

# Gender Matters

Lessons for Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia



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Lessons for Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)  
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# Foreword

Inhabitants in the Himalayan region are exposed to many natural hazards. The mountain ranges are young with an unstable geology, steep slopes, and a climate that is difficult to predict. As a result, the region is highly susceptible to natural hazards such as floods and flash floods, landslides, and earthquakes. In populated areas, these can lead to disaster. Vulnerable groups – the poor, women, and children – are often hit hardest.

Since its establishment in 1983, ICIMOD has dedicated much of its work to examining ways to reduce the risk of disasters from natural hazards, thereby working towards the decreased physical vulnerability of the people in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. This work has encompassed training courses, hazard mapping, landslide mitigation and control, mountain risk engineering, watershed management, vulnerability assessment, and much more. ICIMOD has also fostered regional and transboundary dialogue for improved management of both the resources provided and the risks threatened by the big rivers in the Himalayan region; sharing of hydro-meteorological data and information among the countries in the region is of particular importance for mitigating the risk of riverine and flash floods in the major river basins.

This publication is one of a series produced under the project ‘Living with risk – sharing knowledge on disaster preparedness in the Himalayan region’, implemented by ICIMOD during a 15-month period in 2006 and 2007. The project was funded by the European Commission through their Humanitarian Aid department (DG ECHO) as part of the Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme (DIPECHO) in South Asia, and by ICIMOD. Through this project, ICIMOD has endeavoured to encourage knowledge sharing and to strengthen capacity among key practitioners in the field of disaster preparedness and management. This has been done through training courses, workshops, knowledge compilation and dissemination, and the establishment of a website ([www.disasterpreparedness.icimod.org](http://www.disasterpreparedness.icimod.org)).

The publications resulting from this project include baseline assessments of the disaster preparedness status in the four target countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan); case studies and a framework on local knowledge for disaster preparedness; and gender and vulnerability aspects in disaster risk reduction. The publications, training sessions, and workshops were undertaken in the context of the ‘Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015’ which recommends that regional organisations should promote sharing of information; undertake and publish baseline assessments of disaster risk reduction status; and undertake research, training, education, and capacity building in the field of disaster risk reduction.

The long-term mission to bring the Himalayan region to an acceptable level of disaster risk has only just begun. The countries in the region are among the most disaster prone in the world in terms of number and severity of disasters, casualties, and impact on national economies. Only by strong commitment, hard work, and joint efforts can this situation be improved. It is ICIMOD's hope that our collective endeavours will help improve disaster risk reduction in the mountain region we are committed to serve.

Dr. Andreas Schild  
Director General  
ICIMOD



# Preface

The larger project of which this publication is a part addresses capacity development in multi-hazard risk assessment by providing a platform for enabling cross-regional interaction and exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. This document draws attention to gender as an indicator of vulnerability, with particular emphasis on how and why women are often disproportionately affected.

The idea of focusing on gender in a time of crisis may seem a misplaced priority. It is commonly assumed, both by the lay public and by disaster preparedness and management professionals alike, that natural disasters are ‘levellers,’ affecting everyone who comes within their orbit in a more or less equal fashion. Indeed, the ‘tyranny of the urgent’ thinking that guides disaster relief emphasises that the provision of assistance to the homeless, injured, and hungry needs to be addressed first and foremost, thus indicating that gender concerns must wait until more immediate needs have been met. But, in fact, disasters are extremely gendered events in terms of both their impacts and people’s responses to them. Failure to acknowledge this not only runs the risk of overlooking obvious and more subtle needs and priorities that can make all the difference between life and death, but can also diminish the efficiency of disaster responses, and even contribute to creating new categories of victims.

Although this synthesis of key findings from the literature contains nothing that has not been said before, given that gender remains peripheral to the field of disaster preparedness and management (hereafter DP/M) there is an urgent need to restate the obvious: gender matters. This document has been written with a view to appealing to key practitioners, whether at the policy or local levels, in order to reiterate how and in what ways natural disasters have different impacts on the sexes, and what can be done to integrate a gender perspective into disaster preparedness and management work in the South Asian context.

As the reader will note, this discussion focuses on women’s vulnerabilities, the root causes of which lie in their low social and economic status relative to men. This emphasis, however, by no means suggests that men do not also suffer in disasters or, in specific contexts, may even be the hardest hit. The central point this document conveys is that *disasters accentuate vulnerabilities*, that gender is an essential component in determining who is more vulnerable, and that it must be taken into account in risk reduction and management work.

Developing a gender-sensitive approach will not be achieved overnight: the integration of gender concerns and perspectives develops incrementally in an iterative manner through trial and error and, equally, the ability to confront the often difficult issues that gender evokes. It is hoped this report will contribute to this ongoing process.

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# Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mats Eriksson for inviting me to participate in the Regional Workshop on Disaster Preparedness Plans for Natural Hazards held at ICIMOD in August 2006, which for the first time exposed me to the centrality of gender in disaster preparedness and management. My year as gender specialist with the Culture, Equity, Gender and Governance programme (CEGG), and subsequent involvement in the Water, Hazards and Environmental Management programme (WHEM) workshops underscored for me the tremendous urgency of the need for developing a sustained dialogue on the mainstreaming of gender at all levels.

Thanks are due to Mats Eriksson, who read and commented on various versions of this report, and also to Farhana Ibrahim and Chandralekha Mehta who provided valuable inputs at the final stage, to Greta Rana for her skilful editing and pulling together of the final product, and to Mats Eriksson and Julie Dekens for sharing their photographs.

Last but not least, I thank Michael Kollmair and my colleagues in CEGG who supported me in this endeavour.

# Executive Summary

This report draws attention to gender as an indicator of vulnerability and discusses how women are disproportionately affected, particularly in the field of disaster preparedness and management (DP/M). It is divided into six sections.

The report commences by introducing the subject and how the research was carried out. It discusses why gender analysis is essential in the field of DP/M, and continues in the second section to examine the gendered contexts of risk and vulnerability and the many dimensions from which they should be approached: economic, social, educational, cultural, physical, organisational, motivational, and political.

The third section examines lessons from the field and how physiological vulnerabilities, sociocultural and economic marginalisation, and gender stereotyping effect whether an individual is killed or manages to survive. It also discusses the extent to which women are more at risk than men and how they have less access to aid and rehabilitation. Reasons for this are seen in structures of decision-making and women's weak bargaining power within the household. Examples are given from the Bangladesh cyclone of 1991, the Asian tsunamis, and the impact of Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998.

In 1991, in Bangladesh, many men failed to pass on to their wives the information about the cyclone delivered to them in the marketplace. In Central America women failed to evacuate themselves and their children because they were waiting for their partners to return and give them permission to leave their homes. The third section also discusses how women's sanitary and health needs are addressed (or not) following disasters citing instances from the Pakistan, Kashmir earthquake of 2005. Also of concern in terms of women's vulnerability are issues such as economic vulnerability and being denied access to relief and compensation and cultural reasons for these; increase in their workloads; and gender-based violence following the trauma of disasters.

The following section discusses that one approach to DP/M is developing community resilience and making women part of the solution. A gender perspective can help to make this possible by increasing understanding of how women can become keys to hazard prevention within the community and natural disasters can actually be built upon as opportunities for social change. Examples of how this works are taken from disaster preparedness and relief work in Bangladesh and the development of new institutional structures by a non-government organisation, Pattan, in Pakistan following the floods of 1992. Other examples of developing women's self-confidence and integrating recovery and relief work with economic self-sufficiency and long-term sustainable development are taken from Nepal and India. In conclusion, the section emphasises that people's ability to cope with crises and recover from them include material, physical, and social resources as well as beliefs and attitudes.

The fifth section examines how gender analysis in disaster preparedness and management can reveal how a community works and the various roles and structures followed by men and women within it. It then discusses what gender-sensitive outreach looks like and how to use it.

The sixth section concludes the report by summarising the discussions put forward and the challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming. It makes recommendations based on seven essential steps for imparting gender-sensitive disaster preparedness and management (DP/M). In addition to the main report, five short annexes complement the discussions with different aspects of and charts for gender-sensitive analysis in DP/M.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
BRIDGE	Internet group offering on-line gender briefs
CEDPA	Centre for Development and Population Activities
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAW	Division for Advancement of Women
DMI	Disaster Mitigation Institute
DP/M	disaster preparedness and management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the UN)
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group (now Practical Action)
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NGO	non-government organisation
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (of Pakistan)
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
SEAGA	socioeconomic and gender analysis
SEEDS	Sustainable Development and Ecological Development Society
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization



# Some Key Terms

**Capacity** – A combination of all the strengths and resources available within a community, society, or organisation that can reduce the level of risk, or the effects of a disaster.

**Disaster** – A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

**Disaster risk reduction (disaster reduction)** – The conceptual framework of elements considered with the possibilities to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development.

**Hazard** – A potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.

**Mitigation** – Structural and non-structural measures undertaken to limit the adverse impact of natural hazards, environmental degradation and technological hazards.

**Preparedness** – Activities and measures taken in advance to ensure effective response to the impact of hazards, including the issuance of timely and effective early warnings and the temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations.

**Resilience/resilient** – The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. It is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organising itself to increase its capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures.

**Risk** – The probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environmental damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions. Conventionally risk is expressed by the notation  $\text{Risk} = \text{Hazards} \times \text{Vulnerability}$ . Some disciplines also include the concept of exposure to refer particularly to the physical aspects of vulnerability. A disaster is a function of the risk process. It results from the combination of hazards, conditions of vulnerability and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential negative consequences of risk.

**Risk assessment or analysis** – A methodology to determine the nature and extent of risk by analysing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that could pose a potential threat or harm to people, property, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend.

**Vulnerability** – The conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards.

Adapted from UN/ISDR (2004)





# Gender Matters

## Lessons for Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia

### Introduction

“Disasters work like the magnifying glass of a society. They magnify what is good and what needs sincere help. Disasters do not affect everyone equally. Who you are and what you do determine your fate.

The strong and the weak stand out.

This is true for gender issues as much as for other issues.”

- Civil servant, Rajasthan, India (Schwoebel and Menon 2004)

### The case for a gender analysis of disaster

**W**hat does gender have to do with natural disasters? Whereas catastrophic events obviously pose a threat to everyone caught in their proximity, what is less well appreciated is that disasters also have gender-differentiated outcomes. A considerable amount of literature published over the past decade and a half emphasises the extent to which gender inequalities, expressed in women’s social and economic marginalisation vis à vis men, often result in women bearing a disproportionate burden of the costs of disasters (Byrne and Baden 1995; Delaney and Shrader 2000; Enarson 2001b; Twigg 2004; United Nations 2004). However, despite indisputable evidence that women are disproportionately affected by disasters, gender remains a peripheral concern in the field of disaster preparedness, relief, and management; and it is typically incorporated into the work of only a handful of gender-aware non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups (ALNAP 2005; IFRC 2006).

This lack of a gender perspective in disaster preparedness and management work is a matter of serious concern at a time when large-scale, devastating natural disasters dominate the headlines with alarming regularity. In less than a year between 2004-2005 three major natural disasters – the Asian tsunami, followed by the infamous Hurricane Katrina and, subsequently, the Kashmir earthquake – captured global attention. These and countless other catastrophes, the images of which we have not seen, have affected hundreds of thousands of people; wrought untold social, economic, and environmental damage; and underscored the challenges of both relief work and the global donor community’s ability to respond adequately to the task of

rehabilitating and rebuilding the communities destroyed. All too pertinent a point to practitioners in mountain development is the fact that mountain areas are at greater exposure to natural hazards than elsewhere. Rugged topography and volatile seismic activity and individual exposure to the effects of altitude are among the reasons for this increased exposure to possible disasters. Mountain women, therefore, are often doubly marginalised – by gender, and by geography. The ways in which the fact of being male or female, elderly, or very young often play a decisive role in determining whether an individual dies or manages to survive and, having survived, the type of access (relatively easy, limited, or none at all) he or she has to aid and rehabilitation are less visible.

