



“Natural” Disasters Are Social Problems: Learning from Katrina

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The Problem:

Natural disasters require emergency management. With or without the impact of global warming, many areas of the United States must live with the reality of natural disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes. While disasters are certain, their timing is unpredictable, and preparedness is essential. How should communities be better prepared than was New Orleans when Katrina hit?

Research Evidence:

The city of New Orleans lacked a coherent plan to evacuate the large numbers of people affected by the storm. Key federal government agencies like FEMA and Homeland Security were slow in developing guidelines to define their respective jurisdictions. Post-disaster reconstruction efforts have not made a sufficient effort to involve residents and displaced persons in the recovery process.

Solutions:

- Federal and State agencies involved in developing post-disaster reconstruction policies should make local social and economic development its highest priority.
- Agencies that are responsible for reconstruction policies should give highest priority to making affordable housing available for middle and low income residents.
- Federal and State funds should be directed to universities located in affected areas to study and develop plans to avoid post-disaster problems that hampered the post-Katrina recovery.

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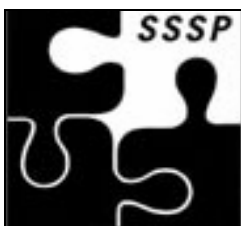
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