

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Across the Lifespan: Aging Refugees' Navigation of Crisis Planning

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INTRODUCTION

- Older refugees in Ohio face unique systemic constraints during emergencies and disasters that amplify their vulnerability.
- Formal emergency and disaster planning often overlooks the cultural and intergenerational structures aging refugees rely on, leaving older adults critically underserved during crises.

METHODS

1. **Study Design:** Qualitative; Exploratory; Five Listening Sessions conducted by ETSS, collected in April 2025.
2. **Participants:** Eight (two women, six men) active community leaders representing five of Ohio's largest refugee communities (Afghan, Bhutanese, Congolese, Ethiopian/Eritrean, and Somali)
3. **Data Analysis:** Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework

"Information gives them transformation. ...So education, training, information is very, very important"
—Ethiopian/Eritrean Community Rep.

"...we have a WhatsApp group where we have everybody. That's where we usually send out certain news regarding the community" —Bhutanese Community Rep.

Theme 1: Identified Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Challenges:

"The problem is accurate information..."

—Somali Community Rep.

Theme 2: Were met with strategic multi-layered resilience:

"We made a small [medical kit] for mental health and distributed in the community and showed them how they can use it"
— Afghan Community Rep.

Theme 3: That offered pathways to strengthen preparedness systems:

"A key cohort, receiving training, and then it spreads to each household"
—Congolese Community Rep.

MAJOR FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

- **Barriers to Preparedness:** Cultural differences and limited access to reliable information place disproportionate responsibility on community leaders during crises.
- **Community Strengths:** Preparedness is actively shaped and sustained through existing community assets, including faith-based networks and intergenerational support systems.
- **What this Means for Practice:** Effective emergency and disaster planning must center community voices, leverage cultural strengths, and prioritize culturally attuned communication strategies.
- **Moving Forward:** Investment in community infrastructure is essential for equitable sustainable disaster preparedness.

References & Acknowledgements:

