



## Making Women's Voices Count Addressing Gender Issues in Disaster Risk Management in East Asia and the Pacific

This note on **Making Women's Voices Count - Addressing Gender Issues in Disaster Risk Management in East Asia and the Pacific** is the first in a series of guidance notes targeting World Bank staff, clients and development partners. The note gives an overview of the links between gender and disaster risk management, identifies the key operational bottlenecks, and recommends strategies and resources.

Grounded in extensive field work in Lao PDR and Vietnam, and drawing on the significant amount of material already available, these guidance notes are intended to be first stop, practical documents that can be used to design and implement gender dimensions into disaster risk management work across the EAP region. The target audience is World Bank staff, clients and development partners active in the fields of gender and DRM.

### WHAT IS DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT? WHERE DOES GENDER FIT?

Disaster risk management (DRM) refers to the systematic process of using administrative decisions, organization, operational skills, and capacities to implement policies, strategies, and coping capacities of society and communities to reduce the impacts of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. DRM is usually divided into three areas of activity:

1. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) (prevention, mitigation, and preparedness);
2. Disaster response (rescue and relief); and
3. Disaster recovery (rehabilitation and reconstruction) (World Bank, 2008:2).

**Governments around the world have committed to take action to reduce disaster risks, and have adopted a guideline to reduce vulnerabilities to natural hazards, called the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).** The overarching goal of the HFA is to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015.



**Gender perspective is considered a cross cutting issue of the HFA.** HFA mandates that 'a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessments, early warning, information management, and education and training' (HFA, UNISDR, 2005). However, despite efforts to include gender perspectives in DRM programs, according to the 2010-2011 mid-term review of the HFA implementation, 'inclusion of a gender perspective and effective community participation are the areas where the least progress seems to have been made (UNISDR, 2011: 44).

**The countries of East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) are among the most vulnerable in the world to the physical, social, and economic effects of natural disasters.** Asia and the Pacific islands represent only 30 percent of global landmass, but have sustained over 50 percent of all recorded disaster events (UNISDR, 2009). Since 1997, the region has sustained 82 percent of total disaster fatalities and its population represents 85 percent of all people affected by disasters (IFRC, 2007). In the past two decades alone, due in part to the effects of global climate changes, the frequency of natural disasters has quadrupled in from approximately 120 events annually in the 1980s to about 500 per year today (Oxfam, 2007).

## REASONS TO ADDRESS GENDER ISSUES IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

**Disaster impacts are often not distributed uniformly within a population, due to existing socio-economic conditions, cultural beliefs and traditional practices.** Gender differences are often most telling in the aftermath of a disaster, as in most cases, the mortality rates for women are higher than those of men. Women died in significantly larger number in the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone (Gorky), the 1993 Maharashtra earthquake in India, the 1995 Kobe earthquake in Japan, as well as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. In some cases of other natural disasters such as thunderstorms and flash floods, however, men tend to suffer greater fatalities given their roles as rescues and searchers.

**There are costs associated with ignoring gender aspects in disaster recovery and risk management strategies.**

Failure to consider gender issues in the design and implementation of DRM programs is likely to lead to overlooking the true costs linked to post-disaster damages and needs, which can hold back reconstruction, recovery and long-term development of countries repeatedly suffering from disasters. Research indicates that disasters followed by gender-blind response can reinforce, per-

petuate and increase existing gender inequalities, making bad situations worse for women and other vulnerable groups and reducing the impact of DRM interventions (UNISDR, UNDP & IUCN 2009; World Bank, 2011). There are a number of factors why women are often excluded from DRM projects:

- At the community level, field research (World Bank, 2011) indicates that disaster management and response is traditionally viewed as "men's business" – planned by men for men. As a result, the different and specific needs of women are often not understood or addressed.
- Women are often poorly represented in government and community decision making and project, planning, implementation and monitoring. As a result, women's voices and concerns tend to be less heard.

