Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Disaster Risk Reduction & Management (DRRM)

Policy Brief, Series 2

"Strengthening Disaster Management ensuring Gender Equity and Social Inclusion".

Introduction

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2074 has promoted the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) to effectively carry out and manage disaster management activities in Nepal. The act has provisioned the Province Disaster Management Committees, District Disaster Management Committees and Local Disaster Management Committees for the purpose of laying down policy and plans on disaster management providing policy guidance. Local Government Operation Act, 2074 has ensured the disaster management in the roles and responsibilities of local government. National Disaster Response Framework, 2070 (first amendment, 2075) has explained the management of disaster response. Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan Guideline, 2067 (first amendment 2076) has envisioned the necessary procedure to follow while formulating preparedness and response plan.

Due to the gap in satisfactory representation of women and at-risk groups in DRRM policy structures especially disaster management committees at province, district and local level, their engagement, meaningful participation and leadership in disaster management program planning, implementation and monitoring is often overlooked. Barriers and challenges to their meaningful participation is not analyzed and well addressed. More serious attentions/efforts is required to make GESI as an integral part of all the provisions, act

> **Why understanding GESI in Disaster Management**
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> Women, children, people living with disabilities, living with health issues, LGBTIQ, elderly are more susceptible to the impact of disasters and their vulnerabilities increased if their needs are not well addressed in disaster.
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> Women and at-risk groups are often not ensured access to disaster related opportunities and information including early warning information. Lack of meaningful participation and consultations in preparedness and response planning, their diverse needs are overlooked increasing their risk.
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> It is vital to understand the barriers of meaningful participation of women and excluded groups to their full potentials and define GESI strategies at all level of interventions.
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> Setting minimum GESI criterions and benchmarks, indicators towards achieving gender equality seems

and its inter-sectionalism in DRRM needs more importance. Women, elderly, PwDs, children, elderly and excluded/marginalized groups are often not consulted during risk assessment process and emergency preparedness and response plan development process. This has resulted the increased vulnerability to women and at-risk groups during disasters and they are more prone to additional risk to fulfil their essential needs, especially protection related challenges.

Key Issues of Meaningful Participation and Engagement in Disaster Management

- **Inadequate representation of women in disaster management committees:** Despite of the constitutional provisions of 33% women representation in state organs, the representation of women

in policy driven structures is nominal. As women are not represented in the disaster management committees, the emergency preparedness & response process is not GESI sensitive. In addition, women and the most vulnerable groups are not consulted and participated in risk assessment and emergency planning process hence their diverse needs are disregarded in response.

- **Policy frameworks implementation gap:** Though the disaster response frameworks and guidelines have emphasized to prioritize need of women, PwDs, elderly, children and vulnerable groups in disaster response, however their meaningful participation and engagement in risk assessment and preparedness planning is not well addressed. Integrating GESI in the policy documents is welcoming but proper guidance for its implementation is essential. As local level women representatives are not aware on the GESI sensitivity of policy frameworks, they are still not been able to localize it to the ward level.

- **Lack of meaningful participation and consultations**: Often women, PwDs, elderly, children and excluded/marginalized groups are overlooked in the disaster management plan development phase. Their access to information on the discussions and consultation are not ensured due to which they are not able to participate in the discussions. In addition to this, there are various challenges that prohibits their engagement and role in meetings and discussions.

- **Lack of availability of Age Sex Disaggregated Data (ASDD) at local level:** Disaster Information Management System at local level plays pertinent role in disaster risk reduction and management. The information on hazards, risk areas, vulnerability, household data including age and sex desegregated data is must to effective disaster risk reduction and management programs. In the present context, local levels have started to establish the disaster information system, however it is important to strengthen the system enhancing technical capacities of local level. In the absence of the disaggregated data on women, children, elderly, PwDs and other vulnerable groups, disaster response actions are facing difficulties to meet their diverse needs. During disaster response also desegregated data are often lacking hence relief activities are hampered.

- **Dimensions of GESI is less prioritized:** Partnership, identity, engagement, involvement is less prioritized in policy formulation process, action plan development process and ultimately reflected in the implementation at grass root level during disaster response. Women representatives especially ward level representatives have very less access to capacity development opportunities including DRR. They are compelled to participate in decision making meetings without knowledge and understanding on DRR. Similarly, community women and girls including other vulnerable groups are mostly excluded in the community discussions, risk assessment process, hence they have very less knowledge and understanding in DRR. They are not aware on hazards, risks to disasters and preparedness increasing their risk. Women though most vulnerable, their access to early warning information is always a challenge, as most of women from rural and disaster prone areas do not have access to communication devices. They are mostly confined within the household chores and not able to participate in the community discussions. Women and girls are normally not encouraged to involve in the search and rescue operations, though they are involved in search and rescue during disasters.

