GENDER ISSUE GUIDE

GENDER RESPONSIVE RISK REDUCTION
AND REHABILITATION





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Gender Issue Guide: A Gender Responsive Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation

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Left - Aerial view of the residential area of the suburb of Milton during the great Brisbane Flood of 2011. © Shutterstock.

Right - People take photographs at Bangkok's Chinatown during the worst flooding on October 31, 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand.

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Background: Natural and human-made disasters

Cities experience large and small scale disasters that can pose great challenges to sustainable development, for natural and human-made disasters¹ have enormous economic, social and political impacts on human lives. "Cities, where half of humanity currently resides and much of the world's assets are concentrated, are fast becoming the locus for much of [the] destruction and loss from disasters." ² These risks will increase as urban populations continue to grow.

The greatest vulnerability to natural and human-made disasters is experienced by those who live in urban informal settlements for they have the least assets to cope with disasters. At the individual level disaster impacts are further differentiated by gender, age and ability; with poor women, children, the elderly and disabled being the most vulnerable urban dwellers (UN-Habitat 2007).³

The scale of human losses and suffering experienced is, moreover, determined by the nature and processes of urban development and urban governance. For example, the vulnerability of cities to the effects of natural and human-made disasters is often due to the growth and location of cities along coastal areas; the modification of the natural environment through human actions; the expansion of settlements within cities to hazard prone locations; and the failure of urban authorities to regulate land use building and planning strategies (UN-Habitat 2007)⁴. Consequently, the effects of disaster risks and impacts can be reduced and or prevented through equitable and sustainable human settlement planning, management of risk reduction and strengthening local resilience through access to economic, social, political and physical assets.

Natural disasters are inclusive of earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, landslides, floods, volcanic eruptions and wind storms. Man-made disasters are associated with explosions and chemical releases. Further, human actions such as construction of human settlement on flood prone areas or on slopes of active volcanoes exacerbate human-made hazards (UN-Habitat 2007).

² UN-Habitat, 2007, Global Report on Human Settlements: Enhancing urban safety and security. Earthscan, UK. Page 163

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

Disasters can present opportunities for transformative change to begin and advance more quickly because the vulnerabilities that emerge as a result of crisis or disaster are clearer and consensus may be obtained more quickly to mitigate vulnerabilities. Population displacements as a result of disasters further create new settlements that present opportunities for planning how municipalities or cities will be managed and planned to cope, in equitable ways, with population changes.

Greater understanding to inform and address the underlying vulnerabilities of urban areas, and their urban inhabitants to disaster risks is therefore very much required.

This issue guide focuses attention on Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation in order to broadly outline the where and how of gender responsive interventions to strengthen planned and future actions to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.



People buying and selling stuffs in front of a collapsed building in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti on August 21 2010. © Shutterstock



Gender Issues in Natural and Human-made Disasters

Gender is the way human society deals with male and female bodies. That dealing has many consequences for the lives of women, men, girls and boys. Gender refers to cultural interpretation and prescription of roles, identities and values assigned to women, men, girls, and boys. Gender is highly variable across cultures, socially constructed and subject to changes over time. Gender further defines the unequal conditions between women and men. In most societies to be a woman is to be more disadvantaged: with less power, fewer rights and privileges relative to men.

Natural and human-made disasters tend to exacerbate or intensify existing gender disparities and gender-based discrimination.

Women and girls are often at greater risk from natural and human-made disasters, especially in low income contexts.

Gender relations also increase men's vulnerability, for example, through risky but "heroic" search and rescue activities, self-destructive 'coping strategies' involving interpersonal violence and substance abuse, and masculinity norms which may limit their ability to ask for needed help⁵.

Furthermore, when women and men confront disasters or crisis, their responses tend to mirror their status, role and position in society.⁶

- Accounts of disaster situations worldwide show that responsibilities follow traditional gender roles, with women's work carrying over from traditional tasks in the home and household, and men taking on leadership positions.
- Gender-based inequalities can put women and girls at high risk and make them
 particularly vulnerable during natural disasters. There are many casualties among
 women in disasters, for example, if they do not receive timely warnings or other
 information about hazards and risks or if their mobility is restricted or otherwise
 affected due to cultural or social constraints.
- Field accounts repeatedly demonstrate how unwritten or unexamined policies and practices disadvantage girls and women in emergencies, for example, marginalizing them in food distribution systems, limiting their access to paid relief

⁵ Elaine Enarson, 2000. Gender Issues in Natural Disasters: Talking points and research needs. Geneva. ILO.

