



Season of Prayer

<http://www.linkedfate.org>

For Information about the Weekly Updates Contact Jason Reece at reece.35@osu.edu

For More Information about the Season of Prayer contact Rev. Tony Johnson at Rev.

tonyjohnson2@verizon.net

An examination of rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with an emphasis on displaced populations, inadequacy of government responses, and inequitable development strategies.

Weekly Update ~ 08.11.06

Reports:

- The Brookings Institution issued its one-year review of key indicators of recovery in post-hurricane New Orleans. Findings address the current status of housing, labor, allocation of federal funds and the overall rebuilding effort. According to the review, although repair and reconstruction of housing is taking place, the rate of house demolitions is also increasing. There is a serious lack of availability when it comes to affordable housing. Public transportation, utilities, and other social services are operating far below capacity. In terms of employment, the labor force is 30% smaller than it was before the hurricane and unemployment is higher than pre-Katrina levels. Health and education sectors suffered the most severe declines and 278,000 workers remain displaced. With regard to federal aid, over \$107 billion has been approved to assist the Gulf Coast region. Almost half of this money will go toward emergency and long-term housing while the rest will go to: the rebuilding of infrastructure on the local, state, and federal levels; debris removal; and levee reconstruction.
Source: Liu, Amy; Fellowes, Matt; and Mabanta, Mia. Special Edition of the Katrina Index: A One-Year Review of Key Indicators of Recovery in Post-Storm New Orleans. The Brookings Institution. August 2006.
- Analysis of change-of-address forms filed with the U.S. Postal Service indicates that return migration to the New Orleans metro area has slowed. According to the figures, 171,000 pre-Katrina New Orleanians have returned to the city. It is estimated that there are 210,000 to 250,000 people living in the city, though it is unknown who was a previous resident and who has come as part of rebuilding efforts. The postal service data does not account for new migrants or people that did not file a change-of-address form. As such, estimating the region's population via postal data is imprecise. When asked to assess these figures, Brown University demographer/sociologist John Logan called the figures "discouraging", attributing the small number of return migrants to the lack of leadership.

Source: Russell, Gordon. "New population statistics gloomy; Rate of return to area down dramatically." Times-Picayune. August 8, 2006.

- A report released by the Foundation Center reveals that nearly \$600 million has been donated to hurricane relief efforts by individuals, non-profit agencies, and corporations. The report also dispels rumors that charitable emergency relief giving may be funneling dollars away from other causes. The report concludes that emergency relief gifts are made in addition to other annual planned giving.

Source: Cassandra, Amanda. "Donations to Hurricane Katrina Victims Near \$600 Million." Voice of America – News Online. August 9, 2006. Accessed August 10, 2006.
<http://www.voanews.com/english/2006-08-09-voa69.cfm>

Commemorating Katrina:

- Spike Lee's documentary "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts" features the themes of race, class and politics "which too often have been sensationalized or rendered in sound bites". Behind the lens, Lee's documentary captures the voice and experience of ordinary people. The first half of "Levees will be shown for free on August 16 to 10,000 people at the New Orleans Arena. HBO will show the first two hours of "Levees" on August 21 at 9pm, and the last two on August 22 at 9pm. The entire documentary will be shown on HBO at 8pm on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Source: "Agony of New Orleans, Through Spike Lee's Eyes." New York Times. August 3, 2006.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/03/arts/television/03leve.html>

- Several organizations brought together by the People's Hurricane Relief Fund (PHRF) and joined by the African American Leadership Project (AALP) are planning an event to coincide with the one year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. This event will serve as "an observance of the devastating events of Katrina" and an opportunity "to rededicate its members to the struggle for a just and equitable reconstruction of New Orleans." The purpose of the event is to solemnly remember the devastation and destruction caused by the hurricane, while at the same time reminding and energizing citizens about the ongoing rebuilding process. The event will take place from August 25-29.

Source: "AALP to mark first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina with a full slate of activities August 25-29." The Louisiana Weekly. August 7, 2006.
<http://www.louisianaweekly.com/weekly/news/articlegate.pl?20060807m>

- Prior to recessing from session, the U.S. House of Representatives failed to note the upcoming anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Similarly, the Senate did not propose a resolution. Both are due back on September 5, which is the anniversary of the arrival of federal troops in New Orleans after the storm.

Source: Walsh, Bill. "A day to forget? Congress doesn't bother to go through the motions to mark Katrina's anniversary." Times-Picayune. August 5, 2006.

