

# Learning Intersectionality of Women Led Disaster Preparedness and Resilience



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# Learning Intersectionality of Women Led Disaster Preparedness and Resilience

By *Mihir R. Bhatt*, AIDMI, Ahmedabad, India

'Intersectionality' refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The intersectionality of gender, risk and resilience very often makes women much more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of disasters and extreme events. AIDMI has observed this in its work in India.

In popular perception, disasters are often seen as these big cataclysmic events that cause indiscriminate death, destruction and distress. However, the vulnerability to the adverse impacts of disasters and extreme events is also driven by several social and economic factors. Gender is one such important social construct that often determines the extent of a disaster's impact on a person. It has often been observed including in AIDMI's work that the same disaster or extreme event can

have differentiated impacts on men and women and other sexual minorities.<sup>1</sup>

During various disasters in India, the mortality of women has been higher than that of men. For instance, during the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, more women died as compared to men because of their restrictive attire traditions, long hair that got entangled with bushes, lack of physical ability to run, as well as their efforts to save valuables from homes and to protect children by taking higher risks.<sup>2</sup> In fact, pre-existing, structural gender inequalities mean that women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse impacts of disasters than men and boys. And this is the reason why AIDMI was one of the first in tsunami response to address women's needs first and directly.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted this differentiated vulnerability like never before. As

the pandemic unfolds, its impacts on women's welfare, food and livelihood security are becoming increasingly clear. The pandemic and its concomitant lockdowns have disrupted livelihoods and value chains in rural and urban areas. Research by sector experts from organizations like International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), World Bank and Centre for Global Development, highlight the differential impacts of the pandemic on men and women and their ability to cope with these multiple shocks. Recent work of GRRIPP has highlighted this.

For instance, women tend to experience more lingering income shocks and have greater difficulty accessing food than men. Furthermore, the pandemic is increasing the work burden on women due to school closures and the additional care needs of sick family members in the household. An increase in gender-based violence and deteriorating mental health of

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Exposure to disaster risk is often dictated by social constructs such as gender, class, race, sexual orientation, etc. The overlap and interconnectedness of these constructs is known as 'intersectionality'. This issue of Southasiadisasters.net is titled '*Learning Intersectionality of Women Led Disaster Preparedness and Resilience*' and focuses on the important aspect of women led disaster risk reduction (DRR).

It has been observed that men and women have differentiated vulnerability to disasters. This differentiated vulnerability needs to be articulated and understood so that appropriate risk reduction policies can be implemented. This issue tries to highlight not only women's differentiated vulnerability but also the fact that women's leadership in reducing risk against extreme events has been hitherto neglected. By discussing, the intersectionality of risk, resilience and gender a meaningful dialogue with concrete action can be started in this direction. ■

- Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI, India

<sup>1</sup> Gender Dynamics of Disaster Risk and Resilience, The World Bank Publication, March 3, 2021,

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disasterriskmanagement/publication/gender-dynamics-of-disaster-risk-and-resilience>

<sup>2</sup> (Pittaway et al. 2007)

women have also been noted. AIDMI has found that casual women workers have suffered loss of income upto 50% due to the pandemic impact.

Another debilitating factor is that the role of women is often ignored in risk reduction and relief contexts which in turn limits their participation in such activities. This is unfortunate, because not only do women suffer the adverse impacts of disasters

more; they also possess the ability to prepare against such extreme events. *Duryog Nivaran* in South Asia has pointed this out for now two decades.

Thus, 'Intersectionality of Women led Disaster Preparedness and Resilience' has emerged to be an important policy agenda as it challenges our pre-existing notions of risk and vulnerability driven by

gender dynamics. Furthermore, it is imperative to understand and address this 'intersectionality' to redeem the pledge of India's NDMP and PM's 10-point agenda on DRR which lay stress on improving the disaster preparedness and participation of women in risk reduction activities across different levels. With this in mind AIDMI has put together this issue. ■

## Women, Pandemic and Small Businesses

By Vishal Pathak, AIDMI, India

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the limited gains made in the past decades on gender equality are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems, which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic.

The government's latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) shows the unemployment rate for women during the January to March 2021 period was 11.8 per cent, even before the second wave of the pandemic hit. This is higher than 10.5 per cent in the corresponding time in 2020.