## The policy context

The past decade has witnessed a paradigm shift in thinking about and responding to disasters. Emerging out of a growing concern that the social and economic costs of disasters are not only holding back the processes of sustainable development but are also major obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, contemporary thinking now places hazard and vulnerability reduction within the broader context of the development process, focusing as much on longer-term development needs as on obvious short-term, life-saving goals (UNDP 2004; United Nations 2006). The Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015 (United Nations 2006), which provides the central framework for informing countries' risk reduction measures and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes, also calls for a gender perspective to be integrated into all disaster reduction management plans, policies, and decision-making processes. Accompanying this policy shift is a new way of conceptualising disasters, their associated risks, vulnerabilities, and outcomes: not simply as isolated events, the consequences of nature gone badly awry, but, rather, as social events that are embedded in human choices, decisions, and actions (Bradshaw 2004b; Enarson 2001c; United Nations 2004). The opening up of a field that has hitherto been perceived to simply address geophysical outcomes through technical solutions is welcome. Nevertheless, many challenges remain and there is still a sizeable gap between rhetoric and action.

## Scope of the report: why is gender analysis essential?

Responding to this gap, this report seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the 'gendered nature of potential vulnerabilities' (Fordham n.d.) in the context of disasters in South Asia through a synthesis of conceptual and empirical material drawn from case studies from around the world.

Gender roles and cultural contexts ensure that in both the household and in the community, women and men often have distinct roles, responsibilities, and differential access to a range of social, economic, and political resources. These in turn shape their ability to prepare for and protect themselves from disaster. An understanding of these gender-differentiated situations and the priorities they can give rise to can play a vital role in strengthening disaster prevention, relief, and rehabilitation work. This can be achieved by helping to develop culturally- and gender-appropriate protection and mitigation strategies that are grounded in the coping strategies, knowledge, and energy

of local communities. A gender perspective can also play a valuable part in highlighting the contributions men and women, as members of communities most susceptible to hazards, can and do play in strengthening resilience to disasters at the local level. Looking at people as gendered beings thus provides an essential lens through which to see how the fact of being male or female – coupled with other intersecting ‘social fault lines’ – has a great deal to do with their ability to cope with and ‘bounce back’ from the effects of disasters. In particular, gender analysis provides the following:

- Illuminates the gender inequalities that render women and girls more susceptible to the risks and outcomes of natural disasters and helps to address future vulnerabilities by providing livelihood assistance to those who are most vulnerable
- Helps to ensure that resources reach the people most in need, women and men alike
- Ensures a greater likelihood of providing culturally- and gender-appropriate resources and services (i.e., housing, foodstuff, clothing, and other personal needs)
- Recognises the vital role local capacities play in preparing for and responding to disasters

The main body report is complemented by Annexes: Annex 1 deals with aspects useful for gender-sensitive analysis of communities before and after disasters (see above); Annex 2 contains a Livelihoods’ Analysis; Annex 3 gives gender-sensitive, post-disaster reconstruction guidelines; Annex 4 is on issues to be considered in developing gender-sensitive outreach; and Annex 5 is a self-assessment tool for agencies involved in disaster response. They are not all cited in the text, but follow logically from recommendations arising from the discussion as a whole.



## The gendered contexts of risk and vulnerability (as if men are not affected!)

“A massive earthquake or volcanic eruption simply lays bare the inequalities of social development which place some people more than others in risky living conditions... and undermine their capacity to mitigate, survive or fully recover from the effects of catastrophe.”

(Enarson 2000)

### Gender and disasters: clarifications and definitions

What is it about gender relations, generally, and women’s roles and responsibilities, in particular, that shape people’s experiences of disasters?

First, some clarification is needed. The term ‘gender’ is often taken to refer only to women. In fact, it refers to both women and men in relation to one another, pertaining to the appropriate roles, activities, and responsibilities attributed to women and men in a given society, and the socially determined norms and values that these place on them. At the heart of gender norms lies a *power differential* that typically values the characteristics, work, and behaviour of males over those of females. The fact that discussions of gender along with gender analyses and training very often focus on women rather than men reflects the extent to which the male experience – along with needs, priorities and concerns – has uncritically been accepted as the female experience as well.

This set of roles, values, and beliefs, referred to as gender systems, assumes significance because it determines the resources and opportunities to which an individual has access and to which he/she is exposed. Because of the way in which power (political, economic, social) is distributed throughout much of South Asia, women usually have considerably less access to and control over resources to protect their well-being, and they are also less likely to be involved in decision-making about key issues in their lives (WHO 2002). This is especially visible at the household level where most females have less access to critical resources and less voice in decision-making than males. At its most extreme, this differential is manifested in the disproportionately poorer health and nutritional status, lower levels of literacy and education, and higher morbidity/mortality rates of women and girls compared to men and boys (Gurung 1999; UNICEF 2006). Thus, while men are obviously affected (and, depending on context, often harder hit by disasters) the broad trend in South Asia and elsewhere is that women have special difficulty in withstanding and responding to crisis situations (Chew and Ramdass 2005; Enarson 2000; SEEDS 2005).

## Gender as a source of vulnerability

Although natural disasters affect everyone within their orbit, they are not ‘levellers’ in that their impacts do not fall on everyone in the same way. On the contrary, the *risk of vulnerability* and the *impacts of disaster* are disproportionately borne by those who are already socioeconomically and physically disadvantaged and who have fewer resources to enable them to ‘bounce back’ to some measure of normality. These include the very young and very old, those living in poverty, ethnic minorities, the physically and mentally disabled, and women — especially those who are poor, elderly, pregnant, or lactating.

Populations at risk in South Asia include the following (Delaney and Shrader 2000; Enarson 2002a):

- *Those living in hazardous areas or conditions*, including inadequate housing
- *The illiterate* who are unable to read early warning announcements and instructions, and who are less likely to participate in disaster preparedness training
- *Small agricultural producers* who are disproportionately located on hillsides and river embankments that are subject to erosion and who are at grave risk of losing their sole forms of investment: seeds, implements, animals
- *Female-headed households* that are more vulnerable to poverty to begin with, more likely to have limited assets, have a slower rate of return to ‘normal,’ and have limited security of land tenure
- *Indigenous women and men* whose vulnerability in all the above factors is likely to be reinforced by their cultural and linguistic marginalisation
- *The elderly, young mothers, the ill, and disabled*



Gender relations, in particular, appear to be a ‘pre-condition’ of people’s ability to anticipate, prepare for, survive, cope with, and recover from disasters. The World Health Organisation notes “a pattern of gender differentiation at all levels of the disaster process: exposure to risk, risk perception, preparedness, response, physical impact, psychological impact, recovery and reconstruction” (WHO 2002). This stems not so much from *gender differences* per se – that is, biological and physical differences (although these can and do put women at risk, e.g., during pregnancies when mobility may be considerably reduced) – but rather from *gender inequalities*. Gender roles and statuses that give women considerably less access than men to productive and social resources and decision-making processes often place them at social, economic, and political disadvantage relative to men. Thus, while men are obviously affected (and, depending on context, often harder hit by disasters) the broad trend in South Asia and elsewhere is that women find it harder than men to withstand and respond to crisis situations (IFRC 2006; Twigg 2004).

### Box 1: Vulnerabilities are multi-dimensional

- *Economic*: lack of access to critical resources (including money and access to credit)
- *Social*: erosion of social structures and social support systems
- *Ecological*: degradation of the environment and the natural resource bases on which subsistence livelihoods depend
- *Educational*: illiteracy and/or lack of adequate access to information and knowledge
- *Cultural*: beliefs and customs that constrain people’s movements and options
- *Physical*: poorly-built construction or individuals who are weak and unable to care for themselves
- *Organisational*: lack of strong national and local institutional structures
- *Motivational*: lack or weakness of public awareness
- *Political*: limited access to political power and representation

(Yoner et al. cited in SEEDS 2005)

Gender (along with class, ethnicity, and other social markers of identity, privilege, and marginality) intersects with each of these categories to reinforce people’s susceptibilities to disaster. Household relations and dynamics also play a critical role in determining people’s levels of risk and vulnerability because the domestic arena is where gender relations, roles, and responsibilities, as well as the privileges and entitlements that arise from them, are enacted (Bradshaw 2004b). They are also the locales within which the ‘cultural permission’ to behave in ways that either maximise or jeopardise personal safety is inculcated through the socialisation process.

By and large, in South Asia, the reasons for women’s greater socioeconomic marginality and, hence, vulnerability stem from the following reasons:

- Having less access to resources – skills, literacy, decision-making, mobility, employment, freedom from violence – that are vital for responding to circumstances created by disasters



- Sociocultural practices that restrict women’s spatial mobility, limit their ability to earn cash income, and limit their independent engagement in decision-making that affects their lives and health conditions (In addition, because children are the primary responsibility of their mothers and female kin, women’s social and economic statuses have a profound impact on children’s ability to cope with and survive disasters.)
- Carrying the double burden of productive and reproductive (domestic) work; and being over-represented in the informal economy and agricultural sectors which, in addition to being underpaid and having little security, tend to be most affected by natural disasters
- Having primary responsibility for domestic work and caring for children and elders which, along with sociocultural constraints on their physical mobility, give them little flexibility to pursue employment opportunities following disasters
- Having their needs for economic support overlooked by relief and rehabilitation initiatives

### **Box 2: Socioeconomic marginality can shape vulnerability to disasters**

An assessment of gender issues in disaster situations funded by the UNDP was carried out in four VDCs in Nepal. It illustrates how the interplay of gender roles and relations with social and economic marginality can have very concrete impacts on women. While disasters obviously have painful outcomes for everyone caught in their midst, they are particularly difficult for women because:

- they suffer more from the loss of children killed or because of risky deliveries;
- when household incomes and food security are affected, women’s jewellery (often their only source of economic security) tends to be sold first to cover expenditure;
- in the event of food shortfalls, women are more likely to eat less; and
- when men migrate out in search of income-generating opportunities, women are left to pick up the slack; if they migrate out, they face relatively harder adjustments to their new situations.

*(Thapa 2001)*

Even though we say that women suffer disproportionately, however, it does not mean that all women suffer more than men or that their experiences are necessarily similar to one another. Like men, women are not a homogenous group. On the contrary, gender intersects class, caste, religion, ethnicity, ability, and other markers of social identity and condition to determine the differential levels of risk and vulnerability experienced by different categories of women and men. Thus, a poor woman or man (gender + class) will in all likelihood experience different sets of constraints, options, and risks than a better-off woman or man; this is also the case for a poor woman or man from a socially marginalised group (gender+class+ethnicity/caste). Differentials of risk and vulnerability are exacerbated by certain aspects of women’s physiology and biology: pregnant and lactating women may be considerably more exposed to risk than those who, otherwise healthy, able-bodied, and of the same sort of age, are neither pregnant nor facing constraints on their mobility.

Several factors that emerge primarily out of gender inequities increase women's and girls' risks in times of crisis (Enarson 2002b). They include the following.

