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Socio-cultural characteristics: the missing factor in disaster risk reduction strategy in sectarian divided societies

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Abstract

This article reviews the implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies in Lebanon and shows that in divided sectarian societies with weak governance institutions, socio-cultural characteristics shaped by religio-political influences can directly influence DRR implementation. This research demonstrates that, despite recent progress in response management and disaster awareness, the lack of policies intended to institutionalize DRR and the neglect of integrating socio-cultural characteristics into DRR strategies have undermined the effectiveness of Lebanon's disaster response capacities. The author highlights the important role of religio-political organisations in influencing socio-cultural factors and contributing to DRR implementation. Finally, the author calls for direct collaboration between international agencies and Lebanese religio-political organisations to accelerate DRR implementation across the country and mitigate the impacts of future disasters. The intent of this article is to add momentum to DRR implementation in divided sectarian societies by emphasizing the influence of socio-cultural factors, particularly the role of religio-political organisations in disaster mitigation, response and resilience.

Keywords: Earthquake hazard, socio-cultural aspects, Lebanon, religio-political organisations , disaster risk reduction, sectarian divided societies

Introduction

Disasters triggered by natural hazards can be tragic, destructive and costly, and pose serious threats to countries' infrastructure and sustainable development. The implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies has been proven to be effective at reducing the impacts of disasters on communities. However, the progress and success of DRR in developing countries and divided sectarian societies remain unclear and limited due to weak governance, financial and technical barriers and the poor integration of socio-cultural factors. Socio-cultural characteristics can influence responses to risk, and in divided sectarian societies, religio-political forces have

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