



Information brochure



Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction

Armenia 2010



Armenia

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This information brochure is aimed at raising awareness on gender issues during Disaster Risk Reduction. It is addressed to different stakeholders including national, state and local self government bodies, NGOs, activists on gender issues, women and men interested on gender and DRR issues.

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List of Abbreviations

RA	- Republic of Armenia
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
DRR	- Disaster Risk Reduction
CEDAW	- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
IUCN	- International Union for Conservation of Nature
UNISDR	- United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
ILO	- International Labour Organization
UN MDGs	- United Nations Millennium Development Goals
HFA	- Hyogo Framework for Action

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance".

Kofi Annan

UN Former Secretary General

1. The Concept of Gender

Gender is a socially constructed concept: it is the set of relations between and among women and men based on socially constructed roles and behaviours considered appropriate for women and men. In simple words, gender refers to the set of relationships between women and men at a particular point of time in a given society.

It is learned behaviour and often based on stereotypes of how a woman or man "should" behave.

Gender does not replace sex as it is a biological category, which is universal, and given by nature.

1.1 Gender Roles

Gender roles are social roles: boys and girls are systematically taught to be different from each other. Socialization into gender roles begins early in life. This includes learning to be different in terms of, for example: appearance and dress, activities and pastimes, behaviour, emotions, responsibilities, intellectual pursuits, etc. Gender roles are learnt and therefore can be unlearned. They are not unchangeable.

1.2 Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination refers to any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms which prevent a person from enjoying full human rights. In many countries of the developing world women continue to have fewer rights, lower education and health status, less income, and less access to resources and decision-making than men.

1.3 Gender Equality

Gender equality is equality between women and men, promoting equal participation in making decisions; in equally supporting women and girls to fully exer-

cise their rights; and in reducing the gap between women's and men's access to and control over, resources and benefits of development. Thus, it is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice: it is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development.

The international community has made important commitments to women's rights and equality between women and men, including:

- ✓ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- ✓ The Beijing Platform for Action,
- ✓ The Millennium Development Goals,
- ✓ The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The guiding principle of gender equity is to create equal outcomes for women and men, girls and boys.

1.4 Gender-Based Violence

"Violence against women constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms."

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines "violence against women" as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

In all societies worldwide, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and the issue of violence is not confined to any cultural, social, class, economic or religious boundaries. Since gender-based violence is a problem across the globe, it has become a matter of concern to all the States.

2. Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce the socio-economic vulnerabilities of disasters as well as dealing with the environmental and other

hazards that trigger them. DRR and gender are both cross-cutting development issues. Mainstreaming gender into DRR offers an opportunity to re-examine gender relations in society from different angles and enhance gender equality in socioeconomic development.

Gender is an important variable since it is clear that those living in poverty are more vulnerable to disaster impact and the majority of the world's poor (70%) are women. It has often been observed that due to higher vulnerability and marginalization, women are more affected by larger or smaller disasters than men, even though no systematic gender sensitive statistics are available.

Since disasters occur in "gendered social systems" they need to be addressed by "gendered disaster management" programmes. It is imperative that these constructs can no longer be ignored if we wish to improve the effectiveness with which we respond to extreme events and prepare for them.

As women, men, boys and girls, often have different needs before, during and after a disaster, gender equity may call for differential targeting of resources in relief operations and to facilitate women's full participation in preparedness and mitigation campaigns.

A gender analysis would not assert that all women are more vulnerable than men, but that gender is an important, though not the sole, determinant of vulnerability. Assessment of vulnerability also involves looking at the coping strategies of those in emergency situations and these are also, in part, determined by gender. A considerable body of evidence highlights the extent to which gender relations place women in socially, economically and politically marginalized positions vis-a-vis men that serve as a limiting "pre-condition" of people's ability to anticipate, prepare for, survive, cope with, and recover from disasters.

Disasters do not discriminate, but people do. Existing socio-economic conditions mean that disasters can lead to different outcomes even for demographically similar communities - but inevitably the most vulnerable groups suffer more than others. Research reveals that disasters reinforce, perpetuate and increase gender inequality, making bad situations worse for women.

