## Emergency Preparedness Initiative
## Summary:  State Findings

## SESSION ONE:  REFLECTING ON YOUR COMMUNITIES' DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

### *Disadvantaged Groups*

*Commonly identified "disadvantaged" groups:*
- Elderly, especially in rural areas*
- Non-English speaking
- Those with Physical and or mental disabilities*, including those with medical dependence (i.e. on oxygen, dialysis, etc.)
- Homeless
- Lacking transportation
- Low education / illiterate
- Low income*
- Isolation*:  social, cultural, and or physical/geographical**
- Families with small children, especially single parents
- Those that refuse to take action
- Homebound
- Illegal immigrants

*\*Indicates groups most often identified as "disadvantaged."*

*\*\* For purposes of this meeting "social isolation" referred to individuals that did not have many connections to community (i.e. not part of churches, clubs, etc. that would connect them to the outside world).  "Cultural isolation" referred to individuals or groups that were separated by some aspect such as language, customs, etc. These individuals may be well connected as a group, but not to the outside world.  "Physical/geographical isolation" referred to individuals that lived in remote locations that may cause a hindrance in a disaster.*

*Notes:*
- Sometimes separating "at risk" and "disadvantaged" is challenging.
- Levels of disadvantage is an important consideration (i.e. How low is the income?  How severe the handicap?  How old / young or how dependent is the person?
- Multiple layers of disadvantaged factors magnified the problem (i.e. low income, illiterate, homebound all rolled into one person puts them at a greater disadvantage than a single factor.

## Common Elements Across Disadvantaged Groups:
## Positive and Negative Aspects of Awareness, Preparation, Response, and Recovery

| | Elderly | Low Income | Isolation: Social &/or Cultural | Disability: Physical, Mental, Medical Dependence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Awareness (+) | • Trust & communicate with neighbors & friends<br>• Trust local institutions. (i.e. churches, social services)<br>• Got warnings from local media outlets. (TV and radio) | | | |
| Awareness (-) | • Not aware of community disaster plan (no communication of plan)<br>• Lack personal plans; some expect that others will take care of them<br>• Dependence on TV for warnings is not as effective in rural settings because stations report from metro areas. | | | |
| Preparation (+) | • Emergency Managers and Community Groups are willing to work together to make it better.<br>• Registering special needs seems helpful; though keeping the registry current is a challenge. | | | |
| Preparation (-) | • No community participation in planning.<br>• Emergency Managers and Community Groups need to work together on planning and preparation<br>• Community plan needs to be communicated to community members.<br>• Some are unable to prepare. (i.e. can't afford to stockpile supplies)<br>• Shelters to accommodate special needs audiences need to be developed. | | | |
| Response (+) | • Rural communities tend to "take care of their own"<br>• Emergency Managers and Community Groups are willing to work together to make it better<br>• Strong internal networks.<br>• Sense of self-sufficiency improved recovery (especially in rural areas)<br>• Extension agents know rural areas and who needs help. | | | |
| Response (-) | • Disadvantaged groups tend to be slower to respond<br>   o Poor communication between outside aid providers and those who are culturally isolated.<br>   o Didn't receive warnings in a timely fashion.<br>   o Low level of trust of EM/ Police/ Fire. (among disabled)<br>• FEMA attitude viewed as negative | | | |
| Recovery (+) | • Isolated communities have their own survival and coping mechanisms. | | | |
| Recovery (-) | • Long term recovery is very slow for low income population.<br>• Rural areas are less prepared for dealing with the aftermath (such as having power restored, clearing roads, etc.)<br>• Too many forms to fill out – recovery assistance needs to be streamlined among agencies to simplify paperwork. | | | |