- **Inadequate preparedness and planning:** Considering the vulnerabilities of at-risk groups in disasters, the local government should develop preparedness plans for safe evacuation and shelter. Identification of safe spaces, management, safe evacuation route modelling and emergency stockpiles should be prepared for effective response. This important aspect is mostly not well considered during preparedness phase. MoHA has started the safe evacuation route modelling from

around 15 municipalities. The information on safe space, evacuation routes must be accessed to the communities so that they can easily evacuate in disaster incidence.

- **Impractical regulatory provisions:** The regulatory provisions of citizenship, land ownership documents during relief distribution is very challenging to women, women with disability LGBTQI and those who do own their own land. During Covid-19 also, most of the affected from LBTQI groups faced various challenges providing documents to receive relief support. During 2015 earthquake, households without land ownership faced challenges to receive shelter supports and women & children were compelled to stay in shelters increasing their vulnerabilities. PwDs often face challenges due to mobility and LGBTQI faces discrimination related to their identity.

Federal Level Voice:

2018-2030 DRR action plan targets to complete the localization of DRM policy frameworks till 2020. Policies and Plans are developing but it is not well monitored in the GESI sensitive lens. In NDRRMA also, special structure to monitor and gender & inclusion is yet not established.

Four dimensions of GESI; identity, recognition, partnership and engagement is not fully internalized and implemented in policies as well as strategic action plans. There is a lack of GESI framework to adapt at all level and also introduce GESI indicators for its monitoring.

Way forward:

NDRRMA upcoming monitoring and evaluation framework will consider these parameters and lens to see women not as a victim but as key actor to play their role in disaster response. A tailored approach is required considering GESI dimensions.

Local Level Voices:

There is policy and guidelines however still women and excluded groups participation during planning phase is not sufficient. Enabling environment to ensure participation is also created by local level but still women need permission to come out of their houses in rural settings but local level will create such environment for women in the coming days to participate.

Women are always behind men due to many constraints and family roles. They have less opportunities. Changes are coming in comparison to past years but still need support to foster their leadership role. Elected women officials still need more capacity building trainings. Local women representatives are initiated the five years plan where they will ensure GESI**.** Only surface level works are being done adopting different formats. The cultural barriers to women leadership needs to be removed slowly so that women can come out and participate in disaster management.

Policy recommendations

- Policy frameworks should be amended to ensure representation of women and at-risk groups in DRM policy structures.
- Establish structures to strongly monitor the GESI sensitive implementation of DRR policy frameworks and action plan from federal to local level.
- Induction and orientation to local level women representatives on the policy frameworks related to preparedness and response so that they can raise the voice for the welfare of women, children, PwDs, elderly and marginalized/excluded groups through active engagement and meaningful participation in preparedness plan development.
- Allocate 40% of DM fund to support women/girls in building capacity on search and rescue.
- Disaster Information Management System (DIMS) at all local level in facilitation with the federal government should be established and local government should be supported technically to strengthen the DIMS.
- Enhance DRR knowledge and understanding of women representatives, grass-root level women/girls, PwDs, Elderly and other at-risk groups providing orientations and capacity development opportunities.

> **Civil Society voices**
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> Creating women/girls DRR volunteers and strengthening to involve them in community disaster risk reduction activities.
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> The one time training event will not ensure marginalized community peoples' participation in DRR but need continuous effort to engage them in DRR.
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> **Community Disaster Management committee voice**
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> Women representing community disaster management committees themselves are vulnerable to disasters, and they are not aware on it. Their numerical representation at these committees without knowledge and capacity is prohibiting them to fulfil their responsibilities. They are not even able to provide basic idea on DRR to communities they represent.

- Engagement and meaningful participation of women and at-risk groups in emergency preparedness and response plan formulation process so that their diverse needs are addressed.
- Administrators/ rulers/policy makers also need to realize the gaps/challenges of GESI sensitive policy implementation for further necessary action. Hence, a need assessment or self-evaluation or GESI audit is recommended to measure the gap at local level.
- DRRM terminologies are well written in the policies but what the terminologies means at practical level is lacking in the documents, which needs to be explained though guidelines and toolkits and should be enacted to support implementing agencies at local level.
- Ensure the access of women and at-risk groups to early warning information considering their vulnerabilities. The mechanism of early warning information dissemination to them can be established in such a way that they do not need to be technology friendly and create enabling environment at home and society to provide opportunity to women to foster their leadership role.

Reference: This policy brief is prepared based on the policy dialogue with Sudurpaschim Province conducted by CDMS/WHDRRP in collaboration with TSK/AFN/NDWA with support of UN Women on 12th Dec, 2020.