Our overarching goal is to contribute to building the disaster resilience of both women and men, in order to achieve sustainable development through:

- ✓ Increasing understanding of gender concerns and needs in disaster risk reduction;
- ✓ Developing government capacity to address gender issues in disaster risk reduction;
- ✓ Encouraging governments to take action to integrate gender perspec-

tives into disaster risk reduction legislation, policies and programmes, for sustainable development.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) have been working jointly to integrate gender issues into disaster risk reduction across the board. UNDP's Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery emphasizes the need to promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction initiatives and to support women and men to build more sustainable communities after disasters. Meanwhile for the IUCN, the growing impact of climate change-related disasters on women is of immense concern.

Gender equality in DRR does not mean merely addressing women's issues - it means addressing concerns of women and men, the relations between them and the root causes of imbalances.

3. Status of Women in Armenia

Poverty in Armenia is widespread. Many factories and industries formerly functioning in the different regions and serving as one of the main sources of income for the rural population have stopped working since the beginning of 1990s. Unemployment is especially high in the rural areas and among women-severe lack of employment possibilities, lack of financial resources and physical infrastructure is especially evident in the regions. In Armenia 75.5 % of officially registered unemployed are women. Hidden unemployment is very high, and self-reported unemployment rates are significantly higher than unemployment rates recorded at employment services. While out of work, females look for a job for a longer period of time than males. Among officially registered job seekers who secured a job placement, 65% were women, of which 64.0% were looking for job for more than 12 months, while the same indicators for male comprised respectively 35.1% and 33.3%. Most Armenian women do not receive maternity benefits because they are not in the formal labour market. For example under the RA Law on the State Benefits the child care benefit or allowance for children under the age of 2 is paid only to working women and is aimed to partially compensate for the salary, while they are on maternity leave.

One of the main fields of economy in the RA is agriculture. According to 2001 census date 45.1 % of the population is involved in the agricultural works. Among them almost half are women. The labour conditions are very hard, and consequently this has an impact on the general and reproductive health of women.

Although women have equal rights under the RA Constitution and relevant laws, their participation in political and public life remains low. In 2008, only 12

out of 131 deputies in the National Assembly were women, and there were only two women cabinet ministers. Women`s participation in local self-governance is also quite low.

In Armenia, the issue of violence against women and domestic violence has become a subject of open discussion. Each year, the country participates in the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence" campaign, and in 2007 Armenia, also joined a Council of Europe campaign. According to studies, 48% of surveyed women have experienced some form of physical violence and 20% of them have suffered a form of sexual violence, including marital rape. The unequal position of women in the family and in society in general makes it often difficult for them to exercise protection against such forms of violence.

On March 30, 2010, according to the decree N 213-A, the Prime-Minister of Republic of Armenia, Tigran Sargsyan, approved the establishment of the Interagency Commission to Combat Gender-Based Violence. The goal of the Commission is to raise the effectiveness of events aimed at preventing gender violence, elaborating certain mechanisms for sharing information, as well as carrying out the purpose of developing the National Program "Against Gender-Based Violence".

3.1 Gender Strategy Concept in Armenia

In February 11, 2010 the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted the Gender Strategy Concept of Armenia. The draft outlines number of strategic directions and challenges women face today. It mentions that gender equality principles ensuring equal rights and possibilities of men and women in social, political and economic spheres are included as a strategic priority in the action plan of 2008-2012 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The aim of the concept is the establishment of legal, political, social-economic and cultural conditions in all spheres supporting full realization of rights and opportunities of women and men. The concept will serve as a basis for the elaboration of gender equality initiatives by state authorities, local self government bodies and civil society institutions.

Gender policy will be implemented in all spheres of social-political life through the involvement of gender indicators and also through the elaboration of special projects and means for overcoming gender inequality and expanding women`s possibilities: it should be based on the following principles:

- ✓ Conformity between the main principles of RA Constitution and country`s international obligations,
- ✓ Democratization of all the spheres of social life,

- ✓ Respect towards the personal rights and freedoms and support to individuals' free and creative development and maximum potential realization,
- ✓ Publicity – open, transparent elaboration, discussion and adoption of public decisions,
- ✓ Expansion of possibilities for women and men to use and exercise their proclaimed rights in reality
- ✓ Insurance of veritable equality and sustained democracy-building,
- ✓ Harmonization of citizen's national and personal interests irrespective of their gender,
- ✓ Promotion of Social Partnership between the state structures and NGOs,
- ✓ Sustainability of state gender policy,
- ✓ Research/study and mainstreaming of national and international experiences, as per necessity.