- Limitations related to childbirth and pregnancy and limited control over reproductive health
- Usually longer lifespan than men and resultant decreased mobility, chronic illness, and disabilities associated with age
- Risk of domestic and sexual violence
- Likelihood of being the sole economic providers
- Lower incomes than men, more economic dependency, limited access to credit
- Limited likelihood of control over productive resources
- Proportionately greater responsibility than men for dependents (the very young, elderly, disabled, ill)
- Higher illiteracy rates, lower educational and training levels than men
- Limited physical mobility
- Less decision-making in homes and political institutions than men
- Greater social isolation than men
- Poor representation in emergency management organisations and professions
- Less knowledge of how to access emergency assistance and the capacity to do so than men

Together these give rise to multiple crosscutting vulnerabilities, including social vulnerability resulting from lack of inclusion in decision-making; physical vulnerability due to limited access to and control over economic and physical resources such as money, housing, land, and other assets; and psychological vulnerability caused by perceptions of having little or no control over one's life. These issues are elaborated upon in detail in the following section drawing on empirical findings from researchers and field workers in the field of disaster relief and rehabilitation, as well as on narrative accounts of those whose lives have been affected by the chaos that disasters cause. For aspects useful for gender sensitive analysis of communities before and after disasters, see Annex 1.





## Lessons from the field

Lessons learned from natural disasters in the region over the past decade and a half illustrate how the **physiological vulnerabilities, sociocultural and economic marginalisation, and gender stereotypes** which inform policy and relief work make all the difference in whether an individual is killed or manages to survive and, having survived, the extent of access he or she has to aid and rehabilitation afterwards. Drawing largely on Chew and Ramdas (2005), this section outlines some of the main ways in which women can be disproportionately affected during and after disasters.

### Women are more at risk of dying than men

The lack of consistent, gender-disaggregated disaster data makes it difficult to generalise about gender mortality rates in natural disasters: evidence from the destruction wrought by Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998 points to higher death rates amongst men (Bradshaw 2004b). There is, however, evidence from various South Asian disasters of women suffering higher mortality rates than men.

- During the Bangladesh cyclone of 1991, mortality levels amongst females over the age of ten were three times higher than those of males (Twigg 2004).
- In the Latur, Maharashtra (India) earthquake of 1993, women accounted for 48% of the affected population, but accounted for 55% of those who died (Twigg 2004).
- In the Asian tsunamis, five times as many women as men are believed to have died (Chew and Ramdas 2005).
- Disproportionate numbers of women were killed in the earthquake that devastated large areas of northern Pakistan in 2005 (Chew and Ramdas 2005).

What accounts for these gender-differentiated mortality rates? In part, they can be explained by physiological and biological factors. Women's physical size, strength, and endurance in relation to men; states of pregnancy and lactation; their primary responsibility for infants, small children, and the elderly; and, often, clothing may all serve to slow them down in crises when timing is crucial to survival.

#### Voices from the field #1

*"When the wave came, I grabbed both my children in my arms and tried to run, but the wave caught me, and I was forced to choose between my six-year old and my baby or else we would have all perished. I can still see the look in his eyes when I let go of him."*

*- Sri Lankan mother and tsunami survivor (Chew and Ramdas 2005)*

But less obvious issues also affect women's ability to protect themselves. Differential death and injury rates can be attributed to how, throughout much of the sub-continent, males and females have very different kinds of 'cultural permission' to use and access physical spaces. One example comes from the earthquake in Pakistan during which disproportionately high numbers of women and children lost their lives because of the collapse of houses and schools which they were in at the time. There is anecdotal

evidence to suggest that, in areas where female seclusion practices are not so pronounced, fewer women died, presumably because they were more mobile and felt more able to flee crumbling dwellings (Farid Ahmad, personal communication).

This relationship between gendered use of space and mortality rates has also been noted in other natural disasters in South Asia. In the Afghan earthquake of 1998 more women and children were killed as they prepared the evening meal (a time during which men were working in the fields) (ALNAP 2005); during the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra in 1993, fewer men than women died because they happened to be sleeping outdoors because of the warm weather. Moreover, because the gender division of labour keeps women in or close to homesteads, it is generally they who suffer disproportionately from the collapse of poorly-constructed dwellings (Bryne and Baden 1995).

Structures of decision-making and women's weak bargaining power within the household also account for high female mortality rates. One well-documented example comes from the Bangladesh cyclone of 1991 when many women waited for their husbands to return home to take the decision to evacuate, thereby losing precious time that might have saved their lives and those of their children (D'Cunha 1997). A similar situation was played out in a very different cultural context halfway across the globe when Hurricane Mitch devastated several Central American countries in 1998. For instance, excessive female and child mortality rates and prevalence of disease in Nicaragua were attributed to many women failing to heed government evacuation warnings because they felt they should not leave their homes without the permission of their partners.



Harder to ‘see’ socialisation processes that inculcate in girls and women what has been termed a ‘learned powerlessness’ can also be at fault. In certain areas affected by the Asian tsunamis, the disproportionately high numbers of females who lost their lives through drowning are attributed to their having been less likely to know how to swim than men and boys; and possibly having limited their own choices by thinking they couldn’t climb trees or on to the roofs. In some areas clothing too was a hindrance, e.g., waterlogged saris constrained women’s ability to move (Chew and Ramdas 2005). Context, however, is everything: saris were an important ‘tool’ in rescue and relief efforts during the devastating Bhuj earthquake in 2001 and were used to pull people out of buildings and served as stretchers to convey the injured to medical attention (Anmol Jain, personal communication).

In some instances, high female mortality rates may be because early warning systems were not effective in reaching women. The following box demonstrates how the intersection of gender inequalities, sociocultural mores constraining women’s autonomy, and faulty assumptions about information-sharing at the household level can have literally deadly consequences for many rural women.

### Box 3: What went wrong?

In the aftermath of the Bangladesh cyclone of 1991 it was found that early warning signals had not reached large numbers of women. The information had been disseminated primarily in market places to which, in this highly sex-segregated society, many women do not have easy access. Moreover, it had also been erroneously assumed that men would convey the warning information to their family members. This did not occur to the extent that it should have, partly because many people discounted the severity of the warnings (cyclones since 1970 hadn’t caused much damage), but also because many men failed to share the relevant information with their wives. In the absence of timely and relevant information, women were unable to minimise the risks to themselves, their children, and whatever productive assets they could otherwise have saved. Sex-segregation norms also contributed to preventing women from protecting themselves and their families by taking the initiative to go to relief distributors and to shelters. Women who did get to shelters found them ill-suited to meet gender- and culture-specific needs: in a social context where seclusion is practised, large numbers of men and women were crowded in together with no prospect of privacy for pregnant, lactating, and menstruating women; and shelters lacked separate toilets and adequate water supplies.

(UNEP 1997)

## Women’s sanitary and health needs may be overlooked

Disaster relief efforts often fail to pay adequate attention to *specifically* female health and sanitation needs. These include attention to pre- and post-natal issues and complications such as early pregnancy loss, premature delivery, stillbirths, and delivery-related complications – all of which have been noted to increase in the aftermath of disasters. According to a non-governmental organisation working in the earthquake-affected area of Kashmir (Pakistan), the lack of gender-appropriate health facilities and personnel made it difficult for medical teams to gain access to injured women, and

left unaddressed the needs of the fifty per cent of married women who were pregnant at the time (IUCN 2006).

The absence of gender- and culturally-appropriate facilities, coupled with restrictive cultural mores and women's low social status, can create difficult situations for pregnant women, as narrated in the box below.

### **Voices from the field #2**

"I delivered a baby in this tent...I couldn't even go to the dispensary within our camp due to the shame my husband felt about me delivering his baby. He said I mustn't raise my voice while delivering so that no one around our tent would hear my cries due to the labour pains. I had to bear all the pains quietly without any help, no lady doctor and no medicine. My baby is still at high risk of a fatal sickness while living in this tent in the severe cold."

- *Earthquake victim and new mother in Pakistan (IUCN with Khwendo Kor 2006)*

In the chaotic conditions that prevail in the aftermath of a disaster it is common for the sanitary needs of women and girls to be overlooked or to not be adequately addressed, or if addressed often inappropriately: a fact-finding mission in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami noted that there was a lack of contraceptives and that the distribution of sanitary supplies and underwear was under the control of men (Chew and Ramdas 2005).

Other health-related dimensions affecting girls and women in disaster situations are given below (Bradshaw 2004b; Byrne and Baden 1995; WHO 2002).

- The extra needs of pregnant and breast-feeding women for food and water are rarely reflected in relief aid.
- Social taboos around menstruation coupled with norms of modesty can create considerable stress and health complications for women and girls, especially if lack of privacy and/or lack of latrines and clean water prevent them from attending to their needs properly.
- Girl children may be given less food in preference to male children and adults, thereby making them susceptible to poor health conditions.
- The breakdown of social support systems can contribute to female vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.
- The fact that women and girls are responsible for child care, water supplies, and sanitation renders them more likely to come into contact with polluted water sources and exposes them to potential health hazards.

### **Women's workloads increase**

The disruption of normal life in the aftermath of a disaster in no way alters the nature of women's domestic work: water and fuelwood must be found; meals need to be prepared; and infants, small children, and the elderly require care. In fact, women's

work in post-disaster contexts may actually become *more* labour intensive because natural catastrophes all too commonly disrupt access to the very natural resources upon which daily household subsistence needs depend, thereby resulting in longer walks to sources of water, fodder, and fuel (United Nations 2004). Because so much of women's work is within or around homesteads, the destruction of houses also makes women's working conditions more difficult – a case in point being the difficulties of cooking on precariously reconstructed hearths or inside temporary shelters (IUCN 2006; SEEDS 2005).

Post-disaster circumstances can also aggravate the conditions of women's work by opening up new arenas of insecurity. An example of this is given by an NGO involved in post-earthquake rehabilitation in Pakistan. It recounts how daily life became highly stressful because: (i) women felt insecure living in tents that couldn't be locked; (ii) they had to walk considerable distances across the camps to use latrines (and, in some instances, there were no separate facilities for women and men); and (iii) they felt their mobility was constricted by the presence of male relief workers. In this atmosphere of a perceived sense of heightened insecurity, children, and especially younger girls, began

### **Voices from the field #3**

"We are worrying day and night. We can't go to our fields. We don't know what will happen. We have a lot of needs that we cannot fulfil due to the loss of employment of the male members of the family...Our men now remain here the whole day because there is no income opportunity for them."

- Earthquake survivor (IUCN with Khwendo Kor 2006)





to share in the daily domestic work, often taking over tasks from mothers and older sisters who were no longer comfortable moving around on their own (IUCN 2006).

An additional pressure placed on women during disasters is the social obligation to deal with stress experienced by other family members. Typically this is not even acknowledged by disaster relief/rehabilitation agencies. There is an unspoken expectation that women (along with their daughters) are available to cope with the *social and emotional upheavals* that are the inevitable outcome of death, disease, injury, destruction of homes, and the loss of all that is familiar (Enarson 2001c; Hussein and Husain 2006).

The following box highlights how the combination of women's productive and reproductive roles can result in their carrying enormous work burdens in post-disaster situations.

#### **Box 4: Who's doing the work?**

A field report to a shelter in the aftermath Hurricane Mitch in Honduras noted that women and teenaged girls were in evidence everywhere washing clothes, cooking, and looking after small children. Women had organised themselves into groups of several families, each having elected a manager to coordinate cooking, cleaning, use of latrines and water, and security. This was in addition to women's responsibilities within their own families. Over 50% of women were, in addition, trying to generate income through various activities such as taking in laundry and preparing tortillas. Conspicuous by their absence were the men, with the few present playing dice in a shelter. The women reported that their menfolk were absent – working elsewhere or 'disappeared.'