Female entrepreneurs have had to content with unclaimed inventories owing to order cancellations and higher raw material costs<sup>3</sup>. Of the 61 million proprietary MSME enterprises in India, only 20% are women-owned (MSME Annual

Report, 2019-20). Social norms prevent women from accessing mentorship and training. In 2018-19, 4.9% of women received informal business training, vs. 12.9% men<sup>4</sup> (PLFS, 2018-19). During the lockdown, only 9% of women respondents learned a new skill<sup>5</sup> (IWWAGE, 2020).



*Economic infrastructure – beyond roads and buildings – for women's enterprise in social sector needs tremendous investments, sustained and substantial, shows recent assessment by AIDMI.*

Every COVID-19 response plans, and every recovery package and budgeting of resources, needs to address the impacts of the pandemic on women. The long-term recovery must mitigate the impact of pandemic and benefits women and girls (refer priorities of UNWOMEN).

### UN Women's Response Focuses on Five Priorities<sup>6</sup>:

1. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is mitigated and reduced
2. Social protection and economic stimulus packages serve women and girls
3. People support and practise equal sharing of care work
4. Women and girls lead and participate in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making
5. Data and coordination mechanisms include gender perspectives. ■

<sup>3</sup> Small businesses, big challenges – How will female-owned micro-businesses recover from COVID-19? (March 2021), Times of India, Opinion – Mitali Nikore, Economist. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/irrational-economics/small-businesses-big-challenges-how-will-female-owned-micro-businesses-recover-from-covid-19/>.

<sup>4</sup> Periodic Labour Force Survey (June 2020), Government of India. National Statistical Office, [http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Annual\\_Report\\_PLFS\\_2018\\_19\\_HL.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Annual_Report_PLFS_2018_19_HL.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Women Entrepreneurs as the powerhouse of recovery, KREA University and IWWAGE, [https://ifmrlead.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Report\\_Women-Entrepreneurs-as-Powerhouse-of-Recovery-upd.pdf](https://ifmrlead.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Report_Women-Entrepreneurs-as-Powerhouse-of-Recovery-upd.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> UN WOMEN Response to COVID-19 Crisis, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/un-women-response-to-covid-19-crisis#data>.

## Women's Leadership in Humanitarian System in India: Early Findings

By Dr. Prabodh Dhar Chakrabarti\*

Women in India like women in general, due to the unique role they play in family and society, are endowed with the qualities of empathy, humility, inclusiveness, and the ability to communicate effectively with other women and children, who comprise nearly three-fourths of the population of the country. These qualities of the head and heart make women natural leaders during humanitarian crises. Women play this leadership role effectively but silently in dealing with crisis situations within household and communities, which often go unnoticed and do not get adequately recognised in the formal humanitarian systems of the country.

The gap between the de facto and de jure leadership position of women can be attributed to their lack of education, overburden of work, culture of inhibitions and patriarchal social norms and practices, which do not allow women to come out openly in public space to assume formal leadership positions during humanitarian response, relief and recovery operations. The nature of humanitarian response during emergency situations - evacuation, search and rescue, emergency relief - demands very high degree of physical exposure and sometime during odd hours which make women's participation in such operations problematic.

Despite all these odds women are breaking the shackles of the past and slowly beginning to assume positions of leadership in humanitarian systems at the local level. Spread of education among women, increasing awareness of their rights, exposures to the outside world through television, etc., and opportunities of interaction through mobile telephone have contributed to this change. Millions of self-help groups of women in the rural areas, large number of highly active women's organisations, and hundreds of thousands of women people's representatives in both rural and urban local bodies, thanks to reservation of minimum of thirty percent of such seats since mid-nineties, have brought women into the focus.

Women have started to assume positions of leadership at the local level. They are in a better position to present their problems and difficulties before the authorities. The trinity of women functionaries at the grassroots - ASHA, Anganwadi and ANM - deal with issues of child and female reproductive health and nutrition which assume critical importance post emergencies. These official functionaries along with the elected Panchs and Sarpanchs are involved with post disaster need assessment at the local level. In the cyclone affected States of Odisha and West Bengal majority of local level

committees to manage shelter camps were led by women. Similar trends were beginning to be noticed in the flood affected regions of Bihar and Tamil Nadu.

Women's leadership at the local level has enabled highlighting issues of violence against women, privacy of women and other women specific needs that were ignored during emergencies. Women's representatives in shelter, relief and other committees have articulated the needs of food, nutrition, water and sanitation much more effectively than their male counterparts.