3.2 UNDP and "Strengthening of National Disaster Risk Reduction Capacities- second phase" project, Armenia

UNDP Armenia "Strengthening of National Disaster Risk Reduction Capacities - second phase" project is aimed at strengthening the legal and institutional framework for disaster risk management in Armenia, including the development of a comprehensive national disaster risk reduction strategy and the enhancement of a risk identification, assessment and monitoring system in Armenia through national risk assessment and establishment of a data observatory for disaster statistics.

Project activities include:

1. National risk assessment and establishment of national data observatory for disaster statistics;
2. Strengthening of legal and institutional framework and inter-agency coordination for disaster management in Armenia.

The project provides support in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for disaster risk management in Armenia, including development of a comprehensive national disaster risk reduction strategy. As a significant input for the elaboration of this strategy, the risk identification, assessment and monitoring works are considered. Main implementing partners of the project are the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of Territorial Administration.

In order to ensure a gender-sensitive approach in all the project activities, UNDP has consolidated national and international expertise to: advise on and assess gender-related needs in the context of disaster risk reduction: identify

gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction measures targeting improved women's participation in DRR decision-making: strengthen capacities and skills of women in Disaster preparedness and response and: assess the level of vulnerability of women and men in Disaster Risk Reduction. The following is a list of recommended measures to improve gender focus into DRR:

- ✓ Collection and analysis of relevant data on risk, vulnerability and capacity assessment and capacity building initiatives is not done taking into consideration gender aspects. Thus, it should equally be targeting women and men taking into consideration differences between their needs, gender roles, socio-economic situation, cultural context, and other factors.
- ✓ Participation of women in workshops and discussions on DRR.
- ✓ Increase in the level of women's participation in decision making.

One of the most important preconditions for entrenching gender sensitive policies into DRR is encouraged participation and involvement of women into the decision-making institutions and positions.

Gender discrimination in any dimension of disaster preparedness or mitigation, emergency relief, or long-term reconstruction inhibits people's realization of their human rights and can reduce individual and community resilience to hazards and disasters.

4. The International Instruments and Mechanisms Protecting Women's Rights

Equality of rights for women is a fundamental principle of the United Nations. The preamble to the **Charter of the United Nations** sets as a basic goal "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of women and men". The provisions of the Charter regarding equal rights of women have been further refined and developed in a great number of international human rights instruments.

4.1 UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

Often called as an "International Bill of Rights for Women", is the most comprehensive instrument on women's rights. CEDAW identifies many specific areas where discrimination against women has been particularly notorious, for example, in regard to political rights, marriage and family and employment. The Convention spells out specific goals and measures that are to be taken to contribute to the creation of a global society free of inequality between women and men.

On 22 December 2000, the **Optional Protocol to the Convention** entered into force. The Optional Protocol entitles the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women⁴ to consider complaints from individual women or groups of women who have exhausted national remedies. It also entitles the Committee to conduct inquiries into grave or systematic violations of the Convention. However, this is valid only for member states which ratified the Optional Protocol.

4.2 UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952)

Spells out the entitlement of women to participate on equal terms with men, and without any discrimination, in political life of the society, and importantly, to be eligible to all publicly elected bodies and to hold public office and exercise all public functions.

4.3 Conventions of the International Labour Organization

The ILO Conventions cover a wide area of social and labour issues including basic human rights, minimum wages, industrial relations, employment policies, etc. – among them a number of gender-specific issues.

It is often argued that protective measures for women might limit their opportunities to get certain jobs. The maternity benefits increase the cost of employing women and therefore might discourage their employment. However, in the case of maternity protection, these measures are necessary to protect the reproductive role of women. Therefore, the revised version of the Convention on Maternity Protection places an emphasis on the payment of maternity benefits from social security funds and restricts the circumstances in which an employer can be held individually liable to pay them (Convention 183, Article 6).

