

Carole Therrien

PhD Student, Anthropology



## Women and disaster recovery: Stories about Hurricane Irma



SIEF2021

Poster Presentation

June 21 to 24, 2021

### Question

Four years after Hurricane Irma (2017), St. Maarten's communities continue to struggle with recovery. Some women attribute this delay to decision-making that favoured non-local, male corporate interests, and their treatment as helpless victims.

*What are the implications of dismissing the recovery capacities of a group usually perceived as at-*

### Timeline

Secondary research:  
June to October 2021

Primary research: No-  
vember 2021 to June  
2022

Data analysis, initial findings and  
further fieldwork (as needed): July  
2022 to May 2023



### Plan



- The research plan focusses on unveiling power dynamics in SXM's recovery and its impacts on single female-headed households of differing economic levels.
- In addition to secondary sources, in-person story telling by participants will play an key role in primary data analysis as ethnographic endeavor: what happened, when, how it made them feel, what are they doing now, etc.
- Participants will be recruited from two groups based in St. Maarten: stakeholders from K1Force, a hurricane relief organization focussed on short-term relief, and members of the BPW Concordia, a professional female networking organization.

### Preliminary Knowledge

- Anecdotal claims from local female leaders center on how decisions made by authorities in the SXM Recovery Process were culturally prejudicial and negatively impactful on the female population.
- Communities away from the tourist eye struggle with social tensions, aggravated by and attributed to unequal treatment of workers and residents (Semple 2019).
- Power inequalities tend to be embedded in both the emergency preparedness and recovery processes (Chmutina, 2021).
- Political and humanitarian interventions by global powers in Irma's recovery tend to cast aside local processes, and practices, ignoring resident needs (Barrios, 2017)
- Recovery needs were identified based on vulnerability, as per institutional definitions (Medina et al, 2020).

### Value of research

*Some disaster recovery research looks at on how cultural processes are dismissed; by looking at capacity rather than vulnerability, recovery can be analysed from the perspective of cultural impact and evolution.*

