

Women Leadership in Disaster Management: The Case of the Beirut Blast

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Background

Disasters affect men and women differently, with research indicating that women often bear a disproportionate burden. Gender inequality exacerbates these disparities, leading to increased vulnerability among women, including the loss of livelihoods and homes, gender-based violence, and loss of life before and after disasters. Despite these challenges, women have demonstrated their resilience and leadership capabilities by actively participating in community resilience-building and disaster risk reduction efforts.

Objectives

This research aims to create a conceptual framework with two dimensions: expanding knowledge on women's leadership in disaster management and emphasizing the importance of supporting and strengthening women's leadership for disaster risk reduction and social change.

Methodology

The research employs qualitative research to investigate and support women's leadership and resilience in the aftermath of the Beirut Port Blast, aiming to contribute to disaster risk reduction and social change. This approach, grounded in real-life experiences, involves 5 to 10 participants in interviews conducted over three months. Interview questions explore women's roles in disaster management and their impact on disaster risk reduction and societal changes.

Findings

The study reveals the crucial role played by women leaders in disaster management during the Beirut Blast. Through interviews with key stakeholders, the research offers valuable insights into the status of women leaders in disaster management, including their roles, challenges, motivations, and actions. The findings provide a roadmap which illustrates the roadmap of conceptualizing and Enhancing Women Leadership.

UN Involvement

The United Nations plays a pivotal role in this roadmap. Firstly, it advocates alongside feminist activists and women's rights groups in Lebanon for gender-sensitive disaster responses, recognizing the unique impact of disasters on women and the importance of including them in decision-making processes. Secondly, UN Women in Lebanon has established a Feminist Civil Society Platform, enabling women's rights NGOs, feminist activists, and scholars to implement pre-disaster warning plans and monitor disaster response efforts, ensuring that women's needs are addressed in the long term. The platform also includes referral mechanisms for lobbying, advocacy, and consultancy, advocating for equitable spaces for women in the public sphere.

Conclusion

This research underscores the vital contribution of women leaders in disaster management, with a specific focus on the Beirut Blast. It emphasizes the need to recognize and support women's leadership in disaster risk reduction and highlights the collaborative efforts between UN agencies and civil society organizations to promote gender-sensitive disaster responses, empower women in the face of disasters and advocate for the inclusion of the women in the decision-making process.

Keywords

Women's Leadership, Disaster Management, Gender Mainstreaming, Beirut Blast, UN Advocacy, Resilience-building, Gender Equality.