Many experienced, educated and articulate women have graduated from local level to assume leadership positions at sub-national and local levels. In the recently held Mayor's conclave at the World Congress on Disaster Management in Delhi women Mayors of many cities including that of Mumbai, Indore and Ranchi stole the show with their impassionate interventions regarding the role they played in leading from the front the fight against the Corona Virus.

It can be expected that with the increasing leadership of women in all spheres of society, their roles in humanitarian systems which were hitherto the exclusive domain of men would also increase. ■

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## Why Investing in Women's Leadership is Important for Disaster Preparedness and Resilience?

By Yogesh Ghore, Coady International Institute, Canada

*Ever since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, we at the Coady International Institute have been working with our graduates and partner organisations across the globe who are leading the fight against coronavirus. Their stories give us a glimpse of how women in local communities are coping with and responding to the global crisis, and why investing in building their leadership is important for disaster preparedness and resilience. Below are some lessons from India and our ongoing work with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA).*

**Mobilising Rapid Response** While the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and threatens to reverse decades of progress on gender equality, what we find in our stories is the resilience, innovation and agency demonstrated women to not only tackle the most immediate threats to public health but to find practical solutions to the problems created by the lockdowns, loss of work and family income. For example, the most pressing and immediate issue at the start of the outbreak was the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks that provide first line of

defence against the virus. Realising this, about 500 women from SEWA learned how to make the masks and produced half a million masks even before the entire country went into a national lockdown in March 2020. These masks were then distributed to the association's membership of over 1.9 million women workers in the informal economy spread across the length and breadth of the country. The decentralised production model of SEWA involved less logistics and time for delivering it to local hospitals and customers and created employment and income for women at a time when the entire economy came to a standstill.

### Raising Public Awareness

Raising public awareness about the pandemic was another area where women took the leadership. Using technology (video messaging, social media) to spread messages on social distancing, hand washing, masking, and subsequently on vaccination. This kind of messaging from trusted sources was especially important given the stigma, and misinformation about the disease, public health protocols, treatment, and vaccines.

### Providing Care to the Most Vulnerable

Providing care to the most vulnerable is a major challenge in a



Photo credit: SEWA.

disaster as they are the hardest to reach and yet are most affected by it. The stories we collected during the pandemic show that women were at the forefront of identifying such groups, be it the informal sector workers—migrant labourers, street vendors, home-based workers, cigarette rollers, rickshaw pullers, domestic workers, waste pickers, construction workers, agricultural workers—or the malnourished children with weak immune system, lactating mothers with low incomes, people with disabilities, single mothers, widows, victims of gender-based violence and others in difficult situations. Working alongside governments at various levels, SEWA members leveraged their community assets (over 2000 self-help groups, district level associations, and various trade groups and social enterprises) to provide immediate shelter, food and medical help.

#### **Stimulating Local Economy through Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Global supply chains were severely affected during the pandemic which included the supply of essential goods and services. While the lockdowns were a huge problem for

the traditional ways in which supply chains function, it opened new opportunities for local businesses and community institutions. For instance, SEWA's RUDI (a grassroots business owned and operated by rural women with an innovative circular model of local production, local processing, and local distribution through a network of last-mile saleswomen who make home deliveries) saw an increase in their procurement as well as sales during the pandemic. They did all this while observing the social distancing norms and used mobile-based apps for accepting orders and inventory management. When the big businesses and wholesale markets were shut, women obtained permissions and worked with the local administration to supply essential goods to the remotest of places during the crisis.

#### **Key Take Away**

Stories collected highlight the extreme impact of the pandemic on women and how that has been translated into agency. Going forward, what difference is it going to make for disaster preparedness and resilience? Particularly given the fact that women have been

recognized to have both been impacted by and have done the most in response.

The once in a century pandemic took everyone by surprise. Governments across the world struggled to control the spread and its extreme impact on public health, economy and society. At the same time, the stories from SEWA tell us how women emerged as capable and compassionate leaders who took the challenges head on. The response provided by SEWA stands on years of investments in building women's agency and leadership. By organising women in the informal economy, SEWA has given them identity, voice and means to build assets thereby increasing their ability to cope with crisis. The stories also point to the ability of women-led organisations to rapidly leverage social capital—in the form of relationships, trust, community connections, institutions, leadership—to mobilise mass action in the time of crisis. Just as they have played a vital role in responding to the crisis, SEWA's experience calls for greater role for women and investments in building their leadership for disaster preparedness and resilience. ■

