



Women's Leadership in Risk-Resilient Development

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

2015



United Nations



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Foreword

How pleasing – and indeed appropriate – it is to celebrate Women's Leadership in Risk-Resilient Development with the publication of this aptly-named volume.

And to think how better policy and practice founded upon gender considerations would enable those profiled – and others like them – to do so much more.

These women and girls provide an example of leadership in a year that presents the global community with a tremendous opportunity to increase and align ambitions to build a risk-resilient world. A series of landmark international conferences covering disaster risk, climate change and sustainable development will have a huge bearing on the future resilience of our planet.

Under the Hyogo Framework for Action over the past ten years we have witnessed an increasing role for and recognition of women and girls in disaster risk reduction. It is one of the genuine successes we can point to. The job, though, is far from over.

Women are often the drivers, strong networkers, managers, organizers, caretakers in the community. However, when you talk about disasters at the highest level, the ones who are talking – and making the decisions – tend to be men.

Imagine if the world begins to release all the knowledge and capacity of the little over 50 per cent of the population who are women and girls. The return on such an investment would be huge.

This publication is a wonderful testimony to the many women and girls who are already stepping up as leaders in risk-resilient development. I have no doubt that their achievement will inspire many others.

Resilient Women, Resilient Planet.

Margareta Wahlstrom
UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General
for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Introduction

Success stories of women participating in disaster risk reduction have been brought to public attention for many years. Yet women's leadership in building disaster-resilient nations and communities has not been adequately highlighted across the world.

The present publication, entitled *Women's Leadership in Risk-Resilient Development: Good Practices & Lessons Learned*, aims to shed some light on women's capabilities to take leading roles in building disaster resilience. It features women as drivers of change in different socio-economic contexts, and under various gender conditions.

While the examples portrayed in this publication present a broad range of approaches to women-led disaster risk reduction across humanitarian, environmental and development sectors, a single common thread binds them together – each practice is an effort to shift the identity of women from beneficiaries to key actors in shaping, building and sustaining resilience to disasters.

The selected case studies also reflect the way gender issues are understood in disaster risk reduction across the globe, and offer unique perspectives of and approaches to the subject.

For ease of reference, each good practice has been divided into key sections and allows the reader to focus on a particular section of the case study - Impact and Results, The Good Practice, Lessons Learned, and so forth. Each of the selected good practices also provides practical recommendations for scaling up similar actions in the future.

It is our hope that this publication will enable practitioners, policy and decision makers to address gender-related challenges in DRR, and that it will inspire more women and men to join the cause of disaster risk reduction and resilience building.

In the immediate future, we especially hope that it can help the global disaster risk reduction community to further advance this agenda, and bring gender equality and women's empowerment at the core of disaster risk reduction efforts at the *Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction*.

Feng Min Kan
Chief of Office,
UNISDR Asia & Pacific

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Africa



Girls gain self-confidence
as public speakers in
Salima, Malawi

Abstract

Based on the success of the *Girls in Risk Reduction Leadership* (GIRRL) Project¹ of the African Centre for Disaster Studies (ACDS), a project is under way in Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, adapting GIRRL to local contexts. Trained as leaders and resource persons, participating school girls have gained better social status and taken up leadership roles, serving as key Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) informants. The girls also identified potential hazards and encouraged DRR measures. Through them, gender equity is introduced into DRR work. The GIRRL approach can be easily integrated into other areas beyond DRR, Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and gender, thereby facilitating access to funding.

¹ Published by the UNISDR as a good practice in 2008 in "Gender Perspectives: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into Climate Change Adaptation - Good Practices and Lessons Learned" – 2008 (<http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/3391>)

The Initiative

The initiative is a regional pilot learning project entitled *Integrating Adolescent Girls (IAG) in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction in Southern Africa*. It was implemented in Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe by CARE USA in partnership with the African Centre for Disaster Studies (ACDS) of North-West University, South Africa.

Building on the success of the GIRRL project in South Africa, the regional pilot project adapted the GIRRL approach for use in the four Southern African countries mentioned above, and for building a regional network to explore new ways of integrating marginalized populations, especially girls and youth, into the design and implementation of DRR and risk mitigation programming.

The IAG pilot project was designed to address some inherent problems related to social vulnerability of adolescent girls living in peri-urban informal settlements and poor rural communities by providing concise and locally-relevant information in a participatory manner, and by encouraging the development of effective decision-making skills. It also involved activities that reduced vulnerability and minimized the adverse effects of hazards.

The IAG pilot project consisted of a comprehensive capacity-building programme addressing the root social causes of vulnerability within targeted groups, as a means of improving their resilience. The capacity-building programme included topics such as team building and decision making, self-discovery, mental/physical/sexual health, personal safety and self-defence, environmental awareness, community involvement, career guidance and skills analysis, effective communication, first aid, fire safety, and community-based disaster risk assessment, all adapted to the local context.

The original GIRRL project had identified schools as an appropriate entry point but the IAG regional pilot project allowed each target country to identify a suitable point of entry. Step-1 of the pilot project involved an ACDS training in GIRRL methodology and CARE USA training in underlying conceptual approaches to vulnerability and programming for adolescent girls. Step-2 involved collaboration between each CARE Country Office and ACDS to adapt the methodology to the local context. Step-3 presented the roll-out of the empowerment training intervention. Step-4 involved the development of pilot strategies for mainstreaming adolescent girls into CBDRR planning interventions, including training and dialogue with relevant community leaders and government partners.

The original GIRRL project has been developed in South Africa in 2008 in Ikageng Township, followed by the townships of Tshwleleng and Tching in 2009 and that of Kanana in 2010. The IAG pilot project, which utilised the GIRRL approach, was launched in June 2012 and formally ended in October 2013. It was implemented in the

following areas:

- In Mphaki, in the rural southern highlands of southern Lesotho;
- In the central Malawi rural communities of Gwazanyoni/Kalulu/Malisero/Mazanani and Chidawa/Losiyati/Malinda/Moya/Mtandaza;
- In the peri-urban informal settlements of Kanyama (Ward 10) and Kanyama (Ward 11) in the Zambian capital, Lusaka; and
- In Rural Tshidhixwa, Beitbridge District, southern Zimbabwe.

The following stakeholders were involved in the IAG project: participating ACDS and CARE staff, other participating academic institutions, government departments and civil society partners who attended regional knowledge sharing and learning events. In addition to the empowerment modules specifically targeting adolescent girls, the pilot project also targeted community leaders and DRR planning structures to reinforce the understanding of differential vulnerability and cost-effectiveness of equity approaches, including the specific case of adolescent girls.

Specific leadership roles were identified and undertaken by the participating school girls as follows:

- They were supported to act as leaders and resource persons to integrate adolescent girls' perspective and needs into existing planning processes.
- They were engaged in dialogue to discuss their experience with risk and vulnerability, both in everyday life and in the context of recurring disasters. This dialogue helped to identify major physical and socio-economic risks that were then used to design risk mitigation and capacity-building training curricula that specifically meet the needs of adolescent girls. The adolescent girls acquired improved capacity through training interventions oriented toward improving their risk profile while also enabling them to participate in decision making on behalf of a distinctly vulnerable group in society.
- In the various communities, girls took on differing leadership roles in Zambia where they were trained in water quality testing at the local university and led water testing in flood-prone Lusaka slum areas to help inform their communities of contamination. In other communities, girls were trained in early warning measures for flood zones and led public warnings. Girls also contributed to: (1) irrigation projects to help control flooding; and (2) greater food security for girls who often were the first to do without it in times of strife. Girls sat on Community Disaster Committees and took on roles leading Disaster Preparedness Groups in their schools to share information with their peers.

The regional pilot project was meant to indirectly benefit the larger population of at-risk communities in the four Southern African countries - Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe - where a total of some 84,000 people had been affected by disasters in

targeted areas. Out of these 84,000 people, 4,261 individuals were targeted, with 120 direct beneficiaries in the initial stage of the project. The 120 direct beneficiaries were NGO and government representatives attending trainings in each country, and who were responsible for adapting and implementing the GIRRL project at local level in the four countries.

Additional direct beneficiaries were participants in the IAG regional pilot project in each country: 500 in Lesotho, 1,000 in Malawi, 2,061 in Zambia, and 700 in Zimbabwe. They benefited from ACDS field visits and focus groups.

CARE USA and the ACDS implemented the project with funding from the USAID Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Local-level implementation was conducted by CARE Zambia, CARE Lesotho, CARE Malawi and CARE Zimbabwe with independent USAID/OFDA funding.

Impact and Results

The GIRRL project in the four countries contributed to the following results:

- Girls' better status within their communities. This was evident in feedbacks from community elders who acknowledged the outward maturity of participants during their involvement in the project and their interest in contributing to their community through involvement in project activities. Parents reported that the girls were suddenly willing to make more efforts in helping within the family unit and in engaging in serious family discussions. Educators in all of the communities reported that some out-of-school girls, upon seeing the in-school participants involved in the project, sought to re-enrol in school. Each site documented girls' involvement and leadership in various aspects of DRR and resilience building, from sitting on

Community Disaster Committees to participating in tree-planting activities to stabilise soil and prevent land slippage while increasing food supply, as well as helping in small-scale irrigation programmes to improve food security in some communities.

- Increased awareness of locally relevant issues surrounding CCA and DRR as well as girls' ability to easily identify potential threats and hazards in their daily lives along with the necessary risk reduction measures.
- Girls taking up leadership roles. After being trained as leaders, the girls served as key informants and role models for siblings and peers within and outside of school in sharing resilience-building and risk reduction information and encouraging related actions.

- Added-value to ongoing DRR work. The project introduced equity approaches and developed tools for planners to better integrate vulnerable, marginalized populations - especially adolescent girls - into existing national and local DRR frameworks.

Experience from the original GIRRL projects hosted in South Africa from 2008 to 2010 shows that gender relations, specifically risks related to traditional gender roles and differential power in decision-making processes at household and community levels, play an important role in differential risk among adolescent girls.

The Good Practice



Girls showcase their skills at a community awareness event in Zimbabwe

The GIRRL project was a good practice in strengthening leadership in DRR and resilience building because it targeted a specific sub-group, namely adolescent girls, who are often marginalised in the Southern African society. The GIRRL project empowered marginalised girls and engaged them to be involved in and lead local initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerability.

Success was linked to the girls' direct involvement and participation in DRR-related activities such as sitting on Community DRR Committees, engaging in community projects such as small-scale irrigation, and taking initiative as young role models.

In Malawi, for example, the girls independently approached community leaders and asked for permission to farm their own plots. In Zimbabwe, they learnt about economic empowerment through their monitored involvement in Village Savings and Loans (VSL) programmes. In Lesotho, girls involved boys to partake in DRR initiatives through their Environmental Youth Clubs.

The above project's success factors contributed to the positive impact of the project by reaffirming that girls did have a positive role to play in Southern African societies and that, through their willingness to engage and speak for their distinct social group, they were able to make meaningful contributions generally and through DRR initiatives.

