Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations in the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

by

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I. Introduction

Problem statement

Disasters occur when human activity intersects with hazardous conditions in the natural world. For instance, a flood does not become a disaster until it begins to inundate homes. Our knowledge of natural hazard mitigation contradicts the belief that disasters are inevitable. While definitions of natural hazard mitigation are as numerous as there are stakeholders in mitigation, when considered together, mitigation refers to long-term actions taken by the private and public sectors that ultimately reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters.

The costs that natural disasters inflict on individuals and communities across the United States continue to be in the hundreds of million every year despite awareness of risk and risk reduction measures. Church World Services says, “[p]eople and communities have come to rely on help after a disaster rather than to learn about risks and take feasible mitigation and prevention measures.”

Nationally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) spent $25.4 billion on disaster response and relief between 1990 and 1999. This figure is eight times that spent by the agency between 1980 and 1989. In addition, the American Red Cross, one of the nation’s leading disaster response agencies, spent over $2.5 billion on disaster response and relief between 1993 and 2001 (this figure excludes costs related to the 9/11 terrorist attacks).

Planning, especially in the hazard mitigation context, serves multiple purposes. These purposes include:

- Discussion of issues in an orderly manner
- Rationale and fact base for public policy

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1 Church World Service, Emergency Response Program. (undated). The religious community as disaster educator: Planning, prevention, and mitigation. Elkhart, IN.


- Education of stakeholders including the public
- Consensus building, conflict resolution and commitment building
- Coordination of issues, goals and policies
- Documentation of goals, policies and programs
- Implementation of policy.  

Each of these purposes, explicitly and implicitly, relates to public participation. Public involvements is an integral part of the planning process, but as discussed later in this paper, public participation in planning can be difficult to obtain. This paper explores the role faith-based and community organizations can play in the hazard mitigation planning process, in large part as a supplement to individual public participation.

**Objectives**

Faith-based and community-based organizations can help planners incorporate community knowledge, values, and needs into mitigation plans. In addition, these organizations can increase local governments’ ability to implement the plan by building community awareness and support for hazard mitigation. Finally, faith and community-based organizations can help deliver information and services to individuals that can help make them safer from disaster.

This paper builds on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s current work in engaging faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation as well as President Bush’s faith-based and community organizations initiative. The paper examines and provides answers to the following questions:

- What roles have faith-based and community-based organizations filled with respect to the mitigation phase of emergency management?
- What lessons learned (e.g., successes and failures) can be gathered from the engagement of faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation planning?

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If faith-based and community organizations are to be included in the planning process, how can planners and emergency managers best engage them?

Which lessons learned from faith-based and community organizations involvement in hazard mitigation planning can be applied to other planning efforts?

Study methods

The paper first explores what is already known about how faith-based and community organizations are engaged in mitigation based on the literature on hazard mitigation and literature regarding the role of faith-based and community organizations in community development.

This literature review is complemented with research into current community efforts related to mitigation planning. This was accomplished in four steps. First, I reviewed of the websites of members of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster group and interviewed several state-level voluntary organizations in North Carolina. Second, hazard mitigation plans submitted to the State of North Carolina by February 9, 2004 (approximately a week after the state-established deadline) were reviewed to determine the extent of involvement of faith-based and community organizations throughout the state. Particular attention was paid to the sections of the plans that addressed public participation and mitigation strategies. Third, follow-up interviews were conducted in two communities. Participants from two communities involved in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s faith-based and community organizations demonstration project were interviewed. Finally, Zebulon, North Carolina is presented as a case study on developing and implementing a plan for involvement of faith-based and community organizations in a community hazard mitigation plan. Lessons learned from this research are incorporated into a model for engagement and recommendations.
II. Background and Literature Review

This literature review provides background information on hazard mitigation, citizen participation, and faith-based and community organizations.

Mitigation as federal priority

Mitigation is not a new concept. The government reorganization group that recommended the creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency included mitigation as one of the agency's primary responsibilities. The importance of mitigation was reaffirmed, in 1993, by the establishment of the Mitigation Directorate within the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Even with this attention at the federal level, for mitigation to be effective, local governments must play a leading role. This belief is reflected by the statement, “all mitigation is local,” a phrase ubiquitous in research and professional publications.

Obstacles for local government

Natural hazard mitigation typically has low issue salience for local government and individuals though there are exceptions. Local officials, because of a lack of political constituency for mitigation, often lack commitment to hazard mitigation. In addition, there may be powerful constituencies such as real estate developers who are in favor of policies that may allow development in hazardous areas. A lack of resources (financial, personnel and expertise) at the local level also increases the difficulty of institutionalizing mitigation at the community level.

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6 Ibid.


8 Beatley, T. and Godschalk, D. R.

Role of the individual

The need to change individual behavior also has been recognized as key to reducing the overall vulnerability of communities to disaster.\(^{10}\) People may lack information about actions that can be taken to reduce their risk and lack resources to take the necessary steps. This lack of capacity is often coupled with a perceptual discounting of individual risk.\(^{11}\) These factors contribute to a lack of commitment on a personal level.

Citizen participation – benefits and pitfalls

Citizen participation in hazard mitigation planning is vitally important to the success of hazard mitigation. Involving citizens in the planning process provides an early opportunity to build consensus and a broad base of support for the final plan. This community support is especially important to elected officials who will be more likely to support implementation of the plan and specific projects if they were developed and are demanded by the public. Research shows that public participation contributes to plan strength and likelihood of implementation. Public participation also is a means to inform the public about hazards and potential mitigation measures.\(^{12}\) This education is crucial to countering the lack of commitment and interest in hazard mitigation described above.

Citizen participation is the hallmark of a democratic society. It helps people exercise their rights of citizenship, links citizens to the state, and enables institutions to be responsive to community needs.\(^{13}\) Managing public participation, however, can be hard. As Lowry et al. states, “often the number of potential stakeholders is far too great to be included in a meeting or even a series of...
meetings."14 Nonprofit organizations, such as faith-based and community organizations, by acting as representatives of community interests, may provide a means to involve the public in a manageable and more effective manner. However, Lowry et al. also note that planners may be “reluctant to engage in a participation process that may involve relinquishing or compromising their control over the outcome of significant portions of a plan.”15 Thus, ensuring meaningful involvement of faith-based and community organizations in planning processes might be problematic.

**Background on non-profit organizations**

Using a typology developed by Lester Salamon, Clarke describes five features that distinguish nonprofits from other organizations:

1. They have meaningful formal organizational structures.
2. They are non-governmental.
3. They are non-profit distributing.
4. They are self-governing.
5. They are supportive of some public purpose.16

Non-profit organizations have a long history of participation in public policy making and implementation. A 2001 issue of *Policy Studies Review* focused on non-profits and their involvement in community development and social service delivery. Smith, in his introduction to the issue, noted that,

> “Nonprofits are regarded by a broad range of citizens and policymakers as critical to fostering citizen participation, grass-roots democracy, more responsive, effective urban governance and services, and a more satisfied citizenry. Nonprofits are also viewed as an opportunity to bring people together and build community and social capital…”17

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15 Ibid.
Smith continues by providing a brief history of non-profits in public affairs. In the 1960s, the formation of community actions agencies provided political voice to the disadvantaged. In the 1970s, non-profits expanded their provision of social services, while the limits of privatization of these services became apparent in the 1980s. He states that some researchers believe that non-profits are needed to provide social services because of the failure of the market and government to do so, but that this can limit the role of non-profits in citizen engagement.18

An underlying assumption of the urban politics and nonprofit literature is that “nonprofits can serve as a viable platform for the aggregation of collective interest, including underrepresented interests.”19 Clarke states, “nonprofit organizations create communities of interest by drawing attention to salient aspects defining their constituencies.”20 Hula et al. believes that by creating coalitions to address chronic social issues, these nonprofits can increase the capacity of local government, particularly with respect to social service delivery.21 Non-profit organizations may be able to facilitate the transformation of local political agendas in ways that government officials and staff are unable.

While Tirrito says that religious institutions have been intertwined with social institutions and the government over the course of history, Chaves points out that religious organizations often were excluded from research regarding non-profits before the 1990s.22 In addition, Reese and Shields

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18 Smith, S. R.
20 Clarke, S. E.
21 Hula, R. C., Jackson, C.Y. and Orr, M.
found that there is a lack systematic scholarly research regarding the role of faith-based organizations in economic development.23

**A primer on faith-based and community organizations**

President George W. Bush, by executive order, established the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives on January 29, 2001, in part fulfilling a campaign promise. An additional executive order established counterpart centers in five cabinet departments (i.e., Education, Justices, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development). A third Executive Order in December 2002 established centers at the Department of Agriculture and the Agency for International Development.24 One purpose of the centers, according to the executive orders, was to “help religious or ‘faith-based’ groups to obtain federal tax dollars.”25 The president’s 2002 management agenda expanded on this purpose by stating that “[t]he Faith-Based and Community Initiative will identify and remove the inexcusable barriers that thwart the work of faith-based and community organizations.”26 A fourth Executive Order went further by stating, “no organization should be discriminated against on the basis of religion or religious belief in the administration or distribution of federal financial assistance under social service programs.”27 While the Federal Emergency Management Agency was not one of the five agencies mentioned in the executive order, efforts were made by the agency to increase involvement with faith-based and community organizations. The agency funded a study completed in 2003 that developed

recommendations on how community and faith-based organizations could be integrated into local community hazard mitigation and disaster resistance activities.\textsuperscript{28}

Critics of President Bush’s faith-based and community initiative raise concerns regarding separation of church and state stemming from the First Amendment. Other concerns include potential hiring discrimination on the part of the faith-based organizations as well as a potential lack of accountability.\textsuperscript{29} The focus of the initiative is on social service delivery (e.g., drug counseling, homeless services, and public health initiatives) and more specifically on how to increase faith-based organizations’ ability to access federal funds. The focus has not been on how to increase partnerships between local governments and community organizations or on how to use these organizations as means to increase civic participation.