(Delaney and Shrader 2000)

### **Women are more economically vulnerable**

Women experience a harder time recovering from disasters, are more vulnerable to destitution, and susceptible to labour exploitation, forced marriages, and trafficking. This is primarily because of their economic vulnerability: compared to men, they have lower literacy and educational levels, have considerably less access to productive resources (notably land) and to income-generating opportunities, and are more likely to be over-represented in the agricultural and informal sectors which tend to be badly-hit by natural disasters. As a result, women account for a disproportionately higher number of the unemployed or those employed in marginally paid work than men. Their economic vulnerability is intensified because they lack meaningful access to decision-making pertaining to divisions of labour, control of household resources, or issues pertaining to their well-being. Finally, the combination of women's domestic and care-giving responsibilities together with the sociocultural constraints on their mobility make it less likely that women will have the opportunity to migrate in search of income-generating work (Twigg 2004; Chew and Ramdas 2005; PAHO n.d.).

The collapse of social support systems, lack of assets, and other expressions of socio-cultural powerlessness can have particularly devastating consequences for certain categories of women, such as the elderly, widows, and female children and orphans. In one riverine community in Pakistan, for instance, the washing away of lands and houses forced families to sell jewellery to make ends meet, with the result that the marriages of many young girls – for whom the jewellery would have provided dowries – had to be delayed. The sale of jewellery also led to a growing sense of vulnerability on the part of women for whom it had represented an important source of economic and psychological security. Fieldworkers noted that the delay (or in some instances lack of marriage opportunities) had serious implications for the social status, psychological state, and even survival of young women (Ariyabandhu 2000).

Women who have lost their husbands can face a particularly difficult time. It is not uncommon for widows to have to face efforts on the part of the dead husband's kin to dispossess them of land and other property. In Bangladesh, for instance, there have been cases of the Shariah law being exercised in this respect, leaving widows and children even poorer than before. The challenges women face in such cases are enormous. Even in South Asian countries that do provide formal recognition of women's property rights, there is a wide gap between *de jure* and *de facto* situations and customary laws, traditions, and cultural factors often hold sway, especially in rural areas. Illiteracy, and lack of education and empowerment also result in women being unaware of the statutory laws that theoretically could grant them security of tenure after the deaths of their husbands. It is, moreover, usually hard for semi- or completely illiterate rural women to muster up the resources required to seek legal protection.

### Women may be denied adequate relief or compensation

The combination of 'cultural permission' shaping women's mobility or lack thereof, and gender biases in relief and rehabilitation work, often affects their ability to benefit from relief efforts. After the earthquake in northern Pakistan in 2005, widows, single women, and women-headed households found it difficult to gain access to the relief and tent camps that had been set up outside their local areas because of their concern about having to deal with men who were not related to them. NGOs involved in relief and reconstruction work reported that it was not uncommon for women, even in areas where no formal constraints on women's physical mobility exist, to feel intimidated by having to deal with male relief workers who were not their kin and, hence, they did not receive the relief supplies available. While compensation was provided by the government to designated heads of families who had proof of identity, this was not always easy for women: women who had lost their male family members found it difficult to sign up because they were neither able to go to the issuing office on their own, nor did they want to have their photographs taken by men they did not know (IUCN 2006).

Gender biases that permeate thinking at the policy and field levels are even more to blame for accentuating women's sociocultural and economic vulnerabilities in the aftermath of disasters. Key amongst these is the 'male head of household' bias which assumes that men are the primary income earners, whereas women's inputs

are regarded as supplementary, thereby justifying the channelling of economic assistance, direct compensation, assistance, jobs, and training to men only. Lessons learned highlight how failing to explicitly acknowledge women's routinely central inputs into family sustenance and welfare and their need for economic support, relief, and rehabilitation work often aggravates women's situations. For instance, consider the following.

- Women who lack resources in their own right may risk losing indirect access to resources if they are abandoned or if the husband dies.
- Female heads of household, who are often amongst the most vulnerable segments of the disaster-affected population, and their dependents, often fail to receive adequate supplies.
- Food and other resources distributed to men on the assumption that what benefits them will also benefit their families may fail to reach household members and be sold on the market instead.

#### **Voices from the field #4**

*"We have skills but lack resources. It is most important that we are given some productive resources such as sewing machines and material for embroidery so that we can work and earn to restore our damaged and weak family economy."*

*- Young female earthquake survivor (IUCN with Khwendo Kor 2006)*

There are many instances of how common this gender bias is. In one area in Sri Lanka women whose husbands had died during the tsunami were unable to claim money. There have also been cases in which relief distribution has been based on the needs of single adults, so that even if women do receive aid it is insufficient to share with their children (Chew and Ramdas 2005). In the aftermath of the '91 cyclone, Bangladeshi women heads of household were overlooked in the allotment of land and housing because it was based on the previous patterns of ownership; allotment ownership had been in men's names, with the result that new allotments were given to even very young sons or the brothers of deceased husbands but not to widows (Asian Disaster Management News, 1997). Women often found themselves doubly marginalised, dealing with the discomfort of interacting with male distributors for relief supplies, often sidelined because virtually all immediate and long-term recovery support was directed toward men, and because male kin often used relief items to meet their own needs, spending money on pān and cigarettes, thus directing crucial resources away from household needs (Enarson 2004).

### **Women face the risk of increased gender-based violence**

Field studies from socially and culturally dissimilar regions, such as the areas affected by the Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and the Kashmir earthquake, suggest that women and girls face increased vulnerability to domestic and sexual violence in the aftermath of disasters (IUCN 2006; Enarson 2006). An increase in domestic violence and sexual assault was noted after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, with instances of women being battered for resisting their husbands' sale of jewellery or disputing the use



of relief funds (Chew and Ramdas 2005). It has also been observed that women who are socially isolated to begin with face greater risks of domestic violence than others in disaster situations, with access to fewer resources and options at such times.

### Gender stereotyping – it hurts everyone

Gender stereotypes – the casting of people into rigidly fixed ‘boxes’ based on *assumptions and expectations* about their abilities and their temperaments (which are often far removed from reality) – often play a large part in configuring how people are affected by and how they respond to disasters. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch some work programmes in housing construction prevented women from participating in construction work in order that they could devote their time to their perceived ‘natural roles’ of domestic work and child care (Delaney and Shrader 2000). In other instances, relief and rehabilitation agencies have unwittingly reinforced women’s work burdens by taking for granted their labour and care-giving inputs.

Field studies indicate that men, too, are by no means immune to the negative effects of gender stereotyping. Cross-culturally, ideologies of manhood stress men’s roles as breadwinners and protectors of families, a problematic image to live up to in ‘normal’ times (especially when the overwhelming reality is that most rural and poor urban households are equally dependent on the inputs and earnings of their female members). It can become especially onerous in post-disaster situations when families’ livelihoods and assets are destroyed. Evidence from North America and Cambodia indicates that men may have a difficult time seeking assistance from relief centres because of a perceived sense that this is an admission of their inability to live up to their roles as providers (Enarson 2004). In another example, young Sudanese men in refugee camps were unable to prepare the food provided for them, since cooking was usually done only by women, and it was something they had never learned to do (WHO 2002).



Gender stereotyping can also cause damage by failing to give due weight to the mental trauma and psycho-social problems that emerge in disaster contexts and which can seriously affect people's coping strategies. There is evidence that females may suffer more emotional disorder and distress in the aftermath of disaster than men because of the expectation of society that they will provide the support needed to family members, placing family well-being before themselves within a context of limited social support for their own needs (ALNAP 2005; Bradshaw 2004b; WHO 2002). On the other hand, the expectation that men (and boys) are physically and emotionally strong has done little to ensure that they are provided with much-needed counselling and emotional support in times of trauma.

#### **Box 5: Gender stereotyping can have negative consequences**

- **Seeing women as victims** overlooks their capacities: their lives force them to be resourceful!
- **Taking for granted women's time and labour** (including for unpaid care-giving) places huge burdens on them, prevents them from engaging in hazard prevention work, and is a major cause of their poor emotional well-being.
- **Having a male 'household head' bias in food/supply distribution** is marginalising women and rendering them and children susceptible to abandonment if men take off or if relief supplies are directed away from household needs.
- **Assuming that men are physically and emotionally strong** prevents the channelling of post-disaster counselling to them.
- **Viewing men as family providers** reinforces a commonly-held view amongst men that seeking assistance is an admission of weakness (and, thereby, places added burdens on women).
- **Uncritical acceptance of 'the household' as a system of support** overlooks the fact that members' (including the elderly) needs may not be met in times of crisis.
- **Sociocultural norms of female modesty** can severely hamper women's ability to protect their lives and gain access to relief and reconstruction initiatives.

# Developing community resilience: women as part of the solution

“Perception is perhaps the most important issue. If women are good at managing contingencies at home, why do we feel they cannot play a serious role in the contingency planning process at the district, block or state level?”

*(Schwoebel and Menon 2004:6)*

## Shifting from vulnerabilities to capacities

Gender is a factor in determining men’s and women’s vulnerabilities in the face of disaster. However, as the previous section has shown, gender divisions of labour, household and economic structures, maternal health, and other aspects of gendered inequality that shape people’s everyday lives put women and girls at particular risk (Enarson 2002b). While a gender perspective provides crucial insights into why women face heightened vulnerability in disaster, to see them solely as victims does them a serious injustice and deprives the field of a potentially powerful fount of knowledge for strengthening hazard reduction and disaster management.

There is considerable evidence from the field that points to the myriad ways in which even the poorest of women living in the starkest of conditions are equipped with knowledge, skills, and coping strategies that are valuable reservoirs of ‘capital’ to draw upon at critical points in the disaster cycle. Strategies that develop and strengthen women’s



capacity in hazard reduction and disaster response acknowledge that they, along with men, are key social actors in developing more hazard-resilient communities.

The challenge is how to balance gender vulnerabilities with capacities, and not to lose sight of one in focusing on the other. The disaster preparedness and management (DP/M) community is becoming increasingly aware that “mitigation is not a technical accomplishment but a social process” (Fordham n.d.) which must draw on the strengths and knowledge systems of the people, women and men, whose lives are most likely to be affected by disasters. There is, moreover, recognition that gender equity is a necessary ingredient for bolstering households with the capacity to engage in hazard/risk reduction activities, thus focusing attention on the ways in which women are ‘keys to (hazard) prevention’ because of their everyday experiences (Enarson 2001a; UN 2004). Some of the skills women have that can make them ‘keys to hazard prevention’ are listed below.

- They manage and use natural resources on a daily basis.
- They can draw on survival and coping skills in emergencies, including food preservation.
- They have family and community roles that make them important ‘risk’ communicators.
- Their social networks provide them with information about members of the community who may be in need of assistance, or who can help in times of crisis.
- They are often more likely than men to be attentive to emergency warnings and the need for disaster preparedness.
- They are safety conscious and ‘risk averse’
- They having informal physical and mental health care skills and experience.



- They play leadership roles in local networks and organisations.
- They have formal and informal occupational specialisation in jobs vital to disaster preparedness and recovery (e.g., teaching, counselling, health care, etc).

## Contributing to community-level resilience

Thus far, the disaster community has failed to understand how people survive disasters, emphasising identification, mapping, and recording of vulnerability indicators and risk factors to the exclusion of analysing the strengths, skills, and resources that local communities draw on to build their resilience.