Lesson(s) Learned

Key lessons learnt from the project include the following:

- Girls need to be involved in DRR/CCA as they have distinct needs which often are overlooked in traditional broad DRR/CCA programming. Even though the GIRRL project specifically targeted girls using an equity approach, it was impossible to find viable solutions without the insight and contributions of other role players in communities such as boys, parents and elders.
- Stakeholder and community buy-in, inclusion and continuous engagement are necessary as the foundation for facilitating the engagement of girls as participants and leaders in DRR/CCA. Political will from local leaders, communities and stakeholders, facilitates girls' empowerment. Community involvement is a tool for making girls visible.
- Girls learn better through participatory methods.
- Empowerment programming such as the GIRRL project can help to address multiple issues such as how to return girl school dropouts to school. There is a strong relationship between girls' empowerment, education and DRR.
- There are a number of cross-cutting issues which have implications for girls, including the combination of sex, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), natural hazards and food insecurity. It has been, for instance, determined that in times of food insecurity, girls received food last within the household and this could force them to engage in transactional sex for food or money. This increases their exposure to early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, which makes them more vulnerable to disasters.
- Even during domestic chores, girls can share their experience and knowledge, especially

on vulnerability-related issues such as GBV and early marriage, with their mothers and female guardians who also benefit. The extent to which this was occurring exceeded the expectations.

- The GIRRL project has to be context specific. A one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to address the needs of adolescent girls in Southern Africa. Cultural context is a significant factor for consideration.
- Girls have a meaningful contribution to make and are willing and able to take on leadership roles in DRR and resilience building.
- Girls do not live in a vacuum and, as a result, other key social actors need to be involved for sustainable change to occur. Men and boys need to be involved as partners for sustainable change, as they can shed light on how to address situations and they can even help lead initiatives to change the attitudes of other men and boys in the community.

A number of factors proved to be a challenge, such as the short time frame available for implementation (based on project and funding constraints), limitations regarding time available for sessions (especially if conducted over school holidays), and problems in establishing secure venues (no suitable classrooms available). These became major concerns which undermined the ability of CARE Country Offices to effectively implement the project as prescribed. CARE sought to overcome these challenges by developing proposals to include longer time periods for implementation to accommodate school holidays, and they utilised portable venues such as tents, where available, as well as hosting sessions in the safety of school yards.

Also, teachers were involved in the original sessions as facilitators. However, this became a concern as they had to strike a balance with their full-time teaching responsibilities. Budgets were modified to add costs for bringing in other facilitators. But teachers do play a significant role in the lives of girls and serve as mentors in many instances, so they were encouraged to get involved as much as they could to keep the relationship going.

The most dominant gender-related issues raised during the project implementation included the following: how to further integrate boys into the project without undermining the goal of empowering adolescent girls. Another issue raised for further investigation was how to engage more girls in the project as well as parents, mother's groups, men, women, boys, traditional leaders and clergy. For the sake of sustainability and impact, these role players need to be more involved in the project.

Suggestions for scaling up the project include the provision of a handbook for the girls themselves, based on the project curriculum. Another suggestion was to create a magazine-type publication covering topical issues which would appeal to girls in project sites in different countries.

Potential for Replication

The original GIRRL project developed in South Africa was already replicated with some modifications in Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The key for replication of the GIRRL project is in establishing the specific conditions of the chosen setting. The capacity-building components need to address the critical issues and conditions which affect girls in the specific community context selected. The original GIRRL project was designed to be fluid and flexible and able to address various settings.

In this regard, CARE Country Offices have also incorporated the practice into follow-up projects such as the *Mountain Integrated Conservation Agriculture* (MICA) project in Lesotho or the *Drought Mitigation through Irrigation Promotion and Conservation Agriculture Extension II* (DICE II) project in Malawi.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACDS: African Centre for Disaster Studies

CBDRR: Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction

DICE II: Drought Mitigation through Irrigation

Promotion and Conservation Agriculture Extension II

GBV: Gender Based Violence

One of the advantages of the GIRRL project is that it can be easily integrated into other broader projects such as those mentioned above. Integrating the GIRRL approach into other projects can assist replication and scaling up. It also facilitates access to funding.

Linking the GIRRL project to critical programme areas such as food security or agriculture (depending on issues in the area) can help involve girls actively in areas such as dialogue surrounding food production and how money can be used in the family unit. Finally, using the GIRRL project as a tool for starting dialogue and integrating girls into other areas beyond direct DRR activities, is crucial in empowering girls as leaders in society and hence reducing risk.

GIRRL: Girls in Risk Reduction Leadership

IAG: Integrating Adolescent Girls

MICA: Mountain Integrated Conservation Agriculture

OFDA: Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

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Australia



MONASH University
Injury Research Institute

Women-led sustained efforts give birth to key Gender & Disaster body, many Australian “firsts”

*Women's Health Goulburn North East² (WHGNE),
Women's Health in the North³ (WHIN)
& Monash Injury Research Institute⁴ (MIRI),
State of Victoria, Australia*



Winners of the 2014 Resilient Australia Award, 'National Significance' category

Abstract

On Saturday 7 February 2009, bushfires swept through the southern State of Victoria, killing 173 people, injuring 414 others, destroying 2,133 homes, displacing over 7,000 people and burning 4,500 km² of land. In such large-scale disasters, men are assumed to be protectors, women to be protected. But on that Black Saturday⁵, the gap between male and female deaths

² Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) was established in July 2000. Previously known as NEWomen, WHGNE is the government-funded, specialist women's health service for Goulburn Valley and North East Victoria.

³ Women's Health In the North (WHIN) is a regional women's health service operating across Melbourne's northern suburbs. WHIN focuses on issues that impact women's health and wellbeing, including violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, economic participation and environmental justice.

⁴ Monash Injury Research Institute (MIRI) is a multi-disciplinary organisation, undertaking research into accident and injury causes and prevention across all modes of transport, in the workplace, in the community and in the home.

in Australian bushfires was found to be closing and, in two fires, reversed. Research was conducted to throw some light on what actually happens to women during a disaster and its aftermaths in Australia. Based on its findings, a series of women-led actions and events took place, leading to many Australian “firsts”, of which the creation of Australia’s first Gender & Disaster Taskforce, a key body for advancing gender and disaster issues in Victoria. A blueprint is being developed for other states in Australia to follow.

The Initiative

The initiative consists of a women-led *Gender & Disaster* project involving research work and a series of actions and events based on the outcomes of the research work.

The project, based in the State of Victoria in southern Australia, has been implemented following the Black Saturday bushfires⁵, one of Australia’s worst disasters. The bushfires on Saturday 7 February 2009, in the State of Victoria, killed 173 people, injured 414 others, destroyed 2,133 homes, displaced some 7,000 people and burnt 4,500 km² of land. The research work sought to throw some light on what actually happens to women during a disaster and in its aftermath in Australia. Based on the research findings and recommendations, the project moved into action to influence policy makers and Emergency Service Organisations (ESOs) to bring a gender focus to disaster policy, planning, training and practice.

The project started in 2009 with research conducted by Victoria-based Women’s Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) to hear from women and men about their experience during disaster events and their aftermaths. Later on, the project moved from research to action, with evaluation guiding each following step.

The project is a direct outcome of community engagement - via qualitative research and consultation - with 30 women, 32 men, and 47 workers affected by the Black Saturday bushfires. Such research and consultation were first covered in two reports entitled *The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday*⁶ and *Men on Black Saturday-Risks and opportunities for change*⁷. Recommendations for improving disaster

⁵ Some 400 individual bushfires that caused heavy casualties and massive property losses in the State of Victoria on Saturday 7 February 2009. That day has since then been widely referred to as Black Saturday.

⁶ “The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday” is a WHGNE research report that captures the experience and knowledge of women who survived Black Saturday. It was published in 2011.

⁷ “Men on Black Saturday – Risks and opportunities for change” is a 2013 report on research into men’s Black Saturday experience in Victoria. The research was conducted under the auspices of WHGNE and Monash University’s Injury Research Institute (MIRI).

planning, training and ESO practice have been informed by the stories, experiences and advice offered by community members, community and ESO workers, and academics working in the fields of masculinity, gender and disaster. At two national conferences, community members and on-the-ground workers presented their first-hand accounts of the Black Saturday bushfires.

At the forefront of and leading the project are two Victoria-based women's health services: Women's Health Goulburn North East and Women's Health in the North. WHGNE funded and resourced the project, instigating the first research in 2009. In 2012, WHIN joined WHGNE and the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse to hold a national conference called *Identifying the Hidden Disaster: The First Australian Conference on Natural Disasters and Family Violence*. In partnership with the Monash Injury Research Institute (MIRI), WHGNE then funded and resourced the research into men's experiences - with additional funding from the National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme (NDRGS) - and a subsequent national conference in 2013. WHGNE, WHIN and MIRI also drove the work underpinning the establishment of Australia's first Gender & Disaster multi-stakeholder body called *Victoria Gender and Disaster Taskforce* (the Taskforce).

In fact, all work done under the project was led and driven by the two women's health services, whose board members and managerial staff are all women from different backgrounds and communities.

As far as the project funding is concerned, commitment has now been made by the Emergency Management Commission Victoria (EMCV) and the Victoria Department of Human Services (DHS) to substantially fund the work of the two women's health services so as to ensure ongoing outcomes.

Impact and Results

The most far-reaching impact of the project has been the establishment in January 2014 - and successful operation since then - of the above-mentioned first Australian Gender & Disaster taskforce: the Victoria Gender & Disaster Taskforce. The Taskforce was formed following the release of research findings at the above-mentioned national conferences (in 2012 and 2013). WHGNE and WHIN have resourced the Taskforce since its establishment. A foundational document

prepared by a key Taskforce member from the Department of Primary Industries has been endorsed by the EMCV and accepted by the Taskforce, along with Terms of Reference and a substantial work plan with key objectives – both led by WHGNE and WHIN. The Victoria Gender & Disaster Taskforce aims to reduce the compounding effects of gender on disaster impacts, through the following 7 key objectives:

1. To transform the work environments and practices of ESOs so that women find working in them to be welcoming and inclusive.
2. To transform the work environments and practices of ESOs so that men feel encouraged to work against harmful, destructive, conscious and unconscious masculine behaviours to self and others, and feel less pressure to engage in them.
3. To improve the gender-specific support that men and women in ESOs and other emergency management organisations receive after disasters.
4. To achieve Objectives 1, 2, 3 in ways that improve respect for the needs of diverse groups, for example culture, sexuality, and age, in relation to how it intersects with the issue of gender.
5. To improve the gender-specific support that men and women, along with boys and girls, receive throughout the community after disasters.
6. To embed a gender lens across culture and systems relating to disasters to improve community outcomes following future disasters.
7. To ensure efficient and responsive Taskforce planning, reflective of gender equity and representative of the principles of the foundational document.

The Taskforce has identified the following as key strategies: (1) changing the culture of emergency management to include equal contribution by women at all levels; and (2) linking with existing community groups/organisations through the endorsement of other gender/disaster initiatives.

The Taskforce operates under the auspices

of the Emergency Management Commission Victoria (EMCV), with high level representation from all major Victorian ESOs and the community, government, academic and women's health sectors. Co-chaired by the Victoria Emergency Management Commissioner and the WHGNE Executive Officer, the Taskforce brings together very senior leaders of key ESOs, including: Victoria Police; the Metropolitan Fire Brigade; the Country Fire Authority; the Deputy Director of Emergency Management for the Victoria Department of Human Services (DHS); the Assistant Director, Security and Emergency Management Branch, Department of Premier and Cabinet; and academics and community representatives.

