation



Jim Beifron

Five years after the storm, and three years since our first report, there are new lessons to be learned from the experience in the Gulf Coast. These new recommendations should be viewed in light of different nonprofit capacities by region, different types of disasters, and different regional cultures. However, regardless of regional variations, these new lessons should help inform the thinking of both philanthropy and nonprofits when planning for disasters in the future.

Funding Advocacy after Disasters: New Lessons Learned in 2010

1. Funders should provide continuing and flexible support for a period longer than the typical grantmaking cycle to groups responding to disasters.

Five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast, nonprofits continue to advocate for laws and policies needed to rebuild communities and lives. And the work is not nearly done. While the needs and goals may change, responding to disasters is a long-term process, possibly requiring ten years or more. Groups need the financial resources to enable them to react, transform, and capitalize on opportunities in an evolving, fluid manner.

2. Funders should incorporate advocacy training and technical assistance support into post-disaster funding for nonprofits.

Nonprofits on the Gulf Coast have embraced advocacy since the 2005 storms. They have seen the power in coming together, speaking out, asking for what they want and need, and holding government accountable. Funders should provide both financial resources and technical assistance to nonprofits to help them assess and strengthen their advocacy capacity, understand the legal frameworks that govern advocacy, and become more strategic and effective advocates. State nonprofit associations and other infrastructure groups can be strong allies in this work.

3. Funders should always consider local needs, priorities, culture, and leadership when providing funding after disasters.

Receiving resources from national and regional funders and organizations is critical in the post-disaster period. However, those resources (whether financial or otherwise) are most useful when they meet local needs and priorities. A cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach cannot be used. National and regional funders and other organizations wanting to help should work with or through local partners to ensure that sufficient and appropriate resources are provided at the right time to the right groups, local wants and needs are being addressed, and resources are being absorbed locally to develop or strengthen local leadership and knowledge.

4. Since much post-disaster advocacy work may be conducted through new and adaptive coalitions and collaboratives, funders should accommodate these dynamics.

In the months and even years after the hurricanes, many individuals, neighborhoods, interests, and groups came together in various formal and informal coalitions and collaboratives to push for change and assistance. Financial support for these groups made possible much of the advocacy that occurred. Over time, the collaboratives morphed and evolved as needs changed, organizations grew, and priorities that had once been unified became more diffuse. While funding needs may change, the need for funding does not. Funders should adapt their support to accommodate the evolving dynamics.

5. Strengthening community-based foundations should be a priority for national funders.

Local funders, operating within and for specific communities, are usually best positioned to know the opportunities, challenges, players, and local character of a region. They can and should be a conduit for a needed exchange of resources (information, money, technical assistance, and more) between local nonprofits and national and regional funders. National and regional funders should invest in building strong and sustainable local foundations that can support robust advocacy work in the community. Building the advocacy capacity and culture of local philanthropy will help ensure that local advocacy can be sustained.

Appendix A

Interviewees

Many of the groups listed below serve Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Ivey Allen, President, Foundation for the Mid South, Mississippi

Jainey Bavishi, Former Director, Equity and Inclusion Campaign, LDRF, Louisiana

Martha Bergmark, President, Mississippi Center for Justice, Mississippi

Samantha Bickham, Coordinator, Gulf Coast Funders for Equity, Louisiana

Jim Brandt, President, Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Louisiana

Deborah Cotton, blogger, *The Gambit Weekly*, formerly with New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance, Louisiana

Flozell Daniels, President and CEO, Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, Louisiana

Lucas Diaz, Executive Director, Puentes of New Orleans, Louisiana

Nancy Freeman, Executive Director, Institute of Mental Hygiene, Louisiana

Monika Gerhart, Director of Policy and Government Relations, Equity and Inclusion Campaign, Louisiana

Linetta Gilbert, Senior Program Officer, Ford Foundation, New York

Sharon Hanshaw, Executive Director, Coastal Women for Change, Mississippi

Erlin Ibreck, Director, Strategic Opportunities Fund, Open Society Institute, New York

Jacqueline Jones, Lead Organizer, The Jeremiah Group, Industrial Arts Foundation, Louisiana

Annie LaRock, Director of National Fundraising, United Way of Greater New Orleans, Louisiana

Luceia LeDoux, Program Director, Public Safety & Governmental Oversight, Baptist Community Ministries, Louisiana