### To What Extent Were the Things Noted in the Chart Above Affected by Rural Vs. Urban Locations?

| Rural | Urban |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>Less attention is given to rural areas; tend to be neglected.</li><li>Lack of financial resources.</li><li>Higher social capital; more bonding. (people helping people, know their neighbors)</li><li>Heavy equipment is available. (farmers)</li><li>Limited rural tax base.</li><li>More prone to do for themselves.</li><li>More barriers when living outside towns/cities (i.e. roads washed out). Distance and resources inhibits quick response.</li><li>Same people play multiple roles in the community.</li><li>Plans often created by regional entities not local people and groups.</li></ul> | <ul><li>More resources available. (physical, financial, formal organizations)</li><li>Attitude of "who is going to do for me?" (vs. rural attitude of doing for myself)</li><li>Individuals are more isolated socially. (may not know neighbors)</li><li>Many demands in a small geographic area – may have to wait for help</li><li>More formal organizations involved in planning and response.</li><li>More formal "top-down" planning.</li></ul> |

### What Worked Well in Past Disasters?

- Having a place where "trusted" people are present.
- Communications among agencies.
- Good coordination of formal Emergency Management organizations.
- Advanced warning systems.
- Mock exercises and drills.
- Increased tracking of vulnerable populations.
- BRACE example

### What Needs Improvement?

- Better communication to the public is needed.
- Integrating city, county planning and resources with that of grassroots/informal organizations.
- Coordination between local organizations and national organizations. (localized agencies need to maintain leadership) Develop positive vertical and horizontal relations.
- Coordination of donations and volunteers is needed.
- Address needs of pets and livestock.
- Keeping registry of special needs population up to date is a challenge (dialysis, oxygen, etc.)
- Open attitudes and skills of Emergency Management leadership – seek community input.
- Use social network links that exit. (technology based, relationship based, etc. – whatever connects people to others around them)
- Streamline assistance process and paperwork – use a single system across agencies.
- Increase training and education of individuals; use flexible timing and creative approaches; stress personal responsibility.

## SESSION TWO:  KEY COMMUNITY ASSETS AND RESOURCES

### Who did each group identify as resources that disadvantaged groups trusted?

| Emergency Managers | Community Group |
|---|---|
| • Fire<br>• Faith-based organizations<br>• Emergency Management Agencies<br>• Law enforcement | • Fire<br>• Faith-based organizations (churches)<br>• Emergency Management Agencies<br>• Human service agencies (home health agencies)<br>• Red Cross<br>• Friends and neighbors |

*Note:  While some common ground was identified, the group noted that there were considerable differences between the EM and CG groups on this question as seen in the matrix of state responses.*

### What Key Groups Are Currently Involved?

- Churches
- Emergency Management (fire, law enforcement, EMA)
- Red Cross
- People with a pulse on the community
- Health agencies
- Schools

### What Key Groups Should Have Been Used But Were Not?

- Churches & faith-based organizations
- Trash companies – debris removal
- Private sector
- Civic organizations
- Extension
- Human service agencies
- Pet services/vets
- "Unique" groups (i.e. tribes, military, inmates)
- Grassroots organizations (ministerial alliances, neighborhood watch)
- Emergent groups
- Schools, community colleges, universities

### *Emergency Preparedness Demonstration Process Feedback*

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Good sequence of events/process; provides a good starting point.<br>• Liked mapping process. (though noted that it needs to clearly define the community and make sure the right people are present)<br>• Good if connected to the whole plan.<br>• Brings Community Group perspective to the process.<br>• Mobilizes more people; it is inclusive.<br>• Increases awareness of both vulnerabilities and resources.<br>• Addresses some of the weaknesses of the current plans (i.e. not inclusive, not communicated)<br>• May be received best if marketed as a tool and clearly not a criticism of existing emergency efforts.<br>• Alleviates conflicts ahead of time.<br>• Coordination saves time and increases efficiency.<br>• Increases horizontal linkages, especially at the county level. | • Need a step-by-step guide; curriculum and training needed.<br>• Communities need technical assistance for mapping.<br>• Funding is an issue.<br>• Sustainability; Keeping maps updated may be a challenge.<br>• Challenge in getting and keeping community involvement.<br>• Concern for how local leadership will accept the process.  Caution: Work with existing leadership – not come in as an "outside expert"<br>• Defining "community" and ensuring the right people are involved is challenging.<br>• Potential turf issues.<br>• Distribution/communication of plans may still be challenging.<br>• Time consuming.<br>• Some states have templates that are intended to work together; May disrupt.<br>• Focus on the Disadvantaged is not comprehensive; must be part of a total plan to work. |