**There are many reasons why more women are disproportionately impacted and even lose their lives as a result of a natural disaster,** including their physical capacities (such as the ability to swim), the need to protect other vulnerable family members such as children and elderly, and the livelihood patterns or timing of disasters' occurrence. Likewise, women may experience specific health vulnerabilities: malaria, cholera, impaired psycho-social health and other health-related impacts not only affect women's health but also increase burdens on their care responsibility. Increased conflicts or unsecure shelter situation can also increase women's vulnerability to violence. Table 1 includes some of the many factors that affect the disaster experience related to gender.

### Percentage of Women killed as a result of major disasters across Asia

- 61 % Cyclone Nargis, Myanmar, 2008
- 67 % Indian Ocean Tsunami, Banda Aceh, 2004
- 91 % Cyclone Gorky, Bangladesh, 1991

(Source: ASEAN, GOM & UN 2008; Doocy & Rofi (John Hopkins and Mercy Corp) 2006; IFRC 2006)



### Perception of women's capabilities and their participation in Lao PDR and Vietnam

*In Thua Thien Hue Village in Vietnam, men are given the mandate by the people and communities to take care of government-sanctioned disaster preparedness, rescue operations, and disaster recovery programs. This is due to:*

- wide acceptance by men and women of the traditional notion that men are physically stronger than women, and that males are the heads of households;
- the access that men (as compared to the women) have to disaster information, survival skills training programs, and formal training; and
- a male dominated community leadership structure, which strengthens their official participation in planning and resource allocation.

In Lao PDR only one of the ten individual members of the National Disaster Management Committee and six of the 25 assigned DRM focal points are female. The Lao Women's Union (the Government institution responsible for responding to women's development needs and promoting the role and status of women) is not a member of the NDMC. As a result, gender is notably absent from the country's Strategic Plan on DRM 2020 and Action Plans and the level of gender integration in DRM programs being implemented across the country is ad hoc.

*(Source World Bank, 2011)*

**A gender sensitive DRM approach takes both women's and men's different needs, constraints and opportunities into account throughout the whole project cycle**, thereby strengthening community disaster resilience and making DRM interventions more effective. Addressing gender issues contributes to reducing women's vulnerabilities and increases their resilience to overcome the impacts of disasters. When done well, women and men can both benefit, and women can be empowered to make decisions and contribute to household recovery. For example, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia following the 2006 earthquake, a Java Reconstruction Fund Housing Reconstruction Project took into account women's participation in the recovery process; an independent impact evaluation on satisfaction involving over 1,000 samples confirmed that 96.0% men and 94.4% women were either satisfied or very satisfied with the rebuilt houses (see the case study in Guidance Note #3 for more details).

**Women and men's different perspectives on disaster risks affect how emergency preparedness, planning and post-disaster recovery programs are designed and carried out.** Community mapping exercises illustrate men and women's perceptions related to resources and their familiarity with the flood hazards scenario in their community. The maps below were drawn by male and female participants in the gender-based flood risk mapping activities in the Ha Village, Thua Thien Hue Province, Vietnam. The map drawn by women highlights the locations of schools, while the one drawn by men indicates the location of the town temple as the main meeting place for community members (World Bank, 2011).

**Table 1: Selected factors related to gender that can affect disaster experience and resilience**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Division of labor (activity/place)</li> <li>• Visibility of labor (formal/informal sector)</li> <li>• Mobility patterns (clothing/rule of conduct)</li> <li>• Poverty levels</li> <li>• Human development factors ,including nutrition pattern, literacy levels and health issues</li> <li>• Shelter and relief provision (food/personal security)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survival skills</li> <li>• Access to information</li> <li>• Supply of information</li> <li>• Access to resources (emergency aid/ loans/insurance)</li> <li>• Recourse to legal protection (inheritance/land rights)</li> <li>• Influence over decision-making processes</li> <li>• Participation in decision-making and implementation</li> </ul> |
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Source: Adapted from WBI Distance Learning: Gender Aspects of Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction



## WHAT CAN BE DONE? CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAINSTREAMING GENDER ISSUES IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

**There are many opportunities to further integrate gender considerations in post-disaster response and risk reduction initiatives in EAP.** A significant amount of documentation, including tools and guidelines are available on incorporating gender into socio-economic development policy, planning and project implementation. However, implementation of gender mainstreaming in DRM is still lagging. While there are some good examples, efforts remain largely ad hoc.