⁶ http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-natdisasters-e.pdf

work programmes and excluding them from decision-making positions in relief and reconstruction efforts.

- Emergency relief workers' lack of awareness of gender-based inequalities can further perpetuate gender bias and put women at an increased disadvantage in access to relief measures and other opportunities and benefits.
- The direct and indirect impact of disasters on women's lives and livelihoods extend to their aftermath. Gender-based attitudes and stereotypes can complicate and extend women's recovery, for example, if women do not seek or receive timely care for physical and mental trauma.

Other factors that expand on the above concerns and help account for differences in women's and men's vulnerability to natural hazards and their post-crisis aftermath include:

- Early warning systems, where these exist, are most often designed by men, often
 without consideration of whether they are effective for transmitting warnings to
 women. Studies have shown that women are often not aware of early warning
 messages that could protect their lives;
- In relation to men, women have less access to resources including money, social networks and influence, transportation, information, education (including literacy), control over land and other economic resources, personal mobility, secure housing and employment, freedom from violence and control over decision-making that are essential in disaster preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation.
- Because women are often caregivers responsible for care of children and the elderly, sick or disabled – they have less mobility than men. More women than men died during the 2005 Tsunami primarily because women drowned trying to save children and the elderly who were in their care.
- Poor quality housing and construction that does not respect safety codes affects
 women more than men, since in many cultures women are more frequently at
 home when disaster strikes; likewise, building in high-risk areas on steep slopes or
 floodplains similarly places women, children, the very old, the ill and disabled at
 higher risk;
- In many societies, women do not have the liberty of migrating to look for work before or following a disaster. Men, on the other hand, often do migrate from poverty-stricken and disaster prone areas, leaving behind very high numbers of female-headed households.
- Women's poverty and poor working conditions greatly increase their vulnerability
 to natural disasters. In relation to men, they are overrepresented as agricultural
 workers, in self-employment and the informal economy, in under-paid jobs with
 little security and no benefits such as employment insurance and healthcare.⁷

⁷ UN-Habitat. DATE (Still missing). Practitioner's Handbook on Gender and Governance in Post-Crisis Situations. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya



RRR: The urban/human settlement issue(s)

What is/are the urban/human settlement issue(s) being addressed (including current and planned/future) by Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation?

The Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation (RRR) Branch seeks to increase the resilience of cities in the face of the impacts of natural and human-made crises. The RRR Branch further assists governments and local authorities in managing catastrophes through its disaster response services and early recovery programmes.

The RRR Branch comprises the following sub-units

- Shelter Rehabilitation Unit
- Settlements Recovery Unit
- Urban Risk Reduction Unit

The programmatic focus of RRR is to:

- Engage in both reducing urban risk and responding to urban crises through its Resilient Cities Programme and Settlements Recovery Programme, respectively, in partnership with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Making Resilient Cities Campaign.
- Address crisis-affected cities in terms of both disaster prevention and disaster response.

RRR has five key entry points for urban risk reduction and post-crisis reconstruction: shelter and housing; basic infrastructure and services; land use and tenure; climate change and urban environment; and economic recovery and livelihoods. The expected strategic outcome for the RRR branch is: Cities have increased their resilience to the impacts of natural and human-made crises, in an equitable manner, and undertaken rehabilitation in ways that advance sustainable urban development.

⁸ UN-Habitat, Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat 2014-2019



A big Tent city for the Victims of the earthquake on August 28, 2010 in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. © Shutterstock



Gender issue(s)/concern(s) and needs of RRR

What is/are the gender issue(s)/concern(s) and need of this urban/human settlement issue(s) that is/are being addressed?

