

Fijian Women's Role in Disaster Risk Management: Climate Change

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Abstract : Climate change is progressively being identified as a global crisis and this has immediate repercussions for Fiji Islands due to its geographical location being prone to natural disasters. In the Pacific, it is common to find significant differences between men and women, in terms of their roles and responsibilities. In the pursuit of prudent preparedness before disasters, Fijian women's engagement is constrained due to socially constructed roles and expectation of women here in Fiji. This vulnerability is aggravated by viewing women as victims, rather than as key people who have vital information of their society, economy, and environment, as well as useful skills, which, when recognized and used, can be effective in disaster risk reduction. The focus of this study on disaster management is to outline ways in which Fijian women can be actively engaged in disaster risk management, articulating in decision-making, negating the perceived ideology of women's constricted roles in Fiji and unveiling social constraints that limit women's access to practical disaster management strategic plan. This paper outlines the importance of gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction and the ways of mainstreaming gender based on a literature review. It analyses theoretical study of academic literature as well as papers and reports produced by various national and international institutions and explores ways to better inform and engage women for climate change per ser disaster management in Fiji. The empowerment of women is believed to be a critical element in constructing disaster resilience as women are often considered to be the designers of community resilience at the local level. Gender mainstreaming as a way of bringing a gender perspective into climate related disasters can be applied to distinguish the varying needs and capacities of women, and integrate them into climate change adaptation strategies. This study will advocate women articulation in disaster risk management, thus giving equal standing to females in Fiji and also identify the gaps and inform national and local Disaster Risk Management authorities to implement processes that enhance gender equality and women's empowerment towards a more equitable and effective disaster practice.

Keywords : disaster risk management, climate change, gender mainstreaming, women empowerment

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