The project has also resulted in a growing body of knowledge, networks and resources to support community wellbeing and disaster preparedness. There has been widespread dissemination of research findings/recommendations via journal articles, online media, five Victorian disaster conferences, one national conference (AWHC, Sydney 2013), one international conference (ISA, Yokohama, 2014) and the provision of training to community/ESO workers in *FV after Natural Disasters and Gender Equity*, national papers (AWHN Position Paper 2014) and book chapters (CSIRO 2014, and forthcoming). A suite of resources is available to community/health and ESO workers, which provides evidence/recommendations, practical strategies and training tools to plan for and respond to the specific effects of gender on disaster. These have been developed by WHGNE, and have been made freely available via the WHGNE and WHIN web sites. The resources include the following:

- Training package on *Natural Disasters and Family Violence*;
- Training package on *Men and Disaster*, in final stages of development to be piloted in April 2015;
- A series of five snapshots summarising research findings/recommendations;
- *FV and Disaster Postcard* and *Gender and Disaster Planning Flyer*;
- Filmed presentations/interviews with gender/disaster experts;
- A podcast and webinar;
- Webpages dedicated to *FV & Disaster*, *Environmental Justice* and *Gender and Disaster*; and
- Numerous presentations to Monash University and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

Disaster planning and preparedness measures have also been strengthened through the project, by concrete improvements to family violence data collection and Gender &

Disaster training/awareness. In 2013, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Emergency Branch altered the design of its quarterly reporting form by case managers to include reporting on family violence – a key recommendation in the first research report.

DHS is also using the *Natural Disasters and Family Violence* training package to train workers in recognising/responding to post-disaster family violence, and Victoria Police have used these resources to train police recruits in post-disaster risk management.

The above impacts, results and achievements have all been the result of the leadership and work of WHGNE and WHIN, whose board members and managerial staff are all women from different backgrounds and communities. These women's efforts have made the project a success in the field of gender and disasters, as well as in the broader area of disaster/climate risk reduction and resilience building.

The Good Practice

This initiative is good practice in that: (1) it has catalysed partnerships and collaboration among multiple stakeholders from diverse horizons; (2) it has institutionalized and sustained such partnerships and collaboration over the long term, in a key structure - the Taskforce; (3) it has galvanised interest in a previously un-researched field; (4) it has made proper use of available technology; (5) it has resulted in a number of Australian “firsts”; and (6) it has utilized women’s skills and leadership for risk reduction and resilience building.

1. The initiative has catalysed partnerships and collaboration among multiple stakeholders from diverse horizons. To achieve tangible outcomes at policy, organisational and community levels, the project partners have actively engaged with relevant sectors to initiate partnerships. This is reflected in the establishment of the Taskforce,

ongoing collaboration between the project partners themselves, and ongoing work/partnerships with specific emergency management organisations to deliver conference presentations/sessions.

2. The initiative has institutionalized and sustained such partnerships and collaboration over the long term, in a key structure - the Taskforce. The formation of the Taskforce is a ground-breaking initiative in the field of disaster planning: it is rare in the world, and the only taskforce of its kind in Australia. The formation of the Taskforce represents a unique and significant step in achieving a collaborative partnership across multiple sectors and the community. It is working not only to achieve innovative, evidence-based and practical outcomes for communities affected by disasters, but also to establish a format and framework which is replicable by other states. Dr Elaine Enarson, a leading international Disaster & Gender researcher and founding member of the Taskforce, has acknowledged the significance of this initiative in advancing gender-sensitive policy and practice.
3. The initiative has galvanised interest in a previously un-researched field. The qualitative research undertaken by the project partners is, in itself, ground-breaking work. Despite significant evidence that attention to gender in disaster planning and recovery is essential, there has been - to date - a limited Australian knowledge base on disasters and family violence, very little theorising of masculinity and disasters, and no attempt in Australia to achieve a cross-sector response to these issues. Although worldwide literature suggests that increased violence against women is characteristic of post-disaster recovery, *The Way He Tells It* was the first research conducted in Australia which identified and examined the link between disasters and violence against women. The 2012 Identifying the Hidden Disaster conference was the first Australian conference convened around this issue.

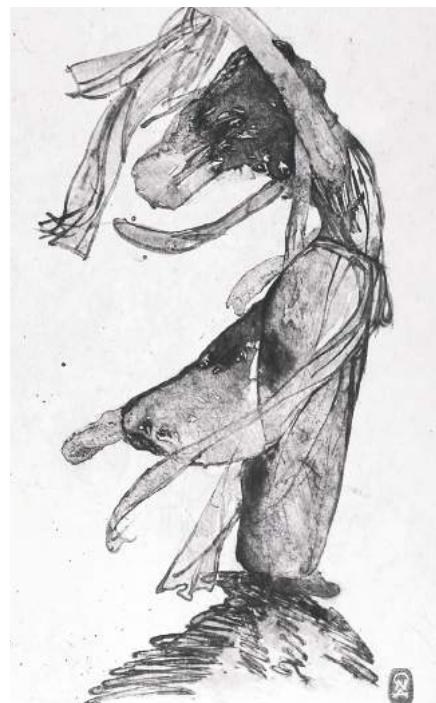
Under the research work, for example, women spoke of being silenced from speaking out about new or increased violence from their husbands or partners. As the disaster recovery workers involved had not been trained in identifying family violence, they advised the women to support their men, saying the men were suffering and were not acting as they would normally do. Even the police sometimes failed to follow the usual code of conduct for investigating family violence because they knew the men who had sometimes been "heroes" in the fires, or were traumatised in their aftermaths. As a result, women and children were left to live with increased violence.

Another finding emerges from research into men's Black Saturday experience. During the disaster, men were expected to protect their families, even in the face of such an unprecedented, catastrophic fire storm. In the aftermath of the disaster, they were expected to provide for their families, which was often impossible as housing and employment were lost as a result of the fires.

4. The initiative has made proper use of available technology, including: filming keynote conference presentations and individual interviews with community members/gender and disaster experts; making information available via Podcast and YouTube; and establishing a central repository of information/resources on Gender & Disaster (including training packages, snapshots, research reports, case studies, presentations) via the project partners' web sites (ref: www.whealth.com.au/environmentaljustice/gender-disaster.html and www.whin.org.au/what-we-do/environmental-justice.html).
5. The initiative has resulted in a number of Australian "firsts". These include the new research area, the research work conducted, the resulting knowledge base, the national-level conferences and the establishment of the Taskforce itself.
6. The initiative has utilized women's skills and leadership for DRR and resilience building. As mentioned earlier, the leadership and work of the two women-led and women-staffed organisations - WHGNE and WHIN, have been instrumental to the project, along with information from women survivors of the Black Saturday bushfires, insights from women gender and disaster experts and scholars.

Furthermore, the following key factors contributed to the overall success of the project:

- The public nature of the findings. Holding public conferences and facilitating panel discussions with the ESO leaders and community members with an audience of key stakeholders - including those most affected, have resulted in constructive change by ESOs and disaster policy makers.
- Partnering with top-level leaders has enabled change from the top, and a commitment from the EMCV and DHS to substantially fund the work of the women's health services to ensure ongoing outcomes.
- Community engagement and partnerships with the emergency services sector have been essential to the project, which seeks to effect cultural change within communities and ESOs, as well as policy change. In this regard, a key strategy of the Taskforce, as mentioned earlier, is to link with existing community groups/organisations through the endorsement of other gender/disaster initiatives.



"She Dances on the Wind" - Ona Henderson
(one of the images used for the gender and disaster project)

Lesson(s) Learned

Key lessons learned from the project are as follows:

- The formation of the Taskforce has strengthened both community and organisational connectedness - and planning and preparedness measures - by achieving a cross-sector approach to disaster planning. This ensures that cultural, organisational and policy reforms can be directly informed and driven by senior representatives from both the emergency management and community sectors.

Recently, WHGNE and WHIN invited Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick and David Morrison of the Australian Military to provide an information session to the Taskforce and other senior ESO staff on gender and cultural change. This presentation was instrumental in ensuring that organisational change is understood and driven by senior ESO representatives, and that cultural/community change is supported and driven by community members/workers. Plans are under way to invite them back again to enhance the improved understanding they instilled in the senior ESO staff.

- Extensive cross-sector communication/education is essential. Under the project, this has been carried out via three Victorian conferences, national and international conferences, journal/media articles, and via presentations at emergency management, health and academic forums.

The project, however, did not go without some challenges. Major challenges have included the need to include gender into the disaster context when people feel there is no time to consider this. Dr Elaine Enarson writes about this challenge. "Each summer," she says, "the bushfire season again diverts attention on to 'urgent' matters, and attention to gender issues is relegated to the unimportant. Yet its importance lives on as both men and women suffer from the gendered expectations of ESOs, their communities and society as a whole." Furthermore, the whole project has been a lengthy, five-year process that was definitely not a smooth one, if only to have traumatised women talking openly about family violence by their husbands or partners.

Potential for Replication

The project can be replicated in a number of different ways:

A blueprint is being developed for Australia's other states to follow. Through training, conferences, online/mainstream media, resources development, and the development of key partnerships, the project partners are working not only to improve planning and preparedness in Victorian communities affected by disaster, but also to establish a blueprint for other states to follow.

The research methodology could be replicated with adjustments to take into account the local populations.

The resources produced could also be tailored to suit local contexts (e.g. the postcards and snapshots).

Training could be adapted for different audiences.

Sex-disaggregated data could be gathered by all disaster agencies.

Family violence awareness training and data collection could be prioritised before a disaster occurs and reemphasized to response personnel.

These resources are freely available for download from the web sites listed earlier, along with YouTube clips. Other countries could adapt them for appropriate language and to give readily understood examples.

Some constraints can be expected when scaling up the project, particularly where English is not the spoken language and where open discussion of violence against women is even more silenced than what the project encountered in rural Victoria. For

scaling up the project, the following in-depth recommendations have been issued in the snapshots and reports mentioned above:

Disaster is no excuse for violence against women, and emergency management should promote awareness of its increase after disaster, along with training on how to respond constructively.

Widely disseminate practical steps, such as the postcard showing 4 steps to respond to increased domestic violence.

Minimise gender-based risk by training women in disaster survival skills and ensuring men have access to appropriate debriefing and other emotional and practical support after disasters.

Employ women at all levels of emergency management and disaster planning, response and recovery.

Engage ESOs, especially top-level leaders, in identifying and addressing gender-based discrimination.

Ensure take-up of research findings by policy and decision makers by engaging them in panels at national conferences.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

AWHC: Australian Women's Health Conference

CSIRO: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

DHS: Department of Human Services

DV: Domestic violence

EMCV: Emergency Management Commission Victoria

ESO: Emergency Service Organisation

FV: Family violence

GAD: Gender and Disaster

ISA: International Sociological Association

MIRI: Monash Injury Research Institute
(Monash University)

NDRGS: National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme

RMIT: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

WHGNE: Women's Health Goulburn North East

WHIN: Women's Health in the North

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Bangladesh



Female household heads protect lives, livelihoods in remote cyclone-prone villages

*Action Against Hunger (ACF)
Bangladesh*



Women get ready to simulate an emergency situation

Abstract

Some remote coastal villages in southern Bangladesh are not yet reached by the country's elaborate national disaster management system. In light of the above, ACF implemented a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) pilot project in 10 villages, establishing a Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC) and a Women's Committee (WC) in each of them. The project targeted over 4,000 households, mostly female-headed households and poor women's households highly exposed to disaster risks. When a tropical storm struck, shortly after the end of the project, the women put in practice the disaster preparedness measures that were explained to them. They protected their lives and livelihoods, on their own initiative, without the intervention of the national disaster management system.

