Insights and Reflections: Social Resilience

Climate change and impacts from natural hazards are disrupting community social structures. More than ever, a connected community is a crucial part of holistic resilience. On July 28, 2021, the Resilient Nation Partnership Network convened a panel of community leaders for a conversation on Social Resilience to dig into what this really means and draw from best practices nationwide.

Key themes the panel identified for advancing social resilience include:

- Social Resilience provides multiple benefits to a community, including focusing on the ability of social units, groups or populations to prepare for, withstand, respond and recover from climate, natural hazards and other disruptions.

- A recent report authored by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine identified two key pieces to advancing social resilience:

  - **Social capital**: The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. This includes social norms, trust and networks.

  - **Social connectedness**: The degree to which individuals or groups of individuals have and perceive a desired number, quality and diversity of relationships that create a sense of belonging and being cared for, valued and supported.

- Social resilience encompasses close connections to family and those immediately around you, but also to individuals and organizations with decision-making power in the community. The stronger relationships are before a disaster, the better a community will be able to respond and recover. Be sure to build relationships during "blue sky days" – not the day after a disaster.

- Sometimes when individuals or pockets of the community have religious, theological, political or ideological differences, it can seem difficult to establish human connections and build trust. Step out of the comfort of your bubble and start with shared commonalities as the foundation when working towards greater resilience. Always remember that partnering with faith-based organizations, the arts community, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and others can facilitate these connections.

- Leveraging both physical and digital spaces is essential to social connectedness. For some communities, the power of physical space cannot be overlooked—the ability of some groups to get together is almost a lifeline aiding in resilience efforts, supporting mental health, and more.

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