The RRR Branch has developed the following tools and materials to strengthen gender responsiveness in risk reduction and rehabilitation programmes:

- UN-Habitat, 2012. Women in Post-Conflict Settlement Planning. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya
- UN-Habitat, 2007. Post Conflict Land Administration and Peace building Handbook. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya
- UN-Habitat, 2007. Practitioner's Handbook on Gender and Post-Crisis Reconstruction. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya
- UN-Habitat, 2007. Handbook on Post-Conflict Land Administration and Peace Building from Emergency to Reconstruction Series 1: Countries with Land Records. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya
- UN-Habitat, 2003 Toolkit for mainstreaming gender in UN-Habitat field programmes: Kosovo Urban Planning and Management Programme. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya

These tools will guide the processes for gender equity by guiding interventions to strengthen gender equality.

Gender equality

Means availing similar opportunities to both women and men. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to engage in and contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit from the outcomes. Working towards gender equality does not mean treating women and men in the same way.

Source: UN-Habitat "Gender in Local Government - A Source Book for Trainers" page 18

Gender equity

Is the process of carrying out the different measures that may be needed for women and men to achieve gender equality. Gender equity is therefore the course of actions that are undertaken to ensure fairness to women and men. For example, such actions may include reviewing and transforming policies and activities in order to take account of women's caring and domestic work so that these tasks are not a barrier to their engagement in the public sphere.

Source: UN-Habitat "Gender in Local Government - A Source Book for Trainers" page 19.



"Belgrade for Japan", Support for the people of Japan after the earthquake and tsunami in Belgrade, Serbia. © Shutterstock



Mainstreaming gender into Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation to achieve sustainable urbanisation/development

How can gender be mainstreamed into interventions/ projects/programmes developed to address the urban/ human settlement issues in order to achieve sustainable urbanisation/development?

UN-Habitat literature9 notes that:

- Field practitioners face challenges when being asked to mainstream gender equality into their relief and reconstruction programmes and projects.
- The specific post-crisis context in itself poses some of these challenges, but also the ever more complex policy, operational, and practical requirements that are part of the organisational culture of external actors.
- Even though these challenges are considerable, there are not insurmountable.
- Predominantly, post-conflict situations are highly politicized and complex. As standards and values are being reinvented, people and their relationships take on extraordinary importance. This is why considering gender dimensions just at this time is a particularly important endeavour.
- *De facto,* gender relations are highly affected by the state of crisis of a particular society.
- Blatant discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups must be responded to by protection measures, but in addition, all assistance programmes/projects can be more effective if they pay attention to gender concerns.

⁹ UN-Habitat, DATE. Practitioner's Handbook on Gender and Post-Crisis Reconstruction. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Nairobi, Kenya. Is this still a Draft- not for citation. Agneta Johannsen/ 18 Dec 2006. Most materials in the K drive did not have dates, and several were works in progress but I have referenced them in the document.

To respond adequately to these concerns requires mainstreaming gender issues into RRR interventions.

Gender mainstreaming

Makes women and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that both sexes benefit equally. Gender mainstreaming assesses the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. UN-Habitat, 2008, Gender in Local Government, Source: A Source Book for Trainers, Page 20 UN-Habitat Nairobi, Kenya.

Mainstreaming gender into RRR will call for developing and implementing responses which recognize that:

Women are not universally or identically impacted by disasters. Highly vulnerable women have specific needs and interests before, during, and after disasters:10

Highly vulnerable girls and women may not be socially visible or included in disaster plans but they have urgent needs, for example for: safe and accessible evacuation space and temporary housing; equitable access to food, clothing, and other relief goods; transportation assistance and emergency communication in community languages; child care and other services supporting women's long-term care of surviving dependents; reproductive health care and gender-sensitive mental health services during evacuation, relocation, and resettlement; provision for mitigating violence against women in disaster contexts; long-term economic recovery assistance and access to paid disaster relief and recovery work.

