The role of social capital in disaster situations

Social capital plays a vitally important role for disaster victims. Warner and Engel (for literature reference see original source document) maintain it is the first resource people turn to: "In the hour of need and often all throughout recovery, people have to rely on their social cultural networks; their social capital to overcome whatever disaster they lived". There are several ways in which social capital has been shown to help citizens. Most lives are saved by other community members rather than DMAs: "experience shows that the most effective life-saving efforts are usually carried out by the affected populations themselves, during and after a disaster". These networks of volunteers may also continue to operate during the recovery stage. Strong social capital can be an advantage in these situations, as Veszteg et al. (for literature reference see original source document) note: "… scholars have argued that communities with a larger stock of social capital tend to be more efficient in post-disaster rescue and relief work". It is therefore important for DMAs to better understand and support these relief networks that are borne in the community, after a disaster.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Social networks

Disaster Phases: Response, Recovery

Types of Actors Concerned: Non-active citizens, Active citizens, National civil protection body, Local authorities, Government, Red Cross, NGOs, Military, Law enforcement agencies, Healthcare and emergency services, European Civil Protection Mechanism, UN and other international organisations

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

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