Assessing vulnerabilities and resilience through a gendered lens is a valuable fount of knowledge for community-based vulnerability research. Examples from around the world illustrate how, in conjunction with civil society organisations, as members of formal groups and informally, local communities generally and women, in particular, are often at the forefront in mobilising efforts for disaster preparedness, relief, and rehabilitation (Abrahamovitz 2001; Enarson 2001a; 2001b; 2002b; SEEDS 2005; Twigg 2004). Lessons from the field point to the ways in which mobilising, giving adequate training to, and financing local women's groups can be a powerful way of helping disaster-prone and affected communities deal with their practical and strategic needs (SEEDS 2005).

- They have access to information that is often not easily accessible to outsiders.
- They can mobilise resources and build up networks.
- They can play a valuable role in monitoring programmes.
- They can contribute to empowering individuals and households.

These lessons, some of which are documented below, provide an important counterbalance to the 'victim paradigm' that all too often pervades presentations of disasters and which views those caught up in them as having little control over their fates or lives and few capabilities (Enarson 2001b). More importantly, the evidence suggests that women's involvement in DP/M work can provide them with new skills and confidence which, together, can lay the groundwork for strengthening their and their households' abilities to be more resilient to the risks of natural hazards (PAHO n.d.; UNICEF 2006).

Women's local efforts to reduce and manage risk include the following.

- **Risk assessment:** Women's community-based organisations in St. Lucia and the Dominican Republic have participated in a risk mapping exercise in their communities. They later compiled community vulnerability profiles that were shared with community leaders and local emergency managers. This module has subsequently been tested in El Salvador and Dominica (Enarson 2002b).
- **Environmental hazard mitigation:** Poor rural women living in the *charlands* (sandbars created by erosion and accretion in rivers prone to flooding and sand carpeting that render large tracts of cultivable lands non-arable and destroy standing crops) of Bangladesh have developed a number of technological innovations to reduce risk in the ecologically fragile areas: increasing food security through



kitchen gardening, use of fast-growing seedlings, food processing and storage, seed preservation, composting, and rainwater harvesting. They prepare for the floods by gathering sufficient fodder for livestock and planting trees around homesteads and, because the frequency of storms and river erosion forces families to move frequently, prefer to use non-durable materials such as grasses to construct their homes. They ensure access to potable water by digging holes in moist sandy spots near the river: the water is filtered through the sand particles and settles to the bottom of the pit, after which it is scooped out with coconut shells and stored in a clean pan (Chowdhury 2001).

- **Post-disaster recovery (a):** During and after the 2001 earthquake in the Kutch region of Gujarat (India), grassroots women's organisations working with community-based groups, mitigation agencies, and government recovery programmes played a leading role in providing rural women with income-generating work and training in earthquake-resistant masonry techniques (Enarson 2001a).
- **Post-disaster recovery (b):** After the 1993 earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra (India), women's groups and rural organisations developed a system of 'community consultants' to serve as an interface between the communities affected and the government for long-term development. Local women were trained in earthquake-resilient methods of construction, were involved in monitoring the housing reconstruction process, and were consulted about dwelling designs suitable for women. Subsequently, this body of experience and knowledge was shared with women's groups in Turkey after the 1999 earthquake (SEEDS 2005).

## Natural disasters as opportunities for social change

Lessons learned from natural disasters that have occurred suggest that a foregrounding of gender concerns in disaster management should begin by drawing upon the connections between women's social and economic needs and priorities, addressing the root causes of their low status as well as being attentive to longer-term sustainable development concerns. The examples provided below also highlight the creative ways in which gender mainstreaming can address the challenges of working in sociocultural conditions where sex segregation is part of the fabric of everyday interactions and is often the reason for the disproportionate impact of disasters on women in South Asia.

### *Gender mainstreaming disaster preparedness and relief work in Bangladesh*

Since the devastating floods of 1991 when disproportionate numbers of women lost their lives, a concerted effort has been made to recruit female volunteers and female field workers into disaster preparedness and relief work. One such initiative, under the aegis of the Bangladesh Red Crescent and German Red Cross, has been to set up village DP committees and to provide training to women on what to take to shelters and how to save food, increase awareness amongst women and men about the importance of gender equality, and provide women with an opportunity to exchange ideas with other women. Another, run jointly by the Cyclone Preparedness Programme of Bangladesh and Red Crescent Society, now recruits female volunteers and female field workers for

local disaster response, and encourages male and female micro-groups to get involved in decision making on disaster issues. Their involvement has been encouraged by supporting them through education, training in reproductive health, organising self-help groups and small-scale businesses. One outcome has been women's increased confidence in their ability to participate in community life (Twigg 2004).

### ***Helping to address the root causes of women's vulnerabilities in Pakistan***

Following the severe floods of 1992, a non-government organisation, Pattan, developed new institutional structures to facilitate reduction in community vulnerability to floods; and special emphasis was placed on developing women's capacities. Features of the group's work included employing female relief workers, introducing the concept of co-ownership of houses by both husband and wife, registering women as heads of households to receive food for their families, and involving women in designing and constructing houses. While the concept of joint house ownership took some time to be accepted, over time it has contributed to a reduction in domestic violence and has given women a greater sense of self-confidence which has been translated into their involvement in other collective projects (Twigg 2004).

### ***Developing self-confidence through involvement in disaster mitigation in Nepal***

In Nepal, as a result of a disaster-mitigation project funded by UNDP, women are now beginning to participate with men in decision-making relating to the project, a level of cooperation which is now spilling over into domestic and social matters. In one village women formed groups and began tackling pressing social issues such as male alcoholism and are feeling more confident in their ability to mobilise themselves around development concerns. Perceptions of risk have also undergone change as a result of disaster mitigation training (Thapa 2001).

### ***Integrating recovery work with economic self-sufficiency and long-term sustainable development in India***

When water conservation became a critical issue during and after the 2001 earthquake in the Kutch region of Gujarat (India), the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) together with the Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI) worked with local women to teach them new techniques of water harvesting with household containers and in community ponds and wells. Responding to the needs of women artisans who, already weakened by on-going drought, had asked not for emergency relief goods but for supplies that would enable them to begin sewing and earning again, SEWA and other local women's organisations provided craft kits that enabled women still living in tents to earn the income essential for getting their lives back on track. SEWA's approach combined livelihood reconstruction with other aspects of social support, such as child-care centres, social/economic insurance, and providing arenas for women to engage in social dialogue. Later, SEWA and DMI trained women in seismic-resistant building techniques and began to rebuild markets for women artisans. The success of these initiatives is attributed to both DMI's and SEWA's long track records of working amongst local

communities and their extensive and well-developed social networks and knowledge of the people and their needs (Enarson et al. 2002b).

In destroying the fabric of everyday life and creating conditions in which women are compelled to play a more active part in economic and public life, disasters also open up spaces within which social change can occur. It remains to be seen whether changes in gender and economics persist over the long term. Although the literature on disasters records that there is often a tendency in the immediacy of the event for women and men to cooperate more in daily activities, and for men to give greater respect to their wives for their involvement in activities hitherto considered 'masculine,' most of the literature also records the diminishment over time of these aspects (Bradshaw 2004b; Delaney and Shrader 2000; United Nations 2004). What these examples suggest is that there is a post-disaster 'window of opportunity' which can provide a valuable space within which the disaster preparedness and management community, along with other agencies, could begin to lay the groundwork for social change that promotes gender equality and is firmly rooted in sustainable development and hazard prevention (Enarson 2001b; 2002b).

It takes time to build capacities. The lessons learned from the literature suggest that people's ability to cope with crises and to recover from them is multi-faceted and includes material, physical and social resources, beliefs, and attitudes (Graham 2001). While there are no quick fixes, there is nevertheless abundant evidence that collective mobilisation and economic security play a powerful role in developing women's sense of self-esteem, socially empowering them, and, as a result, enlarging their sense of the possible. This should not be underestimated.

## From knowledge to action: some gender guidelines

### Gender analysis in DP/M

There are already many excellent gender guidelines available in the field of disaster preparedness and management (ActionAid International 2005; FAO n.d. ; Graham 2001; Schwoebel and Menon 2004; Twigg 2004; Enarson 2005; WHO 2005). This section presents a synthesis of some of this material.

Gender analysis is a useful tool for analysing how a community works by exploring the experiences of different categories of people within it. Specifically, it identifies the varied roles that structure women's and men's relationships and activities in their everyday lives; the unequal power relationship that often characterises their social, economic, and political engagements; and the consequences such inequalities may have over their health and life opportunities. It does this by framing questions pertinent to who does *what*, *when*, and *why*; who has access to *what* and *who doesn't*; and who has control over *what* and *who doesn't*. Together with these insights into roles, responsibilities, and rights of access and control, it also highlights how culturally-structured understandings of what it means to be a woman or a man in a particular



context help to shape people's behaviour in ways that often prevent them from looking after themselves optimally in disaster situations (Graham 2001).

While checklists are an essential component of the gender mainstreaming process, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind that there is no single blueprint, nor can there be one, for integrating gender analysis into DP/M work. This is especially true in a region as varied as South Asia where the sheer cultural and socioeconomic variations within and across communities ensure that what works in one area may not be applicable in another. In this respect, even the most inclusive of checklists and practice guidelines will at best provide only a 'road map' for the type of questions to ask and the issues to examine. Vital accompaniments to checklists and guidelines include (i) an appreciation by all staff of what gender analysis is, why it is important, and how it is done; (ii) a solid understanding of the local context; and (iii) linkages with organisations and individuals who can provide the necessary background, tools, resources, and connections to the community with which one is working.

## What does gender-sensitive outreach look like?

Gender-sensitive outreach begins by asking the right questions. These include the following.

- **Who does what, when and where?**
  - What do men and women, children and elders do, and where and when do these activities take place?
  - Ideally this should also include an understanding of how divisions of labour are organised across different castes and ethnicities.
  - What amount of time is spent performing different unpaid and paid activities?
  - What is the relative social value given to activities in both the informal and formal economies?

### Box 6: Points to keep in mind when engaging in gender analysis

- Gender is about women and men in relation to one another: the fact of being female or male plays a critical role in shaping vulnerabilities, first responses, information and sharing capacities, and access to decision-making.
- Communities and households are not made up of individuals with equal entitlements and access to resources (e.g., food, money, decision-making): understanding the structures of both is an essential component of gender analysis.
- Assumptions about what women and men do, their roles and responsibilities, should be examined rather than taken for granted: for instance, much of what women do is not considered 'work' because no remuneration is received for it.
- Class (social position, wealth), caste, age, and education also influence gender roles, responsibilities, access to resources, and power: a poor woman's or man's needs and priorities are likely to be different from those of better-off men and women.
- Participatory approaches may not necessarily ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account: notions of well-being need to be based on a range of definitions given by local people.

