



### Presenter

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### Recovery and Resilience from Hurricane-Induced Flooding in Eastern North Carolina: Perspectives from Community Leaders

**Background:** On September 16, 1999, Hurricane Floyd (HF), a category two hurricane hit North Carolina (NC), causing damage that today represents the greatest disaster in the state's history. On October 8, 2016, Hurricane Matthew (HM) repeated destruction in most of the same counties in eastern North Carolina. We know very little about individual resilience within communities in rural, inland eastern NC where repeated hurricanes have opened opportunities to discover factors that form the fabric of individual, and hence, community resilience and give voice to those that do not have it. What does resiliency look like in underserved communities faced with underlying hardship? We conducted an applied research project to gain understanding of individual and community resiliency in socially vulnerable populations.

**Methods:** For this qualitative research project, Pitt County and Robeson County in NC were selected as sites because both are classified as economically distressed. Both counties were heavily damaged by HF and HM. Seven focus groups were conducted between November 2017 and April 2018. In Pitt County, the Disaster Recovery Partners of Pitt County, the unmet needs group, served as our primary community partner. In Robeson County, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, to date, facilitated collaboration for a focus group with a church in Lumberton damaged by flooding from HM. A semi-structured interview guide, lasting approximately 60 minutes, was developed. A survey to collect information on demographics and behaviors related to responding to HM and HF and drinking water consumption was provided. Notes were taken. The facilitator was trained to administer the interview guide. Focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed. Themes were extracted and coded independently by 3 trained researchers. All focus groups were conducted in English language.

**Results:** Many common themes emerged from the focus groups. For the CISA conference, the results will focus on recommendations that survivors made related to how to improve response and mitigation efforts by the local, state, and federal government responses. Ms. Mary Perkins-Williams, Pitt County Board of Commissioner for District 2, is invited to share her community's story of recovery and

resilience. Pastor Lausandra Hunt from Riverside Church of God, Lumberton, NC and Speaker of Lumbee Tribal Council during HM recovery, is invited to share his congregation and tribal stories of recovery and resilience.

Suggestions for government: Improve communication of recovery process and the process itself at federal, state, and local levels; Provide funds to tear down homes that cannot be occupied; Provide mortgage loan forgiveness for homes that were completely destroyed (where home was not flood insured); Assign consistent caseworkers for case management; Clean out ditches and drainage pipes in towns and along rural roads; Elderly and isolated need time and means to be transported for evacuation; Replacement funds for heating/air conditioning units remains major unmet need.

Conclusion: Data from this project will inform planning for recovery and resilience resulting from hurricane-induced flooding and other natural disasters.