The following is a non-exhaustive list of Conventions concerning gender-specific issues:

- ✓ Maternity Protection Convention
- ✓ Night Work Women Convention
- ✓ Equal Remuneration Convention
- ✓ Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention
- ✓ Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention
- ✓ Part-time Work Convention
- ✓ Home Work Convention

4.4 UN Millennium Development Goals (2000)

MDGs are an integrated set of eight goals and 18 time-bound targets for extending the benefits of globalization to the world's poorest citizens. The goals aim to stimulate real progress by 2015 in tackling the most pressing issues faced by developing countries.

Millennium Development Goal 3 is "to promote gender equality and empower women". The very existence of a separate goal demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the development paradigm. Goal 3 crosscuts along all the 8 MDG goals, because gender inequality is a major obstacle to meeting the MDG targets. In fact, achieving the goals will be impossible without closing the gaps between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities.

4.5 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment, which aims at removing all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international context.

4.6 The Hyogo Framework on DRR

The impact of disasters is on the rise worldwide. There is an urgent need to halt that rise and to reduce disaster impact. This can only be done by shifting the official paradigm from a sole emphasis on disaster response to comprehensive disaster risk reduction.

In January 2005, and recognizing the need for this new paradigm, governments adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The Hyogo Framework recognized that DRR is a cross-cutting development issue, not a purely humanitarian one.

The Hyogo Framework emphasizes that DRR must be addressed in the context of socioeconomic development, and mainstreamed into development planning and actions through five processes. This is reflected in HFA's five priority areas for action.

- ✓ Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- ✓ Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning;
- ✓ Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- ✓ Reduce the underlying risk factors; and
- ✓ Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Integration of gender perspectives is needed in all these processes in order to ultimately ensure that DRR policies and programmes are gender-sensitive. This is underlined in the HFA as a necessary condition of effective DRR.

- ✓ The political process requires national authorities to create an enabling environment for DRR;
- ✓ The technical process stresses the important role and application of science and technology in DRR;
- ✓ The socio-educational process focuses on ways to increase citizens' understanding, knowledge and skills for reducing disaster risks;
- ✓ The development process underlines the importance and necessity of integrating DRR into development practices;
- ✓ The humanitarian process emphasizes the importance of disaster preparedness and effective relief assistance, with increased effort in factoring DRR into disaster preparedness and recovery.

The Hyogo Framework also states that a gender perspective should be integrated into all DRR policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training.

4.7 UNDP's Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery

UNDP recognizes gender equality as a core goal of human development, and promotes it through gender mainstreaming. The **Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery** is committed to **UNDP's Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery**.

The agenda aims to:

- ✓ Strengthen women's security in crisis: Stop violence against women;
- ✓ Advance gender justice: Provide justice and security for women;

- ✓ Expand women's citizenship, participation and leadership: Advance women as decision-makers;
- ✓ Build peace with and for women: Involve women in all peace processes;
- ✓ Promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction: Support women and men to build back better;
- ✓ Ensure gender-responsive recovery: Promote women as leaders of recovery;
- ✓ Transform government to deliver for women: Include women's issues on the national agenda;
- ✓ Develop capacities for social change: Work together to transform society.

5. Women's Vulnerability in Disasters

Everyone can be equally exposed to hazards, but women and men have different levels of vulnerability and access to resources, and have therefore developed different coping skills. Vulnerability is the exposure and susceptibility of any person to losses and/or possible harm (Physical, Mental, Psychological, Social, and Biological). Major indicators of vulnerability are loss of assets, entitlements, social exclusion, and physical or psychological exploitation.

Who are considered most vulnerable to disasters?

- ✓ Poor and low-income households,
- ✓ Single-parent households,
- ✓ Socially isolated households,
- ✓ Recently arrived residents, immigrants and, foreigners,
- ✓ Senior citizens, children and young people,
- ✓ People with a disease or a mental or physical disability,
- ✓ Undocumented residents; refugees; war veterans,
- ✓ Indigenous populations and subordinate ethnic groups,
- ✓ Institutionalized populations; homeless residents,
- ✓ Women.