Collaborative efforts:

- Louisiana and Department of Homeland Security officials are at odds over who is responsible for the evacuation and shelter provisions in the state. This debate rages on at the peak of hurricane season and nearly one year after Hurricane Katrina. Louisiana is the only hurricane-prone state that does not have emergency plans in place. Mississippi's Emergency Management Agency has their "Stay Alert, Stay Alive" program which educates residents of FEMA trailers on how to

evacuate. To date, the federal government has contracts to evacuate 80,000 Louisiana residents by bus, 40,000 by air and 15,000 by rail. However, Governor Blanco criticized this plan for not consulting an independent agency. She created the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) as an independent agency and expects the federal government to consult this group. The lack of coordination between local, state and federal governments is likely to result in disjointed emergency responses.

Source: Hudson, Audrey. "Louisiana questions hurricane policies; Seeks clear-cut federal response." The Washington Times. August 4, 2006.

- Paul Lambert, a consultant hired by the New Orleans City Council, has strongly criticized the Greater New Orleans Foundation for its recovery planning. He says that the Foundation's plan, called the Unified New Orleans Neighborhood Plan, is delaying grants vital to the redevelopment of communities, and that neighborhoods would be better off making use of the plans being put together by his group consultants. Specifically, he claims that currently supported projects may not develop into funding requests until next spring. Lambert also expressed concern over the fact that some residents think that in order to get recovery funding, their neighborhoods must pick consultants who are endorsed by the planning committee. The work being done by Lambert's team will be integrated into the city's plan, an effort which is endorsed by the Louisiana Recovery Authority. The city's plan is largely supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and seeks to help recovery planning in 49 neighborhoods.
Source: Warner, Coleman. "Consultant slams recovery plan." Times-Picayune. August 3, 2006. http://www.nola.com/newslogs/topnews/index.ssf?/mtlogs/nola_topnews/archives/2006_08_03.html#168221

Living conditions:

- FEMA announced that it would begin testing government trailers for formaldehyde emissions after 46 health-related complaints were issued in Mississippi from displaced residents living in FEMA trailers. This testing comes three-months after the Sierra Club tested and found high levels of formaldehyde emissions in trailers in Mississippi and Alabama.
Source: Byrd, Shelia. "FEMA to test hurricane trailers for formaldehyde emissions." The Associated Press State & Local Wire. August 4, 2006.
- Many displaced are starting to see the generosity of communities across the country dwindle. This phenomena occurring in a number of cities that received Katrina evacuees is dubbed "Katrina fatigue". Reports of displaced households being turned away are making headlines. This is exemplified by a recent article in the Chicago Tribune which discusses the turning away of a household after receiving a year's worth of housing and service assistance.
Source: Wronski, Richard. "Church tells Katrina mom it's time to go. Palatine congregation wants woman, her 3 kids to move on; she says they gave her to Dec. 31." Chicago Tribune. August 4, 2006. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0608040283aug04,1,6836386.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed>

Housing:

- Following Memorial Day, the residential real estate market slowed down. The number of houses for sales in the metro New Orleans has outpaced demand thus driving the average selling price down. Homes on the market include those damaged by Katrina and those undamaged. The current oversupply yields a buyers market. Noteworthy is the increase in homes for sale costing

\$500,000 on up, which may indicate an 'executive exodus', particularly medical personnel fleeing the New Orleans area.

Source: Roberts, Deon. "Number of houses for sale in metro New Orleans area outpacing demand." *New Orleans CityBusiness*. August 7, 2006.