Taking gender relations into account suggests that those most likely to be hard-hit and to need long-term assistance recovering from environmental disasters, include:

- destitute, low-income, and economically insecure women; women who are contingent workers or unemployed; domestic workers and others in the informal sector; small-scale farmers; women in care-giving jobs and professions
- women in subordinated racial/ethnic/cultural groups; recent immigrants and undocumented women; women migrant workers
- women heading households, those in large complex households, and women caring for many dependents

¹⁰ The section draws on research work by: Elaine Enarson, 2000. Gender Issues in Natural Disasters: Talking Points and Research Needs, Geneva, ILO



Building Seawalls. Tarawa, Kiribati. © World Bank/Lauren Day

- frail senior women, undernourished women and those with chronic health problems or disabling physical and mental conditions, and women whose mobility is restricted due to pregnancy or childbearing
- widows and single women; socially isolated women; rural women
- women subject to domestic and sexual violence, and those insecurely housed in shelters
- functionally illiterate women; women not fluent in majority languages

Gender mainstreaming in RRR must further take into account:

- Post disaster mortality, injury, and illness rates which are often (but not universally) higher for girls and women;
- **Economic losses** which disproportionately impact economically insecure women (e.g. agricultural losses of women farmers, the destruction of women's home-based businesses, limited access to post disaster economic aid);

- **Work load changes** which suggest that disasters increase women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere, paid workplace, and community through the disaster cycle of preparation, relief, reconstruction, and mitigation;
- **Post disaster stress** symptoms which are often (but not universally) reported more frequently by women;
- Increased rates of sexual and domestic violence against girls and women in disaster contexts.



Thai people making sandbags to prevent flooding during the monsoon season in Bangkok, Thailand. © Shutterstock



Women's empowerment and RRR

Is there a need for women's empowerment in the urban/ human settlement issue areas to foster/facilitate gender equality? If yes, what is/are the women empowerment need(s)?

Given that the poor, and especially poor women, will especially be hard hit by the impacts of natural and human-made disasters and that the poor, especially poor women, are more often than not "disenfranchised from institutional power" 11 and thus disempowered, is reflected by the following examples: 12

- Women's economic insecurity (e.g. high poverty rates, contingent labour, homework, lack of credit and savings). **Ideological constraints** on female mobility may limit access to lifesaving information, shelter, or relief goods.
- Male dominance in disaster decision-making undermines women's greater willingness to mitigate the effects of known hazards (e.g. moving livestock, tools, or household goods to safer locations, making evacuation plans), or targeting funds or responses to male heads of household, (limits women's paid disaster recovery work).
- **Sexual and domestic violence** magnifies the demands women face during crisis.
- Extensive care giving responsibilities throughout the disaster cycle substantially increase women's emotional and material work load and, when caregivers put the well-being of others first, may endanger women's lives.
- Heterosexist practices and kinship relations place women outside the norm (e.g. widows, single women, lesbians, single mothers) at greater risk when relief programs are designed to reach women through male-headed households.
- **Urban migration and hyper-urbanization** brings women to unsafe living conditions and informal sector work in huge urban centres, where they are increasingly exposed to urban environmental pollution and disasters such as mudslides and earthquakes.
- Environmental degradation clearly endangers women as the primary users and managers of natural resources (e.g. drought effects on women farmers, deforestation effects on fuel wood gathering).

¹¹ Naila Kabeer, 1994. Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought. Verso, London and New York.

¹² Elaine Enarson, 2000. Gender Issues in Natural Disasters: Talking Points and Research Needs. Geneva. ILO.





Integrating women's empowerment need(s) into Urban **Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation** to ensure gender equality

How can the identified women's empowerment need(s) be integrated into the interventions/projects/programmes developed to address the urban/human settlement issue(s) in order to ensure gender equality?

Empowerment for women means that women are able to organise for support and mobilisation around their self-defined needs and strategic concerns and that crucially they will be enabled to articulate their priorities and concerns to the relevant institutions and gain access to the platforms that set policy agendas.

Interventions to reduce urban risks and respond to urban disasters must thus empower women and girls by:

- Providing women with analytical skills, timely information channels, education and training to strengthen the empowerment of women.
- Supporting the development of women's networks and institutions for conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction, peace building, and post-conflict/post-disaster reconstruction.
- Incorporating gender analysis in the assessment of disaster risks, impacts and needs at the start of all interventions into risk reduction and rehabilitation.
- Bringing gender analysis into all post-conflict and post-disaster planning tools and processes.
- Ensuring recovery efforts provide equal economic opportunities for women including access to assets and strengthen women's greater control over resources for long term sustainability.
- Ending violence against women by increasing the gender responsiveness of security institutions, strengthening the rule of law and working with men and boys to end gender based violence.