**Projects face a number of key bottlenecks when integrating gender issues into DRM programs.** Based on a review of several case studies and research, Table 2 below highlights some of the key challenges that teams are likely to encounter during project identification, preparation, and implementation. It also suggests ways to deal with these problems and points out the relevant Guidance Notes for further reference.

### Good Practice:

#### Indonesia: Reconstruction of Aceh Land Administration System (RALAS) project

In Indonesia, in areas where land titling has been carried out, registration data from 1998 shows that only 30% of titles are in women's names. The Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck Indonesia in 2004 affected over 800 km of coastline and destroyed up to 53,795 land parcels. The objectives of the Reconstruction of Aceh Land Administration System (RALAS) project, which was supported by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Aceh and North Sumatra (MDF), were to: (a) recover and protect land ownership rights of the people in Tsunami-affected areas; and (b) to rebuild the land administration system. Throughout the project, women's needs and rights were given particular attention.

The project included a Community-Driven Adjudication (CDA) process to land titling, utilized community land mapping (CLM) and community consensus on land parcel boundaries and inventory of land ownership. These elements were then used by the government in its land titling process. After four years of implementation, the project supported the issuance of 222,628 land title certificates to tsunami disaster survivors, their heirs or adjoining land owners. A total of 63,181 titles, about 28% of all titles distributed, were distributed to female owners, individually or as joint owners with their spouses.

Along the successful project implementation, particular attention was given to drawing lessons for future post-disaster projects. As part of the RALAS project, a detailed ex-post field research on gender, through the lens of women's access to land rights, as well as an impact and beneficiary assessment were conducted. The report 'Gender Impacts of Land Titling in Post-Tsunami Aceh' points out that the tsunami disaster put women on the verge of losing livelihoods and assets, as women's land and property rights were not acknowledged uniformly, and that affected women found it difficult to register and secure a title certificate for inherited claims. The findings and recommendations of the study were widely accepted both the Government of Indonesia and a number of agencies working in the field, including Shariah courts.

The RALAS project makes a strong case for securing women's land and property rights, which are fundamental to building back communities and livelihoods, as efforts linked to post-disaster reconstruction, such as land re-allocation, new spatial planning, solving pre-disaster informal possessory rights, renters, mortgages, require land and property rights of men and women to be addressed systematically, transparently and fairly.

*References: World Bank (2010) Reconstruction of Aceh Land Administration System (RALAS) project Implementation Completion and Results (ICR) Report; World Bank (2009) RALAS: Project Implementation and Beneficiary Assessment (PIBA); World Bank (2011) Gender Impacts of Land Titling in Post-Tsunami Aceh; World Bank (2011) After the Tsunami. Women and Land Reforms in Aceh. Social Development Notes, East Asia and Pacific Region.*

