



## **Gender Aspects of Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction**

### **Session 1 - Why Mainstream Gender into Disaster Management?**

This introductory presentation argues that disaster risk reduction policies, plans and interventions should incorporate gender considerations. It introduces the concept of gender, that is determined by the roles women and men are expected to play in society, and that in turn determines among other factors their access to and control of resources, and their decision making power. It explores the linkages between gender, vulnerability, coping capacity, resilience and speed and quality of recovery, and concludes that the disaster experience of men as a group and women as a group tends to differ substantially. This provides the rationale to pursue gender sensitive approaches in each disaster phase and to improve the efficiency of risk reduction measures.

### **Session 2 - Disaster Recovery through a Gender Lens**

The presentation analyzes the key gender concerns in individual phases of disasters with a focus on recovery and reconstruction. The analysis is based on differing gender needs in each stage of disaster. Although there are overlapping issues that might come out in more than one disaster phase, the traditional approach makes it easier to highlight the course of actions for different levels of governments, national and sub-national and for non-governmental actors as NGOs and relief agencies. Gender needs can also become the organizing principle for interventions and provide the priorities for disaster activities. It also allows the monitoring of efficiency of disaster reduction measures through the impact on vulnerabilities of different gender groups. The presentation suggests that strategies facilitating efficient preparedness systems and recovery mechanisms are the ones which promote equality among all gender groups.

### **Session 3 - Mainstreaming Gender for Equitable Disaster Recovery**

This session illustrates the process of mainstreaming gender into disaster recovery for equitable development outcomes. As it was presented in earlier sessions, gendered disaster recovery shortens the time for economic reintegration, improves efficiency of reconstruction while addresses fundamental social issues and provides a window of opportunity for social transformation. Disasters change dramatically the gender relations and gender roles but in order the transformation could take place it is important that gender concerns are integrated into policies and interventions at all levels of governments and in each stages of projects. Gender analytical tools form an important component for introducing gender sensitive initiatives. The presentation suggests easy to apply analytical tools to support the process of engendered disaster recovery and reconstruction in a broader risk reduction context.

### **Case Study 1 - [Gender in Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction in Thailand](#) and [Gender in Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction in Tamil Nadu](#)**

Both case studies were prepared as part of the analytical work undertaken by the World Bank Institute with the aim to identify good practices in gender sensitive disaster recovery and reconstruction. They were developed three years after the tsunami using the same approach: review of official recovery and reconstruction plans, conducting structured surveys with government officials from different levels of administration, interviews with representatives of international agencies and NGOs who were actively

involved in the reconstruction operations, and field visits to affected communities. Both case studies give a short description of the disaster management system at the time of tsunami followed by summaries of reconstruction experiences. They look into the housing sector, to the re-establishment of the social capital through communal spaces, to livelihood restoration through loss recovery and new economic opportunities and to improved preparedness through establishment of early warning system and knowledge dissemination. While the political and social structure of the two countries differs considerably, in both cases a large proportion of the population was marginalized and left outside of the post disaster support, aid and compensation systems, such as sea gypsies and migrant workers in Thailand, indigenous tribes and people from the lowest casts in India, who had the hardest time to cope and recover.

### **Case Study 2 - Gender Differences in Psychological Distress**

In 1997 a team of researchers from Middle East Technical University conducted a survey to study the gender differences of post-disaster distress among survivors of the 1995 Dinar earthquake. A sample of 315 adult survivors living in Dinar, Turkey were questioned focusing on socio-demographic variables, earthquake impact, psychological distress, coping strategies, perceived social support and life events after the disaster. The main results of the study have implications for designing disaster related psychological services. According to recommendations, women need counseling to develop positive coping strategies and preparedness skills. It is equally important to provide women with outlets, in form of post-disaster stress debriefing groups, to process their disaster memories. As part of planning for the future, it is recommended to create pre-disaster preparedness programs and post-disaster mental outreach programs based on gender differences in psychological impact of disasters.

### **Case Study 3 - Gender in Hurricane Mitch: Why Does It Remain Invisible?**

Hurricane Mitch caused tremendous losses throughout Central America, however, its impact was greatest in two of the poorest countries, in Honduras and Nicaragua. The case study explores why gender aspects were ignored in these countries during relief and recovery operations despite of the tremendous body of evidence on the importance of gender sensitive recovery operations. The study found that even relief and development actors which are usually advocate for gender sensitive approaches professed ignorance of any link between gender and disasters based on a host of constraints to operationalize gender aspects into their activities. The most commonly cited reasons were tyranny of the urgent, lack of institutional familiarity with disasters, limitations in assessment methodologies, abandonment of gender-sensitive approaches, lack of integrated planning between disaster response and long-term development, and finally, weak gender analysis capacity in implementing agencies and NGOs in the region.

### **Case Study 4 - Gender Snapshot of India and Thailand**

The course argues that country gender assessments are necessary preconditions in designing gender sensitive disaster risk reduction policies and measures. Unfortunately, when the most needed, in critical post-disaster situations, these gender assessments are not available. However, in most countries household surveys and annual statistics have some basic gender disaggregated data. These data combined with review of basic legislation and regulations and with information related to social and cultural environment can be done in short time and feed into design of measures for relief, recovery and reconstruction. The case study showcases two "gender snapshots" prepared for India and Thailand in order to assess the Tsunami recovery and reconstruction experiences. The data and information assembled gives not only interesting insight on the socio-economic and cultural environment but also could serve as a template for preparing basic information to guide gender sensitive disaster relief, recovery and reconstruction programs.

## **Case Study 5 - Lines That Divide, Ties That Bind**

Race, Class and Gender in Women's Flood Recovery in the US and UK This case study looks at post-disaster experience of women in two developed countries, in US and UK following major floods. It shows the diversity in impact and in recovery by asking two main questions, "how did the social relations of race/ethnicity, social class and gender increase the structural vulnerability of women in communities subject to flooding?" and "how did these patterns affect women's subsequent recovery from major flooding?". The study found that power structures based on race, gender and class exposed some residents more than others to the effects of floods and these structures also heavily influenced their emotional and financial recovery. At the same time local emergency planners were not equipped with knowledge neither on women's structural vulnerability nor on organizational barriers to recovery, to help guide the effective use and distribution of scarce resources. While the comparative aspect of the study helped to identify similarities and differences in geographically and culturally dispersed communities, it concludes by emphasizing the need to identify common patterns within and across national/ cultural boundaries to meet better the diverse needs of vulnerable communities.

### **Readings**