### Box 7: Identifying gender needs and concerns (Adapted from Morris 2003)

- **Working through lines of household authority** – How can response programmes work with/through lines of household authority to reach women and other vulnerable individuals in households?
- **Understanding the connection between divisions of labour and vulnerability** – What implications do divisions of labour within the household have for different categories of people’s ability to look after themselves, attend information meetings, and so forth?
- **Resource allocation issues** – Are there discernible patterns of gender and/or generational discrimination in terms of allocation of resources within the household that put girls and elders at risk of receiving less food, medical attention, etc?
- **Local and external support networks** – How can resource distribution capitalise on and strengthen local/external networks? How can these be strengthened and used for relief work? Are local women and groups/associations actively included in planning and implementation of disaster preparedness and management activities?
- **Seclusion practices** – Are there ways in which formal/informal constraints on women’s physical mobility predispose them to have less access to aid or information? Is this expressed in who receives supplies (e.g., who isn’t visible in the distribution lines and what does this imply in terms of their heightened vulnerability)?
- **Participatory measures** – Are women (and other potentially vulnerable groups) involved in decision-making and employed as aid workers at all levels?
- **Recognising that gender involves men** – Are the vulnerabilities of men and boys acknowledged? What can be done to help men deal more effectively with crises that threaten their perceived roles and identities?
- **Keeping in mind the informal/domestic economy** – What ‘invisible’ economic enterprises of women and men are disrupted or destroyed by disasters? How can relief/rehabilitation programmes prioritise their recovery?
- **Siting issues** – Does the location of water points/latrines/distribution centres make women feel insecure or put them at risk? Does the distance/procedure plan place an increased burden on them?
- **Sex-specific needs** – Are there adequate services addressing the needs of, and reaching women (including pregnant and nursing women) and paying special attention to women’s reproductive health and sanitary needs?
- **Other marginalised groups** – Does the targeting of aid distribution have the potential to exclude certain groups or increase opportunities for their exploitation?
- **Women’s care-giving roles** (to children, the elderly, the sick, etc): Is there awareness that divisions of labour and expectations may prevent women from having proper access to aid or engaging in hazard-prevention activities?

- **Who has access to what resources and who does not? Who has control over what resources and who does not?**
  - Resources are defined as anything people require to carry out activities, including tangibles such as land, animals, paid jobs, and money, as well as intangibles such as status, time, and knowledge (see Annex 2 for issues to consider for livelihoods' analysis).
- **What is the structure of local households? Who lives together? What are the lines of household authority?**

These clusters help to broadly identify gender roles and needs of relevance to relief and rehabilitation services, which can then contribute to a better understanding of the contexts that shape different categories of people's vulnerability to disaster situations.

Finally, to repeat a point already made: gender stereotypes affect both women and men, and can hamper the ability of households and communities to engage effectively in pre- and post-disaster activities. Gender analysis involves being attentive to how the following have an impact on roles people undertake.

- **The ideology of the 'male breadwinner'** makes it hard for female heads of household to get access to relief, jobs, and training, often when they have primary responsibility for their households.
- **The assumption that women are 'natural' care-givers** overburdens their already labour-intensive days.
- **The stereotype that men and boys are physically and emotionally strong** overlooks the amount and type of support they require in the aftermath of disaster.
- **Viewing men as family providers** can reinforce the commonly-held belief that seeking assistance is an admission of weakness.
- **Viewing women's household inputs as supplementary** renders their work invisible and reinforces the priority relief programmes give to the economic recovery of men only.

Providing a 'principle of good practices' is the easy part. Ensuring that they are actualised is considerably harder and requires the willingness to make political commitments to make structural changes. Some pointers include the suggestions given below (WHO 2005).

- **Involving women at all stages of decision-making** (Ensuring that information about the needs of the family/community are obtained from men and women, and from women from different groups as different kinds of information may emerge)
- **Collecting sex-disaggregated data** and incorporating them into programme planning and documentation for short and long-term gender effects of disasters
- **Identifying and addressing sex-specific needs** (Focusing on sanitary supplies, need for privacy, reproductive health requirements, and culturally-appropriate clothing)

- **Understanding that as care givers to the injured and sick, women require information, resources, and support**
- **Assessing the impact of all response activities on both women and men**
- **Being attentive to those who experience social exclusion** (widows, female heads of households, disabled women, and those from socially/ethnically/religiously marginalised groups)
- **Ensuring that assistance is available for women without placing them at risk of injury or abuse and showing concern for their security by including women distributors**

Annex 3 presents a set of gender-sensitive, post-disaster reconstruction guidelines for those involved in disaster relief.

Disasters are extremely complex phenomena, as are the social and institutional contexts upon which they have an impact: each approach has to be grounded in locally-specific circumstances based on an understanding of sociocultural contexts and needs. At its best, gender analysis plays a critical role in identifying and understanding vulnerable segments of communities, in channelling resources to those most in need, and in helping to mobilise the capacities of those whose contributions are often overlooked because they are deemed to be 'helpless'. Lessons from the field illustrate that without a gender-sensitive lens a great deal of important information about disasters is likely to be overlooked to the great detriment of people and their recovery.

See Annex 4 for issues to be considered in developing gender-sensitive outreach, and Annex 5 for self-assessment tools for disaster-responding agencies.

## The road ahead

Taking gender seriously requires a paradigm shift in organisations.  
Gender is a pervasive life or death issue.

- *Reynold Levy, International Rescue Committee (Morris 2003)*

### Summary

Natural hazards are commonplace throughout the South Asian region. Every year millions of people are exposed to the consequences of earthquakes, cyclones, floods, droughts, and landslides; lives are lost and livelihoods are disrupted; and the financial costs of repairing devastated infrastructure and recouping lost productivity are enormous setbacks to development efforts. Acknowledging the tremendous physical and social costs of such events, the new paradigm of disaster management recognises that effective hazard prevention, preparation, and mitigation should address the needs of vulnerable segments of society, of whom women constitute a large proportion, as well as recognising that local-level initiatives must be included in DP/M work.

The vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals that are shaped by gender take on particular importance in the South Asian context where, across diverse cultural and socioeconomic circumstances, women tend to be socially, economically, and politically marginalised vis à vis men. This marginalisation increases in mountain areas which have greater exposure than many other areas to natural disasters. The fact that mountain people in general are socially and physically marginalised results in mountain women being doubly marginalised by virtue of the mountain aspect as well as the gender aspect. This marginalisation is mirrored in the make-up of disaster prevention, relief, and rehabilitation bodies which rarely include women; and one consequence of this is that their needs and priorities often remain invisible. As this report has outlined, women's vulnerabilities in disasters stem from multiple sources: their care-giving roles to the very young, elderly, and ill which often prevent them from looking after themselves; heavy work burdens; limited control over household resources such as food and income; and the threat of domestic violence and sexual exploitation (Shwoebel and Menon 2004). In addition, the tendency for the DP/M community to view women as victims has contributed to an over-emphasis of their vulnerabilities while failing to highlight the capacities, knowledge, and insights that they, along with men, bring to more effective hazard prevention and sustainable long-term development.

### Challenges to and opportunities for gender mainstreaming

One of the main challenges to gender mainstreaming is that, notwithstanding a wealth of field-based knowledge illustrating how and why gender vulnerabilities can have life and death consequences and a large body of gender guidelines prepared specifically for disaster planning and relief work, these remain largely peripheral to DP/M practice.

Why is this and what can be done to address it? At one level the continued marginality of gender – indeed social concerns more generally – is a reflection of the extent to which disaster preparedness and management remains technically weighted in outlook and generally regarded as 'a man's job' (Schwoebel and Menon 2004). To this extent, the failure to 'walk the talk' – in other words, to translate the rhetoric of gender mainstreaming at all levels by bringing on board gender-sensitive personnel; the inclusion of men at all levels who understand and support the need for gender analysis; and



incorporating gender-appropriate methodologies into practice in the field – is an inevitable by-product of thinking that sees gender analysis as a ‘soft’ concern best left to gender specialists who, more often than not, are women.

How do we move forward? Key strategic areas for mainstreaming gender in disaster management are noted below (Schwoebel and Menon 2004).

- (i) *Gender mainstreaming disaster management structures, institutions, and policies* – Women remain inadequately represented at virtually all levels of disaster management decision-making and in various technical fields. This has to be addressed through active recruitment of women into DP/M initiatives; the formation of gender focal points in disaster management institutions; and, given that the tools, knowledge, and means already exist, the garnering of political will to ensure that gender analysis becomes institutionalised and not merely an ‘add-on.’
- (ii) *Information management* – To date much of the knowledge and experience about gender in disasters has emerged from response and recovery work at the community level. In addition, case studies demonstrating effective local-level involvement in mitigation and preparedness, best practices, and lessons learned tend not to be systematically documented and shared. Toward this end, and because so much small-scale and innovative work is being carried out at the local level, it is vital that there be more interaction between government bodies, donor agencies, non-government organisations, and research institutes.
- (iii) *Developing gender awareness and capacity-building* – There remains an urgent need for gender training and capacity building at all levels of the DP/M process, drawing on a consultative process that brings together different groups of practitioners to develop sectoral and culturally-appropriate tool-kits and other training materials.

## Final words

This report has reiterated the reasons why disaster vulnerability, impact, and recovery are profoundly gendered issues. At a time when national governments and the international development community are becoming sensitised to the need for developing socially and gender-sensitive disaster preparation methodologies, it is essential that everyone involved in DP/M, whether at their desks or in the field, develop a working familiarity with gender as both a conceptual issue and a living reality; how it shapes the lives of women and men, girls and boys, the elderly, and the young; and, above all, how addressing gender inequalities can play a vital role in reducing subsequent vulnerabilities. It is also vital that practitioners at all levels commit themselves to engagement in cross-disciplinary and sectoral dialogues in order to learn from the lessons emerging from disaster situations around the world and the innovative work that is being developed to respond to them.

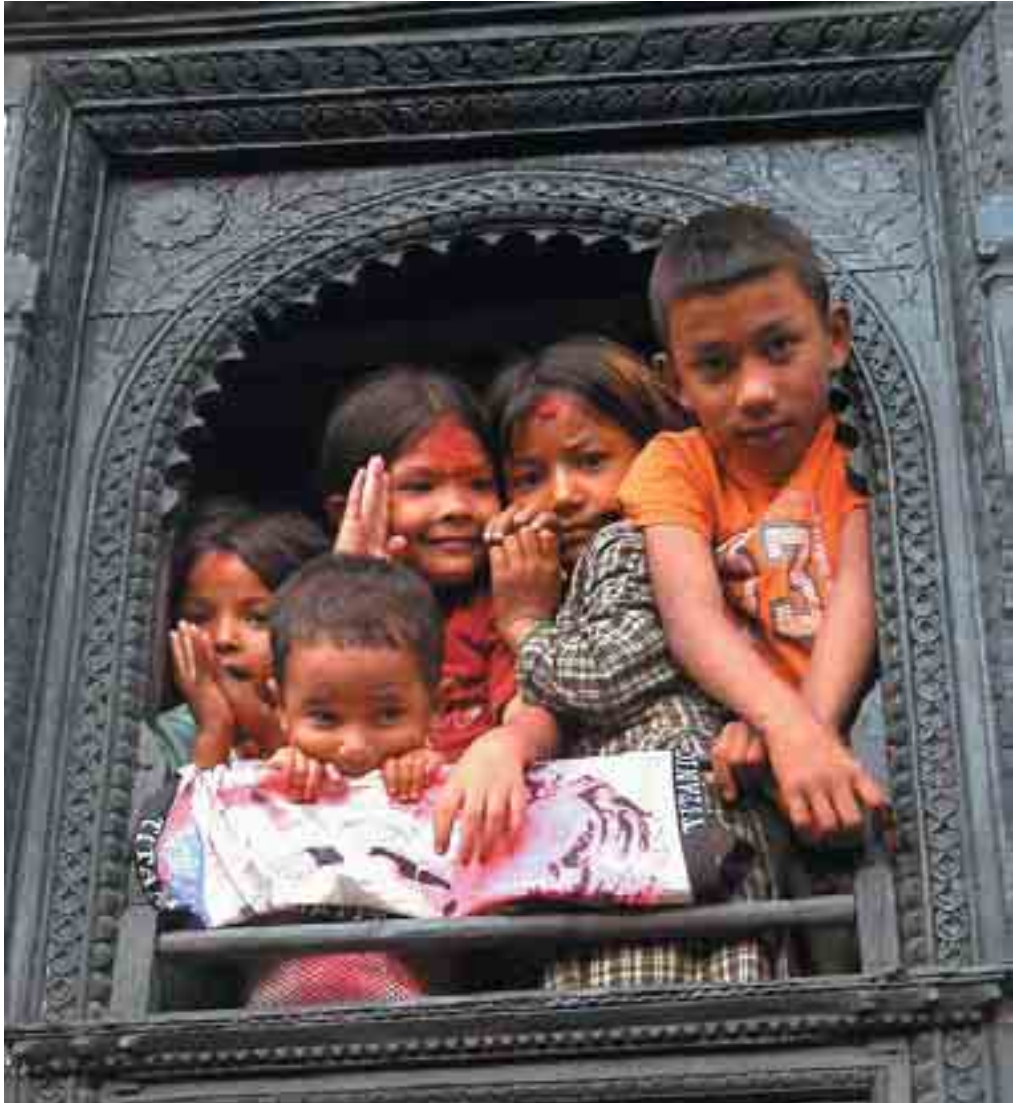
The reassuring news is that there is already a large and valuable body of resources available in the form of conceptual and empirical studies, guidelines, and, above all, individuals, non-government organisations, and research institutions working to arrive

at an improved understanding of disasters and their social and gendered impacts. These resources need to be used.