The Initiative

This initiative is a Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR)⁸ pilot project implemented by ACF in southern Bangladesh from November 2011 to May 2013. The project consisted of a community-led initiative that looked into bringing social cohesion and community inclusiveness to reduce disaster risk for the vulnerable population - especially poor, landless individuals and women, as well as girls and children.

One of its key objectives was to empower local communities through: (1) introducing a sustainable community risk management system; (2) building DRR skills; and (3) linking local communities with local government authorities such as the Union Parishad⁹.

The pilot project was implemented in 10 villages in three unions/wards named Borobogi, Nisanbaria and Sonakata in Amtali Upazilla (Sub-District), Barguna District. The villages are located in the coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal, which makes the residents vulnerable to cyclones, tropical storms and floods.

Even though the Government of Bangladesh has an elaborate disaster management system, it is yet to reach communities living in the farthest corners of coastal areas. As a result, communities at high risk remain vulnerable to cyclones and tropical storms every year. Additionally, ACF has learned from experience that communities are always the first to respond to disasters and are best positioned to derive solutions to their problems. Therefore, it was crucial to empower the targeted communities with DRR skills as part of this project, so as to turn their vulnerability into resilience.

The project targeted 4,613 households. A large percentage of the households were either female-headed households or households of extremely poor women, highly exposed not only to high magnitude cyclones but also to low-intensity hazards such as high tides, salinity and winds.

This pilot project was co-financed by ACF International and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID in Spanish).

⁸ CMDRR is “a process of bringing people together within the same community to enable them to collectively address a common disaster risk and to collectively pursue common disaster risk reduction measures.” – GFDRR (World Bank)

⁹ A union parishad is the second smallest rural administrative and local government unit in Bangladesh.

Impact and Results

An external evaluation was conducted after the end of the project. It highlighted the following findings and project outcomes:

The survey respondents confirmed that gender was vital to DRR activities.

The evaluators found evidence of the usefulness of the preparedness messages and their enforcement by both Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and Women's Committees (WCs).

The survey respondents also said early warning and disaster preparedness awareness raising were the two most important project inputs which helped to enhance preparedness.

It is to be noted that soon after its completion, the CMDRR pilot project contributed directly to reducing disaster risks and vulnerabilities on the ground. When Tropical Storm Mahasen struck in May 2013 (during the last month of the project), the targeted households applied - on their own initiative - many of the preparedness measures explained to them by the project. This helped them protect their lives and livelihoods.

Such successful implementation of preparedness measures can be attributed largely to women's leadership. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, a large percentage of the households targeted by the project were either female-headed or those of women living in extremely poor conditions and highly exposed to disaster risk.

Other gender dimensions/issues addressed by the project were special types of vulnerability such as violence, sexual harassment and limited access to recovery support. Women's

forums served as key catalysts to raise and address such concerns. The women's forums offered them a place to talk about general and specific feminine issues (health, pregnancy, menstrual hygiene management, etc.). But the pilot project was a new experience for women in the selected villages, and many of the women's forum members never had an opportunity to participate in village meetings previously.

Also, some women were not able to play a meaningful role at community-level meetings because of their historical deprivation and muted role, and the limited project investment to groom women's leadership in this context. As a result, initially very few women participated in the forums due to lack of information and interest, as well as lack of time. Later on, however, interest grew among women and teenage girls, and in participation was in the end very high.

Overall, capacity building provided by the project did help women to broaden their understanding about early warning, nutrition for pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls' reproductive health problems. Moreover, public awareness work helped create shared understanding about women's vulnerability within communities.

It should be noted that the women's forums also helped to extend the coverage of early warning dissemination. Most women interviewed said they received early warning messages from women's forum members.

The Good Practice



Announcing the next village meeting

The following two good practices evolved through the CMDRR pilot project:

1. Establishing, at village level, 10 Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and Women's Committees (WCs) through a gender-inclusive community-led approach; and
2. Directly promoting gender equality and the importance of women's participation in DRR practices, to enhance disaster resilience among vulnerable communities.

ACF worked together with the community to establish, in each village, VDMCs and WCs, which are village-level platforms for DRR skills building and risk planning and management. An innovative approach adopted led to combining men's and women's committees in the same village.

Community-led approaches are not new in Bangladesh. However, when establishing the VDMCs and WCs, ACF also introduced innovative democratic selection and decision-making processes to ensure community ownership. In this regard, the project experience suggests that women's forums/committees should be an essential component of national risk reduction efforts and should promote women's leadership in DRR.

Cultural practices obviously made it difficult to mobilize women within communities. Women generally have low status within community decision-making forums, inadequate access to economic opportunities and low educational standards. As a result, it was initially difficult to link with women. This required an overly long initial preparatory

phase, which also delayed the whole project schedule. However, these challenges were overcome by building trust and confidence among women groups and the community. A gender-inclusive approach encouraged women to participate in organised meetings and discuss their needs and opinions. This resulted into sharing information and promoted women's participation in previously men-dominated discussions.

To initiate the two good practices within the project, ACF adopted a number of effective strategies to address social and health risks faced by women during a disaster, strategies that can be described as key success factors:

- Initiating the establishment of Women's Committees as key catalysts for raising and addressing gender issues;
- Developing, through community awareness raising, shared understanding at community level about women's vulnerability in general; and
- Providing direct livelihoods support to female-headed households and women's households living outside an embankment located in the project area. This helped them improve their incomes and food security.

To sum up, the CMDRR project directly advocated women's participation and involvement in disaster preparedness, and contributed to DRR and resilience building by carrying out capacity building as well as gender promotion through community awareness raising.

Lesson(s) Learned

Lessons learned and knowledge from the project suggest that:

- More investment and work are required to strengthen the DRR capacity of the local communities.
- Continued advocacy of women's participation is, in community-based interventions, critical to sustainability and DRR resilience.

The poor cannot invest in DRR measures because of low surplus of income. Improved livelihoods opportunities are required. However, agriculture-based livelihoods in unprotected areas can be unproductive if a DRR/resilience approach is not utilised. The project design therefore should create provisions for additional resources for resilient livelihoods.

Globally, a self-reliant DRR project/initiative is a popular approach. ACF's approach of ensuring strong community participation is crucial for a self-managed, village-level DRR initiative. Sustaining such an initiative in a chronic-disaster context, however,

requires strong community ownership of the DRR process. ACF's role was to act as a facilitator only.

Furthermore, since every disaster is unique and vulnerabilities/risks are influenced by numerous social, political and economic factors, it is important to also invest in communities' ability to research, innovate and take actions individually and collectively. Community participation alone cannot guarantee high-quality programmes because understanding about future risks is limited within communities. Therefore, to strengthen this initiative in the future, ACF's role should also be to help communities look at the big picture and generate technical knowledge. This is to make sure that community-led planning processes and outcomes are duly informed by technical considerations.

Potential for Replication

The CMDRR pilot project has demonstrated that a community-managed approach and DRR mobilisation at community level through VDMCs and WCs are replicable and effective in similar contexts. However, since VDMCs and WCs are not part of the Bangladesh Government's disaster management system, it is challenging to scale up the initiative for institutionalisation.

ACF believes, however, that VDMCs and WCs, as they are, can already play a supportive role to the Bangladesh Government's UDMCs (Union Disaster Management Committees) in early warning dissemination, evacuation and relief distribution. Furthermore, VDMCs and WCs can also play a role in amplifying the voices of the most marginalised and advocate the adoption of gender-inclusive DRR approaches by local governments.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACF: Action contre la faim / Action Against Hunger

AECID: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo / Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation

CMDRR: Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction

DRM: Disaster Risk Management

FSL: Food Security & Livelihoods (ACF)

GFDRR: Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (The World Bank)

UDMC: Union Disaster Management Committee

VDMC: Village Disaster Management Committee

WC: Women's Committee

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Guatemala



Fisherwomen reduce hurricane risk, advocate women's resilience priorities

*Guatemalan Caribbean Fisherwomen's Network,
Community Practitioners Platform (CPP) for
Resilience of Guatemala
& Huairou Commission, USA¹⁰*



Water collection in one of the target communities

Abstract

The Guatemalan Caribbean is a hurricane-prone region facing the Caribbean Sea in eastern Guatemala. In early 2012, reforestation and rainwater harvesting were initiated by local rural and indigenous fisherwomen. This has helped to stabilise the seashore with coconut trees that act as natural barriers against hurricanes, strong winds and high tides. The coconuts improve family food security in the event of a disaster or economic shock. Rainwater harvesting has made non-polluted water available. Women realised they could enhance community resilience with simple actions and by advocating their resilience priorities with their local governments. The initiative is being replicated and scaled up in other communities in the country.

¹⁰ The Huairou Commission is a global membership and partnership coalition that empowers grassroots women's organisations to enhance their community development practice and to exercise collective political power at the global level.

The Initiative

The initiative, known as *Coconut Reforestation and Water Harvesting*, is being implemented by grassroots women in the Guatemalan Caribbean. It was launched after a community risk, hazard and vulnerability mapping exercise was undertaken by the women, and following a resilience capacity-building process developed for key grassroots women leaders from the region. The capacity-building process aimed to enable the women leaders to prioritize actions to reduce risk and build resilience.

During the community mapping exercise, the women shared the view that seashore deforestation was what made their communities so vulnerable to hazards like hurricanes, strong winds and high tides. This led them to prioritize reforestation as a good risk reduction solution. Another major problem encountered by the community was lack of clean drinkable water. The area's abundant rainfall prompted the women to opt for rainwater harvesting.

The *Coconut Reforestation and Water Harvesting* initiative was then launched in late 2011 as a community disaster resilience initiative, but actual implementation could not start until the beginning of 2012. The initiative is still under way with the support of and joint activities with the municipality of Puerto Barrios in the province of Izabal in eastern Guatemala.

The initiative is led by a rural and indigenous women's grassroots organisation called *Guatemalan Caribbean Fisherwomen's Network*. The Fisherwomen's Network works in coordination with the five municipalities of the departamento of Izabal, and is a member of the Community Practitioners Platform¹¹ for Resilience (CPP). CPP is a Huairou Commission-led body but it is facilitated at the national level by Fundación Guatemala, a women's civil society organisation.

The following leadership roles were identified and undertaken by the grassroots women:

- The Network undertook community risk mapping to assess hazards and vulnerabilities and prioritize DRR and resilience-building actions. This was conducted after they had taken part in a first peer exchange on the *Role of Indigenous Women in DRR* organized by Fundación Guatemala, as part of the Community Resilience Campaign led by the Huairou Commission.
- The fisherwomen engaged the country's National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED in Spanish) during the community mapping process and related search for solutions. CONRED then supported them through resilience capacity building and, jointly with Fundación Guatemala, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate

¹¹ The Community Practitioners Platform (CPP) is a partnership and networking mechanism led by grassroots women that connects community groups to each other and to institutional actors working in the field of disaster risk reduction and resilient development.