(Source: Emerson and Morrow 1998)

In this respect, a recent study of 141 countries found that more women than men die from natural hazards, and that this disparity is most strongly linked to women's unequal socioeconomic status¹.

¹ Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive Policy and Practical Guidelines, Published by UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN. Geneva, Switzerland, June 2009

The study indicates that where the socioeconomic status of women is high, women and men will die in roughly equal numbers during and after natural hazards, whereas more women than men die (or die at a younger age) where the socioeconomic status of women is low.

Though not reflected in most hazard and risk assessments, the gender division of labour shapes the exposure of women and men to different hazards, taking different shapes in different cultural contexts.

- ✓ Women's more extensive domestic labour exposes them more to hazards of interior space, for example, smoke pollution from cooking fires, post-flood mold, erratic electrification and contaminated water.
- ✓ Women farmers and others who rely on natural resources such as wood and water for their livelihood are threatened by drought, deforestation, pollution, and other hazards of environmental degradation and climate change.
- ✓ Many women are doubly exposed to toxics and contaminated air and water, through domestic labour in interior spaces and in outdoor work such as construction and mining.

Living conditions and inequalities also increase women's exposure and susceptibility to hazards of many kinds.

- ✓ Women's lower economic status makes it more difficult for them to purchase equipment or supplies useful for mitigation, for example the medications needed by their children in a health epidemic or the air conditioners that save lives in extreme heat.
- ✓ Women who lack safe and accessible transport and those who live with chronic illnesses, age-related diseases or physical/mental disabilities are less able to avoid or escape hazards due to decreased mobility.
- ✓ Poor health and nutritional status undermine the ability of poor women around the world to resist the effects of natural, technological or deliberately induced hazards.
- ✓ Pregnancy as well as pre-natal and post-natal health conditions diminishes women's resistance to, for example, the effects of contaminants in agricultural and/or industrial production, food contaminants, toxic gas or radiation. Men's reproductive health is also affected by these hazards.

More women than men live with physical and/or mental conditions which, in a disability-hostile environment, limit their everyday activities.

- ✓ Women live longer than men on balance so experience more of the disabilities of advanced age.
- ✓ Rates of mental illness, such as depression, are higher among women.

- ✓ Chronic illnesses such as debilitating asthma or diabetes are higher among women, and women are the fastest growing group among young people living with HIV/AIDS.
- ✓ Women are more likely to be severely disabled by stroke due to disparate treatment.
- ✓ The late stages of pregnancy can also profoundly limit women's personal mobility, along with childbirth and its aftermath, and a World Bank report points out that 30 women every moment are injured or disabled during labour.
- ✓ Sex-based and gender-based violence may leave survivors with permanent and disabling injuries.

Interacting gender dynamics magnify the effects of disability on women and reduce the services needed to live as independently as possible.

- ✓ Poverty rates are higher among women with disabilities due to employment discrimination and lack of social protection.
- ✓ Employment rates for disabled women are half that of disabled men. Disabled women must depend more heavily than men on state supported social services, to the extent of their availability.
- ✓ Disabled women are subject to twice the amount of domestic violence than that of nondisabled women.
- ✓ Disabled sons are allowed to marry more often than disabled daughters and rates of divorce are higher among disabled women.
- ✓ Women receive just 1/5 of rehabilitative services available globally.
- ✓ 8 in 10 of the 500 million plus persons with disabilities live in the global South, where just 1% of disabled women are literate.

Disasters compound the social effects of disability, especially for girls and women who face other barriers.

- ✓ Like men, women also become disabled as a result of disaster-related injuries, including inadequate reproductive care. This may seriously affect the care or income they can provide for their families and may lead to divorce or desertion.
- ✓ Women with disabilities are subject to higher rates of sexual assault and partner violence, both of which may increase in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.
- ✓ Limitations on personal mobility due to cultural norms may deter women from successfully accessing much-needed support services or post-disaster resources for persons with disabilities.

Women who live with disabilities are also active earners, caregivers and activists in human rights campaigns.