## **WOMEN AND WASH OUTCOMES**

# **Women in WASH Alliance: Building Resilience to Disaster and Climate Threats**

*By Shaila Shahid, Chief Operating Officer; and Rifat Binte Jia, Gender Expert, Disaster Climate Change Support Unit, CWIS-FSM Support Cell, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Bangladesh Government*

**W**ater and sanitation are the primary areas and key medium by which we feel the impacts of climate change. As climate vulnerable people experience changing weather patterns, less predictable rainfall, drought, salt-

water intrusion and increased exposure to disease, improved WASH (access to water sanitation and hygiene) becomes a critical line of defense. In many instances, climate change impacts on WASH sector are disproportionately

affecting women, girls, elderly and people with disabilities. When women and people with disabilities have relatively lower social and legal status and hold less political power within a community, this limits their influence on decisions about how

families and communities should respond to maintain WASH access against climate change impacts.

### Challenges Faced by Women: WASH Context

In local communities of South Asia, women are the key managers of water and sanitation at the household level – collecting safe water from a safe space is a major activity of women. They are left with little to no time for work, school or to care for family and important time for their own leisure. Further, adding to the needs, women have a lack of education on health and poor concern about menstrual hygiene. Women’s WASH-related decision-making is low as their participation in water governance is [constrained by a range of factors](#). WASH-related decision-making is dominated by men in this region.

Addressing the WASH needs of women in the changing climate scenario:

In the case of Bangladesh, it has the Women Advancement Policy (2011) included a section on women and children in disasters. Bangladesh Climate Change Strategies and Action Plan, also states that every effort shall be made to ensure that vulnerable groups will be protected from the impacts of disaster and climate change impacts. The Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) 2013 of Bangladesh in its capacity building initiatives of GoB and other organizations gave more emphasis on gender issues in general and relevant organizations on gender and WASH and Climate Change in particular.

### Practice Level WASH in Bangladesh

The government approved the National Strategy for Water Supply



*Women in WASH resilience.*

and Sanitation in 2014, and the Fecal Sludge Management Institutional and Regulatory Framework (FSM - IRF) developed in 2017 in the country. To execute those strategies by 2030, a ‘National Action Plan’ has been adopted to better execute and monitor those national policies in the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives. A comprehensive approach is being applied to focus on CWIS indicators (City-wide inclusive sanitation) in DPHE to ensure gender, equality and inclusion at all level of programme implementation WASH, DRR, and Water and Sanitation entrepreneurship. Bangladesh has made its cyclone preparedness programme more inclusive of women.

Women are involved in the design of early warning systems, the building of cyclone shelters, and in raising community awareness. This has managed to lower the ratio of female to male deaths by almost two-thirds. Women’s voice in water governance

is critical for inclusive policies that benefit both women and men and support the sustainability of water resources.

### Way Forward

Ensure women’s meaningful participation and leadership in WASH governance, climate governance, disaster management and integrated water resources management (IWRM) at all levels (household, community, national, and trans-boundary) are key stepping stone to adapt to the changing climate.

Since, low levels of awareness and poor understanding of climate change risks, combined with significant knowledge gaps about climate change processes, have hindered effective societal decision making, there is a need to initiate massive campaign to challenge the social norms around unpaid care work, women’s leadership, and gender-based violence, with special focus on WASH sector and sanitation value chain. ■

# Role of RedR India in Promoting Women’s Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction

By Prasad Bhagwan Sevekari, Advisor & Interim CEO, RedR<sup>7</sup> India

Time and again, statistics of a disaster aftermath have indicated high mortalities and morbidities among those sections of society that are chronically vulnerable. Gender inequalities that persist within the societies get exacerbated during the disasters, putting women and girls most at risk. However structural barriers, social norms and capacity gaps have seen to limit the opportunities for women, to get into the decision making and leadership roles for better disaster risk governance.

RedR India understands that leadership is not an overnight phenomenon but an outcome which passes through stages, a resultant of rigorous ground work and calibrated support. Capacities need to be reinforced, opportunities need to be created and trust needs to be built, to ensure that women not only attain but sustain in a leadership position.

- Capacity reinforcement would happen only if the gaps are understood, inherent skills are identified and knowledge is enhanced.
- Opportunities will be created if women engage actively in contributing their newly gained knowledge and skills towards the process of decision making.
- Building trust, amongst the women members about their capacities and then, within the

group members about the abilities of women as leaders is necessary. The community needs to be ‘galvanised’ to achieve a greater common goal, under the new leadership. A sustained support is indeed necessary to ensure that those already established do not hinder the advancement of the deprived in different positions.

