



Member Care Update

Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team

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My name is Linda Swanson and I work for [Link Care Center](#) in Fresno, California. Link Care is a counseling center that serves missionaries and pastors, as well as our local community. Part of my responsibilities is to edit this member care update for [Ethnê to Ethnê](#). This month, I want us to consider the challenge of helping Christian community leaders around the world be prepared as first responders when there is a crisis in their village or regional area. We (missionaries from other places) can't get there quickly enough and it is very expensive when we finally do set foot in a disaster zone, we often make mistakes, and though some needs are cared for, we often leave behind unintended consequences. Local people are already on the ground and understand their language and culture and people needs. They may be able to do the work much more efficiently and economically with fewer unwanted results. The questions I've long had are:

- Is there a need for appropriate, psychological first aid training?
- What kind of training is needed?
- Is there training that crosses cultural boundaries or would it always need to be designed with each region/culture in mind?
- How could this training be provided?
- Are there resources that could be made available?
- Who are people who are prepared to help us think through these issues?

To find answers to these questions, I wrote to Eng Hoe and our email correspondence will be this month's update. I believe you will enjoy discovering his heart for these issues and his wisdom that took my questions to much farther than I had considered possible. The resources this month include his writings on the role of the church in responding to crisis and providing relief. I commend him to you and invite your responses. Please email me at lindaswanson@linkcare.org with your thoughts, questions, or your ideas for future member care updates.

Eng Hoe is married with 3 teenage children. He was a Barrister at Law, Lincoln's Inn, UK and practiced as an advocate and solicitor in Malaysia for 10 years. In 1994 he left his legal practice and spent 5 years waiting on the Lord and learning about the poor. In 1999 he pioneered a crisis relief ministry, training and leading teams from Malaysia, Singapore and people from other nations to crisis situations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Macedonia/Kosovo, Honduras, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Karen refugees along the Burmese-Thai border.

Eng Hoe now gives training in leadership, strategic planning, crisis response, community development and kingdom transformation. The training has been given in Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, US, Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Myanmar, China, Africa and he continues to mentor several leaders he has trained in these nations. He is currently an associate of Partners International, a US based agency, an associate of Starfish International Partnerships and a director of

Crisis Response Training & Networks Asia. s is passionate for the church to fall in love with Jesus and catch His kingdom vision and His heart for the poor, broken and marginalized, so that they would engage the poor and needy in meaningful ways.

After I wrote to him, Eng Hoe responded:

Dear Linda,

It is so good to hear from you. This indeed is something that runs in my veins. There is so much I would like to say about it. I am so glad to hear someone express the very thing that I have been saying for years – prepare the local Christian leaders on the ground; they know the people, the culture. What could be more strategic? And then **get behind them**; don't take the lead away from them by getting them to serve us. Their community needs to see them in the lead, and see us who come from the outside following their lead. They need to be seen; not us. We are there only for a short while. Quite apart from the practical side of things, we who are far more educated, equipped, connected, materially far more wealthy, from more advanced nations, etc. need to follow the example of our servant master Jesus and get down and serve our brothers and sisters there so that we will demonstrate the love of Jesus, and so that **their** light will shine. And, when the work is done, we need to quietly fade away from the scene.

Is there a need for appropriate, psychological first aid training?

Yes absolutely. Local Christian leaders need to understand that everyone, including themselves, will be traumatized. They need to know what trauma is, its effects, how to deal with it themselves, how to help others in trauma, etc.

What kind of training is needed?

Besides trauma and how to deal with it, there are other things they can be prepared to deal with. I have attached a general training syllabus. It needs to be adjusted and tailored for each community. But there are subjects that are common to all cultures and communities. They need to know what usually happens in a disaster, the different phases they will go through, what usually happens in each phase, the chaos and challenges, the changing needs, the human reactions and responses from different quarters - local government, public services, local religious authorities, local community leaders, local NGOs, international NGOs, survivors, to what extent each can help, what's realistic, what's not, understand the usual dependency syndrome that develops and how not to get into it, how to get organized, how to plan, how to work with each of them, the logistics, etc. What is really important is to explore with them what they can do to get back to work (the rehabilitation phase), and how to help people get back to work and earn their own income. The acute phase where relief is needed will pass quickly, and must not be prolonged or dependency will set in. Job creation is one of the most important needs in a community after a disaster.