Change Adaptation (CCA) training and skills certification for 40 key women leaders, including some leaders of the Fisherwomen's Network.

- After being trained at the national level, the 40 key grassroots women leaders went back to their communities to raise awareness and build resilience capacity.

The direct and indirect beneficiaries of the “Coconut Reforestation and Water Harvesting” initiative are 100 families in the communities of Estero Lagarto and Punta de Manabique. The initiative was developed thanks to the World Bank’s GFDRR *South-South Cooperation Program Grant for Facilitating Women’s Leadership*¹². With funding from the Community Resilience Fund (CRF)¹³, the initiative is currently being replicated through peer exchange in the two communities of San Juan and Barra Sarstún (in the Livingston area), where fisherwomen are involved in organic agriculture for food security and in “tool bank”¹⁴ as another resilience building practice.

Impact and Results

The following impact and results have been achieved by the initiative:

- Restoring coconut plantations on seashores, which in the community of Estero Lagarto are natural barriers against hurricanes, strong winds and high tides: this has significantly reduced the exposure of coastal houses and community infrastructure to these hazards.
- Promoting natural resources conservation and local biodiversity protection: many rural women have benefited greatly from the practice as their livelihoods depend on these resources.
- Promoting access to non-polluted water: rainwater harvesting has helped the targeted communities to access non-polluted water, which has very positive

impacts on community health and wellbeing.

- Supporting the use of non-polluted water for productive activities, such as water supply to an eco-hostel managed by some other families in one of the communities.
- Scaling-up from one initiative to more: for example using water collected in a tank for irrigating diversified farming plots which the fisherwomen have developed and benefited from.
- Generating increased income, which some fisherwomen have started experiencing by selling vegetables and natural herbs from the diversified farming plots.
- Increasing awareness on resilience: the fisherwomen became aware of the importance of looking for alternative

¹² The full official name of the GFDRR programme is “South-South Cooperation Program Grant for Facilitating Women’s Leadership and Forging Partnerships to Drive the Demand for Local Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action”.

¹³ The Community Resilience Fund (CRF) is a financial mechanism of the Community Resilience Campaign and is currently under way in 19 developing countries. It is financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNDP and the World Bank’s GFDRR.

¹⁴ To organize the sharing of farming tools.

livelihood options like water harvesting and agroforestry. They realized they could make a significant impact on community wellbeing and resilience to disasters.

- Fostering grassroots women's leadership roles: the fisherwomen took up leadership roles, advocating grassroots women's resilience priorities with local governments, and creating long-term partnerships that benefit all parties.

In short, thanks to sustained capacity and skills building efforts, the women saw their social status changed, now recognized as experts. Often portrayed as victims, passive recipients of aid or assigned to care-giving roles during disaster emergency response and disaster recovery and rehabilitation, the women became key actors in community resilience building.

Furthermore, their active involvement in community committee work and

relationships with mayors and other local authorities have turned them into decision makers, even more so now that they are also proving to be efficient in managing CRF funds, no matter how small. In the same vein, their newly-acquired ability to earn their own alternative income has substantially improved their socio-economic status and empowered them to look for more sustainable economic opportunities.

Lastly, some of the fisherwomen won a CONRED certification as *Development Managers in Disaster Risk Reduction*. This has enabled them to take part in some policy discussions related to DRR and CCA at the local, regional and national level. Interacting with other CPP women leaders at the national level and with other partners has also opened opportunities for advocacy and effective participation in public policy and programme processes.

The Good Practice

This initiative can be regarded as a good practice because of its positive impacts on the targeted communities and because it is being replicated in other communities, as mentioned above and earlier. Developing and implementing the *Coconut Reforestation and Water Harvesting* initiative was an integrative process that empowered the grassroots women to become leaders in resilient development.

Furthermore, good results achieved by the initiative have motivated the fisherwomen to start other resilience practices. Rainwater harvesting has helped to develop and irrigate diversified farming plots and to supply non-polluted water to an eco-hostel. And the eco-hostel, which is a community enterprise, is now receiving tourists and providing new sources of income to local residents. As for the coconut reforestation, the fisherwomen have been able to develop coconut nurseries and share young plants with others in their communities, thereby protecting their houses and improving food security, protecting the local ecosystem and diversifying their livelihoods.

Better still, the initiative has empowered the fisherwomen to become recognized agents of change and trainers of other women, of girls and boys in their communities, in addition to using their leadership in all DRR and community resilience issues.

Overall, the following key factors contributed to the initiative's success:

- The intensive training provided to the 40 key grassroots women leaders at national level: the training was in DRR, CCA, policy advocacy (especially the HFA) and leadership. It was conducted during the whole process of mapping risks, prioritizing hazards and needs, designing solutions and implementing the initiative. One of the most successful training was in Local-to-Local Dialogue, a tool to engage and negotiate with local authorities and to create longstanding partnerships that speed up community-based initiatives and support scaling up. This particular training was provided in partnership with CONRED, Fundación Guatemala and Huairou Commission.
- A bottom-up approach that suited the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of the communities involved: this not only had an impact on the adequacy of actions taken but also instilled in the participants a sense of ownership of the solution, and highlighted the ability of traditionally marginalized people to bring change to their realities.
- The focus on capacity building for and training in DRR and resilience building to empower women to be development leaders: having leaders emerging from their own ranks have made the targeted communities more confident and more committed to implement solutions based on their own assessment and prioritization processes. In fact, the risk mapping exercise was the best tool because it enabled the communities to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of the risks and vulnerabilities they were facing and the appropriate practices to reduce them.

Lesson(s) Learned

Lessons learned from the initiative include the following:

- Organized grassroots women, without knowing it, already do work for community resilience. It is only their capacities and skills that need to be enhanced. One needs only to promote their empowerment in order to become leaders and public stakeholders in DRR and long-term community resilience.
- Advocacy and partnership building are key in community resilience. Both allow grassroots women leaders to become part of policy and programme decision-making processes. They can steer the wheel to successfully build resilience and promote

sustainable development under a bottom-up approach that makes women part of the solution.

- Instead of focusing on the traditional issues of hazard and emergency response, there has to be a more holistic and integrative vision on DRR that addresses socioeconomic vulnerabilities as a main source of disaster risk. The initiative gave light on such a vision.
- It is a fact that entrusting grassroots women and their organisations with resources management allows them to scale up from one practice to other initiatives, and to access local budgets at municipal levels for food security, ecosystem protection, organic agriculture, soil conservation, water harvesting equipment, and so forth.

The initiative, however, did not go without some challenges. One of the main challenges was men's cultural bias against the women's new roles as active community actors and problem solvers. This was challenged not just within their own households and communities but also in institutional decision-making bodies such as COCODES (Community Councils for Development), COMUDEs (Municipal Councils for Development) and CODEDEs (Departmental Councils for Development), which embody decentralization at the local level.

Another clearly identified challenge was lack of funding at the local level for implementing this kind of initiative and for allocating funds directly to the grassroots women through the Community Resilience Fund (CRF).

Meanwhile, should new funds be leveraged to keep scaling up the initiative, it is very important to promote peer exchange among women leaders to share knowledge and lessons learnt, strengthen networking among grassroots women, implement initiatives that break the cycle of poverty, better protect their own and their families' lives against chronic climate and disaster threats.

It is essential, in the Guatemalan Caribbean, to focus resilience efforts on protecting community livelihoods and training communities to prepare, respond and recover from disasters and reduce disaster impact and disaster-induced development losses.

Potential for Replication

As mentioned earlier, the initiative is currently being replicated in two communities. As a matter of fact, the initiative has been made flexible enough to be transferred and adapted to different sociocultural and political contexts. This is because the findings of the community risk mapping exercise – carried out under the initiative – were more or less shared by many at-risk coastal communities that lack adequate infrastructure and face pressure from large land holdings and private initiatives in their territory.

However, a key issue which the Fisherwomen's Network and CPP had to advocate for, was support for grassroots women's leadership and promotion of the initiative's success. They also had to demonstrate community women's ability to identify proper solutions to address risks imposed by climate change on their already impoverished lives.

Equally important is the development of strong win-win partnerships between communities and local governments. Such partnerships accelerate the positive impacts of bottom-up practices such as the present initiative. They also help to promote women's role as key community change makers, and upgrade their profile from community leaders to true agents of development.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

COCODE: Consejo Comunitario de Desarrollo / Community Council for Development

CODEDE: Consejo Departamental de Desarrollo / Departmental Council for Development

COMUDE Consejo Municipal de Desarrollo / Municipal Council for Development

CONRED: Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres/National Coordination for Disaster Reduction

CPP: Community Practitioners Platform (for Resilience)

CRF: Community Resilience Fund

GFDRR: Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (The World Bank)

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Honduras



Indigenous women diversify livelihoods, reduce community vulnerability

*Plataforma Comunitaria Comité y Redes de Honduras
& Huairou Commission¹⁵
USA*

Abstract

Facing the Caribbean Sea, the Honduran coastal region is prone to hurricanes. In the aftermaths of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, community organisations began working on building disaster resilience in devastated local communities. In 2010, community organisations rallied in a Plataforma (Platform in), a network led by indigenous grassroots women. In 2011, the Plataforma began diversifying the local economy in various communities, through sustainable agriculture. The initiative would make such an impact that partnerships were established with the Honduran Ministry of Agriculture and Husbandry, Ministry of Planning, National Emergency Authority and even with a regional Central American body, the Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC). The initiative is being expanded to other communities.

The Initiative

This is an indigenous grassroots women's initiative that seeks to reduce grassroots community vulnerability and build community resilience through a more diversified local economy. Such a diversified economy, mainly based on agricultural activities, is aimed to withstand hazards, scale up food security and increase income generation opportunities.

The initiative involves an integrative and sustainable agriculture activity: developing moringa¹⁶ nurseries and orchards. To implement the initiative properly and fully, grassroots women were organised and their capacities built in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), through practical and concrete initiatives.

¹⁵ The Huairou Commission is a global membership and partnership coalition that empowers grassroots women's organisations to enhance their community development practice and to exercise collective political power at the global level.

¹⁶ "Moringa" (*moringa oleifera*) is a drought-resistant, fast-growing edible plant with very high content of protein, minerals and vitamins.

The initiative, which is still under way, was launched in 2011 and implemented in various communities in the municipality of Trujillo, in the departamento (province or region) of Colon on the Caribbean coast of northern Honduras. Currently, it is being expanded to seven other communities in the same Department, and the plan is to continue its expansion to other departments such as Atlántida and Francisco Morazán.

The key actor in this initiative was the Plataforma Comunitaria Comité y Redes de Honduras (Community Platform Committee and Networks of Honduras), an indigenous grassroots women-led network of community organisations. These community organisations have been working to build climate and disaster resilience in the mostly Garifuna¹⁷ communities devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. In 2010, the Plataforma was established formally as an NGO. It is now a member of the Global Community Practitioners Platform¹⁸ (CPP), led by the Huairou Commission.