Understanding the types of organizations that should be included when discussing faith-based and community organizations is important. The definition of faith-based organizations is nebulous. The White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives uses the term “faith-based” in a broad sense to include any non-profit organization with a religious element.\textsuperscript{30} According to President Bush, “any program emanating out of a church or a synagogue or a mosque is a faith-based program.”\textsuperscript{31} At a forum sponsored by the Pew Forum in 2003, Frederica Kramer of the Urban Institute noted that faith-based organizations are varied in size, community base, degree of religious affiliation, and faith content in programs.\textsuperscript{32} The Department of Housing and Urban


\textsuperscript{30} Personal conversation with White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.


Development, Office of Policy Development and Research proposes that faith-based organizations can be thought of in three ways: congregations, national networks (e.g., Catholic Charities), and freestanding religious organizations (e.g., Habitat for Humanity).³³

The Independent Sector, a coalition of nonprofits, foundations, and corporations committed to philanthropy, estimates that there are over 300,000 community-serving faith-based organizations in the United States and that more than eighty percent serve people of all faiths.³⁴ The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research found that faith-based organizations have been active in various ways: providing food, shelter, and clothing; affordable housing; community development; and building neighborhood cohesion.³⁵ According to Tirrito and Cascio, “almost all religions have obligated their followers to engage in acts of charity, sometimes only to the members of their creed and sometimes to anyone in need.”³⁶ They highlight the Christian Church’s inclusion of “victims of calamity” in the groups deserving charity.

Research by the Pew Charitable Trust found that most Americans believe that faith-based organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity and the Salvation Army, are top problem-solving organizations in local communities.³⁷

Community organizations are even less well-defined. The White House again uses the term in a broad sense to be as inclusive as possible. Generally, the term is used to refer to service organizations and other non-profits serving a local community (as opposed to a statewide or national constituency). In a November 2001 report, the Department of Housing and Urban

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³⁵ Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research.
³⁶ Tirrito, T. and Cascio T. (Eds.).
³⁷ Ibid.
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Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research suggests that “[f]or many community-based operations, the community is operationally defined as the leadership from government, business, education, religious groups, and other institutions of civic importance.”38 Using this approach, faith-based organizations are a type of community organization. One can speculate that the Bush administration makes a distinction between the two because of its focus on increasing access to federal funds for religious organizations.

While noting that it is difficult to develop a general model of non-profits, James Ferris believes secular non-profit organizations can be categorized in three ways:

1. civic – provides structure for collective decisions
2. policy advocacy – works towards the enactment of certain policies
3. policy implementing – carries out policies

These categories are not mutually exclusive.39 Ferris goes on to say that these organizations make it easier for citizens to participate in government. The organizations help to shape agendas and build public support for public policies that benefit their members. Finally, these organizations are active in service delivery.40

Rationale for partnering with faith-based and community organizations

Local governments are increasingly turning to partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors as a means to better serve the public. These relationships require investment of time on the part of local governments and will likely fail if not carefully nurtured.41 Ideally, these partnerships would be designed to bring together community members to meet needs and create solutions to

38 Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research.
41 Smith, S. R.
community problems. By working together, limited resources can be leveraged and services may be provided more efficiently.\textsuperscript{42}

Conventional wisdom suggests that faith-based organizations are able to provide social services to those in need with a greater degree of efficiency and effectiveness than the government because of deep roots in the community, a greater degree of trust and understanding of community needs, and high public credibility.\textsuperscript{43} Kramer and Chaves both suggest that faith-based and community organizations are “better in touch with disenfranchised populations,” are more accessible and are better able to serve people who may not reach out for help to the government.\textsuperscript{44} Some people such as Senator Joseph Lieberman believe that these organizations also allow people to take a “larger role in solving their own problems.”\textsuperscript{45} In addition, it is widely held that faith-based organizations can be more “flexible and responsive” than government to the changing needs of the community.\textsuperscript{46}

Interestingly, while the role of faith-based organizations in social service delivery is well documented, much of the evidence suggesting that they are superior social service deliverers is anecdotal.\textsuperscript{47} Firoz and Matthews states that, while it is a “widely held belief in the United States that religious organization offer better care than secular providers, there are no studies to support this claim.”\textsuperscript{48} However, there are no studies that show that faith-based organizations are worse than secular social service providers.

\textsuperscript{42} Smith, S. R.
\textsuperscript{43} The President’s Management Agenda (FY2002).
\textsuperscript{44} The Pew Forum. The Faith-Based Initiative Two Years Later: Examining Its Potential, Progress and Problems.
\textsuperscript{45} Chaves, M. (2002).
\textsuperscript{46} Chaves, M.
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Faith-based organizations are believed also to be key in helping people become empowered to believe that they can change their lives for the better.\textsuperscript{49} This personal empowerment may be an important ingredient in increasing engagement in public life and civil society.

Before faith-based and community organizations can be actively engaged in public-private partnerships, planners must first determine what they are good at and use them for those purposes. Carlson-Theis goes on to say that planners need to identify the needs, strengths, and character of government and faith-based organization and ensure that collaborative relationships mesh these factors appropriately.\textsuperscript{50} FEMA, in its faith-based and community organization study also found that a link between a group’s mission and mitigation must be defined in order to engage it effectively. It is crucial to demonstrate what the faith-based and community organizations get for participating and to explain how they can participate.\textsuperscript{51}

In an article by Tirrito, she cites Wineburg’s seven assets that faith-based organizations can bring to community development:

1. Mission to serve
2. Pool of volunteers
3. Sacred space
4. Funding potential
5. Political strength
6. Moral authority
7. Creativity and experimentation\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Tirrito, T. and Cascio T. (Eds.).
\textsuperscript{52} Tirrito, T.
Disasters and faith-based and community organizations

Little research previously has been conducted regarding the role of faith-based and community organizations in the hazard mitigation planning process.

Faith-based organizations comprise sixty-five percent of the membership of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster is a mechanism for national organizations to better coordinate and communicate in order to more effectively provide services to people affected by disaster. While disaster response has traditionally been the focus of the member groups, mitigation is included as part of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster’s core purpose statement. Convincing these national organizations as well as the countless number of state and faith-based organizations to become active in hazard mitigation planning will be challenging. Church World Services offers hope for their involvement. In The religious community as disaster educator: Planning, prevention, and mitigation, the organization states,

As part of its disaster response, the religious community – concerned about the values of human life, human community, and the environment – will just naturally become involved in disaster planning, prevention and risk reduction or mitigation.

Challenges in involving faith-based and community organizations

Significant challenges exist in the mobilization of non-profit organizations in areas outside of their immediate mission. These challenges include financial resources, legal restrictions [e.g., ban on lobbying by 501(c)(3) groups], and other political factors. Faith-based organizations may object to becoming involved in governmental policies and processes based on theology and concerns regarding secularization, objections regarding current government policies, and concerns regarding paperwork, oversight and capacity.

56 Carlson-Thies, S.
The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research found that the involvement of faith-based organizations in community development was limited because of the regular and sustained involvement needed in complex tasks and because the organizations may lack skills, knowledge and time required for success.\(^57\)

Critics of President Bush’s faith-based and community initiative raise concerns regarding separation of church and state stemming from the First Amendment. As Smith suggests, some researchers such as Hula and Jackson-Elmore, believe that non-profits are most effective when they can pursue their own agenda while remaining supportive of government initiatives.\(^58\) Other concerns include potential hiring discrimination on the part of the faith-based organizations as well as a potential lack of accountability.\(^59\)

In addition, the focus of the president’s initiative has been on social service delivery (e.g., drug counseling, homeless services, and public health initiatives) and more specifically on how to increase faith-based organizations’ ability to access federal funds rather than on how to increase partnerships between local governments and community organizations or on how to use these organizations as means to increase civic participation. This emphasis on social services is not surprising when viewed in light of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The hierarchy suggests that people must first ensure that their needs for food and shelter are met before being able to move on to other needs. It follows that faith-based and community organizations also may prioritize their actions in such a way as to satisfy people’s needs in this order.\(^60\)

\(^{57}\) The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research


Summary

It is generally accepted that mitigation happens at a local level but low issue salience and a lack of commitment by officials and individuals alike makes it difficult to focus a community’s efforts on mitigation. Citizen participation in planning efforts, by increasing awareness and building commitment, may increase the likelihood of a plan’s implementation but getting that participation may be difficult. In addition to their traditional role as service providers, non-profits, such as faith-based and community organizations, may be able to serve as representatives of the public by aggregating interests.

