



International Center for Conciliation

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October 15, 2013

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Dear members of the Board and Advisory Council, Fellows and Friends of ICfC:

I am happy to announce the launch of a new ICfC project that consolidates the work of our organization during more than 12 years. On October 23rd, I, along with DeadSeaNet Founder and President, Professor Gilles Wust-Bloch of Tel Aviv University, will be arriving in Amman to coordinate the final planning meetings with representatives of the Jordanian Government, as our invited application for special World Bank involvement advances through the many layers for confirmation. We will be launching the “Community Based First Responders” training program involving Jordan, and ultimately, Jordan’s neighbors.

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The story has become familiar much as it is stunningly inspiring: men and women, elderly and young, educated and untrained, pass by some conflagration, an “act of God” or “man made.” Why they jump into action, rather than averting their eyes and turning away their feet has captured increasing international attention. These intuitive First Responders not only save lives of victims, but also fortify our souls and our will in setting new standards of humanity at the very moment of our greatest despair. There does not seem to be any special gene shared by these First Responders, who provide that silver lining to increasingly frequent reports of terrorist attacks and the multi-causal disasters like Katrina. But the efficacy and safety of these local and unassuming people can be increased through preparedness and carefully structured training. Perhaps most significantly, they can serve their own communities in which they know the human and environmental factors much better than the prototypical First Responders, who are often sent by international aid groups and foreign governments days or even weeks after the disaster first occurred.

Over the past months and during two intensive visits, I met with several important leaders in Jordan to discuss the approach that ICfC has developed together with our DeadSeaNet colleagues. The plan utilizes community based disaster preparedness to encourage cross border cooperation in the Dead Sea region, which is so prone to natural disasters. Our science and environment partners will join us in developing a strategy for training the citizens of rural communities to be their own First Responders in life-threatening disasters. The model that we have developed combines the cutting-edge theorizing of seismologists and seismic engineers, the best approaches of social scientists who have been monitoring disasters in conflict areas around the world, and the organizing skills of devoted Jordanian citizens working for government and non-governmental agencies. The time that we will spend in Jordan will enable us to clarify details of this pilot-project that will be launched early in the next calendar year.

As I share this great news with you, I must also apologize for the irregularity of ICfC’s communications with its friends in the last period. Needless to say, there have been ups and downs in the planning of this project. The breakthrough came not only because of the good ideas and intentions of the professional project leadership, but also in the World Bank recognizing that this initiative deserves special encouragement, evaluation and support. In the past months I have had the privilege of working with impressively devoted executives of the World Bank and particularly at the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) to develop the details of this collaboration. It would include:

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Associations included for identification purposes only.

- The World Bank will manage a special grant provided by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) that could range from \$200,000 to \$3,000,000 dollars, depending on how much funding we can disburse within a fiscal year
- We will coordinate this project with the leading planning institution in the country, the National Center for Security and Crisis Management under the auspices of its Vice Chairman, Dr. Reda Btoush.
- Our pilot for the project will launch in the Jordan Valley but ultimately stretch to some villages and towns in the mountains of Eastern Jordan.
- Within 12-18 months, with the program established, evaluated, well institutionalized, and funded, we will be able to move the initiative to work with our Israeli and Palestinian colleagues in their own countries and prepare the groundwork for participation of any other state along this major Fault, stretching from Turkey in the North through Iraq and Iran in the South.
- Scientists, engineers, environmentalists and community development experts from other seismically active areas, such as Indonesia, Japan, West coast of the United States and Central Europe will be brought in to observe, evaluate, and develop plans for adaptation and replication in their own regions.
- Experienced emergency professionals will guide the project and actively recruit community leadership from unconventional sources, including women and underemployed youth and minorities. We will blend emergency response and preparedness training with vocational skills that Jordanians can use to gain employment or increase livelihoods.
- Training will enable community members to use their skills in non-emergency situations to resolve the ongoing intra- and inter-communal conflicts that have weakened the quality of life and satisfactions of communal solidarity.

While we recognize that there are many more challenges to come, the response from World Bank middle level and executive officials has been most encouraging. Developments in the next weeks will be decisive. I promise to let you know as soon as I can of how things are coming together and will be around to seek your specialized advice. I will leave it to another occasion to tell you about other developments at the Center, including new appointments to our staff, and first steps on other projects and partnerships in South East Asia, for which we hope to receive your enthusiasm and support.

With joyous anticipation,



Hillel Levine



Hillel Levine with two community representatives from a rural village in the Jordan Valley. Hillel spent a day consulting with community members on delivery methods for preparedness and emergency response training.



The sink hole shown in these two photos opened next to a road as a result of seismic activity in the Jordan Valley.



Sink holes present serious danger as they often open without warning, giving people no time to escape.