

Disaster Management
Corruption and Gender
Issues

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A disaster is simply a sudden unfortunate event that occurs and causes destruction and destroys the functioning of a society by causing different kinds of harms in material, environment, and even human harms that are bigger than the society's ability to handle. Disasters come in different forms, disasters could be natural like earthquakes, volcanoes... Disasters could also be man-made, which means that disasters could also be caused by human beings like explosions, biological weapons, and cyber-attacks; Disasters are expected to rise more due to the change in the climate and other aspects "Disasters have been on the rise and are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change, rapid urbanization and environmental degradation." (Chakrabarti, 2009). It has been reported that between 19994 and 2013, 6,873 natural disasters happened over the globe causing the death of 1.35 million people and damaged the properties of more that 218 million people; This study shows that an average of 68,000 lives are being taken due to natural disasters. "Today, not only are more people in harm's way than there were 50 years ago, but building in flood plains, earthquakes zones and other high-risk areas has increased the likelihood that a routine natural hazard will become a major catastrophe" (CRED, 2015).The tremendous destruction caused by a disaster is due to the lack of preplanning for such an event, this planning can be also called disaster managing. Disaster management is a plan for dealing with a particular disaster prior, post, and after the disaster happens by having a preparedness plan, a response plan, and a recovery plan.

Gender inequality is still visible until today in different fields from income, education, political voice, to violence. "Disasters affect women and men differently, and due to deep-seated gender inequalities, women are at greater risk of suffering from disasters." (Chakrabarti, 2009).

Gender discrimination against women has a great effect on women by not only making them vulnerable during such events, however, discrimination also wastes women's capability and potential in fighting such disaster. Women were always considered and reported to be only restricted to supply food, shelter, and water during any disaster, although, they might have a significant role in making decisions regarding the disasters to decrease the risks, knowing that they possess vital knowledge and logic. Women evidentially have been a powerful helping agent during disasters and after them; Taking the example of the Hurricane Mitch that took place in Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998 that was the cause of great destruction, the role of women in the recovery process after this disaster was significant, where women took the initiative to build temporary shelters to contain the people who lost their properties due to the disaster, not to forget to mention that these women also worked hard to restore livelihoods. Another example is the destructive earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, women after this natural disaster were an essential tool in rebuilding what has been destroyed, including the reconstruction of infrastructure, houses, and even tourism sites for the earthquake's proof. Women were always the building block in the process of fighting and recovering after a certain disaster, after proving themselves to be so in different situations (Mexico (2017), Nepal (2015), Honduras and Nicaragua (1998) ...). Therefore, the resistance and recovery during and after disasters is the responsibility of both men and women "The strength of post-disaster recovery lies with how well it responds to the needs of both women and men." (Disaster Recovery Guidance Series, 2020).

A recent disaster that shook the world was the great explosion of Beirut's port in Lebanon. August 4, 2020 was a memorable day for the Lebanese people, after the explosion of a great amount of explosive material called ammonium nitrate that were stored in a building in the port of Beirut. 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that are equivalent to 1.1 kilotons of TNT

have been stored for a minimum of six years, ever since the abandoned ship “Rhosus” reached Beirut port and unloaded its storage of ammonium nitrate in the port. The Beirut port blast was considered the third most powerful explosion and was felt by countries that are 240 km far from the port including Syria, Palestine, Turkey, and even Cyprus. This disaster was accompanied with a great impact on humans and material, causing the unfortunate death of at least 210 people, the injury of at least 7,500 people, and a damage in building and material that was estimated to be equivalent to 15 million US dollars which left 300,000 people homeless; not to mention the people that were mentally injured until today.

A simple disaster management plan could have been used to prevent such an unfortunate event. A disaster management plan should have been studied by knowledgeable men and women that implements rules and regulations to prevent the happening of the disaster by identifying such dangerous material to either monitor this material carefully or have a clear policy on how to react after the detection of such material. The disaster management plan could have also trained the staff that worked in the port on how to directly react after the start of the fire in the building, after knowing exactly what was stored in that building. Lebanon was missing such a plan that would have been very essential to reduce the chances for such an incident to happen.

Moving forward to having a disaster management plan to respond to the disaster in the time it occurred, The Lebanese government was not prepared to respond in a fast-efficient way to save properties and humans during such a disaster. Another sector in the country that was surprisingly unprepared were the Lebanese hospitals that were facing a lot of trouble in understanding and helping the amount of injured people. However, special organizations were trained and well-prepared to respond to save lives in such a catastrophe like the Lebanese Red

Cross and The Lebanese Red Crescent; Both of these organizations are humanitarian organizations with a team of trained medics that provide urgent medical services to people in need of them. The Lebanese Red Cross is a foundation with more than 7,000 volunteers that are divided equally on both genders, which shows the presence and the capability of women in helping in disasters, and that was well proven in the explosion of Beirut's port where both young men and women volunteers in The Lebanese Red Cross contributed and helped in saving the lives of many people that are until this day grateful for their efforts in that day. "Immediately after the explosion, the Lebanese Red Cross responded to urgent lifesaving needs on the ground. Teams rescued and provided first aid to wounded persons and lifesaving blood. They distributed food, water, masks and other essentials to more than 80,000 people. To meet emotional support needs, trained team members provided crisis counseling to over 5,700 people." (American Red Cross, 2020).