These faith-based and community organizations are well-positioned in the community and enjoy a high degree of public trust that government may not. President Bush’s faith-based and community organizations initiative has increased the amount of funding available to such organizations but has not focused on engaging them as community partners. Challenges to faith-based and community organizations’ engagement include a lack of skills and time necessary to commit to planning efforts in addition to tight financial situations.

Using this background, the remainder of this paper examines how faith-based and community organizations have already been active in hazard mitigation and proposes ways they can be more actively engaged in mitigation planning.
III. Federal and State Policy and Program Framework

While the literature review provides an overview of the professional and academic research that has been conducted with respect to faith-based and community organizations, an understanding of the policy framework that mitigation operates within is equally important. This section addresses various laws, policies, and programs that directly affect mitigation planning.

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988

The Stafford Act originally required state governments, in order to receive federal public assistance funds after a disaster, to evaluate the natural hazard risks faced in the state and to develop a plan (generally referred to as Section 409 plans) to mitigate these hazards. The intent of the Act was to encourage states to develop the plans prior to a disaster and to update them following a disaster, but in practice, the plans were often developed quickly after a presidential disaster declaration. The act was amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, which is described below.

The Stafford Act also established the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to fund mitigation activities after disaster. Typically, when a portion of a state was declared part of a Presidential disaster the entire state became eligible for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, though this was done through a separate declaration process. From seven and a half to fifteen percent of the total FEMA assistance provided was made available to the state for use in hazard mitigation. A portion of this money could be used for planning purposes. In addition, non-profits were eligible to apply for grants under this program. This program is important to funding local mitigation projects.

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**Project Impact**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, in the mid-1990s, established *Project Impact: Building Disaster Resistant Communities*, an initiative that provided grants of up to $500,000 to local communities. The grants were to be used for a variety of activities including partnership building, risk assessment, mitigation activity prioritization (including planning and outreach), and publicity.\(^{62}\) Emphasis was placed on involving groups from every part of the community such as business leaders, non-profit organizations, local government, and private citizens.\(^{63}\) By February 2000, 250 cities and counties were designated *Project Impact* communities.\(^{64}\) The *Project Impact* designation provided a branding for hazard mitigation that helped build local recognition and commitment.

After the 2000 elections and subsequent change in administration, the initiative was phased out. In congressional testimony, Director Joseph Allbaugh of the Federal Emergency Management Agency praised *Project Impact* but called for communities to move to the next phase of hazard mitigation, primarily implementation of hazard mitigation projects, funded in part through a pre-disaster mitigation grant program created by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.\(^{65}\)

**Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000**

The U.S. Congress, in an effort to encourage government policies to reduce the impacts of disaster, passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This legislation requires state and local governments to develop written hazard mitigation plans by November 2004 in order to remain eligible for federal hazard mitigation grants as well as certain types of disaster relief funds.\(^{66}\) The

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\(^{63}\) Clinton-Gore Administration. (2000) *Building Livable Communities: Sustaining Prosperity, Improving Quality of Life, Building a Sense of Community.* Washington, DC.


legislation provided an outline for what information needed to be included in the plans; this was further fleshed out in regulations issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is tasked with implementing the Act. In addition to the regulations, the Federal Emergency Management Agency developed a multi-part guide for state and local officials that breaks the planning process into four pieces comprised of twelve steps:

1. Organizing to Plan
2. Assessing the Risk
3. Writing the Plan
4. Implementing the Plan

Two steps of the planning process, as described in the how-to guides, deal exclusively with public participation. Section 102 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 also authorized a nationally competitive pre-disaster mitigation grant program. Eligibility for these grants is tied in part to having a FEMA-approved mitigation plan as described above. In a departure from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, private non-profit organizations are not eligible to apply for grants.67

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 authorized states to use up to 7% of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds for planning purposes. In addition, the law provided for an increase in the availability of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds if states had an enhanced state plan (i.e., meeting certain management requirements).68 Subsequent threatened and actual budget cuts to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program appear to be signaling a move towards phasing it out.

**Senate Bill 300**

North Carolina Governor Michael Easley signed Senate Bill 300 on June 15, 2001. The bill requires local governments to have approved hazard mitigation plans that are compliant with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, in order to remain eligible for state disaster response and recovery

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68 Public Law 106-390.
funds after November 1, 2004. The bill does not impose any additional public participation requirements.

Evaluation

Section 409 plans, as Stafford Act state mitigation plans are often called, were many times developed in a haphazard way following a disaster rather than being carefully developed prior to disaster. States had six months to develop a plan following a presidentially-declared disaster in order to remain eligible for federal assistance, particularly for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds. The rush to develop the plans led to an inability to follow “a sound planning process.” A study by Godschalk et al. found that while the Section 409 plans met the requirements of the Stafford Act, the plans were poorly crafted. The plans tended to be descriptive rather than analytical and general rather than specific. In addition, the study found that few states involved anyone outside of government in the development of the plan.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 was partly a response to the perceived ineffectiveness of Section 409 plans. The resulting prescriptive planning process was meant to ensure that state and local government plans were grounded in a solid fact base and were thoughtfully developed. The regulations notably state that “the planning process shall include…[a]n opportunity for…businesses, academia and other private and non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process.”

It is too early to say what the impact of the guidance will be on the extent of public participation or the quality of the plans developed under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The detailed guidance on plan development and content as well as the review process by the state and by

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70 Godschalk, D.R., et. al. *Natural Hazard Mitigation.*
the Federal Emergency Management Agency may provide incentives for developing a higher-quality plan.

While Senate Bill 300 provides added incentive for North Carolina communities to develop hazard mitigation plans, the short amount of time local governments were given to prepare plans may have created an unmeetable demand for state technical assistance. In addition, the state is required to review all the plans, which is also resource intensive.

**Obstacles**

Mitigation is not easy. Natural hazards typically pose complex problems that require substantial investment of time, money, and expertise in order to address them. Denial on the part of the public leads to a lack of issue salience. People often are more concerned with the economy and other immediate problems than with the uncertain risk posed by natural hazards.

The lack of issue salience for voters leads to a lack of commitment on the part of politicians. While planners frequently are confronted with the difficulties of making decisions with long-term effects (and therefore not immediately tangible benefits) palatable to the general citizenry, elected officials generally have shorter timelines in which to make the effects of their work evident. Therefore, it may be hard to convince politicians to support policies and projects that have immediate costs but long-term uncertain benefits. While many of the programs and policies described above focus on planning, the challenge in risk reduction lies in implementation of the policies and projects described in the plan. If the plan is not followed, then the risk is not reduced.

In addition, hazards are rarely confined to one jurisdiction. It is often necessary to plan for them on a multi-jurisdictional basis, but the American political system is not set-up to facilitate this process. Regional efforts to address mitigation are often hard to gain support for at the local level.

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because of competition for resources and concerns about infringement on local autonomy. The most successful regional initiatives have been mandated by state or federal laws that give strong legislative authority to implement their goals.\textsuperscript{74} Regional efforts might be most successful where economies of scale exist for cooperative efforts such as hazards mapping, flood control, and evacuation route planning.

\textit{Summary}

With the passage of the Stafford Act in 1988, the federal government began to encourage state governments to develop hazard mitigation plans. \textit{Project Impact} began a trend towards increasing the role of local communities in hazard mitigation. While its emphasis was on community awareness and partnership building, the initiative provided a platform for many communities to begin planning efforts. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 established a requirement for local plans and offered additional planning incentives to state government. The requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, however, tend to be data-oriented and do not emphasize public participation. The act references involvement of non-profits but only as one of the many “shoulds” and “shall” to be included in the plan. It is likely that faith-based and community organizations will only be engaged if planners see clear benefits and a way to engage these organizations that does not overtax limited resources.

\textsuperscript{74} Burby, R. J.
IV. Why Involve Faith-Based and Community Organizations?

As discussed in the previous section, hazard mitigation lacks issue salience in most local government arenas. Involving faith-based and community organizations may be way to increase awareness, raise the issue salience, and build political support for planning.

Faith-based and community organizations represent an existing network of people that share common values, interests, and goals. If a link can be made between organizational mission and hazard mitigation, the faith-based and community organizations may provide a pool of people to participate in the planning process. While most faith-based and community organizations do not think of hazard mitigation as part of their primary mission, planners can help them see the links between their mission and hazard mitigation. For instance, the Boy Scouts of America website states, “the mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.” An argument could be made that participating in hazard mitigation planning provides an excellent opportunity for young people to become involved in important discussions regarding community growth and development. These discussions require participants to make challenging ethical and moral choices. Another example of linking an organization’s mission to hazard mitigation would be the Sierra Club. Its mission statement includes a commitment to “[p]ractice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources.” To the extent that local mitigation needs or efforts focus on natural ecosystems such as floodplains, then it would be easy for a planner to make the connection between the mitigation planning process and the local Sierra Club mission.

Two aspects of the mission of faith-based organizations in particular could provide fertile ground for making connections with hazard mitigation. Some faith-based organizations work

towards community empowerment. When hazard mitigation is framed as vital to the safety and future well-being of a community, it could be seen as a critical component of an empowered community.

