

“Building Community Resilience Through Effective Partnerships Between Faith-Based and Community Organizations”

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Pamela Joshi is a senior research scientist and the associate director of the Institute on Children, Youth and Families at Brandeis University. She has 20 years of experience conducting research and evaluating public policies relating to family and children’s health in diverse populations. Drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks and using qualitative and quantitative research methods, Joshi develops integrated research designs that help develop effective policy recommendations geared toward enhancing program design and providing valuable findings to practitioners and policymakers. She specializes in evidence-based reviews, policy assessment, and implementation evaluation of programs targeting diverse populations. Current evidence-based policy reviews include immigrant integration programs, disaster preparedness capacity building targeting faith-based and community organizations, and affordable housing and neighborhood mobility programs. In addition to her policy expertise, Joshi is leading or participating in research projects focused on the effects of employment and job characteristics, neighborhood conditions, and religiosity on maternal and child health outcomes in vulnerable families.

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Summary and Findings: To help expand the contribution of local faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) in helping communities respond to and prepare for emergencies and disasters, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships and DHS Resilient Systems Division funded the Building Resilience with Diverse Communities project. The project focuses on the experiences of FBCOs and emergency preparedness and response (EPR) agencies’ capacity to deliver services in the short and long term to build overall community resilience. The research includes a full systematic review of peer-reviewed and unpublished research on FBCO capacity and networks available to provide services in disaster relief efforts as well as collaborations with EPR agencies. To date, the systematic review identified 21 studies that met review criteria. While the literature is still in early stages of methodological development, surveys find that FBCOs have the capacity to deliver emergency social services. In response to Hurricane Katrina, the smaller FBCOs’ service capacity surged to address unmet emergency needs. General Accounting Office estimates show that the large FBCOs such as the American Red Cross have capacity limitations that may be offset by contributions of smaller FBCOs.

Implications for Policy and Practice: Building the management capacity of nonprofits may better ensure their overall survival, better ensure continuity of operations immediately after a disaster, and may contribute to an organization’s ability to contribute to official disaster response and recovery operations. This research is useful to public managers and policymakers interested in building the capacity of a diverse array of nonprofit organizations, including social service agencies, as well as community anchor institutions such as churches, schools, early education centers, and community health centers, which can participate in service delivery systems and emergency preparedness efforts. This research underscores the potential for value-added training and building capacity of FBCOs to be incorporated into larger community prevention and resilience strategies. Since Hurricane Katrina, several formal and informal practices emerged to increase FBCOs’ participation in EPR activities, though none has been formally evaluated. Each study in this review includes recommendations for further program development to facilitate FBCO participation. There is broad agreement across studies that FBCOs should supplement and not replace governmental activities. The recommendations reflect a continuum of policy and program options such as developing informal linkages and formal memorandums of

understanding, increasing FEMA's community outreach functions, enhancing training opportunities, and dedicating funding sources.