The Plataforma, for its part, is led by Wagucha¹⁹, a Garifuna organisation located in the above-mentioned municipality of Trujillo. Wagucha promotes resilient human development among Honduran Garifuna people. Its work focuses largely on food security, climate-smart practices and organic agriculture, promoting sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship, disaster preparedness and response, among others. As with many Plataforma member organisations, the creation of Wagucha was prompted by Garifuna communities' need to organize around community rebuilding and livelihood recovery in the aftermaths of Hurricane Mitch.

The following leadership roles were identified for and undertaken by the grassroots women members of the Plataforma:

- Selected grassroots women leaders from several of the Plataforma member organisations were trained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Husbandry to grow, process and reproduce moringa in an effective and sustainable manner.
- The selected women leaders began identifying sources of moringa seeds to start developing nurseries in different communities. By June 2012 in different communities in the municipalities of Trujillo and Rio Esteban, 500 moringa plants were planted, including 300 plants for seed production in the nurseries.
- 12 organized groups were formed, in the same period, in the communities of Jutiapa, Atlántida, Santa Fe, San Antonio and Guadalupe to expand the moringa nursery and orchards initiative to their communities.
- Grassroots women currently are taking up leadership roles, leading work committees under which seven communities, in the same departamento of Colon, are replicating the initiative.

¹⁷ The Garifuna are descendants of enslaved Africans that escaped their captors. They live primarily in Central America, along the Caribbean coast in Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras.

¹⁸ The Community Practitioners Platform (CPP) is a partnership and networking mechanism led by grassroots women that connects community groups to each other and to institutional actors working in the field of disaster risk reduction and resilient development.

¹⁹ Wagucha is the Garifuna word for "our roots".

It is to be noted that the moringa initiative was a result of community hazard and vulnerability mapping carried out earlier on by grassroots women of the Plataforma, after being trained by leaders of Jamaica's Construction Resource and Development Centre²⁰ (CRDC). The CRDC leaders are also members of the CPP, which promotes and supports peer learning within organized groups of women working on DRR and community resilience. The mapping exercise, which had been initiated in communities most at risk of disaster and negative impacts of climate change, helped the participating communities to assess their needs and prioritize actions. Food insecurity soon emerged as the most pressing issue to be addressed, as local livelihoods were increasingly threatened by recurrent small-scale climate-related disasters such as drought, coastal erosion and tropical storms.

To address food insecurity, the Plataforma women members decided to promote the cultivation, processing and consumption of moringa, through nurseries and orchards, as an integrative initiative to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in their communities. Moringa is a drought-resistant, fast-growing edible plant with very high content of protein, minerals and vitamins. It is also considered a traditional plant for the Garifuna people, and its use had increased in previous years due to new markets for commercializing it.

People targeted by the initiative were the mostly Garifuna communities devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Some 2,000 people were directly participating in the initiative, of whom 70% were women organized in committees. Wagucha estimated that 5,000 families would benefit indirectly from the moringa nurseries.

The initiative was initially supported by the World Bank's *South-South Cooperation Program Grant for Facilitating Women's Leadership*²¹, under the GFDRR, in partnership with the Huairou Commission. With this initial funding, the Community Resilience Fund (CRF) was created as a financial mechanism managed by grassroots women, who utilize flexible funding for DRR and resilience building at the community level.

The CRF, which is supported by the Huairou Commission, provides funds that enable implementing communities to leverage other funds locally and nationally. The ongoing expansion of the moringa initiative in Honduras is supported by the CRF.

The Plataforma also received direct support from the Honduran Ministry of Agriculture and Husbandry to train grassroots women leaders on how to grow, process and reproduce moringa.

²⁰ The Construction Resource and Development Centre (CRDC) in Jamaica has been working since 1984 to get women involved in shelter and construction activities. It was the first organisation in Jamaica to set up a women's construction collective. The Collective trains and places women in construction-related businesses. CRDC has a women's housing advice line which provides technical, legal and financial assistance for low-income women in search of affordable housing solutions.

²¹ The full official name of the GFDRR programme is "South-South Cooperation Program Grant for Facilitating Women's Leadership and Forging Partnerships to Drive the Demand for Local Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action".

Impact and Results

As of today, the initiative has achieved the following results:

- Enhanced capacity for the Garifuna women to organize themselves and get involved in sustainable development, DRR and CCA activities, including as certified COPECO (National Emergency Authority) volunteers, certified COPECO *Development Managers in Disaster Risk Reduction* and members of Local Emergency Committees. Furthermore, the implementing women groups undertook peer-to-peer exchange to share their newly acquired expertise and awareness and mobilize new community groups to get involved.
- A partnership between the grassroots women and CEPREDENAC (Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America): the women's achievements took them to a higher level - to regional level, with such a partnership that helps them to position their work at a larger scale and leverage available opportunities to secure technical and financial support.
- Strengthened partnership between the Plataforma and COPECO, which trained more than 200 Garifuna community members to be first respondents in the event of an emergency and to be certified COPECO volunteers who can monitor hazards, map risks and organize and respond within minutes of a disaster event. Most of the trained women became part of Local Emergency Committees.
- Enhanced advocacy, lobbying, negotiation and partnership skills: the grassroots women were trained by Wagucha to be able to advocate resilience, lobby and negotiate with local governments, and build strong partnerships with local governments and other public/private institutional actors.
- The women were positioned as key advisors to development policies and programmes targeting their communities. This approach was adopted by Wagucha (and also CPC) to reduce risk and build long-term resilience. As grassroots women were powerful catalysts for change, their leadership was essential. The challenge, however, is to ensure that the women leaders, with their capacity to motivate and mobilize communities around local issues affecting women and the community at large, continue exploring and promoting development opportunities.
- The grassroots women have been recognised by their communities as leaders and promoters of development. And because they were widely recognized as experts in resilience building and innovators in sustainable development, they have been appointed to decision-making committees and boards.
- As the moringa initiative also has a strong economic and entrepreneurship focus, the women who are implementing it have improved their socio-economic status within their households and communities. This has directly empowered them further and increased their autonomy and self-recognition as active agents in their communities and the society at large.

The Good Practice

This initiative is a good practice because it was context-relevant and empowering, and also made good use of the women's skills and leadership to advance DRR and resilience building:

1. The *moringa* initiative was relevant to the local economic context as it enhanced food security and reduced famine risk in the participating communities. It was also culturally relevant because it promoted and preserved the traditional knowledge of the Garifuna women of Honduras.
2. The initiative helped to organize and empower historically impoverished and marginalized communities, especially women, supporting them to raise awareness in their communities and local governments, and take up leadership roles in resilience building and DRR activities.
3. The initiative is replicable, as shown by the fact that it is already being replicated in seven communities. As a matter of fact, the *moringa* initiative was also a training-of-trainers practice. Training more and more women help to rotate responsibilities and engage other women (as well as men and youths) in all ongoing and planned resilience-building activities.
4. The initiative made good use of the women's skills and leadership to advance DRR and resilience building. Indeed, the following activities undertaken by women were, combined together, a major boost to resilience building, DRR and CCA and resilience: implementing the initiative with the use of seed funds provided in the framework of development; improving livelihoods; enhancing community disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention, involving both women and men.

The following key factors contributed to the initiative's success:

- The initiative is a brainchild of the communities and is based on a collective process of decision making. This participatory and bottom-up approach not only ensures that actions taken do address issues prioritized by the targeted communities, but it also generates a sense of ownership that increased the participants' commitment to its objectives and expected results.
- The initiative is led by grassroots women and has an empowerment focus. During the implementation stage, the women have been continuously trained in leadership, negotiation skills, agricultural techniques, DRR and resilient development, public policy, etc. With the acquired capacities, they have taken up leadership roles in the design, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation of the initiative. They also manage the funds being utilized in the initiative. They have taken up a public role in policy forums and events where the work of the Plataforma is showcased,

and are now having a say on community and institutional policy issues. This has anchored their interest in and commitment to the initiative, and to speeding up the community resilience and DRR agendas at the local level.

- The *moringa* initiative has a special focus on poverty alleviation through entrepreneurship and income diversification. Connecting this particular issue – so important to the impoverished Garifuna communities – to the DRR agenda has been one of the main reasons why the communities not only have opened their doors to the initiative but also have played a key role in its maintenance and expansion over time.

Lesson(s) Learned

Some of the key lessons learned from this initiative include:

- Political advocacy and building strong partnerships are important pillars in building resilience because they help to incorporate grassroots women's resilience practices into policies and programmes.
- Partnerships on an equal footing among organized groups of grassroots women help to build networks that can explore and promote opportunities, and leverage resources available at local, national, regional and global levels to support community-led practices.
- Consolidating a win-win partnership with a single government department/institution can be a good entry point into the national arena. To implement the initiative, the Plataforma received direct support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Husbandry to conduct training on *moringa* planting, processing and use. Consolidating this partnership was a first step to enter the national arena and start promoting the CPP as a partnership mechanism to accelerate grassroots women's roles in decision-making processes related to resilient development policy agendas. Subsequently, the Plataforma built a strong partnership with the Ministry of Planning, working directly with the Technical Secretary for Planning and External Cooperation, and also with COPECO (the National Emergency Authority), with which it developed a series of actions, such as COPECO skills certification of grassroots community members of the Plataforma as "Development Managers in Disaster Risk Reduction".

It should be noted that the initiative has also encountered some challenges. One of the main challenges is the constant rotation of government officials, especially at the local

level. This is because most of the partnerships described above depend on the political will of government representatives, not on government bodies' institutional mandates. To overcome this challenge, the Plataforma has started advocating formal agreements signed with government bodies in the framework of the CPP – as this mechanism has proved to be mutually beneficial for both institutional actors and community-based groups in the Honduran context.

Another challenge is the lack of resources, which invariably has been a concern for the Plataforma and its mission of scaling-up the *moringa* initiative. Even though resources have been leveraged, it has been difficult to find flexible funds that communities and grassroots women could allocate to priorities such as leadership training and empowerment - which is essential to the success of the initiative. Given the chronic nature of the challenge and to ensure the sustainability of the Community Resilience Fund (CRF), the Plataforma women have paid more attention to not only leveraging external funds to replenish it but also encouraging the very beneficiaries of the Fund to give back, so that the *moringa* initiative and other similar initiatives can reach other communities.

Lastly, documenting the process and disseminating its results have also been a challenge. The community groups working within the Plataforma usually do not have the capacity for large-scale documentation and dissemination of their work (through publications, the media, etc.) and not enough resources are available to build the required capacity and invest in communications. Being members of global organisations like the Huairou Commission, however, helped to access the desired support and win recognition for successful resilience building practices such as the *moringa* initiative.

Still, supporting initiatives like the *moringa* initiative requires better availability of flexible funds that grassroots women's groups can utilize to fully scale up their resilience practices and meet their priorities. Likewise, decentralization laws should help communities benefit from local funds and programmes that respond more directly to their needs and initiatives.

In the same vein, adequate institutional spaces are required for grassroots communities, especially women, to meet and partner with local authorities, and create opportunities for negotiations and partnership building in a more transparent and accountable manner. Last but not least, creating opportunities for grassroots women's capacity building is essential to strengthening of bottom-up community-led initiatives like the *moringa* initiative.