There is also a social justice or equity dimension of hazard mitigation that might provide an opportune link to the mission of faith-based and community organizations. Numerous researchers have proposed that natural hazards could be considered another aspect of environmental justice analysis.\textsuperscript{77} Environmental justice has many meanings to many people but can be defined as “the principle that environmental costs and amenities ought to be equitably distributed within society.”\textsuperscript{78} Where faith-based and community organizations see themselves as committed to addressing social justice and equity issues, there may be an opportunity to build a link to hazard mitigation.

The success of hazard mitigation planning rests on building a constituency and demand for increased attention to hazard mitigation. Faith-based and community organizations could provide a ready-made constituency. In addition, to the extent that faith-based and community organizations work with and can represent the interests of disadvantaged members of society, they may be able to provide a voice for those who are traditionally underrepresented in the planning process. There is general agreement, both in academic literature and in practice, that people of lower income and/or minorities are impacted more heavily by disaster. It is often assumed this is because minorities or low-income individuals do not have the financial, material, or information resources needed to prepare for or mitigate against disaster. In addition, this lack of resources makes it more difficult to them to recover in a timely manner. Another assumption is that minorities or low-income individuals may be more at risk to natural hazards because of where they live, whether because of


location, housing type or condition. With respect to financial resources and relationship to disaster vulnerability, studies show that people with higher incomes tend to be better prepared for disaster. Tierney et al. go on to state, “since income is positively related to access to better and safer housing, low-income households are at greater risk from many hazards.”

Faith-based and community organizations often have proven public education or member outreach mechanisms. Planners could use these organizations as agents for public education by working with them as partners to distribute information not only about the hazard mitigation planning process but also about ways people can protect their homes and families from disaster. For example, many churches have Sunday bulletins into which planners could insert informational flyers. Information dissemination via word of mouth, such as part of announcements during religious services, can be a means to communicate with people who do not rely on print media for information. Faith-based and community organizations also may have monthly meetings or newsletters that planners could utilize for information dissemination.

Engaging faith-based and community organizations in the planning process provides an opportunity for them to identify future service projects for their members. Many mitigation strategies can be accomplished through the efforts of non-governmental agencies, and it is important that these groups be involved in selecting and prioritizing these projects. In addition, the planning process provides an opportunity to develop relationships that are critical during an actual disaster response. By involving organizations in hazard mitigation planning, relationships needed during disaster response will be broadened and deepened.

79 Godschalk, D. R., Kaiser, E. and Berke, P.
Many grants require matching funds from applicants. Faith-based and community organizations may be able to act as a multiplier of resources by providing the volunteer time that can be counted as a soft or in-kind match that can satisfy grant requirements. Faith-based and community organizations also may have funds from their own budgets or have access to funds from organizations that do not provide grants to governmental agencies. These resources can be used to implement the community’s hazard mitigation plan.

Faith-based and community organizations also may be affected both positively and negatively by the results of the hazard mitigation plan. On the positive side, groups such as a local historical society or others may have a need for mitigation projects to protect property holdings. On the negative side, faith-based and community organizations may be adversely impacted by hazard mitigation efforts such as when a congregation loses membership because of the acquisition of property and relocation of residents. In both instances, these groups have direct interest in the formulation and implementation of a hazard mitigation plan.

As noted in the previous section, the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 planning requirements, as stated in section 201.6(b)(2), specify involving non-profit interests in the planning process. While the legislation does not provide further guidance on what those non-profit interests are, planners can satisfy this requirement by engaging faith-based and community organizations.
V. Snapshot Of Activities

In order to understand the current state of faith-based and community organizations’ engagement in hazard mitigation, a review of the national membership of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster was conducted via a website analysis. This review provides a snapshot of activities the national organizations are conducting with respect to mitigation. Follow-up with two participants in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s faith-based and community organizations study also was done to gauge how these communities progressed after the study’s completion. A review of hazard mitigation plans submitted to the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management was conducted to determine the extent to which faith-based and community organizations were being included in planning in North Carolina. Follow-up interviews with selected communities were conducted. The results of these three efforts are presented in this section. The section concludes with a case study of planning efforts in Zebulon, North Carolina.

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, a group of thirty-seven faith-based and community organizations, provides a mechanism for these national organizations to coordinate and communicate in order to more effectively provide services to people affected by disaster. While disaster response and recovery have traditionally been the focus of the member groups, mitigation is included as part of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster’s core purpose statement. In addition, mitigation is stated as an important role for “sustaining” (or well-established) local or state Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters.
While mitigation is mentioned in the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster’s mission statement, the effect on member organizations’ activities is likely minimal given that its purpose is to provide coordination among its membership, rather than policy direction. Some of the members, such as the American Red Cross and Church World Services, are beginning to become more active in mitigation, but changing the “culture of response” is difficult, particularly in a post-September 11, 2001, environment where resources are limited and the focus is on terrorism.

In order to gauge the extent to which the member organizations are active in mitigation, a survey of the member websites was conducted. Websites were assessed using a modified typology developed by Callah Young, a previous FEMA Community Planning Fellow. Table 1 presents the following information gathered from the review:

- **Is disaster primary mission?** – Yes indicates that disaster was expressly mentioned in the organizations mission statement
- **Response** – Yes indicates that the organization is active in disaster response activities such as direct financial assistance, child care provision, or distribution of supplies.
- **Recovery** – Yes indicates that the organization is active in disaster recovery activities such as assistance with rebuilding.
- **Education/outreach** – Yes indicates that the organization is active in providing information regarding preparedness and mitigation.
  - Business prep – information related to preparedness and mitigation activities for businesses
  - Personal prep – information related to preparedness and mitigation activities for people or communities
- **Community planning** – Yes indicates that the organization is active in community planning efforts.
- **Mitigation/preparedness projects** – Yes indicates that the organization is directly active in hands-on mitigation and preparedness projects.

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83 Young, C. A. (2002). *Creating a Role for Regional Agencies in Hazard Mitigation Planning*. Master’s Project. Department of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
### Table 1: Survey of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Member Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Is disaster primary mission?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Education/outreach</th>
<th>Community planning</th>
<th>Mitigation/preparedness projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is disaster primary mission?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventist Community Services</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Baptist Men</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Disaster Reserve</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Radio Relay League, Inc. / Amateur Radio Emergency Service</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America's Second Harvest</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities USA</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Disaster Response</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Reformed World Relief Committee</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Brethren Disaster Response</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church World Service</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Relief and Development (formerly The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Disaster Service</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preparedness planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humane Society of the United States</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Critical Incident Stress Foundation</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relief Friendship Foundation</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Disaster Response</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Planning guide for church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennonite Disaster Services</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Medical Airlift: National Patient Travel Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Emergency Response Team</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Organization for Victim Assistance</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Response codes: Y = Yes, N = No*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Is disaster primary mission?</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Education/outreach</th>
<th>Community planning</th>
<th>Mitigation/preparedness projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nazarene Disaster Response</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church (USA)</td>
<td>N (Presby. Disaster Assistance – Y)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REACT International, Inc.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of St. Vincent de Paul</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Baptist Convention</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Inc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Points of Light Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Jewish Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y (financial donations)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodist Committee on Relief and the General Board of Global Ministries</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers in Technical Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Vision</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 16 | 34 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 4 |

* No information available for Disaster Psychiatry Outreach and Northwest Medical Teams International.

Nine organizations provide personal preparedness and mitigation information. For example, the Humane Society of the United States provides information on disaster preparedness for livestock and family pets. Catholic Charities USA provides brochures on topics including school preparedness to business preparedness. Four organizations are active in hands-on mitigation projects. The American Red Cross, for instance, collaborated with other community organizations to provide volunteers for retrofitting the homes of senior citizens in Oakland, California.84

Only three of the thirty-seven members are active in planning efforts. Lutheran Disaster Response encourages congregations to plan for disaster including how congregations will contribute

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84 American Red Cross. *Committed to Helping Make Families and Communities Safer from the Ravages of Natural Hazards.* Retrieved from [http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_2_00.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_2_00.html) on March 20, 2004.
to community response and recovery efforts. The guidance also includes information on how to prepare a congregation’s facility to reduce the impacts of a disaster. The American Red Cross includes advocacy as one of its three focus areas with respect to mitigation. Advocacy is defined as “supporting programs, ordinances, and legislation…that are necessary to reduce the vulnerability of people and their property.”

While the mission statement of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster includes mitigation, it appears from this review of member activities that mitigation has yet to be embraced as a primary activity. The focus of member organizations continues to be on disaster response and recovery. When organizations are involved in mitigation and disaster preparedness, the emphasis appears to be on public education or providing direct assistance with mitigation projects. Few organizations appear to be encouraging, from a national standpoint, participation in local government planning efforts. It is important to note, however, that the website review focused on the publicly available websites of national organizations and therefore may not capture the activities of local branches or chapters.

