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Future Trends - Continuous Disaster Risk Exposure and Hazard Vulnerability

With the increase of natural disasters, specifically those that affect the same region or regions multiple times, we will see a diminishment in resiliency activation and populations more prone to hazard vulnerability. This vulnerability, defined by the United Nations' Disaster Risk Management ¹ portal, are "the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards".

Haiti is a case in point. On January 12, 2010 Haiti was struck by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake. Fatalities numbered approximately 220,000 with 300,000 severely injured and 1.5 million experiencing homelessness as a result of the damage. Hurricane Mathew hit Haiti on October 4, 2016 killing 546 people. 175,500 took to shelter and 1.4 million required humanitarian aid.² Another earthquake, 7.2 on the richter scale, struck the southwestern region of Haiti on August 14, 2021 resulting in 2,248 deaths, 12, 763 injured and 650 million in need of humanitarian aid.³ Currently, Haiti is experiencing extreme civil unrest in the form of gang violence, political instability and rising kidnappings, rape and murder all following the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021. All of which is affecting food insecurity. Amnesty International lists Haiti as 9th out of 10 in the top global crisis areas of 2023.⁴

In "The Resilience Activation Framework: A conceptual model of how access to social resources promotes adaptation and rapid recovery in post-disaster settings" ⁵ Abramson, et al describe resiliency as the ability to access latent measures of capacities and resources through human, economic, social and political capital and at both community and individual levels. However, continuous disaster risk exposure will both inhibit the ability to access these attributes and greatly diminish them further increasing hazard vulnerability in Haiti and many other regions. Of tantamount concern, is human capital i.e. the mental health of those affected and those exposed to secondary and/or vicarious trauma in the response and recovery to these disasters. In order to begin to mitigate further exposure we must begin to address the mental health of all stakeholders involved which will aid in creating the economic capital needed to rebuild infrastructure, secure more stable political capital and ultimately affect social capital. All of which also increase human capital.

References

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