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Disaster recovery in developing countries can be an opportunity for sustainable and resilient transformation of conventional construction practices; helping vulnerable communities recover and rebuild efficiently while preparing and strengthening their resilience for possible future disasters. This study explores the drivers and barriers in the housing reconstruction of the island of Saint Martin after Hurricane Irma and proposes specific interventions to support building back safer housing. Such interventions aim to support the transition towards hazard-resistant construction techniques based on effective knowledge exchange with respect to local context and culture.

Strategies in this report address prevailing issues that the community of this island faces regarding living conditions, government disparities, and overall perception of the community's own vulnerabilities. This literature review presents three key barriers in the recovery process; (1) the languages barrier and communication issue between all the stakeholders of the island, (2) the heavy dependence on external aid and regulations, and (3) the building on existing community solidarity to further strengthen overall resilience to potential impending disasters. Findings indicate the importance of building on the existing strengths that bind the people of Saint Martin together and introduces insight into community resilience recovery practices. We propose several interventions: (1) training workshops through social media to enhance the adoption of safer construction practices, (2) community based participatory mapping for urban planning purposes, and (3) language and cultural exchange to foster social inclusion of marginalized groups, such as minorities and migrants. A deeper analysis into intervention (1) is made to further understand the benefits of introducing an interactive learning experience, whereby local affected communities could effectively learn from each other. Such an opportunity could potentially contribute to self-recovery and decrease the dependence on external conventional reconstruction practices. Trade-offs and action plans for successful application are also discussed in this report. An impact assessment program is introduced to measure effectiveness of the proposed intervention and to study the possible level of integration of this strategy into the community of this island.

Emerging voices and pathways to inclusive disaster studies