According to Charles Moeller, the North Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster was re-energized about four years ago following Hurricane Floyd. Mr. Moeller sees the organization as a facilitator between its member organizations and with other agencies rather than as an active participant in response or mitigation projects. He encourages member organizations to be involved in planning and mitigation efforts in the state but noted that these types of activities have not traditionally been a strong point. Mr. Moeller hopes to develop a greater presence for the state

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Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster group and would like the group to become more active in mitigation efforts.^{86}

North Carolina Inter-faith Disaster Recovery facilitates long-term recovery efforts of faith organizations throughout the state. Part of the organization’s focus has been to build the capacity of local interfaith disaster recovery groups. Prior to Hurricane Floyd, the group was staffed entirely by volunteers. The magnitude of the recovery effort and availability of grant funds allowed the organization to hire its first executive director, Dr. Carolyn Tyler. In an interview, Dr. Tyler explained that, when the faith-based organizations she works with have been involved in mitigation, it is typically as part of the recovery process. Volunteers are often available for rebuilding efforts and can then be moved into helping with other unmet needs. According to Dr. Tyler, North Carolina’s recent active disaster history has meant that communities are often still engaged in or are just wrapping up recovery efforts when a subsequent disaster occurs. This constant cycle of response and recovery makes it hard to dedicate time to mitigation.

Some of the interfaith groups have started to participate in preparedness activities so that they can participate more quickly and effectively in response activities. Dr. Tyler said that the benefits of this preparedness were seen in the quick response to Hurricane Isabel. North Carolina Inter-faith Disaster Recovery encourages local interfaith groups to remain active by meeting a few times a year even after recovery projects have closed out. According to Dr. Tyler, the interfaith group in Snow Hill (Green County), North Carolina, remained active after Hurricane Floyd because of an overwhelming need for social services in the community. Dr. Tyler stated, though that the fate of the interfaith groups is a local decision.

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^{86} Personal conversation with Charles Moeller, director of North Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. September 12, 2003.
While national organizations were able to fund the post-Floyd recovery efforts, they were less able to fund long-term planning for disaster. Dr. Tyler’s position is being phased out at the end of May 2004 as the grants that funded it are being closed out. The North Carolina Inter-faith Disaster Recovery board members plan to continue the organization’s work. For instance, the group will continue its annual training for local interfaith disaster recovery groups.

**Examples of faith-based and community organizations involvement in mitigation**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency Community/Faith-Based Organization Integration into Local Community Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Resistance Activities Study provides several lessons learned that can be applied to engaging faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation planning. The study was conducted in three parts. First, ten model communities that successfully integrated faith-based and community organizations into mitigation programs were analyzed. Using the results of that research, a workshop and model for engagement were developed and then implemented in ten demonstration communities. An evaluation of the workshops and model was conducted at the end of three months and lessons learned were identified.

The study found that communities that used existing networks were better able to engage faith-based and community organizations than organizations that did not have existing networks. Where overlap between faith-based and community organizations existed, engaging the faith-based organizations was more successful. Faith-based organizations were particularly interested in how projects would benefit their members and how the projects related to their mission.

Bud Knickerbocker is a planner for the Windham Regional Commission in Vermont, which was one of the demonstration communities for the study. According to Mr. Knickerbocker, the commission works with community organizations to do child-care retrofits, a project started as part

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of the study. He notes that community organizations were already active partners with the commission, in part because the rural nature of the county and state. While momentum has been maintained thus far, he can see a point at which the effort could lose steam. He was able to build on the project started as part of the study and continue involvement into the planning effort.

The commission wrote the hazard mitigation plan for the region and utilized the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) as an advisory team. The American Red Cross, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and other environmental, industry and church organizations were represented on the committee. Involving these organizations helps to build common goals and expand the web of community relationships. He believes that planners need to understand that faith-based organizations have a religious basis while community organizations have a social basis for their mission and that they may need to work past differences. Mr. Knickerbocker explained that he uses a variety of mechanisms, including letters, phone calls, and office visits, to encourage participation from faith-based and community organizations. In addition, he uses contacts within the police and fire department to build the network of organizations.

The experience in Sioux Falls, South Dakota is a bit different. Mary Beth Piatt of the St. Vincent De Paul Society notes that the demonstration project conducted as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency study had two parts: community emergency response team (CERT) training and storm shelters for the homeless. While the CERT training was conducted successfully, the storm shelters project never got off the ground for a variety of reasons including a lack of time and knowledge. Ms. Piatt was initially invited to participate in a letter followed by an e-mail. She believes her agency (a faith-based organization) was invited to participate because of its involvement in a local homeless coalition. Ms. Piatt believes that the informal networks built by participating in the project were “enormously helpful” and that the project gave her a better

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familiarity with what other agencies and government entities can and cannot do. She notes that the biggest obstacle to participation is time and the willingness of agency leadership to allow staff to commit time to a project outside of the immediate scope of the agency.

While she has not been directly involved in the planning process or in community mitigation efforts after the demonstration project was finished, Ms. Piatt states that the community has been active in mitigation planning. Using the Project Impact structure, community members have been kept apprised of the planning efforts.

Some important lessons learned can be drawn from the FEMA study, such as

- Recognize social, cultural, political, and environmental contexts.
- Review the community political and social structure and past involvement of faith-based and community organizations. Strategize ways to successfully integrate conflicting groups.
- Understand faith-based and community organizations’ mission and agenda before inviting them to participate. Present disaster mitigation as an opportunity to advance individual mission and agenda.
- Recognize and utilize faith-based and community organizations as sources of local expertise and knowledge.
- Know that limitations on involvement exist. Create opportunities for involvement specific to an organization.
- Recognize that overlaps may exist between faith-based and community organizations – do not be rigid on drawing distinctions between the two.
- Assess levels of distrust towards government and ways faith-based and community organizations can be utilized to neutralize it.

**Hazard mitigation plans in North Carolina**

The state of North Carolina requested that municipalities and counties submit hazard mitigation plans by January 31, 2004, in order to provide the state adequate time to review and approve plans before the November 2004 deadline for submission to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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As of February 26, 2004, 106 of the 185 plans (57%) expected by the state had been submitted. Interestingly, 96 of the 185 plans (52%) will be the result of multi-jurisdictional planning efforts led by the county rather than a stand-alone plan developed by a single municipality.

A random sample of approximately one-third of the plans was examined to determine if communities had engaged faith-based and community organizations in the planning process. Table 2, located on pages 37 and 38, presents the results of that review.

As can be seen in the table, twenty-one of the thirty-three jurisdictions formed steering committees to oversee the planning process. However, only four of these steering committees included non-governmental representatives. Four municipalities (City of Raleigh, Hoke County, Johnston County, and Vance County) had advisory committees with members from faith-based and community organizations. These advisory committees were in addition to the steering committee.

Several jurisdictions mentioned non-profit organizations as potential funding sources or as part of the community’s institutional capacity. Generally, this consisted of a brief statement regarding using volunteers as an in-kind match for grants. Numerous plans also mentioned coordinating with the American Red Cross regarding shelter operations. Dare County included several community organizations as part of its institutional capacity: Amateur Radio, Civil Air Patrol, Dare Voluntary Action Council, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Ten jurisdictions included faith-based or community organizations as participants in implementing mitigation strategies. For instance, Ashe County plans to partner with the New River Community Partners on an education project regarding riverbank stabilization. Another example is the Town of Elizabethtown, which plans to work with Habitat for Humanity and Meals on Wheels to apply flood mitigation measures to homes of low-income senior citizens.
Table 2: Involvement of Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBO/CBO) in Local NC Hazard Mitigation Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Steering committee</th>
<th>FBO/CBO participation on steering committee?</th>
<th>FBO/CBO – funding source</th>
<th>FBO/CBO – strategies</th>
<th>Other (e.g., stakeholder group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander County (MJ)</td>
<td>August 20, 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Met with LEPC included the Chamber of Commerce and public citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashe County (MJ)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke County (MJ)</td>
<td>June 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabarrus County (MJ)</td>
<td>November 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carteret County (MJ)</td>
<td>No date – post-Floyd</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Solicited input from NGOs (e.g., American Red Cross) but no details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Albemarle (Stanly County)</td>
<td>August 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Creedmoor</td>
<td>January 2004</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good Neighbor Council (comprised of developers, residents, and government) involved as plan stakeholder. Non-profits – partnerships for land conservation and acquisition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Kannapells</td>
<td>May 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Raleigh</td>
<td>January 2004</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stormwater stakeholders group – includes 2 homebuilder (?), Chamber of Commerce, 3 environmental interest groups (Sierra Club, Neuse River Foundation), church representative (Catholic Diocese) and non-profit (Triangle Community Coalition).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dare County (MJ)</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Included Amateur Radio, Civil Air Patrol, Dare Voluntary Action Council, and Chamber of Commerce as part of institutional capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville County</td>
<td>December 1, 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholders including Salvation Army and American Red Cross given chance to review draft plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson County (MJ)</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listed non-profit orgs as part of collaborative effort but no details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoke County</td>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hazard Mitigation Task Force including representatives from American Red Cross and Chamber of Commerce asked for input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston County (MJ)</td>
<td>No date – post-Floyd</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinated with non-profits in part through Hazard Mitigation Task Force that met twice. Members included American Red Cross and Council on Aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>FBO/CBO participation on steering committee?</td>
<td>FBO/CBO – funding source</td>
<td>FBO/CBO – strategies</td>
<td>Other (e.g., stakeholder group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee County</td>
<td>January 1, 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macon County</td>
<td>January 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph County</td>
<td>July 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Beaufort</td>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Bethel</td>
<td>September 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Boone</td>
<td>July 1999</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Burgaw</td>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Chapel Hill</td>
<td>June 10, 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Conetoe</td>
<td>July 9, 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Elizabethtown</td>
<td>June 2000</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Emerald Isle</td>
<td>Jan. 2004</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Holden Beach (approved by FEMA)</td>
<td>July 28, 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-profits organizations involved in plan participation and interviews with stakeholders (no details)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Lake Waccamaw (Columbus County)</td>
<td>January 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Nashville</td>
<td>October 2, 2001</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Shallotte</td>
<td>November 18, 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transylvania County (MJ)</td>
<td>April 2002</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vance County (MJ)</td>
<td>Jan. 2004</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>Local Hazard Mitigation Advisory Team included Vance County Chapter of the American Red Cross, United Way of Vance County and Vance County Firefighters Association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County (MJ)</td>
<td>March 27, 2003</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Ken Krulik was with the Kerr-Tar Council of Governments, he assisted Vance County with the development of its hazard mitigation plan. The county’s advisory team, which included the American Red Cross, United Way, and volunteer firefighters, reviewed and provided community input to the draft and final plan. Mr. Krulik believed that pre-existing relationships were used to engage these organizations. According to Mr. Krulik, the plan provided the team the information it needed to make informed decisions. In addition, the team was able to provide him (the consultant) with localized information that he otherwise would not have had. This information was vital to ensuring the plan met the community’s needs. Mr. Krulik explained that coordinating multiple schedules was often difficult so much of the review was done through e-mail and hard copy. The possibility to build on the relationships with these organizations and gain their input into countywide zoning and comprehensive planning exists, according to Mr. Krulik.92