Richard McCarthy, Executive Director, marketumbrella.org, Louisiana

Dwanda Moore, Program Officer, Foundation for the Mid South, Mississippi

Quynh Nguyen, Program Manager, Boat People SOS, Virginia

Cynthia Renfro, Director of Programs and Evaluation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Washington

Brenda Dardar Robicheaux, United Houma Nation, Louisiana and Lower 9 Center for Sustainability, Louisiana

Mary Rowe, Consultant, Formerly Program Officer, Blue Moon Foundation, Virginia

Albert Ruesga, President and CEO, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Louisiana

Clayton Williams, Former Director of Health Systems Development, Louisiana Public Health Institute, Louisiana

Jon Wool, Director, New Orleans Office, Vera Institute of Justice, Louisiana

Appendix B

Power Amidst Chaos: 2007 Principles for Foundation Support of Effective Disaster-Related Advocacy

Alliance for Justice's 2007 report, *Power Amidst Chaos: Foundation Support for Advocacy Related to Disasters*, identified 10 principles that foundations should use to ensure that a range of public voices can effectively influence the decision-making process before, during, and after disasters. Five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, they remain important.

1. Foundations need to invest in building and strengthening advocacy capacity of all organizations now.

Involvement with advocacy cannot wait until disaster strikes. Advocacy comes into play immediately. Foundations can address that challenge now by making multi-year grants and general support grants, and by providing capacity-building grants, particularly those targeted to building advocacy programs and support.

2. Foundations need to develop their own advocacy capacity.

An effective advocacy staff can initiate constructive, tactical grantmaking and make purposeful use of all of a foundation's resources, including its voice and reputation.

3. General support and other types of flexible funding are needed immediately after disasters.

In addition to providing general support grants, in the wake of a disaster foundations should streamline their usual grantmaking proposal processes, allow existing grantees to deviate from grant proposals as to how they use the funds, and consider supporting different types of organizations, in broader issue areas, or in different geographic regions than they usually do.

4. Funding grassroots leadership development and community organizing efforts should be a priority.

Foundations should make special efforts to identify emerging leaders and organizations. With more resources, grassroots organizations can better represent people affected by disasters at the policymaking table.

5. Foundations must work with and through local organizations and people.

All funding and other decisions should be made by working with local funders, community-based organizations, and others familiar with the culture and priorities of the community. Building these relationships prior to disasters is beneficial.

6. Foundations need to support grantees to make positive, systemic, and infrastructure changes in communities after a disaster.

Disasters provide an opportunity for transformation of systems that have historically failed. Foundation support for institutional re-visioning can lead to the development of an advocacy agenda that will be transformative rather than replicating the status quo.

7. Foundations need to think long-term.

The recovery and transformation of most of the major systems in the Gulf Coast region require a five- to ten-year framework, a timeline beyond grantmakers' typical commitments. Foundation support is needed to help nonprofits with long-term rebuilding and renewal that is necessary for effective advocacy work.

8. Foundations should collaborate to hold government and business accountable.

Coordinated actions by foundations could shape policy that has widespread effects and bring a force to bear on federal decisions.

9. Grantmakers should recognize the critical role of government in disaster work by supporting and encouraging grantee engagement with the public sector.

No matter how organized or well-funded, the nonprofit sector can never supplant government or rebuild alone. Nonprofit organizations have to bring their constituents' voices to policymakers, legislators, representatives of the executive branch, and the courts in order to maximize the effectiveness of government's response.

10. Foundations need to have communication strategies in place, especially related to disaster planning and recovery.

Communications come in various forms, including communication between a foundation and its grantees; between grantees and clients; among members or constituents; and with the government. As policies are being developed, plans drawn, and decisions made, it is crucial for organizations to be able to communicate those with the public (including harder-to-reach people in rural areas and those who have been displaced) and to seek input.



Alliance for Justice provides low-cost and free resources related to nonprofit advocacy thanks to the generous support of foundations, organizations and individuals. If you would like to support our work, please donate online at our website, www.afj.org, or call 866-675-6229.

Cover background photo courtesy: Sherrie Good

Alliance for Justice
www.allianceforjustice.org
advocacy@afj.org
Toll free: 866-675-6229

11 Dupont Circle, NW
2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-822-6070

1611 Telegraph Avenue
Suite 1006
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-444-6070