

Intersectionality Approach for Securing Women Livelihoods, Food and Nutrition Security towards Disaster Resilience Building: Agenda for APMCDRR

Introduction:

Asia-Pacific region, consisting of small islands, developing countries and least developed countries is the most natural disasters prone area. The region, inhibited by large number of poor and marginal population dependent on nature are highly vulnerable to repeated climate hazard, falling eco system, reduced scope of income from primary source and increased food insecurity. With each passing year, the climate change process is getting momentum making the community susceptible to loss, destitution and deprivation. The climate change forces when cojoined with covid-19 pandemic impact, the result was devastating in terms of livelihood, food security, health, education and social harmony. The significant impact of this debacle is on women, further widening socio-economic disparities on the basis of gender and critically affecting their lives.

Differential Impact of Disasters on Women:

Disasters do not differentiate amongst its victims, rather prevalent gender discrimination in the society makes the women suffer disproportionately higher in terms of mortality and morbidity during and after the hazardous events. Further to this, the existing gender disparities in the society in terms of roles and responsibilities, control/ownership over resources and opportunities, possibility of participation in the decision-making process, access to land and other natural resources adds to the vulnerabilities of women and delay the process of recovery in post disaster situation. Empirical studies show, calamity and violence against women move in same direction. There is evidence of abuse, increased domestic violence, intimate partner violence and increased work pressure on women in the post disaster situation. This further accelerates the marginalisation of women in the post climate hazard events.

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As a consequence of increasing incidences of disasters in the Asia-Pacific Region, it becomes all the more important to inculcate resilience building in all the development discourse to bounce back better. In pursuit of resilience building, women play a vital role, as they are the active change agents. Ensuring gender justice is a stepping stone in this regard, however it is a complex issue of multisectoral character. In order to understand the complex intersectionality approach for securing gender justice in building resilience at the household and community level, women's livelihood, food and nutrition needs to be strengthened. In this regard a three-day training was organised by AIDMI in collaboration with NIDM from 28-30 June 2022¹, on the issues of, "Intersectionality approach for securing women livelihood, food and nutrition security towards disaster resilience building: Agenda for APMCDRR". This training made an attempt to bring on board the status of women in the society, their societal role and responsibility in the context of frequent disasters and analysed potential of women stakeholders in building resilient community with equitable opportunity of growth for all.

The training focused on the intersectionality approach of cojoining various threads of development in advancing DRR module for Asia-Pacific Region in tandem with gender parity focusing on livelihood and food security. The aim of the training conducted in the webinar mode was to come up with a set of suggestions for Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, as it is the final opportunity of Mid-Term review of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2023).

¹ Intersectionality Approach for Securing Women's Livelihood, Food and Nutrition Security Towards Disaster Resilience Building: Agenda for APMCDRR, 28-30th June 2022
Organized by: National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, In Collaboration with: All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (ADMI), Gujrat.

The training² began with the opening address of Prof. Surya Parkash³, Head, GMRD, NIDM. Prof. Prakash emphasised on building the capacities of the communities through intense investment in infrastructure and early warning systems to reduce disaster risk. Further to this, he shared that, it is high time that we should shift our attention from climate risk to resilience building in terms of livelihood, food and nutritional security along with gender parity in the society. In order to realise these objectives, women need to be involved in all the activities of resilience building with their leadership role. Prof. Prakash's session was followed by Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen⁴, who highlighted on how the different spectrum of intersectionality operating in the society decides the conditions of women.

Ms. Branwen M Millar⁵ a panelist in the discussion expressed her views in building disaster resilience around the theme of gender equality, agricultural food production and nutritional equity to make disaster resilience a sustainable model. She also emphasized on the promotion of women leadership at all levels of governance systems to incorporate gender sensitive policies and programmes.

In the subsequent session Mr. Denis Nkala⁶, focused on the need of South-South cooperation in sharing knowledge, technology and resources in building disaster risk resilience and shifting the narratives from disaster risk to resilience building of the communities. Ms. Ramona Miranda⁷, another eminent panellist in the workshop highlighted on the deteriorating health and nutritional condition of women engaged in the informal sector in India and Nepal during the Covid pandemic. Women's lack of access to institutional support, resource crunch due to reduced family income and increasing workload at the household level during the pandemic are some of the major contributors in lowering their recovery rate in the post pandemic situation degenerating their welfare and nutritional status. Increase in abuse against women, work pressure and intimate partner violence during covid pandemic were some of major concerns affecting wellbeing, confidence and the dignity of women.

Ms. Omogolo Taunyane-Mnguni⁸ shared her understanding about intersectionality approach in gender issues. She analyzed the marginalization and multi-dimensional experiences of women in the African context and shared about the various feminist movements to bring equality in the society. She highlighted on the predicament of electronic and social media biases in favor of urban upper class women's issues putting dark shed on the issues of women belonging to disadvantaged group and rural areas. In order to address this lack of representation of women issues belonging to the disadvantaged groups, women leadership at multidimensional structures must be promoted to create space and opportunity for the marginalized women to come forward and participate in the decision-making process to address the class-based inequalities.

