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OCCASIONAL PAPER

# The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Long-Term Human Recovery After Disaster

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Reflections From Louisiana Four Years After Hurricane Katrina

*Anita Chandra • Joie Acosta*



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## Summary

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Human recovery is the process of rebuilding social and daily routines and support networks that foster physical and mental health and well-being. The four-year aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has provided a case study of the lengthy and complex process of human recovery, the instrumental contributions of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the policy and resource challenges that affect NGOs' ability to support human recovery. To capture lessons learned, RAND researchers conducted a facilitated discussion with NGO leaders in Louisiana. In that discussion, NGO leaders were asked about difficulties they faced in supporting human recovery and about potential actions needed to address these challenges. This occasional paper describes these issues, including the lack of understanding about which models of long-term human recovery should be used and how they should be financed, inadequate NGO-government coordination, and the lack of clarity about how to formalize and operationalize NGO roles and responsibilities. Development of a formal federal and state system to support human recovery and changes to long-term recovery policies are addressed in the discussion of potential actions. This paper also outlines future directions for research to build the evidence base on what works in long-term human recovery.