The following are further essential steps.

1. **Continuing the dialogue on gender and disaster** – This needs to be done consistently across all levels, bringing together all parties involved (with an emphasis on civil society institutions) and emphasising participatory and consultative processes in which a wide spectrum of voices and experiences are heard. Attention needs to be given to the reasons why local participation (especially of women and other marginalised groups) may be limited and how this can be addressed.
2. **Sex-disaggregated data** – Collecting sex-disaggregated data before, during, and after disasters, subjecting them to gender analysis, and sharing the findings with practitioners.
3. **Adapt existing methodological tools** to suit region- and locale-specific contexts. Excellent materials are already available and adapting them to meet individual cases is more cost-effective than creating new ones.
4. **Create gender and disaster policies and guidelines** – Data collection, analysis, and strengthening of awareness about the ways in which disasters have gendered outcomes may require the formulation of strong, comprehensive guidelines.
5. **Additional interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral research** – More research and analytical work are required to improve our understanding of the gendered dimensions of impact, loss, and recovery; and to give special attention to the constraints and opportunities shaped by the wider cultural context of disasters.
6. **Developing pilot projects** – Developing gender-sensitive disaster preparedness projects into longer-term sustainable development projects in order to reinforce the disaster-development linkages.
7. **Capacity-building and training support on gender and disasters** – This needs to be acknowledged as an essential component of all DP/M work at all stages, and be required of all personnel, irrespective of their sectoral focus, in order to develop an understanding of gendered roles, responsibilities, vulnerabilities, priorities, and opportunities before, during, and after disaster.





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## Selected resources for practitioners

Some particularly useful resources for practitioners are listed below, some are also mentioned in the Bibliography.

The Gender and Disaster Network listserv and Gender and Disaster Sourcebook are invaluable resources for anyone involved in the field of disaster preparedness and management. To sign up: <http://www.gdnonline.org>

ActionAid International (2005) *Participatory Vulnerability Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide for Field Staff*. London: ActionAid International. Also available at <http://www.actionaid.org/wps/content/documents/PVA%20final.pdf>

Ariyabandu, M.M.; Wickramasinghe, M. (2003) *Gender Dimensions in Disaster Management: A Guide for South Asia*. Colombo: ITDG South Asia (available by email at: [general@itdg.sit.lk](mailto:general@itdg.sit.lk))

Bradshaw, S. (2004b) *Socioeconomic Impacts of Natural Disasters: A Gender Analysis*. Santiago (Chile): United Nations, Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division, Women and Development Unit . Also available at <http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/>

BRIDGE (no date) 'Integrating Gender into Emergency Responses.' In *BRIDGE Reports on Gender and Health: Brief 4, Gender and Development*. Brighton, (U.K.): Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University. Also available at [www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/report](http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/report)

Canadian International Development Agency (2004) *Gender Equality and Humanitarian Assistance: A Guide to the Issues*. Ottawa: CIDA. Also available at [www.cida.gc.ca](http://www.cida.gc.ca)

Enarson, E.; with Meyreles, M.; Morrow, B.H.; Mullings, A.; Soares, J. (2002a) *Working with Women at Risk: Practical Guidelines for Assessing Local Disaster Risk*. Miami: Florida International University, International Hurricane Centre, and Centre for Disaster

Management and Humanitarian Assistance, University of South Florida. Also available at <http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/WorkingwithWomenEnglish.pdf>

Enarson, E. (2001a) *Promoting Social Justice in Disaster Reconstruction: Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive and Community-based Planning*, Report from Gujarat, India. Ahmedabad: Disaster Mitigation Institute

Graham, A. (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Disaster Management Programmes: A Principled Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Approach*. Prepared for the Expert Working Group Meeting, Ankara, Turkey, 2001 (Available at [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/env\\_manage/documents.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/env_manage/documents.html))

League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (1991) *Working with Women in Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Programmes*. Field Studies Paper No. 2. Geneva: International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Morris, P. (2003) *Weaving Gender in Disaster and Refugee Assistance and Accompanying Checklists*. Washington D.C.: Commission for the Advancement of Women InterAction, Women in Development Office, Global Bureau, USAID. Also available at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

Oxfam (2004) *A Little Gender Handbook for Emergencies (or Just Plain Common Sense)*. OxfamU.K.: Humanitarian Department (Available at [http://homepage.oxfam.org.uk/emergencies/ed\\_general/scipio/gender\\_handbook.htm](http://homepage.oxfam.org.uk/emergencies/ed_general/scipio/gender_handbook.htm))

Pratt, M. (Compiler) (2003) *Gender and Disasters: A Selective Bibliography*. Prepared for Gender Integration in Disaster and Refugee Assistance: An NGO-Donor Dialogue on Strategies that Work. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Also available at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)

Schwoebel, M.H.; Menon, G. (CEDPA) (2004) *Mainstreaming Gender in Disaster Management Support Project*. A Report for the Women in Development IQC Task Order: New and Expanded Opportunities for Vulnerable Groups in India. New Delhi: USAID. Also available at [http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/dms\\_report\\_wid\\_india\\_6-07-04.pdf](http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/dms_report_wid_india_6-07-04.pdf)



# Annex 1

## Aspects to keep in mind for gender-sensitive analysis of vulnerable communities before and after disasters

(Based on **Bradshaw (2004b) Socioeconomic Impacts of Natural Disasters: A Gender Analysis**. United Nations, Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division, Women and Development Unit)

The following offers a framework within which to consider the situation of people at risk of disasters, whether they are women, men, socioeconomically or otherwise marginalised groups in a community. It enables organisations to learn (a) what the differential impacts of disaster might be on women and men as well as amongst different segments within the community; (b) how disasters can have a profound impact on access to and control of resources and how women and men often start off with very different kinds of access and control; and (c) how to identify the capabilities of women and men and determine how these can be developed in ways that can contribute to disaster prevention and mitigation work.

Aspect	Description
Needs' Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the priority needs of women and men?</li><li>• What factors cause these needs?</li><li>• How can the project address these needs?</li><li>• What capabilities exist in the community?</li><li>• What problems are likely to require outside intervention?</li><li>• What is the nature of the intervention(s) (training? financial inputs?)</li></ul>
Activity Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who does/did what?</li><li>• When are these activities done (daily, weekly, annually?)</li><li>• Where are these activities done, and what (if any) risks are associated with them (e.g., are water sources polluted? Does the source of fuelwood entail a long, steep climb?)</li><li>• Is the gender division of labour flexible? If not, what risks does it pose to certain groups of people?</li></ul>

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Resources, Access,  
and Control Profile

- What resources are used by men and women to carry out their activities?
- Have they lost these resources as a result of the disaster?
- What resources – land, animals, savings, cash, etc – are available to women and to men?
- How do household structures of power dictate how women and men have control over these resources?
- Which groups/individuals have access to resources to deal with the post-disaster situation? Which do not? What are the effects of this?
- Are there new resources that have been introduced as a result of relief and rehabilitation programmes (e.g., credit), who has access to them, and how (if at all) is this affecting existing power relations?

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Limitations and  
Opportunities

- What kinds of vulnerability face various groups of people in the community? What differences exist in terms of access to and control of resources and power?
  - What capabilities, skills, knowledge, and coping strategies do various groups of people in the community have?
  - What opportunities are there for developing these capabilities?
  - What laws and policies (of national and local governments or donor agencies) are relevant to this situation?
  - What financial resources are available and who has access to them?
  - What skills do organisations working in this area have in terms of gender training; planning; and practical skills (e.g., house construction)?
  - Are planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes participatory? Do they include women and other marginalised people from the community? If not, what are some of the constraints, and how can they be addressed?
  - What kinds of information do community organisations have and what do they require?
-

# Annex 2

## Livelihoods' analysis: what do different kinds of resources mean to different categories of people and what kind of access do they have to them?

(Adapted from **Graham (2001) *Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for Disaster Management Programmes: A Principled Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Approach***, and **Schwoebel and Menon (CEDPA) (2004) *Mainstreaming Gender in Disaster Management Support Project***, a report for the Women in Development IQC Task Order, 'New and Expanded Opportunities for Vulnerable Groups in India', USAID)

A key feature of gender analysis is an understanding of the many resources that communities and different groups of people within them draw on for their livelihoods, and how these resources or their lack thereof create the opportunities or constraints they face in disaster contexts. Each of these broad categories, noted in the box below, mean different things to different socioeconomic groups and, in particular, are likely to offer different types of access to men as opposed to women.

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Types</b>
<b>Natural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Land, water, forests, rivers/other bodies of water</li></ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work opportunities, wages, who earns what; remuneration (including in-kind), who controls income earned; remittances, credit, production inputs</li><li>• Skills and capacities in agriculture, petty trading, other areas of work</li></ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal and informal education, social services, community and other social support</li><li>• Where does information about disaster come from first? How is it spread/shared? Are some groups excluded from it?</li></ul>

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads, bridges, electricity, water sources, markets, distance from markets, modes of transportation</li> <li>• Lay-out of village, and distance of different sections of community housing from road/water sources</li> <li>• Types of dwelling</li> <li>• Safe areas easily accessible to women and men and the most vulnerable members of the community</li> </ul>
<b>Political</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for access and participation in organisations, decision-making inputs at community, regional, and national levels</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work time, leisure, how free time is spent</li> <li>• Ability to engage in decision-making over own/others' use of time</li> </ul>
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem issues, communication abilities, individual decision-making capacity</li> </ul>

# Annex 3

## Gender-sensitive post-disaster reconstruction guidelines

(Source: **Enarson (2001a) *Promoting Gender Justice in Disaster Reconstruction: Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive and Community-based Planning***. Ahmedabad: Disaster Mitigation Institute)

This list alerts practitioners to issues that need attending to in relief and reconstruction work and which, if overlooked, can have profound and extremely detrimental impacts on women.

### Livelihoods

Women's work is often socially invisible, even though in most households around the world it is their unpaid and paid work that is at the heart of household well-being. Economic rehabilitation and reconstruction must target economically active women of all ages and social groups.