Is there training that crosses cultural boundaries or would it always need to be designed with each region/culture in mind?

Most of the general training would be helpful for all, but yes, on top of the general training, each region/culture would need special attention to address issues relevant to their region/culture. There is so much about local culture – the corruption, politics between churches vying for support, misappropriation and misapplication of funds, fatalism, dependency, unhelpful imitating of western culture, wrongly using aid as a tool for evangelism, etc. that must be addressed.

How could this training be provided?

First, the local leaders need to see the need for this training. This can come about through someone who catches the vision and then organizes a vision seminar (a one day event) for leaders. If the leaders catch the vision and see the need, a 5 days training can be run 2 or 3 months later with 2nd level leaders. I would really want those who are already engaged in community outreach to come for that training.

Are there resources that could be made available?

Do you mean funds and manpower? Yes, but we need to step back and think this through carefully. Aid is certainly needed, but too much aid and wrong approaches from wealthier nations have created or reinforced dependency and caused a lot of damage to those in poorer nations. This includes creating and reinforcing dependency in churches in the poorer nations. There is so much I want to say about this and so much that I teach on this subject.

This is side-stepping your question, but I think one of the most strategic things that needs to be put in place for completing the unfinished task of Matt.24:14 is to have a crisis response network made up of coordinators and facilitators in each nation, especially the most crisis prone ones (who are also the most unreached) and all of them linked together. Have a look at the Issachar Partnership vision attached. Imagine if we had that in every one of these crisis prone nations and they are all linked up!

You mentioned a “how to” website. That’s a great idea. I have been thinking about this. I have a crisis response manual that I have been thinking of putting the whole thing into the CRTNAsia website, but this is more to prepare teams from more developed nations in how to go and help communities in less developed nations. Local Christian leaders and Community leaders would probably not be able to access any website mainly because of language and they would not have the means to access it.

Who are people who are prepared to help us think through these issues and develop this training/resource?

Unfortunately, the “main players” in the world of crisis relief are the NGOs. NGOs, whether secular or Christian, are stuck in what I call the “NGO paradigm” of operating. They are the last people to think of getting down to serve the local leaders or for the local leaders to take the lead. They would probably like the idea of training local leaders, but they would look at it from their perspective – how to prepare them to serve us, the people from the outside, more effectively!

I have spoken with Christian NGO leaders many times. They can’t help but insist on being in the forefront, fly their banners, get the job done, take their photos, publish their reports, so as to get in more funds to keep their NGO machinery rolling. The local church wears the t-shirt of the NGO and runs at the beck and call of the NGO, obviously because whoever has the money is the boss. Just when the community needs to see the local church caring for them and just when the local church needs most to show their love and care for their neighbors, that doesn’t happen! Instead, the community sees the NGO, not the local church, caring for them. The community’s view of Christianity as a western dominating force is reinforced. The Christian NGO cancels out all opportunities for the local church to reach out to their communities, but they don’t seem to care about this unintended consequence.

I'm sorry, but I have not found anyone in the crisis response world that has stopped even for a moment to think about how their work impacts the local church and its mission to its community. This includes those who want to reach the unreached. They too are thinking and operating in the NGO paradigm.

I once had a rare opportunity to exchange views with someone who sits in the board of a well known NGO. She happened to come to a meeting where I was sharing. After the meeting, she approached me and wanted to talk with me. I told her what was happening in the field. I asked if she would bring this to the attention of the others on her NGO's board so they could do something about it. She immediately resisted the idea and defended the actions of Christian NGOs, although she could not deny, and even agreed with me, that the NGO's behavior effectively canceled out all the opportunities for the local church to reach out to their communities. Amazing! We parted quite politely, but my parting shot to her was,

"I wonder when I would get to see the leader of a big Christian NGO going to a Mr. Nobody pastor of a small local church and asking him if he could wear the church's T-shirt instead." She had no answer.

How do you think the church should respond to disasters?

We need to move people as far as possible away from an NGO paradigm and put the primary responsibility of caring for the community back into the laps of the church. No doubt God used the NGOs and He continues to use them, and they have filled a gaping hole left by the church that is more concerned for the "spiritual" needs of people. But "church as we know it", needs to shift back to "church as it ought to be." The whole understanding of church needs to be radically changed. For that to happen there has to be facilitators in every church and Issachar Coordinators to bring them together. When an Issachar type of network is in place (doesn't matter what it's called), then hopefully NGOs will have no choice but get behind the local church. Issachar Coordinators and local church facilitators who are already used to engaging the communities know immediately what to do in a disaster. They can also prepare their churches for disasters with training.

Lately, everywhere I go, I have been talking about 3 paradigms – church, NGO and kingdom. The Church says, "Give us your money; we will do the spiritual work." The NGO says, "Give us your money; we will do the social work (that the church is not doing)." It is different kind of work, but same modus operandi. The people are just spectators and not engaged in the work of the kingdom.

The kingdom paradigm is where the people to say, "We are part of God's army and workforce for His kingdom. We have skills and creativity. Why are we giving our money to the church or NGO and the money sits in fixed deposits in banks? We are the church. The institution is not the church. The leaders are not the church. We are Jesus' hands and feet and face. We will not be just spectators. We will engage directly with the community, with people in need, one life, one family at a time. We don't need committees and buildings and staff. That is not how Jesus operated, neither Paul. Let's get back to being salt and light to our neighbors."

For years I have seen that people (recipients of aid) are thankful only during the first 2 weeks of a disaster. After that they are no longer thankful. They get demanding and compare between the size of the other guys tent and the tent they are under. I have seen so much jealousy and envy and strife. We might think we are doing a great job helping them in their hour of need, but NO, from their perspective, "What's so great about what you are giving us? It is not your own money; it is donor money. You are just working for your salary with a big NGO. And whatever you can do, so can the other secular or other religious NGOs."

It would be more meaningful to go to them not as an NGO or even as a church with a relief program, but as individual Christians. One to one, heart to heart. I hate to say this, but the truth is, like the secular world, it is efficiency and visible results that drive us, not the slow work and formation of the kingdom in the hearts of people. How differently Jesus operated from the way we do. Imagine if we were standing at Golgotha watching the whole scenario. At the end of His ministry, only 3 Marys and 1 John were at the foot of the cross. Everyone else had fled. What would we think? Would we think that Jesus was a success or a failure? He left behind nothing visible (except later we see a small band of people who had been ravaged by His love taking the world by storm). Yet, we have no doubt today that His Father would have looked down and said, "Son, you totally succeeded!" How different God looks at and measures success from the way we do.

How can we train local Christian leaders to be able to be first responders and be the hands and feet of Jesus as you envision?

More leaders are interested in my Community Development Training than the Crisis Response Training. That's why I saw the need for the Issachar network which will set in place a structure that caters for both CR and CD. If some readers would like to know more about that and perhaps support it, that would be great. They could become catalysts for an Issachar network to start up in their city or nation.

Do you have practical steps we could take? Yes, your readers can get in touch with me at acts1322@gmail.com, or read more at my [Issachar](#) blog. I am already giving training to local Christian leaders wherever doors open. But, it is hard for local Christian leaders to see the need for such training. People do not usually plan for a disaster. Until it is too late, of course! There are much more immediate matters to grapple with that have been waiting at their doorsteps for months.

Eng Hoe

Resources

This month's resources are writings by Eng Hoe. Next month, Doug Harrison will share his thoughts about the role member care providers can take in helping communities develop first responders to crisis. Do you have any thoughts to share with us in response to Eng Hoe's writings? Please write to me at LindaSwanson@Linkcare.org. Your comments, helpful resources, and article ideas are always welcome.

[Biblical Perspective of Disasters Eng Hoe.pdf](#)

[Crisis Response Summary Eng Hoe.pdf](#)

[Crisis Response Training Eng Hoe.pdf](#)

[Indonesia Crisis Response Network Eng Hoe.pdf](#)

[The Issachar Partnership Eng Hoe.pdf](#)

[Why Crisis Relief Eng Hoe.pdf](#)