### *Coaching Feedback*

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Liked having a guide to keep the process on track, motivate, and take responsibility.<br>• Facilitator/Mediator is good.<br>• Appropriate education and experience is a strength: must understand both technical and process aspects.<br>• Compassion to understand community concerns.<br>• Neutral – the lack of political "baggage" allows for appropriate mediation and impartial intervention if needed.<br>• Ideal would be to team an outside coach with an inside facilitator.<br>• Trust is essential to success.<br>• Urban:  more receptive to coach as an outsider, but expressed concern that there was already a plans in place<br>• Rural:  Helpful because of limited resources and the ability to draw people together. | • Need clear definition of the role and necessary qualifications. (skills, personality traits, education)<br>• Concern for selecting a local coach vs. an outsider.<br>• Funding – bigger concern in rural settings.<br>• May be a need to provide coach training (skills, process, education, technical aspects)<br>• Some Emergency Managers may be hesitant – feel threatened (responsibility, hypersensitivity)<br>• Concern for political agendas.<br>• Must be able to establish trust within the community.<br>• Can't be expected to do it all. |

## SESSION FOUR: DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS TO FEMA AND CSREES

- Emergency Preparedness Demonstration Project is valuable and should be pursued:
  - Develop comprehensive training curricula for process and for coaches.
  - Clearly define the role of the coach and the core competencies needed to be successful.
  - Implement a competitive grants process to encourage community "buy-in" upfront.
  - Invest in an outside evaluation of the original pilot sites from EPD – look at both readiness to respond as well as capacity building/leadership development.
  - Catalogue available resources to assist with GIS mapping and coaching needs. (i.e. universities, community colleges, etc.)
  - Refine vulnerability assessments; explore low tech options.
  - Address ways to involve and encourage local buy-in and participation
- Provide feedback to states and communities that participated in this project (i.e. next steps, future opportunities)
- FEMA to explore partnerships with other like-minded entities – Seek to partner as opposed to being the "final authority":
  - Partner FEMA's Regional Catastrophic Preparedness centers with the RRDC's and EDEN
  - Work with philanthropies for funding for planning.
  - Formal and informal relationships with other organizations. (ESFs especially)
- Current SRDC process raises awareness of the needs of disadvantaged populations – expand to other areas.
- Focus on the significant needs of rural areas that are already lacking resources.
- FEMA needs to emphasize planning at <u>all</u> levels.
- FEMA needs to address the skills, commitment, and competency of the Emergency Managers.

## SESSION FIVE: EXAMINING EXTENSION'S ROLE

### *Extension:*
- Has the knowledge and trust of the community; available in every county/parish.
- Should become more actively involved in disaster management. What would it take?
  - Is it a priority for CES? In counties? Nationally?
  - Administrative approval and support
  - Programmatic alignment (CD, ANR, FCS, 4H?)
- Can serve on boards and advisory committees.
- Can assist in response.
- Can assist in education and information dissemination.
- Promotes state and county level involvement.
- Can network with EDEN.
- Provides training/facilitation/coaching.
- Provides technical assistance or access to (i.e. GIS, recovery)
- Builds capacity in communities and has a history of facilitating community change, bringing all stakeholders to the table; can provide coordination
- Can provide links to networks and connections to stakeholders; has diverse audiences
- Is an unbiased, non-political organization that has a reputation of bringing groups together.
- Has the ability to help communities identify assets and improve decision-making.

### *Other Outlets:*
- NACDEP
- JOE
- Emergency Management
- EDEN – (Smith-Lever)
- Summary "Voices of the People" report – create a similar report