Mr. Muhammad Taher⁹ panelist from Bangladesh highlighted on issues relating to coastal vulnerability by sharing the experience of Bangladesh with special emphasis on the structural marginalization of women in the coastal areas. Non-participation of women in grass root level governance system's decision-making process due to various social restrictions, stigma and prejudices has created a gulf in the women leadership role, responsible for downing various issues pertaining to women safety, security and dignity. He further added that the local governance should be allocated with more resources and autonomy to build resilience of the coastal communities with a focus on promoting women's participation in the decision-making process. He further emphasized on the early warning system, preparedness activities and building up of resilient infrastructure to reduce climate risk and vulnerability for the coastal communities.

² Patron by Shri Taj Hassan, Executive Director, NIDM, Government of India

³ Prof. Surya Parkash- Head, GMRD, NIDM, MHA, Government of India

⁴ Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Open University Bangladesh, Regional Lead, GRRIPP

⁵ Ms. Branwen M Millar, Gender Advisor, UNDRR, Thailand

⁶ Mr. Denis Nkala, UNOSSC Regional Coordinator, Thailand

⁷ Ms. Ramona Miranda, Duryog Nivaran, Srilanka

⁸ Ms. Omogolo Taunyane-Mnguni, founder -Gender-based Violence Monitor, South Africa

⁹ Mr. Muhammad Taher, Chair of Duryoga Nivaran, Bangladesh

Suggestions for APMCDRR:

The training organized by AIADMI in collaboration with NIDM came up with the following suggestions that need to be incorporated in the forthcoming APMCDRR in the month of September 2022, with the agenda of *'From Crisis to Resilience: Transforming the Asia-Pacific region's future through disaster risk reduction.'*

1. Representation of Women:

- Rebuild the social capital which is pro-women and promote the rights and equality of women in the society
- State and non-state institutions must create opportunity for women's representation and participation in decision making process
- Promote women sensitive inclusive disaster resilience approach
- Women representation at the different layer of DRR structure starting from grassroots level governance system to international forum

2. Early Warning System

- Strengthening early warning systems
- Leverage technology for an inclusive approach to reach out to each citizen
- Early warning system need to be incorporated in each country's strategic plan
- Dissemination of information in local language with multiple device and forum

3. Building green infrastructure and ecosystem regeneration

- Effort should be made in regeneration of the ecosystem. Healthy ecosystem as a risk reduction strategy should be promoted to absorb the shock of disasters
- Disaster resilient infrastructure should be built to safe the lives of people
- In coastal areas, mangroves need to be regenerated

4. Community Based Disaster Resilience

- Community based disaster plans have shown good result in disaster management and the same approach should be initiated for disaster resilience
- Women as leaders of community-based disaster resilience programmes should get the right authority and financial resources to drive resilience
- Building a network of community-based resilience institutions

5. Research and Advocacy:

- Intersectionality as a lens should be promoted for research about women issues
- Evidence from the field should be documented and share for up-stream public policy advocacy
- Women centric literature should be promoted in the public domain
- Rope in academic institutions with the community-based institutions to develop programmes based on research and evidence

6. Building a Positive Policy Environment

- The state must come up with progressive policies to promote women's participation in the resilience programme
- Local governance systems should carve out positions for women's leadership
- Adequate provisioning of financial resources to implement various women centric programmes

7. Capacity Building Programmes

- Capacity building of various state and non-state institutions should be developed around the theme of disaster resilience
- Regular training of such institutions should be done keeping in focus the leadership of women

8. Building Collaborative Framework for Knowledge Management

- Promote South-South cooperation to learn from each other
- Partnership with private sectors and various civil society organizations
- Develop joint research on various themes to pave out learning
- Ideate and develop common programmes to be implemented in various countries for shared learning
- Developing knowledge products based on the experience of various countries and societies

The training ended with lot of hope that we can rebuild the society when the equality and justice will no more be a dream but a reality for people who are voice less and live in the margins. This will be possible if women get the opportunity to lead the society at all levels.

Next Steps:

It is essential that we must take the necessary steps to build on the various suggestions shared in this training programme. The resource persons are able to give a direction on the approach of intersectionality in building resilience from the perspective of women and gender. In this context the next steps to walk the talk can be on the following strategic direction.

1. Multi country research on intersectionality approach to disaster risk reduction initiatives. This will give an initial trend of impact of women centric disaster resilient activities and its outcomes. This will help us build a discourse on the narrative on intersectionality analysis of initiating programmes and policy.
2. Develop a compendium of training modules of Asia Pacific region countries and its impact on the resilience. This will be a great learning product to help the member countries to learn and adapt to their local context.
3. Initiate a civil society platform for this region with the approach of including academic and other technical organization to serve as a “Knowledge Platform”. This collaborative platform should meet at regular intervals to develop joint initiatives on action research, policy framework and developing knowledge products to build the capacity of the member countries.
4. Initiate action research to determine the nature of support mechanisms required to build resilience and response in communities that are disaster prone.
5. Develop literature based on local knowledge from communities and local activists to build new knowledge and disseminate in affected areas.
6. Leverage on technology and social media platforms to raise awareness to educate communities about challenges and their role in finding sustainable solutions.
7. Co-create capacity building programmes involving community activists, researchers and practitioners to exchange knowledge on disaster risk management and resilience and gender justice.
8. Target young boys and men for behavioral change advocacy on the intersectional oppressions affecting women when natural disasters occur.

This will help us to build a platform at the Asia Pacific region and initiate the research from the intersectionality point of view in build a just and caring society, where each and every member especially women and children lead a life of equality and dignity.



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