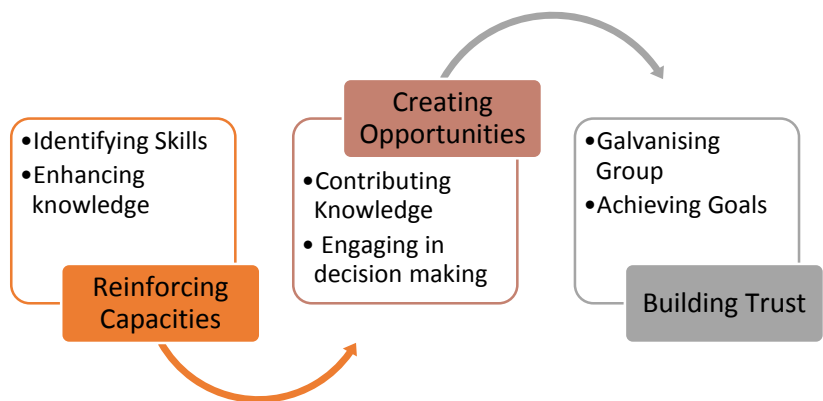
This ideology is manifested in RedR India’s humanitarian interventions under the three foundational pillars of Roster and Deployments, Capacity Building and Project support.

### Roster and Deployments

RedR India’s humanitarian roster currently has 203 members of varied sectoral specialities. Proportion of women on the roster however is not more than 20% (43 out of 203 members); probably a manifestation of limited number of women professionals in humanitarian sector.

RedR India has however made efforts towards increasing the proportion of women members through networking, interviewing and recruiting women for humanitarian deployments and jobs. As yet, RedR India has deployed 154 number of women professionals as against 513 deployments for men members. In the most recent deployment for COVID response in Maharashtra (July-December 2021) with UNICEF Maharashtra Field Office RedR India deployed 66% women professionals, paving way for eliminating gender disparity in humanitarian response deployments.

RedR India has also consciously supported capacity development of its women staff members through mentoring and handholding. It is worth noting that over last five years and as a result of the sustained nurturing, at least five of RedR India’s women staff have moved on



<sup>7</sup> RedR India is part of RedR International Federation, a humanitarian aid, non-profit organization, which maintains a register of experienced humanitarian professionals who are available to assist governments and external support agencies that work in the humanitarian sector.



to take position of greater responsibility at major humanitarian think tanks, policy support and donor agencies.

### Training and Capacity Building

RedR India organises calendar and customised training courses, to build humanitarian capacities for the thematic and operational aspects of humanitarian response. These topics include technical sectors such as WASH, Shelter, Nutrition, Education etc. as also the essential operational functions like logistics. RedR India has been consistently supporting processes for creating equal opportunities for women to learn from experts within these sectors and operations. RedR India's approaches have included:

- Providing **Scholarships** and discounted course fees for deserving women candidates to join calendar courses;
- Organising **Cohorts** to enable women trainees better understand the nuances of the trade;
- Offering **Mentoring** opportunities with experienced RedR India Members.

Over last two decades RedR India has trained 86600 number of participants through various training programs, of which nearly 30% have been women from different humanitarian organisations. The number increases with every training event.

### Project Support

In the backdrop of 2005 Kashmir earthquake, RedR India in collaboration with AKDN designed and conducted capacity building project on community based disaster



preparedness in 17 earthquake affected villages of Uri block of Baramulla district of Jammu & Kashmir. This project was planned in three phases. The first phase of the project dealt with capacity building on understanding hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities of the community emphasising the need for community organisation for preparedness. Conscious efforts were made to ensure participation of women PRI members. RedR India and AKDN emphasised upon organising the capacity building events within the environs of the villages to enable women members to participate at times of their convenience.

The second phase of project helped communities gain knowledge and skills of search and rescue and first aid. There was a significant increase in the number of women who gained from the knowledge of the practitioners, helping enhance their confidence. The third phase of the project was about community-led camp management and training of trainers. Herein the women learnt about nuances of managing

individuals and institutions during critical times. All together 51 onsite training courses were conducted reaching out to almost 500 men, women and youth.

This episode highlighted the role of onsite training and capacity building for enhancing participation of women in decision making processes related to disaster risk reduction. RedR India has continued with the approach ever since, while supporting humanitarian responses in the South Asian region.