**Table 2: Summary of the key challenges and recommendations to improve mainstreaming of gender issues in DRM projects**

Key challenges	Notes	Recommended approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacking conceptual overview of gender/ DRM issues, and awareness of the importance of gender considerations.</li> </ul>	GN1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and make use of the available resources.</li> <li>Use gender-specific terms in DRM policies and plans.</li> <li>Education and advocacy at all levels of government and community through DRM dialogue and platforms inclusive of gender.</li> <li>Identify a high-ranking gender champion to take the lead on advocating the inclusion of gender issues.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of practical guidance on the different stages of the project cycle.</li> </ul>	GN2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult available case studies and projects.</li> <li>Employ Gender and DRM specialists on the team.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of sex-disaggregated data, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of disasters on key vulnerable groups, and design projects that would address these needs.</li> </ul>	GN3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make collection of sex-disaggregated data a requirement at the policy level.</li> <li>Ensure sex-disaggregated data are collected both in the pre- and post-disaster situation.</li> <li>Include women's groups (if they exist) and women in communities in data collection and data analysis.</li> <li>Develop an internal accountability/monitoring tool.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of a sustainable approach, equal participation, and representation at the community level.</li> </ul>	GN4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct gender sensitivity training and highlight the importance of gender issues among male-dominated decision-making and project bodies at the community level.</li> <li>For all DRM consultation and planning exercises, communicate in the local language and use pictures/figures/diagrams to illustrate issues. Organize consultations at convenient times for women and men.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender specific needs are not adequately considered in post-disaster response efforts, esp. related to housing, land titling and property rights; violence against women; community services and infrastructure restoration; and poverty reduction, livelihood restoration and economic development.</li> </ul>	GN5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure both men and women are involved in DRM planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.</li> <li>Take into consideration different needs and priorities among affected groups, comprising of men and women.</li> <li>Work closely with the government, other stakeholders and development partners to be inclusive in their approach to recovery and reconstruction.</li> </ul>

## KEY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three simple strategies for initiating gender mainstreaming in DRM have been compiled from reviews of project documents and relevant literature:

- **Strategy #1: Proposals, policy documents, plans and all associated literature should use gender terms as appropriate**, i.e., referring to “men and women” instead of “people” to raise awareness and promote consideration. However, words must be followed up with actions that ensure both groups are considered throughout planning and implementation. These documents should include corresponding indicators that identify women and men as the target group (and sets sex ratios for beneficiaries of programs) and specific budget lines for addressing women’s specific needs.
- **Strategy #2: Ensure that both men and women are equally (or as close to equally as possible) represented at planning and consultation sessions.** While mere presence does not equal meaningful participation, as a first step, the presence of both sexes minimizes the chance that the concerns and issues facing one group will be overlooked.
- **Strategy #3: Identify a gender champion and train more women leaders to institutionalize gender-equal project planning, implementation and monitoring initiatives.** A review of projects that had successfully incorporated gender considerations indicated that they all had one thing in common – one person pushing the gender mainstreaming agenda. The gender champion could be male or female and should be personally motivated to take on these issues.

**Key recommendations to bear in mind when designing disaster risk management programs include:**

- **Recommendation #1:** Increase the involvement of women in decision making, women’s organizations and grass roots groups experienced in community development.
- **Recommendation #2:** Increase women’s participation in the planning and implementation of disaster recovery activities, such as increased participation of women in restoration of basic, critical community services; restoration of damaged infrastructures (such as water, transport and irrigation systems); poverty reduction, livelihood restoration and economic development; and prioritization of structural and non-structural risk reduction measures.
- **Recommendation #3:** Increase women’s capacity to engage in training by providing targeted education and training to suit their needs and availability.
- **Recommendation #4:** There is a need to further advocate and educate decision makers and the wider community about the importance of both women and men in DRM.





## **CONTACTS:**

For further information, please contact  
Helene Carlsson Rex, Senior Social Development Specialist  
([Hcarlsson@worldbank.org](mailto:Hcarlsson@worldbank.org))  
Zoe Trohanis, Senior Infrastructure Specialist  
([Ztrohanis@worldbank.org](mailto:Ztrohanis@worldbank.org))  
East Asia and Pacific Disaster Risk Management Team  
([eapdrm@worldbank.org](mailto:eapdrm@worldbank.org))

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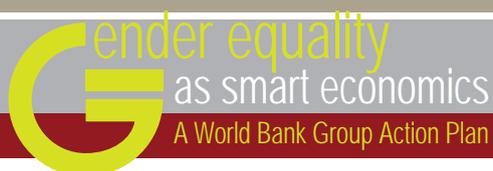
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