Crae Arnette, shortly after accepting the position of emergency services director at the Highlands Chapter of the American Red Cross, approached the Cumberland County emergency management office about participating in its planning efforts. Consequently, she is a member of Cumberland County’s Local Emergency Management Committee and the Emergency Preparedness Task Force. The former includes representatives from local hospitals and large businesses. Members of the latter, which functions as the county’s Local Emergency Preparedness Committee (LEPC), must be approved by the county governing board. The Emergency Preparedness Task Force was used as an advisory committee for the hazard mitigation plan. Ms. Arnette explained that the emergency management director and his staff developed the plan while the task force’s role was limited to plan review. While Ms. Arnette expressed a willingness to have been more involved in the plan’s development, she explained that the emergency management director preferred to retain control during the process.

According to Ms. Arnette, one of the most important benefits of being involved with the planning effort is the opportunity to build relationships with the other response organizations before a disaster occurs. These relationships facilitate a quick response during crisis but also make day-to-day operations run more smoothly. Ms. Arnette has subsequently been invited to participate in other community planning efforts, in part because of the connections she made with other organizations through the task force. For instance, officials at Fort Bragg invited the Red Cross to participate in the development their emergency plan because they have come to recognize the chapter’s role in countywide disaster preparedness and response.93

For many of these communities, this plan was the first of its kind. Given the extent of required elements, it is perhaps not surprising that the plans were light on public participation. The public participation requirements were often met by holding a public meeting. Some municipalities used existing groups as advisory committees. While the majority of municipalities utilized a steering committee composed of a wide array of government stakeholders, an opportunity is present to expand the steering committee to include non-governmental representatives in the next round of planning.

The plans show some recognition on the part of local government regarding the role faith-based and community organizations can play in plan implementation, either by helping with funding or by implementing a mitigation strategy, but there was little correlation between this recognition and the inclusion of faith-based and community organizations as part of the planning team.

Case Study: Zebulon, North Carolina

The town of Zebulon is located approximately 20 miles east of Raleigh, North Carolina. Its population has grown steadily over the past thirty years from 1,839 people in 1979 to 4,046 in 2000. Its proximity to the Triangle area (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill) makes future growth likely. The town’s planning jurisdiction covers approximately 8,600 acres.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a tornado touched down in the middle of town (near the former Piggly Wiggly). The tornado picked up a truck and carried it over 500 feet. The impact killed the driver. In the mid 1980s, a tornado caused minor damage on the outskirts of town.94 The town experienced flooding caused by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The town used Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds to purchase four severely damaged homes and converted them to open space.95 Zebulon also experienced the damaging effects of ice storms in 2002.

The town, in its Hazard Mitigation Plan, identified several community vulnerabilities. Twenty-four homes are located in the floodplain in addition to a lift station for the sewer system. Potential development in the floodplain could increase this vulnerability.

The North Carolina Department of Emergency Management, via the Hazard Mitigation Clinic at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, assisted the town with developing its hazard mitigation plan. Additional assistance with the public participation portion was provided by the author of this paper. The town planned to use the Planning Board as the official steering

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committee. The membership of this board represents a broad cross-section of the community including members of various faith-based and community organizations.\textsuperscript{96} The town’s limited resources to devote to hazard mitigation planning led to a decision to engage faith-based and community organizations primarily through a hands-off approach. Invitations to a community open house were sent to over a hundred faith-based and community organizations. The letter was signed by the town mayor, town manager, and the planning director. Included in this letter were two forms that organizations were asked to return. The purpose of the forms was to gather information that could be included in the community plan; one form addressed institutional capacity while the other asked for input regarding the town’s hazard history. A sample letter and forms is attached in Appendix A. Zebulon Baptist Church and Pilot Missionary Baptist Church were the only organizations to return community capability questionnaires. Approximately 30 letters were returned due to bad addresses. Follow-up calls were made to several of the organizations to call attention to the letters and encourage turnout for the open house.

In addition, the open house was promoted to the public through a variety of means including in the town website and local newspaper. In addition, about a 130 promotional items (i.e., cookies with attached flyer) were distributed at a town concert in October 2003. Individualized letters also were sent to homeowners in the flood-prone Pineview and River Crest subdivision encouraging them to attend the listening session. Some of these homeowners have been flooded in the past, and several have been relocated using buyout funds. Invitations also were included in the monthly packets sent to members of various town boards (e.g., planning, zoning adjustment).

The community open house was held November 15, 2003, in the town council chambers. Copies of the draft plan and maps of the planning area were displayed and available for review. A number of informational handouts regarding disaster preparedness and mitigation, prepared by the

\textsuperscript{96} Personal conversation with Mike Frangos, (former) planning director, Town of Zebulon. September 9, 2003.
town staff, also were available. Despite the outreach effort, attendance was disappointing. Not one member of the public stopped by during the two-hour open house. The only visitors were the town mayor and the state hazard mitigation officer.

Despite the poor turnout at the open house, Zebulon plans to continue its public participation efforts. In the future, the town plans to target volunteer firefighters, Chamber of Commerce Members, and the amateur radio club to encourage public participation. In addition, the town plans to seek letters of support from faith-based and community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Zebulon Baptist Church, Rotary Club, Volunteer Fire Department and local schools. Finally, the town plans to designate one Planning Board meeting every year as a listening session and review of the hazard mitigation plan.

Jack Glasgow is the pastor of Zebulon Baptist Church located in the center of town. He was one of the two people to respond to the letter. He attributed his response, in part to his personal work ethic, but also to a sense of civic responsibility the church feels given its central location in the community. Pastor Glasgow stated that while he was willing to provide input to the plan via the questionnaire, he would have been less likely to participate if asked to be a member of a task force. He explained that while he saw a connection between being asked to be involved because of the church’s visibility in the community, the reality of life’s demands would have prevented him from being involved in a more time-intensive effort. Pastor Glasgow said that if a town official had asked him to attend a meeting or two, he may have been able to do so but would have not been able to make an indefinite time commitment. Pastor Glasgow believes that the government has the responsibility to lead community preparedness efforts. He noted that while the church could
provide support for such activities by hosting training events, it did not see these types of efforts as
directly related to its primary mission. He stated that the institution’s focus is on worship.97

Lyddia Pritchard, Zebulon’s planning director, believes that it may have more effective to
follow-up the letters with phones call to the churches and offered them the opportunity to responds
to the questionnaires at that point. She suggested that an alternate approach would have been for a
town representative to have toured “their facility and tell them what their capacity may be and ask
for an agreement to use them in cases of emergency.” Ms. Pritchard also suggested that having
utilized the contacts of the Planning Board or the Community Relations Council contacts might
have helped.98

Summary

The Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster movement is beginning to broaden its role in
hazard mitigation, but it is a slow transition for its members who are rooted in disaster response and
recovery. Mitigation, particularly involvement in the planning process, may not be an appropriate
role for some of these national organizations, such as the ones who deploy volunteers to disaster
sites and are not based in a particular community. Local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
or local interfaith disaster recovery groups, where they exist, could be effective places to begin
recruiting participants to the planning process.

The importance of using these types of existing networks was a recurring theme in conversations
with planners and plan participants. This technique reduces the burden on planners to build
participation from scratch. Another theme was the need to determine the appropriate level of
involvement of faith-based and community organizations prior to requesting their involvement.
Being specific on how they can be involved, such as reviewing a draft of the plan or providing
written input for a section, appears to be important to gaining their actual involvement. It does not

98 E-mail correspondence with Lyddia Pritchard. April 2, 2004.
appear, however, that there is a “right” way to gain their attention initially. Instead, a variety of ways, such as face-to-face meetings, letters, or phone calls are needed. Personal contacts or previous relationships with local government officials and staff may increase participation of faith-based and community organizations.