### In Conclusion...

Ensuring active involvement of women and girls in decision making processes, particularly within those aspects of life that matter for safety, security and wellbeing of their own selves and their families, is a key tenet of community-based disaster risk reduction.

RedR India takes pride in calling itself an 'equal opportunity capacity builder' to usher in the culture of risk resilience within the affected communities. ■

# The Role of Women in Household Preparedness to Improve Their Likelihood Fragility through Women's Movements in Indonesia

By *Debby Paramitasari*, Post Graduate Student, School of Health and Related Research, The University of Sheffield, UK

Women are part of marginalised groups within the society, including in Indonesia. Based on the concept of the triangle of vulnerability by Wisner et al. (2012), marginalisation has a causal relationship with lack of accesses and resources on people's everyday lives and during disasters due to residing in an unsafe location and having fragile likelihood (1). This article will only focus on the role of women in improving their livelihood fragility.

Women's inclusion in the disaster has been recognised and regulated in Indonesia by enacting a Head of BNPB regulation No 13/2014 about Mainstreaming Gender in Disaster Management (2). At the same time, women have been locally involved in several movements that promote empowerment and inclusiveness in tackling family-related problems to strengthen their everyday likelihood, which indirectly supports household preparedness to face many difficulties, including disaster.

## Women Empowerment through PKK Movement

PKK (or Empowerment and Family Welfare) was founded in 1957 for grassroots women (3). The PKK movement, which initially focused on supporting men in family management, income earner, and community development, shifted to empower women by collaborating with men in every aspect of life, from household management, community development, and even country development (3,4). The PKK conducts their programs through

five different working groups, including ensuring the practicality of Pancasila and Gotong Royong (communality) as our country tenet; education and training; food, housing, and household management; health and environmental management; and small businesses and community coop (5).

Through the PKK programs, the likelihood of women across Indonesia has improved in many aspects. For instance, people in Pasar Minggu sub-district, DKI Jakarta Province, have experienced the benefits of PKK programs, particularly on preschool education, managing household waste through composting workshops, and regular integrated health service programs for children and elderly (5). Similarly, people in Ciputat sub-district, South Tangerang City,

Banten Province, the PKK have regularly conducted Muslim study groups, religious festivals, and charity events (5). In Candimulyo Village, Kedu District, Temanggung Regency, East Java Province, the PKK workshops teach women to cook and sell food products, such as crackers, banana cake, and noodles which help women increase their income (6).

## The Role of Women as Kader for Active Village Preparedness

The Ministry of Health initiated Active Villages Preparedness in 2006 to improve health quality in villages across Indonesia for a better quality of life. The program focuses on improving health services and developing community-based health surveillance, emergency and disaster management, and environmental health (7). Other than village-based health practitioners, cadres,



*Illustration of the PKK's Cooking Workshop: Snack Making Workshop by the PKK members in Sukodadi Village, Semarang City, Central Java Province. (Ref.: Sukodadi Village Government. 2019 [cited 2022 Jan 22]. Available from.*

primarily women, have a critical role in empowering and leading community participation throughout the programs.

For example, in Wonokromo Village, Surabaya, East Java Province, cadres actively promote a healthy lifestyle, raising awareness on health and bridging between health practitioners and people in the community (8). Further, in Sukoharjo Village, Kader actively promotes mental health problems to reduce stigma and supports patients with mental illness who are being shackled by their families (9). In Pasié Nan Tigo Ward in Padang, West Sumatra Province, Kader's role is critical in earthquake and tsunami disaster preparedness, including facilitating workshop and disaster simulation and facilitating in developing household disaster response plan: evacuation plan and survival bag (10). During COVID-19 pandemic, Kader in Kediri City, East Java, together with the local Campus, provided online COVID-19 awareness-raising through WhatsApp Group, which positively improved knowledge of people within the community about COVID-19 preparedness and Management (11).

### The Srikandi of Disaster Preparedness

BNPB facilitates workshops for representatives of the existing women-led organisation to increase awareness of disaster preparedness

and disaster risk reduction, aiming to strengthen women's capacities and capabilities in facing disasters within their area (12). This initiative is known as "Srikandi Siaga Bencana". After the workshop, every representative would initiate and support disaster preparedness measures within their own family and community.