A house designed to meet technical specifications to reduce risks from earthquakes. Yogyakarta, Indonesia. © World Bank/Nugroho Nurdikiawan Sunjoyo



Gender-sensitive indicators in Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation

What are gender sensitive indicators to monitor gender mainstreaming progress in Urban Risk Reduction? Provide some examples.

The process of monitoring in contexts where disasters have occurred will be complex. However, there is need to capture information and data to understand and learn from current practices and to manage for gender equitable results in risks reduction and rehabilitation.

Examples of gender-sensitive indicators in Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation

Expected Outcomes	Illustrative Indicators		
Cities, regional and national authorities, and partner organizations with improved capacity for gender responsiveness to manage disaster risk reduction and resilience programs	 Availability of sex-disaggregated data in risk reduction and resilience programs; Evidence of gender-responsive application of resilience indices. 		
Increased number of gender- responsive partner cities that have implemented sustainable urban recovery programmes	 Availability of sex-disaggregated data in urban recovery programmes; Evidence of equitable participation by women and men in planning and equal access to the benefits of urban recovery programmes. 		
Improved capacity of partner organizations to deliver gender-responsive shelter rehabilitation programs contributing to disasterresilient permanent housing.	 Evidence of gender-sensitive policies and strategies of partner agencies in shelter rehabilitation programs; Evidence of equitable participation by women and men in the planning and implementation of shelter rehabilitation programs that respond to the needs of both women and men. 		
Gender Equality Fostered	Number and percentage of women and men in local disaster preparedness and management committees, and risk assessment and planning teams.		

Good Practices: Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation

Ensure that women's rights and gender equality are central to how crisis-affected cities in terms of both disaster prevention and disaster response are managed planned and financed.

- Undertake gender analysis to inform the development of the Resilient Cities Programme and the Settlements Recovery Programme.
- Take steps to reflect women's rights and gender equality targets in the way urban risk reduction and post-crisis reconstruction is carried out in the following interventions: shelter and housing; basic infrastructure and services; land use and tenure; climate change and urban environment; and economic recovery and livelihoods.

Develop a process for community based consultations with all key stakeholders inclusive of women, especially poor women, youth and minority groups wherever a re-examination of risk reduction and post-crisis reconstruction is to be undertaken.

- Recognize that women, poor women and girls face numerous constraints given their gender roles, responsibilities and discriminations in participating in consultative or decision-making
- Take steps that encourage and ensure that women and girls, especially poor women, become active participants in a safe environment.

Ensure that legal interventions or reforms with regards to how land is managed, how post-crisis reconstruction of municipalities or towns are to be planned: establishment of mechanisms addressing violence against women and other human rights violations, and how rights to post-crisis basic services, housing and economic resources are being expressed and equal treatment in documentation are effectively targeting and benefiting the poorest women, girls, boys and men.

- Collect sex-disaggregated data and undertake gender analysis to ensure effective targeting of interventions.
- Monitor consultation and participation of women, men, boys and girls in planning and implementation of disaster responses.
- Monitor implementation processes to measure progress in targeting the needs of women, girls, boys and men.
- Evaluate and report on results of the interventions to assess whether the interventions have indeed been effective in benefiting the poorest women, girls, boys and men.

Cities experience large and small scale disasters that can pose great challenges to sustainable development, for natural and human-made disasters have enormous economic, social and political impacts that have gendered consequences on the lives of women, men, boys and girls. The scale of human losses and suffering experienced is moreover determined by the nature and processes of urban development and urban governance. UN-Habitat seeks to increase the resilience of cities in the face of the impacts of natural and human-made crises and assist governments and local authorities in managing catastrophes through its disaster response services and early recovery programmes. The objective of this gender issue guide on Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation is to:

- Increase understanding of how natural and human-made disasters exacerbate
 or intensify existing gender disparities and gender-based discrimination.
- Increase understanding of gender concerns and needs in Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation.
- Develop staff and partners' capacity to address gender issues in human settlement areas that have experienced natural and human-made disasters.
- Encourage staff and partners to integrate gender perspectives into policies, projects, and programmes for sustainable post disaster urban development.
- Support institutionalization of the culture of gender mainstreaming and gender equality through the implementation of gender-sensitive projects/ programmes and the monitoring of gender mainstreaming progress.

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