



Religious beliefs may hinder first responders in a disaster situation

In the context of worldviews, practitioners also felt that religious beliefs and religious differences caused problems in disaster response, for example, in medical issues and that some emergency and disaster workers are not well trained to deal with the issue: “Cultural difference... family management... the corpse exposition and transportation. This is the reason for many misunderstandings and critical points. Operators are not well trained and do not understand the differences between Jewish, Muslims, fundamentalist Catholics needs” (G1; R), “The Jehovah witnesses that don’t receive blood transfusions, for instance. And the nurses are confused and don’t know what to do” (G3; R), “Medical issues differ from religion to religion” (G3; R), or how religious beliefs are linked to fatalistic attitudes towards disasters: “We are all very fatalist, and this fatalism is connected to religion. I think that more than a scarce perception, there is the behaviour of those who say “We’ll see, God will protect us” (G4; R10). Awareness of religious differences was perceived as important for practitioners also after a disaster has occurred, as some religions have specific dietary requirements, which may be hard to match in relief camps: “In Emilia, we had difficulties with immigrants, not much for languages but for cooking and traditions, meat, relationships with women” (G1; R), “Once we had to break a fight because the volunteer woman who was serving meals used the same spoon both for tortellini and penne with tomato sauce. I had not realized that tortellini had meat inside” (G1; R). In the disaster recovery phase, one practitioner felt that religious beliefs affected recovery efforts, with some areas placing more emphasis on rebuilding religious centres rather than homes or businesses: “I see the religious issue in the recovery phase. In Friuli in ’76, their priority was to rebuild factories, then homes, then churches. In other areas the church priority is higher than the productive or residential system” (G3; R).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Customs/traditions/rituals](#), [Worldviews](#)

Disaster Phases: [Preparedness](#), [Response](#), [Recovery](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Government](#), [Red Cross](#), [NGOs](#), [Military](#), [Law enforcement agencies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Foster the adoption of a culture of disaster prevention and resilience by informing and motivating citizens to take action](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.11 "Report on Stakeholder Assembly 2 \(Italy\)" \(page 20\)](#)

This file was generated automatically on: 12.02.2019.

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