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*We do very little about the impact of COVID-19 in women's economic enterprise – activity to organisation – even though the impact is negative and huge, indicates initial assessment by [AIDMI](#).*

# The Key Role of Women in Preventing Disaster Related Avoidable Deaths

By Ms. Lauren Macleod and Mr. Julian Coetzee, Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN), UK

This article explores the key role of women in preventing disaster-related avoidable deaths. Women are consistently becoming more involved at senior leadership levels in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM) organisations and government bodies (UNDRR ROAP, 2021). The United Nations 'Sendai Framework for DRR' highlights the indispensable role of women in reducing disaster risks, emphasising that there should be a mobilisation of women leading resilience building.

This article highlights influential women leading DRR and DRM initiatives at senior levels, helping to prevent avoidable disaster deaths. The methodology for this article is a qualitative review of literature pertaining to women in positions of influence, and those women who are not perceived as influential, yet who play a critical role in avoidable disaster deaths.

As the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for DRR, Ms. Mami Mizutori leads the global DRR community towards disaster prevention and mitigation. Speaking at the Avoidable Deaths Network's Symposium on 'Integrating Disaster Risk Management with Emergency Services and Defence to Reduce Avoidable Deaths in the Caribbean Region' that was held on the 10th of December 2021, Ms. Mizutori detailed that reducing avoidable deaths is a key mandate of the



"Dr. Fatima Akter (Asst. Professor, Dhaka University, ADN RC (left) and Dr. Nibedita Ray-Bennett (ADN President - right) with a renowned Human Geographer and Director at DRTMC, Dhaka University, Prof. Hafiza Khatun. Picture taken in 2019."

UNDRR. To reduce deaths in the Caribbean region, the UNDRR supports disaster risk governance, builds risk knowledge capacities and supports resilient investment. Addressing women of Latin America and the Caribbean on the International Day for DRR, Ms. Mizutori commended women's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in both their professional and home lives (Waddington, 2021).

The Women's International Network on DRR (WIN DRR) (UNDRR ROAP, 2021) is an initiative to develop leaders, showcasing women's extraordinary achievements. Recipients of the 2021 WIN DRR Leadership Awards included Dr. Nuraini Rahma Hanifa and Ms. Vasiti Soko (UNDRR, 2021). Dr. Hanifa is regarded for her work with

earthquake related DRR through the Research Centre for Geotechnology, Research Organization of Earth Sciences, National Research and Innovation Agency, whilst Dr. Soko is the first female Director of the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (UNDRR, 2021).

As well as the individuals who are exemplifying of the professional role of women in DRR, there is statistical evidence supporting women's general roles in DRR. Fioramonti, Coscieme and Trebeck (2020, p.?) observed that "countries with female leaders have suffered one-sixth as many COVID-19 deaths as those led by men", predicting that these countries will recover sooner from the effects of the COVID-19 recession following the pandemic. Ruszczyk et al. (2020) found that women are

willing to lead DRR efforts and be more involved, if they were afforded the opportunity. In line with these studies, the United Nations Development Programme (2020) published a Gender and recovery toolkit to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis and recovery situations.

On a community level, stories of women in leadership positions in small towns and villages, and families are not heard often enough. Last year, the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) started an innovative initiative to capture stories of local woman leaders, and to provide them with the recognition that they truly deserve.

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## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DRR

# Women Role in Disaster Management in Afghanistan

By Taj Mohammad Bassiry, Managing Director, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the few countries around the world where natural and man-made disasters are quite frequent. Avalanches, floods, drought, landslides, insurgency and war are the most common ones. Other than those, harsh temperatures in winter and summer and lack of cooling and heating equipment are the other reasons which adds to disasters in the country. Due to five decades of war and an unending instability, the infrastructures have been damaged badly. The international community intervention could not boost the

disaster preparedness infrastructures as expected.

Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) was established in 1973 and started to respond to the natural and man-made disasters within the country, but their work was not sufficient in building the resiliency of the communities prone to natural disasters. Afghanistan due to being affected by climate change has lost a huge portion of its herbal covering and huge mountain erosion has happened, as a result of which floods happen regularly in the winter and spring seasons. Due to lack of

financial as well technical skills, vulnerability amongst Afghans are high. In the male-dominated country like Afghanistan, children and women tend to be affected from disasters more.

Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), established in 1987, has a functional Disaster Risk Reduction department which works on disaster risk management and building resilience in the communities prone to natural and man-made disasters. The department runs projects to build resilience, decrease the destructive effects of the disasters and train



people on how to be prepared in the areas prone to natural disasters.