- The New Orleans Community Support Foundation (NOCSF) selected ACORN Housing as a planning team for the rebuilding of New Orleans' neighborhoods. The proposed plan was developed with extensive input from the community and experts. ACORN Housing and partners have been recommended as a district-wide planning team to the City of New Orleans.
Source: "ACORN Housing Wins Place in New Orleans Rebuilding Plan." ACORN. July 22, 2006. [http://www.acorn.org/index.php?id=9715&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=18725&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=10317&cHash=0038a4ad1f](http://www.acorn.org/index.php?id=9715&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=18725&tx_ttnews[backPid]=10317&cHash=0038a4ad1f)
- In St. Bernard Parish which was devastated by Katrina, one year later nearly 1,200 families are still waiting for trailers to be unlocked and serviced for utilities, while 400 families are simply waiting for trailers.
Source: Roberts, Michelle. "Some in Katrina-trashed community still looking for trailers." *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*. August 8, 2006.
- Although rental housing is being rebuilt in New Orleans, the estimated hike in rent may price many residents out of their own neighborhoods. Rental housing is being rebuilt at a much higher quality which has driven up the cost of rent by hundreds of dollars. Gloria Cauldfield, who lives on Broadway Street in New Orleans, said that renters there paid "\$225 for rent before" the hurricane, but are now looking at "\$600 or \$700 a month." The most immediate and evident impact of the rising rental costs is that new residents are moving in while the original inhabitants are staying out.
Source: Foster, Mary. "Post-Katrina block may price out tenants." *Houston Chronicle*. August 6, 2006. <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/nation/4097995.html>
- The Bush administration and FEMA awarded temporary housing contracts worth up to \$15 billion for future hurricane disasters this week. Many of the companies receiving contracts are the same companies who received non-competitive contracts after Hurricane Katrina for the same services.
Source: Associated Press. "FEMA contracts go to same four big firms." *The Eagle – Online*. August 10, 2006. http://www.theeagle.com/stories/081006/nation_20060810001.php
- FEMA is trying to get many Hurricane Rita and Katrina evacuees into FEMA's rental assistance program. An outreach campaign has begun to get people currently enrolled in FEMA's sheltering program, set to expire August 31, into rental assistance programs. FEMA is providing information to community and faith-based volunteer agencies to assist those that no longer qualify for FEMA assistance. Traditionally FEMA has offered 18 months of rental assistance after a disaster declaration. While FEMA is making an effort to assist those affected by Rita and Katrina many believe, as does E.C. Smith, Director of the Texas Transitional Recovery Office, that "ultimately, it is the responsibility of each individual to take charge of their own recovery from a disaster, and move forward."
Source: "FEMA Winds Down Year of Compassionate Sheltering." Press Release. August 8, 2006. <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=28662>

- As the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches, Louisiana's "Road Home" housing aid program has yet to come through with the money for the 100,000 people that have applied. It could take up to two years to distribute the \$7.5 billion state and federal funding.
Source: Deslatte, Melinda. "Katrina victims left waiting for grants." The Boston Globe. August 10, 2006.
http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/08/10/katrina_victims_left_waiting_for_grants/
- The Army Corps of Engineers began demolition on Lakeview homes in order to improve levees along the 17th Street Canal. However, displaced homeowners have yet to be compensated. The Corps has not provided temporary relocation assistance or bought out flood-ravaged property.
Source: Williams, Leslie. "Corps begin razing homes along canal; But homeowners still waiting for government buyout of land." Times-Picayune. August 10, 2006.

Schools:

- The first of 57 New Orleans public schools opened this week. State officials warned parents and students that their first day would be chaotic. Many schools are not sure what building they are in, some do not know when they will start classes, and many are unsure if desks and books ordered will arrive in time. Additionally, school staff hiring is ongoing with positions available for teachers, janitorial and food service providers. Bus transportation to school is not up and running. Delays in school building repairs have resulted from the wait for FEMA funds and/or alternative funds.
Source: Ritea, Steve. "Students are ready, but what about the schools? Parents, children may face a disorganized first day." Times-Picayune. August 6, 2006.
<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-6/1154843399102520.xml&coll=1>
- Throughout the week, a handful of New Orleans' public schools continued to reopen, giving more than 4,000 students an early start on the school year. Fifty-one other public schools are scheduled to open by mid-September for an estimated 30,000 students. Prior to Katrina, the New Orleans school system (considered one of the worst in the nation) serviced 60,000 students. The current school has no geographic requirements. Any student, living anywhere in the city, can register for any school on a first-come, first-served basis or by lottery. This places schools in competition for students and state funding.
Source: Plaisance, S. "Some New Orleans public schools opening amid hope, confusion." The Associated Press State & Local Wire. August 7, 2006.
<http://www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/08/07/neworleans.schools.ap/>
- At a joint meeting of the Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Education, LRA proposed a process for distributing more than \$200 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to repair and rebuild K-12 schools not eligible for FEMA funds. The LRA Board has yet to determine criteria for eligibility.
Source: "LRA Proposes Process for Distributing Infrastructure Funds, Project Design Criteria for Schools." Press Release. Louisiana Recovery Authority. August 8, 2006.
<http://www.lra.louisiana.gov/pr080806edu.html>

In the Courts:

- Nederland, TX based company Metrocare EMS has filed a suit against the state of Louisiana for payments yet to be received. Metrocare deployed ambulances to Louisiana the day after

Hurricane Katrina made landfall. The bill for these services, according to Metrocare, totaled \$1.5 million dollars. The state of Louisiana has paid the company \$400,000 to date.

Source: Associated Press. "Nederland ambulance firm sues state over Katrina bill." The Houston Chronicle – Online. August 9, 2006. Accessed August 10, 2006.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/4105433.html>