Many of the plans and interviewees reviewed recognized a role for non-profits in the implementation of mitigation plans. Non-profits were recognized as having human and other resources that communities could use to meet match requirements for grants. In addition, some communities included faith-based and community organizations as part of the groups needed to implement mitigation strategies.

The concentrated outreach in Zebulon, North Carolina, did not receive as great a response as hoped. It was, however, the first step in a proactive public participation effort by the town. The experience shows that trying to involve faith-based and community organizations without utilizing existing networks or contacts is difficult. In addition, organizations will be more inclined to participate if they can see a clear link between mitigation and their organization’s mission.
VI. A Model for Involvement

In this section, a conceptual model for engaging faith-based and community organizations is presented. It is based on the assumption that rather than trying to involve faith-based and community organizations in the entire process, it would be more productive to selectively engage them at key points. This approach will make the process less overwhelming and reduce the perceived amount of time and resources that involvement in the entire process would require. It may be too much to expect an organization to be involved at every step of the planning process. Flexible memorandums of agreement that outline expectations from planners and from faith-based and community organizations on each other’s roles may be useful in managing expectations.

The following matrix (Table 3) attempts to break apart the stages of the planning process and identify at which steps engaging faith-based and community organizations may be appropriate. A role may not exist at every step; these instances have been blacked out in the matrix. The means by which a community chooses to engage these organizations, however, will differ as each community’s need for hazard mitigation differs. In addition, the organizations present in each community will be different requiring planners to tailor their approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase &amp; Step</th>
<th>Faith-based and Community Organizations Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One: Organizing to Plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Assess community support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Determine planning area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Determine if the community is ready to begin planning process</td>
<td>Provide information about “climate” for mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Remove roadblocks</td>
<td>Assist with removing roadblocks and building support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Build the planning team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Create the planning team</td>
<td>Be a member of planning team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase &amp; Step</td>
<td>Faith-based and Community Organizations Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engage the public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Identify the public</td>
<td>Identify people willing to participate in planning process or identify special needs populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Organize public participation activities</td>
<td>Act as means to proactively reach public by providing a venue for events or organizing events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Develop a public education campaign</td>
<td>Act as service delivery mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conduct a risk assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Identify hazards</td>
<td>Provide information from past experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Profile hazards</td>
<td>Provide information on historical losses or on special needs populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Inventory assets</td>
<td>Provide information on resources available and community-critical facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Estimate losses</td>
<td>Provide information from historical losses or specific to special needs populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop mitigation goals and objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Review and analyze the results of the hazard profiles and loss estimation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Formulate goals</td>
<td>Provide input based on needs of congregation/members/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Determine objectives</td>
<td>Provide input based on needs of congregation/members/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Get public input</td>
<td>Distribute information to congregation/members/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Identify and prioritize mitigation actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Identify alternative mitigation actions</td>
<td>Provide input based on needs of congregation/members/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Identify and analyze state and local mitigation capabilities</td>
<td>Provide input on organization/community capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase &amp; Step</td>
<td>Faith-based and Community Organizations Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Evaluate, select, and prioritize mitigation actions</td>
<td>Provide input based on needs of congregation/members/clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Prepare and implementation strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Identify how the mitigation actions will be implemented</td>
<td>Act as service delivery mechanism – accomplish actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Document the implementation strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Obtain the consensus of the planning team</td>
<td>Facilitate acceptance of implementation strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Document the mitigation planning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Make decisions about the style of the document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Write the plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Review the plan</td>
<td>Provide feedback on the final plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase Four: Implementing the Plan**

| 9. Adopt the plan | Provide public support for plan; write letters of support |
| 10. Implement actions | Use as service delivery mechanism |
| 11. Monitor and revise plan | Use to gather feedback on implementation |
| 12. Continue public involvement | Facilitate participation process |

Planners can use existing organizations, such as local emergency planning committees, interfaith disaster recovery groups, and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster networks as a starting point to involving faith-based and community organizations. These groups, in their entirety, could serve as a hazard mitigation advisory team, or planners could use the groups as a means to identify key organizations who could then be invited to participate on an individualized basis.

A variety of traditional public participation methods could be used as a mean of engaging faith-based and community organizations. The alternatives range from a fairly hands-off approach that might be used because of limited resources or by a community with limited planning experience. The hands-off approach could be accomplished by sending custom invitation letters to community
leaders asking them to attend a public meeting or community open house. The letters could be followed by phone calls to encourage the leaders to attend the open house and become involved in the planning process.

Alternatively, community leaders could be invited to participate in focus group or other facilitated meeting in order to gain their input at strategic points in the planning process. More experienced communities may want to consider establishing an advisory group or steering committee that would provide more formalized input on the direction and content of the planning process. Lastly, a new organization such as a community mitigation council comprised of faith-based and community organizations could be formed that would be responsible for developing the plan.

Communities may choose to utilize methods that are more non-traditional. The plan could be approached from the bottom up by encouraging individual organizations to develop their own vulnerability assessment and hazard mitigation plans that could be combined into a town plan. Another approach may be to include faith-based and community organizations in developing an element of the plan such as a vulnerability assessment of churches or other private community buildings that might be needed in the response and recovery phase for use as shelters or distribution centers. These plans would provide an obvious benefit to the organization and can serve as a means to build commitment to the overall community planning process.

The Community-based Pre-Disaster Mitigation Curriculum developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency also provides a means to engage faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation planning. The training, composed of two modules, is designed to “enable participants to discover the role that CBOs/FBOs [community-based/faith-based organizations] can

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FBO/CBO Engagement Methods</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Public meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Council/task force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-traditional:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual organizational plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individual plan elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Workshop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations in the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

play in mitigation activities, determine possible mitigation projects in which they might engage, and better understand ways that CBOs/FBOs and emergency managers can work together.” While the curriculum is focused on encouraging the participation of faith-based and community organizations in projects, it may provide a means to inform the organizations about hazard mitigation and provide a catalyst to their involvement in the planning process.

Regardless of the means by which the faith-based and community organizations are engaged, it is crucial that their interest be sustained. One way to accomplish this objective is to seek funding for implementation of public-private projects that are described in the plan. Hands-on projects could provide sought-after volunteer activities for organizations. Projects also may be planned so they have direct benefits to faith-based and community organizations such as purchasing and installing storm shutters for a church. The results of these projects will provide a tangible reward for the effort put in by the faith-based and community organizations during the planning process.

One lesson that can be learned from earlier efforts is the need to get past “knee-jerk” reactions from the leaders of faith-based and community organizations. Planners may need to be persistent in getting the attention of an organization’s leaders. Focusing on the how hazard mitigation links to the organization’s mission and the benefits that the organization would receive from being involved in the planning process are crucial to neutralizing initial disinterest.

Planners should recognize that some faith-based and community organizations will be more interested in being involved in project-based mitigation efforts rather than process-based efforts such as planning. Their lack of involvement in the planning phase, however, should not automatically exclude them from being involved as the plan is implemented. Planners may choose to concentrate on soliciting input from such organizations as strategies are being developed, in order

to assure that the proper organizations are involved and that the right types of strategies are being chosen.

While proof of public participation is already required in local hazard mitigation plans, the federal and state government could specifically require municipalities to involve a minimum number of faith-based and community organizations in the planning process. According to French Wetmore, a nationally-known planning consultant, convincing communities to include extensive public participation in plans developed for the Community Rating System (CRS) is easy because the CRS guidance specifically requires it. He often encourages communities to have a cross-section including homeowners associations and Chamber of Commerce members but the “stick” provided by the plan requirements is the true incentive. He noted that the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 planning requirements only specify a planning committee but do not require non-governmental representatives and believes this is a missed opportunity. He also noted that the approach suggested under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the evaluation approach used for the pre-disaster mitigation grant program makes planning appear to be a very technical, data-oriented process with little need for participation or looking at alternatives.

In addition to the stick of minimum requirements, federal and state governments should consider how they can encourage public participation in local planning. For instance, the federal and state governments could give preference to grants developed as part of a planning process that included faith-based and community organizations.

The federal government should continue to develop and disseminate resource materials, such as the Community-based Pre-Disaster Mitigation Curriculum. This curriculum should be aggressively marketed by the agency, perhaps through the efforts of regional voluntary agency liaisons. In

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addition, the agency should consider developing a how-to guide focused on public participation including engaging faith-based and community organizations.

**Recommendations**

- **Planners**
  - Build on existing networks
  - Be flexible about involvement but provide specifics
  - Identify mutual benefits
  - Demonstrate links to organizational mission
  - Start with projects as introduction to mitigation
  - Educate organizations before seeking involvement

- **Federal and State Government**
  - Require minimum number of non-profits to be part of planning team
  - Provide more incentives for involvement
VII. Conclusions

This section briefly addresses the questions posed in the introduction to this paper as a means of summarizing the findings of the research. In addition, it draws some conclusion regarding the applicability of these findings to other planning efforts.

It also presents constraints to and uncertainties in engaging faith-based and community organizations in local hazard mitigation planning. Finally, it provides suggestions for future research.

Research questions - revisited

- What roles have faith-based and community-based organizations filled with respect to the mitigation phase of emergency management?