At the field level, women were active in precreation of the plans, meetings and capacity building but with the latest political changes, it is challenging. Women as an inseparable part of the community and have quite an eminent role in the houses and on the field before and after disasters. The humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan working in the disaster prone areas established community based disaster risk management committees (CBDRM). CBDRM members are comprised of community elders, women and youth. These committees were comprised of volunteers that were capacitated on first aid kit application, early warning systems

as well as search and rescue methods. The trainings by the organizations have been blended into the local system of flood and avalanche signs. Women have taken quite a positive role in the capacity building exercises. CBDRM also has female groups in the areas prone to disaster. They have learned how to deliver first aid to the wounded persons. They also practice early warning methods such as use of phone calls or special sounds to inform other women about the threat of a flood or an avalanche.

Building the capacity of women in disaster management and preparedness is crucial as women can transfer the messages to their household members as well as adhere to the existing protocols and plans. Women's role during and after

a disaster is important because of the fact that they are responsible to organize food, water and drug as well as shelter for their family members.

There is an increasing need for women and girls to be at the core of disaster risk reduction, given that they often bear the brunt of climate change and hazards such as storms and floods.

In conclusion, other than financial means, Afghans still need ample awareness raising campaigns on natural disaster mitigation, management on climate change, early warning systems and putting them in place, reinforcing women's role in disaster preparedness and management systems and building their capacity. ■

#### WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN PLANNING

## Women are Central in Resilient Human Development Planning: A View

- Prof. Dr. Sanjukta Bhaduri, School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), New Delhi, India

**H**uman Development as mentioned by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) refers to having a long and healthy life (assessed by life expectancy at birth), being knowledgeable (assessed by years of formal

education) and having a decent standard of living (assessed by per capita income). Corey L.M. Keyes (2004) states that human development consists of constancy and change in quantitative and qualitative aspects of behaviour and

functioning throughout life and that it is multi-dimensional, multi directional., multi determined life long process. Over the last few decades, human beings have been exposed to increased risks. The risk dynamics have been triggered by

climate change, climate change induced disasters like cyclones, storms droughts, heatwaves, erosion, floods, etc. and pandemics that have led to adverse impacts on human development. Repeatedly, research has demonstrated that at-risk individuals were more likely to develop undesirable developmental outcomes than individuals without or not exposed to the risk factor (Keyes, 2004). With the prevailing pre-existing gender inequalities, discrimination, the vulnerability in natural disasters of the marginalized sections of the urban population, particularly women increases.

Resilient Planning identifies the contributory factors, vulnerabilities, processes of risks and related implications. It aims to overcome or address the risk factors related to human development at various levels i.e. individual, family and community. Decades of research has attributed various factors as enablers of resilience at the above mentioned levels. At the individual level, resilience is enabled by education, competence and enhanced capacities, while family cohesion, parenting quality, higher household income contribute to resilience at the family level. Community level resilience is attributed to support programmes and capacity building initiatives.

In recent years, various organizations such as the UN Women and government bodies have acknowledged the role of women allowing them to contribute to risk preparedness. In most cases, women act as the caregivers in the family, to the children,

*“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.”*

- Diane Mariechild

youth and elderly, provide aid to the family, are experts on the adaptive traditional knowledge, and in some cases as community leaders to provoke the thought of disaster management, empowerment, community resilience, policy, and institutional response, thus building an ecosystem. Women are also proficient leaders, enact a significant role in disaster mitigation and towards resilience building through the adaptation of their indigenous knowledge and skills, paving the way towards an equitable and sustainable approach to disaster management. Thus, women contribute to resilience building for the individuals, at the family level and also at the community level.

Various success stories across the world show the contribution of women as leaders, decision-makers, stakeholders, educators, caregivers and experts across sectors can lead to long-term solutions to mitigate the impact of disasters. One such example is that of the group of marginalized women from the state of Odisha. To reduce poverty and improve the lives of poor and marginalized people prone to cyclones and floods, the project was initiated by a group of 70 poor and marginalized women from the Jaypur village turning into all-around community resilience leaders in male-dominated local government institutions. The story of the Jaypur Mahila Mandal, a community-based rural women organization showcases the power of strengthening the lives incorporating the women’s needs, rights, and entitlements into community-level processes making disaster resilience a huge success. It is argued women’s knowledge of the community, their ability helps the communities mitigate disasters. ■



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