- ✓ Women of ability/disability have organized independent bodies (e.g. Disabled Women's Network of Canada, Disabled Women's Network and Resource Organization in Uganda) and also work in disability coalitions to raise awareness on gender issues.
- ✓ Mobility International US takes a strong position on disability and development with a focus on women and promotes leadership training, economic development and global exchange among women with disabilities.
- ✓ Women disability activists are increasingly challenging disaster risk managers to consider the gendered dynamics of disaster in emergency preparedness and disaster relief and reconstruction.

6. Specific Implications for Women

International experience has shown that women and men are differently affected by disasters as a result of the unequal relations of women and men. More specifically:

- ✓ The different roles and responsibilities women and men undertake in their daily lives resulted in gender related differences in the times of crisis and hazards. An unequal gender division of labour led to additional physical work and burden for the women;
- ✓ Demographic changes have an impact on gender relations in any society. These changes affect the women most in terms of additional mouths to feed, sick or elderly to care for or losses to the family. When men die or get injured and move to other places to work, it is women who are the single care takers of the family;
- ✓ The economic impact of the disasters shows that the livelihood problem becomes common for all, and there are fewer opportunities for women. The reason is that men have the option of migrating and finding employment in rehabilitation/restoration work, while women stay back with their families;
- ✓ Another dimension of the economic impact is that women may be forced to sell their own personal assets, including valuables and jewels. At the same time disasters often result in increasing the dependence of women on men and make them more susceptible to sexual exploitation and domestic violence. Consider the case of Orissa floods, for example, where it has been found that during floods, and among the survivors of the disaster, many women were trafficked and forced in-to sex work.
- ✓ Psychological impact shows that though both women and men are psy-

chologically affected, women are more under psychological stress. Women's stress originates from the risk perception to the family. The break down of the household and social structures during disasters tends to make women more vulnerable to stress and anxiety.

Some of the significant ways in which both women and men were impacted are briefly presented below:

- ◆ **Direct impacts of sudden onset hazards (floods, cyclones, tsunamis, mud slides etc.)**
 - ✓ Women are at greater risk of injury and death due to societal restrictions and gender roles.
 - ✓ Swimming is not a skill girls and women are encouraged to learn in some cultures.
 - ✓ In some regions women's clothing limits their mobility.
 - ✓ In some societies and cultures, women cannot respond to warnings or leave the house without a male companion.
- ◆ **Impacts of slow onset hazards (drought, certification, deforestation, land degradation etc.)**
 - ✓ Increased workload to collect, store, protect, and distribute water for the household – often a responsibility that falls entirely to women.
 - ✓ Increased numbers of women headed households due to men's migration.
- ◆ **Less access to early warnings and lower ability to respond**
 - ✓ Warnings in many cases do not reach women.
 - ✓ Women lack adequate awareness on how to act upon warnings.
 - ✓ Women lack life saving skills such as swimming and climbing.
 - ✓ Women tend to take the responsibility of carrying children and elderly to safety.
- ◆ **Lower land and other asset ownership**
 - ✓ Less control over production and markets.
 - ✓ Less ability to adapt to ecological changes, resulting in crop failure.
 - ✓ Loss of income.
- ◆ **Lower income**
 - ✓ Greater vulnerability in the face of shocks such as food shortages, crop failure, and disasters.
- ◆ **Low levels of education**

- ✓ Hampers women's access to information, and limits their ability to prepare and respond to disasters.
- ♦ **Limited opportunities at decision making bodies**
 - ✓ Women's capacities are not applied, their needs and concern are not voiced and they are overlooked in policies and programmes.

7. Men as Agents of Gender Equality in Disasters

- ✓ Men need to advocate for gender equality.
- ✓ Men need to deliver gender mainstreaming messages to other men.
- ✓ Men need to be full partners in gender sensitivity training.
- ✓ Men as leaders need to be committed to bringing gender equity results within their own organizations.
- ✓ Men need to confront gender stereotyping.
- ✓ Men need to recognize that women have lots of personal knowledge and skills in coping with disasters, and that more women need to be trained as first responders.
- ✓ A separate workshop on men's role in gender equality/gender mainstreaming is needed, and sessions should be held at upcoming meetings, such as the National Hazards Research Workshop, sociology, disaster mitigation, and other forums.