Potential for Replication

This initiative has already proven to be easily replicable as it is being replicated in seven communities with different geospatial and socioeconomic contexts. Depending on the geographical context, working in natural resources management, especially forestry, provides an opportunity for local communities to improve their quality of life, diversify the local economy, and promote long-term resilience. Empowering women to lead the related processes is key for sustainability, given their track records and capacity to speed up DRR action in situ as well as their commitment to sustain projects with direct impact on their families' and communities' wellbeing.

One of the main social constraints for scaling up, however, is the lack or inadequate recognition of grassroots women as direct contributors to DRR and resilient development. Lack of understanding of gender-related issues in disaster risk reduction affects poor women and prevents grassroots women from playing public roles fully and swiftly in the local, national and global agendas of DRR. This is another reason why insufficient development funding is available for grassroots women to invest in resilience building initiatives like the ones implemented or promoted by the Plataforma.

As a conclusion, for scaling up the initiative, the following actions are recommended:

- Training other communities on this practice, to reduce food insecurity. This is relevant as the practice has proven successful for impoverished communities with little access to job markets.
- Making use of the proven success of the initiative to engage local authorities in supporting and investing in bottom-up initiatives that build local resilience among poor communities, with little access to infrastructure and services.
- Building partnerships with national actors to scale up achievements. This is because scaling up involves transferring knowledge to and replicating the initiative in a larger context, which requires collaboration among key stakeholders.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CEPREDENAC: Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de Desastres en América Central / Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America

COPECO: Comisión Permanente de Contingencias / National Emergency Authority

CPP: Community Practitioners Platform

GFDRR: Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (The World Bank)

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India



Poor, marginalised women turned community resilience leaders in cyclone-prone village

*Practical Action,
State of Odisha, Eastern India*



A women's group meeting
to identify local needs

Abstract

Jaypur village cluster, on the eastern coast of India, is prone to strong cyclones and severe floods. Lives, livelihoods and property are affected badly after each disaster event. A project was launched in 2009 to reduce poverty and improve the life of poor and marginalised people. 70 Jaypur poor and marginalised women were assisted to join a women group. The women became active participants in male-dominated local government institutions, and one was elected village head. Their group became a women's rights counselling centre, enabled access to microcredit and financial services, improved incomes and community resilience, and led in sharing disaster information. The project has turned poor and marginalised women into all-round community resilience leaders.

The Initiative

This initiative is a project focusing on practice and implementation that aims to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of poor and marginalised men and women. Its major objective was to build the capacity of the local governance system to include poor and vulnerable men and women in consultative and decision-making processes.

Implemented from July 2009 to March 2014, the project area encompassed 49 *gram panchayats* (village local self-government bodies) and 20 urban slums in Puri, Nayagarh and Khurdha districts of the State of Odisha (formerly Orissa) on the eastern coast of India. This geographical area is facing the Bay of Bengal, which is known to be a “breeding ground” for tropical cyclones.

The following entities were involved in the project: women Self Help Groups (SHGs); the village community; NGOs; *Panchayati Raj*²² Institutions (PRIs), which are India’s grassroots-level self-government mechanisms; the State Institute of Rural Development and Government of Odisha’s Panchayati Raj Department. A total of 880 women from 50 SHGs were involved.

The project was implemented by Practical Action with the support of its local partner SWAD (Society for

Women Action Development) and funding from the European Union (EU).

The present case study is from Jaypur Village Cluster, Gop Block²³, Puri District.

Impact and Results

In the whole project area, the women SHGs generally took the lead in mobilising and organising communities, especially women, incorporating women’s needs into community-level planning processes, and working for the inclusion of women in village-level committees and other local government bodies. In Jaypur, where 70 poor women were assisted to join a women body called Jaypur Mahila Mandal (Jaypur Women Group), the project impact was outstanding:

- The Jaypur Mahila Mandal women became active participants in local self-governance institutions, which traditionally have been a male preserve. In 2012, one Jaypur Mahila Mandal woman was elected *sarpanch* (head) of the *panchayat* (village-level self-governing institution).
- The women took up collective initiatives to enhance livelihoods. Their first initiative was to clear weeds from the village pond. This was done solely by the women with no financial support from an agency. They subsequently took the pond on a five-year lease from the *gram*

²² Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats (villages) are the basic administrative units. It has 3 levels: gram (village - which can comprise more than one village), janpad (taluka or block) and zilla (district).

²³ An administrative unit between the gram panchayat (village) and the district.

panchayat (village local government body) and started fish cultivation. The group also started other income-generating activities like pig and duck rearing, coir work and pottery. For this, the women were able to obtain some benefits through convergence and linkages with government schemes and programmes. Regarding these government schemes, the project team helped the women's group to build awareness about the schemes and helped them establish the initial linkages.

- The empowered women were also able to successfully get safe drinking water sources for the village, by working with the concerned government department.
- Through the women's efforts, some 40 permanent houses in the village were built under government housing programmes.
- Jaypur Mahila Mandal emerged as a counselling centre for women's rights and entitlements and Jaypur Mahila Mandal leaders as vibrant advocates of such rights and entitlements. All the members now take an active part in pallisabha & gramsabha (village-level meetings) and raise their voices for their rights and entitlements.
- Jaypur Mahila Mandal leaders, with support from the local police, resolved cases of domestic violence or family disputes.
- The Jaypur Mahila Mandal women took on a leadership role in sharing information on impending disasters. As soon as its seven women leaders get information of any threat of cyclone or flood, they share it with the community.

- Jaypur Mahila Mandal enabled increased access to microcredit and financial services. The women group worked to improve incomes substantially and boost community resilience.
- Jaypur Mahila Mandal currently has savings worth over 5 lakhs (500,000 Indian rupees or 8,000 USD). The savings are used as a rotating fund among the women and to provide easy credit especially in post-disaster situations. Repayment is based on the group's agreed rules.

It is to be noted that Jaypur is prone to recurrent disasters, the most recent ones being: a strong cyclone (cyclone Hudhud) in October 2014; another strong cyclone (cyclone Phailin) in 2013; floods in 2011, 2008, 2006 and 2003; a super cyclone (cyclone 05B) in 1999. Lives, livelihoods and property are severely affected after each disaster event. So before joining the Jaypur Mahila Mandal, the 70 poor women's households had suffered a lot from disaster impact such as food insecurity, collapsed houses, loss of agricultural yields, non-availability of safe drinking water and sanitation. The project built their capacity and empowered them to assert their rights, access benefits and entitlements, and act for community resilience.

The Good Practice



The project is a good practice. It has turned poor women into all-round leaders who can lead on three fronts: social, economic, and public. The Jaypur Mahila Mandal story demonstrates how empowered women can enhance and strengthen livelihoods and help build disaster resilience and disaster recovery capacity.

To utilise women's skills and leadership for risk reduction and resilience building, the project adopted the following approach. As women bear the brunt of disasters, the project focused on mobilising women and building them as community leaders for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and resilience building. Efforts were undertaken to build the capacity of 70 women in the village. This was done through individual interactions, group meetings, exposure and interface with different stakeholders. Handholding support from the project was provided to women groups for alternative income generation programmes, such as pig and duck rearing, coir and stitching work and pottery, through convergence and linkages with government schemes and programmes; the alternative income generation programmes being aimed at strengthening resilience.

A major component of the capacity building training was on DRR and resilience, and the Mahila Mandal shortly after became a taskforce for the community. The women's skills and leadership were also utilised as follows: as soon as the women leaders receive information of an impending cyclone or flood, they share them within their communities and plan for shelter, food and drinking water for every household.

Key success factors of the initiative included the following:

- Focusing on women, who were made aware of and sensitised on how they could take the initiative to build better lives and livelihoods for their communities and themselves.
- Capitalizing on the women's traditional knowledge and skills for income generation.
- Promoting collaborative efforts by different stakeholders.
- Ensuring transparency and accountability: the group was educated on and adhered to these two values.

The fact that it was a *mahila mandal* (women group) was also a major factor leading to success. A *mahila mandal* in India is a community-based rural women organisation which generally has more than 20 members. It functions as a village forum for women to discuss their personal, social, political, spiritual and economic concerns. It has an elected executive body but its key asset is members' ability to be together, think together and act together.

These success factors contributed to the overall positive impact of the project. The empowered women could put forward their views in public forums and became confident enough to take an active part in local decision-making processes and demand their rights and entitlement. This contributed to making the grassroots local self-government planning process more participatory and inclusive, which increased the positive impact of the project.

Also, linking with government agencies on various development and income generation activities, taking up alternative livelihood options and adopting new technology, helped the women enhance their household incomes and improve their quality of life, which expanded the scope of the project's impact.

Lesson(s) Learned

Key lessons learned from the project included the following:

- Empowered women groups can take stronger and more sustainable initiatives.
- Women need to be active participants in governance and political processes.

Some challenges, however, were also encountered during the project. A major challenge was resistance and opposition from males in the families and other interest groups in the community. This led the project to work on building awareness and dispelling fears among males in the families. Later on, the empowered women themselves were able to take on entrenched interest groups.

To sustain the initiative, the project worked with the government to strengthen women's participation and leadership in the local self-governance process. But even if enabling policies are in place, there is a further need to strengthen practice.

To promote the initiative, the project has showcased the women group's achievements to various stakeholders and at varied forums, explaining that women often bear the brunt of disasters, so they can and should be enabled to play leadership roles in community resilience and sustainable development.

Potential for Replication

The project is easily replicable, especially in South Asia. In the traditional societies that exist in South Asia, there is a strong resistance to giving effective leadership roles to women but this can be overcome by putting enabling policies in place and ensuring their implementation by educating both men and women.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

EU: European Union

PRI: Panchayati Raj Institution

SHG: Self Help Group

SWAD: Society for Women Action Development

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Japan



Women's umbrella coalition wins key disaster risk reduction reforms, works for a gender-equal HFA2

JWNDRR (Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction)



The evacuation center
in Fukushima

Abstract

Immediately after the 11 March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, women in affected areas and from across Japan came together to form a women's umbrella coalition called the *Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction* (hereafter, JWNDRR). Joined by over 100 member organisations, JWNDRR has sought to empower women inside and outside Japan, and to actively participate in all aspects of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). JWNDRR wants to foster change that will impact upon not only legislation, but also the concrete challenges that women face at the grassroots. JWNDRR quickly won key legislative and policy reforms and continues to work to ensure that gender perspectives are included in the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2) to be adopted in March 2015 at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in Japan.

The Initiative

The Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (JWNDRR) emerged in the immediate aftermath of the 11 March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami – also known as the “Triple Disaster”²⁴. Women in the affected areas, as well as from across Japan, came together to publicly air the concrete challenges facing women at the grassroots. This led to the formation of a giant umbrella coalition whose national mandate was to advocate both legislative/policy change and concrete implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment in the reconstruction of the affected Tohoku region. Its international focus has been on ensuring the inclusion of gender equality and diverse perspectives in DRR policies, and notably, in the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2) to be adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in Japan in March 2015.

Through active participation and advocacy throughout the policy-making process, JWNDRR's aim is to improve the content of Japanese laws and policies. At the same time, law and policy reform is not enough. Women must be empowered to actively participate in DRR policy-making, decision-making, as well as in the concrete implementation of DRR that is undertaken at the local, national and international levels. Consequently, JWNDRR is proposing to develop a training initiative that supports women's empowerment. To foster a paradigm shift across multiple sectors and target audiences, it will include training modules, not only on women's leadership but also on the mainstreaming of gender equality commitments into DRR approaches and frameworks.