- Assume women are economic providers: target the informal sector.
- Implement economic initiatives that include arenas in which women are involved and likely to have sustained losses in the wake of disaster (especially those whose work is dependent on natural resources). Give priority to restoration of economic resources that will contribute to women's economic recovery.
- Target self-employed artisans and home-based workers for grants and loans to replace tools and resources that have been damaged.
- Help to expand women's employment opportunities.
- Seek women's inputs in identifying changes to be implemented in restoring and replacing assets, spaces, systems (pertaining to fodder, water storage, etc).
- Monitor access to work, wages, training, and working conditions, as well as the impact on women and girls, in public and private relief work projects.
- Evaluate women's ability to participate in and benefit from economic recovery packages. (Are women mobile compared to men? Are child-care centres available? Are health services available for the injured and the sick?)

### Temporary and permanent housing

Safe and secure housing is vital for women because so much of their daily lives centre around the household. Women must be centrally involved in the design, siting, and construction of local housing and community facilities because of their roles as home-based workers, caregivers, and managers of domestic and natural resources.

- Adequate lighting and provisions to protect security and privacy must be a priority.
- Increase housing security by deeding permanent housing in the names of both wives and husbands.
- Target highly vulnerable categories of women – single women, widows, women living below poverty level and unemployed women, socially marginalised women, and others (identified at the local level by knowledgeable women).
- Provide women with access to construction-related employment.
- Promote the participation of women across caste and class lines (and other relevant social ‘fault lines’) in decisions regarding community relocation, siting of new settlements, and design of new dwellings.
- Collaborate with local women in planning design innovations that reduce or simplify women’s work loads or that improve living and working conditions for them and their families.

## Training and education

Women are informal and formal educators who provide vital links between households and emergency responders, and whose social networks make them effective trainers in community-based technical assistance projects. Attention needs to be directed at girls who are at risk of leaving school early after disasters and at the many women who are unable to work because of child-care and other responsibilities.

- Give priority to the restoration of pre-school and child-care centres, schools, and community education programmes targeting women and girls.
- Monitor short- and long-term effects of injury, displacement, and rehabilitation on girls’ access to school (be attentive to relief projects that don’t target school attendance).
- Monitor job programmes to avoid training that promotes gender stereotypes and which limits rather than expands women’s options; offer non-traditional training to men.
- Use a variety of media and all community languages to ensure that all community members have access to recovery information.
- Capitalise on women’s local knowledge about vulnerable members of the village, neighbourhood, and community and about coping strategies in past disasters.
- Provide on-the-job training to women to take up decision-making roles in professional and government outreach projects.

## Physical and mental health

Although women’s health is vital to the well-being of their families after disasters, as caregivers they tend to place their needs last. Reproductive health needs are essential, as are women’s heightened risk of sexual/domestic violence.

- Antenatal and postnatal care and nutritional supplements must be made available to pregnant and lactating women.

- Mobile health services should include reproductive and family planning services.
- Older women should be targeted in public health campaigns to capture their needs as well as to draw on their knowledge in relevant areas.
- Mental health training and care must be provided to all women and men at risk of post-traumatic stress.

## Empowerment

Women's local knowledge and expertise are essential assets for households and communities struggling to rebuild. In order to capture their capacities, disaster responders need to work closely with them in ways that empower and develop their self-determination.

- Integrate disaster mitigation initiatives into ongoing community activities and concerns, if possible partnering with local women.
- Ensure that women who are knowledgeable about women's issues are proportionally represented when key decisions are made about the distribution and use of relief funds and available government funds.
- Plan for ongoing and long-term consultations with local women's groups in affected areas. Identify and develop relations with women's advocacy groups. Strengthen or develop informal social networks that link these groups with disaster response agencies and offices.
- Organise reconstruction planning meetings and pay attention to women's ability to participate by providing child-care, transportation, holding the meeting at a time convenient to the women, etc.
- Monitor and respond to women's need for legal services in the areas of housing, employment, and family relations.
- Monitor relief and rehabilitation services for gender bias and inequalities (unintentional burdening of women's work, etc).
- Monitor, as far as possible, the degree to which relief and rehabilitation assets are equally distributed within the household.



# Annex 4

## Issues for consideration in developing gender-sensitive outreach

(This compilation of practice guidelines is taken from **Enarson (2005) Sectoral Guidelines for Gender-Sensitive Outreach**. Included in the Gender and Disaster Sourcebook, published online by the Gender and Disaster Network <http://www.gdnonline.org>)

### A. Assessment and consultation

- The assessment team is balanced by sex and trained in gender analysis.
- Terms of reference for needs assessment teams give priority to gender mainstreaming.
- Informal women's networks are involved in the assessment.
- Sex-specific data are consistently collected (and not confined to a 'gender section').
- The language of assessment questions is sex-specific (e.g., 'mother/father' and not 'parent').
- Impact and project assessments include gender considerations across sectors.
- Indirect impacts (on schooling, employment, training, access to land, new employment, etc) are assessed by sex.
- Conditions of life cover different and representative groups of people affected (widows, senior women/men; young women/men, poor women/men, etc).
- Lessons from previous events relating to gender are considered in the assessment.
- Vulnerable groups in which women are disproportionately represented (those in extreme poverty, single-headed households, frail elderly, etc) are noted.
- Women's and men's inputs into decision-making (at household, village, and regional levels) are noted and integrated into project planning.
- Women's and men's responsibilities for children, the ill, orphans, the elderly and the disabled are noted.

### B. Participation and representation

- Diverse communication methods are used and reach women and households deemed the most vulnerable.
- Existing and potential capacities of women/women's groups, men/men's groups, and children are identified and integrated into project design.
- Both women's and men's groups are represented in community committees and consulted on a regular basis.

- Constraints on women's participation (work burden, mobility limitations, etc) are addressed.
- Women's community-building traditions, resources, and skills are integrated into post-disaster outreach.

### **C. Security and human rights**

- Mechanisms are in place to report and gather information on gender-based violence affecting women and girls (harassment, abuse, rape, sex-for-food coercion, pressure for early marriage, trafficking).
- Mechanisms are in place to document and respond to gender-based violence affecting the health and well-being of boys.
- Changing gender roles produced by the disaster and/or relief efforts are monitored for changes in the risk of violence.
- Field staff are made aware of the possible health, economic, and social effects of gender-based violence.

### **D. Logistics**

- Women are given central roles in registration and distribution groups and activities.
- Women are included in health and as protection workers and interpreters.
- Women and women's groups are involved in the placement of distribution centres, latrines, and housing areas.
- Likely constraints on women's access to aid are anticipated and addressed.
- Bathing, washing, and laundry facilities are sited to ensure privacy and security of girls and women.
- Women are consulted in the design of shelters, storage methods, and cooking tools and items.

### **E. Livelihood and education**

- Skills and knowledge of women and men (as teachers, social and health workers, etc) are used in skills training and employment initiatives.
- Daily and seasonal work of women and men in paid/unpaid, agricultural and other formal/informal sectors is known.
- Women producers are involved in decision-making in promoting sustainable and self-reliant means of livelihood and household food security.
- Increases in women's workloads are assessed and addressed by emergency relief and post-disaster initiatives.
- Environmental impacts on resources and assets used by women to provide food and earn income are identified and mitigated.
- Micro-credit and other economic measures are designed in consultation with the women affected (and groups working with them).
- Educational services target both girls and boys.
- Training programmes are developed for both women and men to provide traditional and non-traditional opportunities.

## **F. Shelter**

- The gender division of labour within households before, during, and after the disaster is understood and reflected in aid measures.
- The significance of the home/homestead in women's domestic production (for consumption and sale) is reflected in reconstruction plans.
- Site planning and housing design are carried out in collaboration with women and men, with a specific emphasis on women's needs and obligations.
- Women and women's groups are involved in monitoring housing reconstruction projects.

## **G. Health and nutrition**

- Maternal health care facilities are designed and operated in collaboration with the women affected and women's groups.
- Food taboos and requirements are understood and reflected in relief commodities.
- Caloric intake is known and disaggregated by sex with particular emphasis on infants, young children, and pregnant and lactating women.
- Female health workers are available where women cannot seek help from male providers.

## **H. Project impact: monitoring and evaluation**

- Gender training is provided to all field staff.
- Female experts are employed in situations where it is not culturally appropriate for male staff to directly address women's needs, and hiring practices reflect this need.
- All relief initiatives are evaluated in terms of overall impact on women's and girls' lives and gender relations.
- All project activities are evaluated for impact on post-disaster gender relations: male out-migration, increase in female-headed households, child abandonment, earlier marriages for girls, closer spacing of pregnancies and births, degraded natural resource bases, sexual violence, and suicide rates of boys and men.
- Participation (rates, types, roles) in project activities is tracked by sex.
- Women are separately consulted regarding emergency relief measures.
- Outcomes for women and men are separately assessed: Who benefits? How? For how long? In what ways?
- Good practice gender-sensitive projects and approaches are documented and shared.

## **I. Leadership development**

- Gender-specific considerations are taken into account for staff placement and designation of responsibilities following consultation with gender experts and staff.

- Gender-sensitive counselling is made available for all staff and volunteers.
- Measures are in place for confidential reporting and discussion of psycho-social impacts on relief staff.

#### **J. Environment**

- Measures promoting environmental and social sustainability in disaster recovery are based on how women and men use and manage environmental resources.
- Strategies for mitigating environmental hazards that increase women's risks or future disasters are identified and integrated into post-disaster reconstruction plans.
- Impacts of degraded resource bases on girls' and women's time and labour are identified and mitigated in recovery plans and in the design and siting of temporary encampments.
- Women's resource-based work, occupations, and income-generating activities are identified and reflected in economic and environmental recovery projects.

#### **K. Capacity building and advocacy**

- Civil society organisations working with women and girls in education and literacy, health, and other areas are engaged as partners.
- Repair and reconstruction of facilities for women's community groups are given priority.
- Gender-specific data, programming, and projects are shared with government authorities, research groups, and others working in the field of gender equality and disaster risk reduction.

# Annex 5

## Self-assessment tool for disaster-responding agencies

(Taken from **Enarson** [no date] **Gender-Aware Disaster Practice: A Self-Assessment Tool for Disaster Responding Agencies**. Originally developed in 1999 for the Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre, University of British Columbia.)

### 1. Staff and Training

Yes/No

Are opportunities available in your agency for women and men interested in non-traditional positions?

Do staff and volunteers represent the local population in terms of ethnicity, income levels, language skills, etc?

Does your agency recruit female and male volunteers to non-traditional roles?

Do staff receive training about how gender issues impact disaster planning and response?

Are training and social events offered at times and in places accessible to those with family responsibilities?

Does the informal culture of your agency support women in non-traditional decision-making roles?

### 2. Programme Development

Are women actively involved in developing and implementing programmes?

Are programmes evaluated in terms of how they affect local women (as survivors, risk communicators, caregivers, etc)?

Is programming based on knowledge of local women's economic status, housing, family size and structure, health concerns and other relevant living conditions?

Do programmes specifically target at-risk groups such as low-income single women, women living alone, and others?

Yes/No

Are relief centres and evacuation sites culturally accessible to all local women and safe for people with special needs?

Are women involved in the distribution and management of relief as much as possible?

Are all family units within a single household registered independently to receive relief?

### 3. Community Outreach

Does your agency include disaster-vulnerable women as partners in disaster planning and response?

Does the agency draw on women's educational, voluntary, civic, religious, professional, and other associations?

Are local women's groups and organisations appropriately incorporated into agency exercises, events, and training?

Are government and non-profit women's services included in agency communication, networks, and events?



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