8. Policy Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster may be seen as an opportunity to change processes, as a platform to legitimize and build possible and needed social, political and economical changes in order to diminish disaster risk and therefore vulnerabilities in communities. New situations and strategies should focus on gender sensitive disaster management strategies.

To address these challenges, national governments, international development agencies, regional organizations and other stakeholders should aim to:

1. Increase genuine political accountability and financial resources for global advocacy and action on mainstreaming gender in DRR;
2. Improve conceptual and practical understanding of the linkages between gender and DRR, particularly at the national level;
3. Build institutional and individual capacity and tools for mainstreaming gender into DRR;

4. Recognize and mobilize women's skills and capacities and protect their own, dependents and communities safety as part of disaster risk reduction strategy.

In line with international legal instruments and agreements Governments may:

- ✓ Commit to gender analysis and gender mainstreaming through enhanced cooperation and collaboration between Ministries responsible for disaster risk reduction, climate change, poverty reduction and gender issues;
- ✓ Review national policies, strategies and plans and take immediate action to mainstream gender into national development policies, planning and programs;
- ✓ Ensure women and men's equal access to natural hazard early warning systems;
- ✓ Establish gender specific data and statistics on impact of disasters, carry out gender-sensitive vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments and develop gender-sensitive indicators to monitor and measure progress;
- ✓ Increase awareness of the public and media on the gender sensitive vulnerabilities and capacities in disasters and gender specific needs and concerns in disaster risk reduction and management;
- ✓ Support research institutions to study the cost-benefit and efficiency of gender-sensitive policies and programs in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and poverty reduction;
- ✓ Secure the linkage between DRR and climate change adaptation from a gender perspective;
- ✓ Support gender-sensitive financial risk-sharing mechanisms, including risk insurance and reinsurance;
- ✓ Improve disaster preparedness, response and contingency planning from a gender perspective and make them respond to the specific needs and concerns of women and men;
- ✓ Increase women's participation in disaster relief coordination and secure equal access to disaster relief assistance between women and men;
- ✓ Reconstruct through the canalization of budgets to emergent gender sensitive social priorities and activities for the revitalization of affected economic sectors. It includes temporary job programs, reconstruction of houses and vital infrastructures and incorporates mitigation measures to reduce present and future vulnerabilities, specially avoiding the reconstruction of previous vulnerabilities;
- ✓ Build and enhance the capacities of professional communities and pertinent national institutions to enable gender mainstreaming into all develop-

ment sectors.

Prerequisites of effective management of gender issues in disaster management are as follows:

- ✓ All project actors undergo a gender sensitization and gender analysis training. This should aim to equip them with skills to recognize and exploit potential avenues for enhancing a gender responsive culture. It would help project actors prepare gender responsive work-plans.
- ✓ Special effort is required from researchers, planners and policy makers in disaster management to establish the use of disaggregated data as the basis for collecting and analyzing information, designing projects, monitoring and evaluating disaster management projects.
- ✓ Situated activities aimed at promoting gender and women's empowerment in disaster management activities in a strategic way throughout the overall project design.

9. A Gender-Sensitive Risk Assessment

Disaster risk is a part of the everyday life. Awareness of risk is a necessary condition for disaster risk management and reduction.

A key aspect of any risk reduction strategy is risk assessment, as mentioned by the Yokohama Strategy: "Risk assessment is a required step for the adoption of adequate and successful disaster reduction policies and measures".

Risk assessment is a methodology that determines the nature and extent of risk. It analyzes potential hazards and evaluates vulnerabilities that could pose a potential threat to people, property, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend. These assessments include detailed quantitative and qualitative understandings of risk, including its physical, social, economic, environmental factors and consequences.

Needs, concerns and the level of preparedness of women and men to cope with disasters are different, and they should be adequately addressed during the risk assessments to equally ensure security for all the groups of population.

Conclusion: The bottom line is that unless gender is acknowledged as one of the important factors that affect people's experience in every aspect of life, and accepted as one of the "angles" to be explored while covering all these aspects, the practitioners will continue to tell only part of the story – whatever that story may be.

Resources

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