After the great blast of Beirut's port, the Lebanese people were facing a lot of hard times trying to rebuild what was destroyed from their properties in result of this gigantic explosion, this leads to thinking of the disaster management plan that is required basically to help the people and the country recover after such a disaster. Clearly the Lebanese government did not take any initiative neither had any disaster management plan to save the Lebanese people from the disaster they were facing. However, on the other hand, several countries took the initiative to donate and help the people of Lebanon recover from the explosion's effect on properties, giving the example of the French president Emmanuel Macron that donated a total of 340 million dollars worth of cash and aid to help the people rebuild and recover. Many humanitarian Lebanese and non-Lebanese organizations stood up and contributed to help clean, repair, and rebuild properties that have been severely damages by the explosion "Countries and international organizations lined up on Wednesday to help Lebanon after a

massive warehouse explosion sent a blast wave across Beirut, killing at least 100 people and injuring nearly 4,000.” (Staff, 2020).

Such volunteering organizations are well trained to react after the appearance of such disasters especially in Lebanon where such disasters are expected to happen. Based on experience, one of the organization that did a great progress in the ground was Offre Joie, a humanitarian organization that was founded in Lebanon in 1985 from a group of volunteers that were wishing to aid people in need for their help, the community had a 25 years’ experience in helping people in similar disasters with a vision to help as much people as possible. During the Beirut explosion Offre Joie was lead by Reine Abi Rached a female volunteer that had the leader’s traits and the enthusiasm to offer help as much as other guys would have and even more. Until this day, Offre Joie, by the help of numerous guys and girls volunteers, contributed in the cleaning and rebuilding of about 350 houses that are ready for families to move back into “As a result, our solidarity will guarantee a safe return home to at least 350 families” (Offrejoie, 2021).

Lebanon is always in danger from a range of natural and human-made disasters, which makes the vulnerability of the Lebanese people towards disasters a great issue, due to lack of strong structure, regulation of land use, and in simple words the lack of an effective disaster preparedness in Lebanon. The Lebanese UNDP provided assistance to the Lebanese government to raise awareness for all forms of disaster risks reduction. Moreover, the UNDP developed a project plan to create an internal disaster risk reduction unit for the country to avoid the circumstances of a disaster of any form that will happen in the future to the country “The three year project focuses on the creation of an inter-ministerial DRR Unit, which establishes a DRR strategy with clear, measurable and time-bound objectives and a National

Action Plan to achieve those objectives.” (UNDP, 2009). The government is in a place where it is forced to respond and accept the UNDP’s offer to build a disaster management plan for the country to help prevent what happened in the Beirut port’s explosion in August 4, 2020. However, unfortunately this planned project was designed in the 2009, and was not followed by the Lebanese government in any way. If this plan was followed there would have been a possibility that Lebanon would have reacted in a better way to help people’s lives and property once the disaster took place, or as a matter of fact the explosive material would have never entered the Beirut port in the first place due to proper surveillance. This leads to a very important point: Lebanon is a highly corrupt country. Due to this corruption, people lost their lives, a change must be done to this system to be able to deal with disasters in the future. Having a government and parliament that only think about individual financial gain and staying in power won’t keep people safe. Reforms need to be done so that Lebanon can operate efficiently and safely, which means people need to wake up and know that the decision they make in the elections can cost people their lives and corrupted individuals should be held accountable of their actions so that the one who follow them into a position of power don’t take peoples lives for granted.

To sum up all that has been stated so far, disasters are unpleasant events with a great negative income on people’s lives and properties, and can come in different forms (natural, man-made). This shows the importance of developing a clear well-built measure that is included in a disaster management plan; Knowing that this disaster management plan should be formed by using the knowledge and minds of organized, smart men and women. The presence of women in fighting a disaster is as important as the presence of men. In August 4, 2021 a huge explosion struck the heart of Beirut causing tremendous loses in the lives of men

and women, and the damage of a big number of properties with no prior plan to combat such a catastrophe by the Lebanese government due to corruption, however, other countries and organization stood to help reduce the effects of such a man-made horrid disaster through and after the explosion. This example gives a clear view of the importance of having a well-developed disaster management plan that will be in collaboration between men and women to prevent the country from going through such a disaster again.

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