At a national level, faith-based and community-based organizations do not appear to be widely active in mitigation. When they are involved, the focus seems to be on public education and hands-on projects. Local involvement varies widely and seems to depend on the initiative of individuals. Involvement tends to happen in communities where relationships between planners or emergency managers and faith-based and community organizations already exist. The findings show that important relationships are built when faith-based and community organizations are involved in the planning process.

- What lessons learned can be gathered from the engagement of faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation planning?

Existing contacts and networks are the best place to start when engaging faith-based and community organizations. Starting from scratch may be resource-intensive and lack results. Resource constraints, on the part of planners and organizations, may prevent extensive involvement but the local knowledge that faith-based and community organizations can contribute is worthwhile. While identifying links to organizational mission is one part of convincing them that their involvement is important, another part is to identifying how they can benefit from involvement.
Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations in the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process

One such benefit is the relationships that are built during the hazard mitigation planning process. These relationships are crucial during times of crisis and to furthering future joint activities. Providing a flexible means for faith-based and community organizations to be involved is also important.

- If faith-based and community organizations are to be included in the planning process, how can planners and emergency managers best engage them?

  The way and means to engage faith-based and community organizations will depend on the community’s needs and desires. There is not a correct way to approach their involvement but one that will be developed through an understanding of community context and through trial and error. The model and recommendations presented in this paper provides a framework for planners to start the process.

- Which lessons learned from faith-based and community organizations involvement in hazard mitigation planning can be applied to other planning efforts?

  There is nothing inherent to hazard mitigation planning that would prevent the lessons learned from being applied to other planning efforts. Most community comprehensive plans are based on the need to protect the general health, welfare, and safety of a community – a goal shared by hazard mitigation plans. It may be harder to engage faith-based and community organizations, though, in other planning efforts because benefits (e.g., grants, hands-on projects) may be harder to identify.

**Constraints**

Numerous constraints exist regarding engaging faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation. The foremost barrier is a lack of public interest in mitigation and an accompanying apathy on the part of organizations. This apathy may be amplified when organizations do not see a clear link between their mission and hazard mitigation. The education effort is therefore key to engaging faith-based and community organizations. This education likely will be best accomplished through face-to-face meetings between planners and faith-based and community organizations, whether on an individual basis or through workshops.
A lack of resources may prevent planners from devoting the time needed to engage faith-based and community organizations. In addition, planners may be concerned about how grant money will be allocated or controlled if they involve outside organizations. The faith-based and community organizations also may be reluctant to become involved if they perceived that human and financial resource requirements are overwhelming and divert resources from the organizations’ core missions. It is key, therefore, to determine the appropriate level of involvement for faith-based and community organizations and to ensure that organizations reap benefits from their involvement.

Engaging faith-based organizations may be particularly difficult because of First Amendment concerns. The organizations may not want to become involved because they want to retain their independence and freedom from government intervention in their conduct. Conversely, government officials may feel it is inappropriate to seek input from religious organizations. This unease may extend to an unwillingness to extend any participation in the planning process to individuals or organizations beyond the public sector.

**Uncertainties**

The primary uncertainty that confronts planners is will they be able to get and hold the attention of faith-based and community organizations. Ensuring the long-term participation of these organizations requires an equal commitment on the part of planners to make sure their participation is rewarding.

Another uncertainty is whether faith-based and community organizations can accurately represent community needs and abilities. As mentioned previously, when the leadership of the organization reflects the composition of its membership one can be relatively assured that this is true. However, there may be instances when the leadership of an organization does not reflect the population it serves. One example of this case is Habitat for Humanity, as demonstrated in a study by R. Allen Hayes in which he showed that the leadership of the organization was “overwhelmingly
governed by white, college educated persons making over $75,000 a year,” distinctly not the demographics of its clientele.101

The true test of a plan is at the implementation stage. Local government must be seen as honoring the investment made by the faith-based and community organizations in the planning process. If organizations, and by extension the public, have invested time into developing a mitigation plan, it may cause undue frustration and a breakdown in trust if a community does not have the means to finance and implement the plan.

The federal government also is providing unintentional signals regarding the involvement of faith-based and community organizations in hazard mitigation. Non-profits’ lack of eligibility for grants under the new Pre-Disaster Mitigation program in addition to the decrease in funding for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program might suggest that their involvement in mitigation is not valued. Funding is always a crucial part of a project’s viability; by removing a source of funding, an organization’s ability to participate in a project is dramatically decreased.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 can be interpreted as having escalating requirements for plans. For instance, some read the requirements to say that in the next planning cycle, communities will have to demonstrate how public participation has been increased since the initial plan. If this is true, it may create an incentive to include the minimum public participation in an initial plan in order to not set too high of a bar for the next cycle.

The increased emphasis on investment in homeland security also may come at the cost of hazard mitigation. Communities may be more able politically to focus on homeland security than on hazard mitigation because of the perceived risk. In addition, the lack of cost-share requirements that often come with homeland security grants may make it more financially feasible for communities to

pursue those types of grants as opposed to hazard mitigation grants that come with substantial cost-share requirements.

Finally, it is uncertain what a community’s response will be if a disaster occurs. If the community has been active with respect to hazard mitigation, the impact will be hopefully minimal and the community will be in a better position to begin recovery. A disaster, though, may by necessity divert attention away from mitigation and towards response in the short-term causing the planning process to lose crucial momentum.

**Future research**

One of the questions left unanswered by this paper is whether there are differences in outcomes given the engagement of faith-based and community organizations. A comprehensive look into plan quality and its relationship to the involvement of faith-based and community organizations in the planning process would be useful in documenting the benefits and costs (or advantages and disadvantages) of their involvement. Investigating a connection between involvement of faith-based and community organizations in the planning process and the extent of implementation of plans also would be an interesting direction for future research.

In addition, conducting more in-depth research into the role of individual members of the national Voluntary Organizations in Disaster may provide interesting insights into how faith-based and community organizations are currently involved in mitigation and how why could be drawn into planning efforts.
VIII. References


Engaging Faith-based and Community Organizations in the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process


Appendix A. Letter to Zebulon’s Faith-Based and Community Organizations
and Attachments

«Contact_Name»
«Organization»
«Street»
«City», «State»  «Zip»

October 21, 2003

Dear «Salutation» «Last_name»,

We would like your help to make Zebulon safer from natural disaster. We have recently begun a planning process that will help reduce our community’s risk to natural hazards. In order to ensure that the final plan reflects our community needs, we would like the «Organization»’s assistance. There are several ways for you and your members to contribute:

- Announce the upcoming community event to your members. Enclosed is a flyer for the upcoming public meeting with details on date, time, and location. This event will provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the hazards Zebulon faces and what we can do to reduce our risk to them. We also welcome input on community needs and priorities.

- As part of the plan, we are developing a hazard history that details past disaster events in Zebulon. While we have information on many of the major recent events such as Hurricane Fran, Floyd and the ice storm of 2002, we need your help in uncovering the smaller, less known, more localized events from Zebulon’s past. If you have information about these types of events, please complete the enclosed hazard history form and return it to the indicated address.

- In the plan, we would like to provide a full picture of Zebulon’s capacity to prepare for and prevent disasters. If your organization would like to be included in this capability assessment, please complete the enclosed form and return it to the indicated address.

Your input into the plan is critical to its success. Thank you in advance for your contributions. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Michael S. Frangos AICP, CZO, Town of Zebulon Planning Director at (919) 269-7455 ext. 244.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Matheny  Rick Hardin   Michael S. Frangos, AICP
Mayor    Town Manager    Director, Planning Department
Capabilities Assessment – City of Zebulon

As part of our plan, we would like to provide a full picture of Zebulon’s capacity to prepare for and prevent disasters. Please answer the questions below so we can include your organization in the plan; attach additional sheets if needed. Thank you!

1. How many members does your organization have?

2. Has your organization completed any disaster preparedness or reduction-related project? If so, please describe it below.

3. What sorts of activities would your organization be able to support?
   - Training
   - Public outreach/education/information dissemination
   - Assembling and distributing disaster supplies kits
   - Non-structural projects (e.g., installing hurricane shutters, clearing streams of debris)
   - Other (please explain):

4. Would your organization need funding to participate in the activities described above?

Return to:
Planning Department, Town of Zebulon, 100 N. Arendell Avenue, Zebulon, NC 27597
City of Zebulon - Hazard History

As part of our plan, we need to identify what hazards Zebulon has been affected by in the past and how our community was impacted. While information on large-scale events is readily available, we would like your help in describing some of the smaller events. If you or other members of your organization know about any localized occurrence of the hazards listed below, please describe them in the attached table. Feel free to make additional copies of the table if needed. Please include your organization’s name at the top of each sheet in the space provided. Thank you!

Hazard Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dam Failure</th>
<th>Flood</th>
<th>Severe Winter Storm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Hailstorm</td>
<td>Tornado</td>
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<td>Earthquake</td>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>Wildfire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expansive Soils</td>
<td>Land Subsidence</td>
<td>Windstorm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat</td>
<td>Landslide</td>
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IX. Hazard History (provided by ____________________________)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard type (e.g., flood)</th>
<th>Date of event (approximate)</th>
<th>Number of injuries</th>
<th>Approximate cost</th>
<th>Type of damage (e.g., number of buildings, roads affected)</th>
<th>Other comments</th>
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