JWNDRR includes a wide variety of women's groups and collaborates with Japanese and international gender equality experts. Even though JWNDRR has already achieved several key legislative reforms in Japan, it is still actively seeking to empower women in Japan and in countries worldwide. To that end, JWNDRR believes that a comprehensive training model is needed to ensure that desired changes are not merely included in legislation, but also impact upon the diverse realities and practical resilience of women at the grassroots. Their first objective is to advance concrete legislative and policy reforms and to educate the entire Japanese population. The second objective is to develop adapted training modules that have specific targets, such as national and local DRR managers, leaders of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), women's organisations, as well as the general public.

The *Japan Women's Network for DRR* includes political action groups, such as the International Women's Year Liaison Group Japan and Accountability Caucus for the

²⁴ Also referred to as 3.11. The three disasters are the earthquake, the resulting tsunami, and the radioactive contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant which could not withstand the earthquake and tsunami.

Beijing Conference; national organisations, such as the National Federation of Regional Women's Organisations and the National Council of Women's Centers; academic groups such as the Society of Japanese Women Scientists and the Japanese Association of University Women; professional bodies, such as the Japan Medical Women's Association and Japan Society of Disaster Nursing; and international, welfare and educational NPOs and NGOs in various fields. In all, over 100 organisations have joined forces to contribute to JWNDRR.

Over the past four years, JWNDRR has taken leadership roles in a wide variety of local, national, and international advocacy and educational activities, including political lobbying, drafting of law reform recommendations, the organisation of large-scale awareness-raising symposiums, and by fostering a shared consensus on gender-equal DRR objectives, based on data gathered from the diverse women who were directly affected by the triple disaster of 11 March 2011. The funds to establish JWNDRR and to sustain its initial activities came from individual donations and support provided by various women's groups across the country.

Impact and Results

Seizing a strategic window of opportunity, JWNDRR has enjoyed tremendous success, partly due to the timing of its establishment in the immediate aftermath of 3.11. At this particular moment in history, local to national governments in Japan, joined by the international community, shone a light on the challenges of the affected areas and thus provided an opportunity to both raise and re-politicize the pre-existing gender inequalities that were further exacerbated by the triple disaster. Although many Japanese women's groups and NPOs had existed prior to 3.11, it was the events of the triple disaster that brought them together to collaborate towards common goals and concrete legislative reforms. This has made the movement very strong, diverse, and wide-reaching.

Within a short period of time, strategic advocacy by JWNDRR has resulted in significant gains in Japanese government policy reforms. JWNDRR secured meetings with women legislators, relevant Ministers, and they submitted 15 separate petitions to the National Diet²⁵ (Parliament) within a three-month time period. These intensive advocacy and lobbying efforts raised the profile of gender equality among parliamentarians and ultimately influenced the membership of the government's 15-member Reconstruction Design Council from the appointment of one token woman to the appointment of several women with relevant policy and professional expertise. The Council included a discussion of

²⁵ Japan's bicameral legislature which is composed of a lower house called "House of Representatives" and an upper house called "House of Councillors".

gender equality in its initial findings released on 29 May 2011, and the *Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction* released on 28 July 2011 mentioned gender perspectives in 12 separate sections.

A subsequent victory won by JWNDRR in June 2012 was a partial reform of the *Basic Act on Disaster Control Measures* that struck down the requirement that members of central and local disaster management councils be appointed exclusively from specified (male-dominated) professions. Since then, any individual with expertise relevant to disaster risk reduction can be appointed to these councils. This has led to an encouraging increase in the number of women members appointed to the disaster management councils at the local, prefectural, and national levels of Japan.

Even though it is difficult to measure the impact of policy changes that make leadership positions available to women, a shift in focus towards both gender equality and DRR has resulted from women's

increased presence and leadership and this is contributing significantly to community resilience-building. Overall, women are generally much more aware of the social or "soft" aspects of fostering resilient communities than the traditional male DRR specialists, whose focus tends to concentrate on the infrastructure-related or "hard" aspects of roads, construction and risk management.

To sustain this shift in focus towards gender and DRR, JWNDRR aims to support women's training and leadership to ensure that sufficient women experts may be available for appointment to key positions on government committees and councils. The proposed JWNDRR Training Initiative has therefore identified both women's and men's education and training, such that men working in DRR will also become better educated as to the importance of integrating gender equality into DRR strategies and frameworks.

The Good Practice

JWNDRR believes that advocacy success that influences legislation and policy reform is essential in advancing gender equality in DRR frameworks, but these processes must also recognise the importance of training women and the larger community in order that gender-inclusive policies may be implemented in practice at the grassroots level.

JWNDRR realizes that, rather than being silent and helpless victims of disasters, women are in fact leaders within their community who must be empowered to use their strengths and experiences at each stage of the DRR process.

JWNDRR is committed to ensuring that women's skills and leadership are valued by governments, the media, and the general public for their contributions at every level of DRR processes, from training and advocacy to policy-making and decision-making, and from policy implementation to evaluation and reform. Women's strengths, experiences

and abilities are an essential component of resilience-building and better DRR governance.



Nationwide symposium on 11 June 2011

Lesson(s) Learned

The key lessons learned are as follows:

- Legislative reform is important, but the impact of law and policy is limited by concrete commitments to proactive implementation of gender equality commitments from the local to national levels.
- It is essential that women at the grassroots be empowered to participate in various levels of local through national government policy-making and decision-making processes.
- Ensuring gender-equal approaches are mainstreamed into DRR is particularly difficult given that it is a traditionally male-dominated policy area, not only in Japan but also in many countries worldwide.

- Rather than building or enhancing community resilience, DRR laws and policies have been directed at managing disasters and preventing physical damage through improved infrastructure and construction techniques. Albeit important, this narrow focus leaves little opportunity for women's voices to be heard and valued.
- Challenging the status quo has been very difficult and therefore the strategic collaboration of a forceful and broad-based coalition of organisations has been essential to achieving policy gains.
- The remaining challenge is to train and empower women to take full advantage of these recent policy gains, and to mainstream women's participation more fully at all levels of DRR policy development, implementation, and training.

Potential for Replication

JWNDRR understands that law and policy reforms are constrained by the specific legal and political context of each country/region. However, a common challenge to most societies is the lack of attention to gender equality and women's empowerment as a core component of effective disaster risk reduction. Empowering women in the context of DRR will also contribute to women's empowerment more generally since disasters merely expose and exacerbate the social weaknesses and exclusions that are already present in a society. Ensuring that respect for gender equality and the diversity of the population is a prior commitment in all DRR policies will lead to the more general empowerment of women and other diverse groups, as their needs, strengths and leadership will be more fully recognised and mobilized in the recovery and reconstruction processes that follow.

JWNDRR hopes to develop an effective training programme that can be adapted to diverse local and national realities and then implemented in many parts of the world. JWNDRR also believes that effective training initiatives must aim to provide women with the skills, knowledge and also the confidence to participate as leaders in DRR. At the same time, such training should also include men, so they can understand the advantages of including viewpoints from diverse perspectives in DRR planning and management. Social transformation is a long-term venture that requires sustained political will and sufficient funding over the long term to generate consistent policy improvements. At a minimum, legislative reforms can eliminate some of the structural inequalities of existing DRR policies and approaches; this constitutes an important first step towards the long-term realization of gender-equal disaster risk reduction.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

HFA2: Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction

JWNDRR: Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction

NPO: Non-Profit Organisation

WCDRR: World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

3.11: March 2011 (referring to the 11 March 2011 “Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami”)

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Japan



Women's group boosts social capital to build disaster-resilient community

*Women's Eye (WE)
Miyagi Prefecture, Japan*

Connecting women through crafts



Abstract

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of March 2011 broke up communities, leaving many individuals isolated and vulnerable. To combat social fragmentation and encourage mutual aid, the present project, implemented in a northeast Japanese town, has created numerous small women's networks in order to produce safety nets in the daily lives of residents. This kind of "social capital"²⁶ approach which, many scholars say, is needed for creating disaster-resilient communities, has helped to turn local women into active agents of community disaster resilience.

²⁶ The World Bank, for instance, describes "social capital" as follows: "Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together."

The Initiative

The initiative is an implementation project that aims to build a more resilient local community. To build greater community resilience among those affected by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, it is crucial to combat social fragmentation and encourage mutual aid by creating numerous small networks that produce a safety net in local town residents' daily lives.

Indeed, many affected residents have been dispersed, and social ties are weakened or broken even though the local geographical context (districts and hamlets) is already densely networked and hierarchically organized. By creating small groups focused on common interests based on similar living conditions, the project aims to buttress pre-existing vertical social relationships with small, horizontal communities, preventing people from slipping through the cracks.

Initiated in September 2011, the project is still under way primarily in Minamisanriku Town (northeast Japan), Miyagi Prefecture, Tohoku Region. Minamisanriku Town was one of those worst affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The project is implemented by Women's Eye (WE), with support from the following stakeholders: local women; the Minamisanriku Town Disaster Support Center; volunteers; heads of local associations; heads of local community centers; the Miyagi Prefectural Government; and various specialists. The project targets some 5,000 women living in Minamisanriku Town, and is funded by the Miyagi Prefecture.

WE is a specified non-profit corporation that seeks to be a helping hand for women to become active players in rebuilding their own lives and communities. WE operates around Tome City, Kesennuma City and Minamisanriku Town, all in Miyagi Prefecture. WE, initially called RQ Women's Support Center (RQW), was established on 1 June 2011 by a group of volunteers who gathered after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami to work for and give support to affected people in disaster-struck areas. RQW became a specified non-profit corporation and was renamed Women's Eye on 4 June 2013.

To create opportunities for dialogue, communication and social change among local women, Women's Eye promotes not only those women at the top but also those who can stand in-between to connect and encourage those around them. The focus, accordingly, is more on identifying and developing potential coordinators, organizers and mediators than on leaders.

Impact and Results

The following results have been achieved through this initiative:

- The project has given birth to numerous small thematic communities, promoting strong links and a sense of independence amongst members. For example, participating women have taken a lead in maintaining regular gatherings and planning new activities, displaying major shifts in both confidence and community engagement.
- The project has turned local women into major actors addressing issues in their area. And as the number of community organizers increases with the number of small communities created by the project, the latter improves women's conditions not just by developing key leaders but also by encouraging those who want to do something, however small, for their communities, to do it.
- As the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami broke up pre-existing communities, leaving many individuals isolated and vulnerable, the project has helped to reduce communication barriers

amongst women, whose attentiveness to daily life leaves them well equipped to identify and move quickly to help the socially vulnerable.

- Participating in the project activities has given them the opportunity to discuss their conditions and the issues facing them, their families and their communities with others in similar situations.

To sum up, the project has helped build resilience through increasing social capital, which many scholars argue is essential in a post-disaster context. This has been achieved through creating safety nets among residents dispersed by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, combating social fragmentation, and encouraging mutual aid. Information sharing about living conditions through the new networks has also led to many women becoming more active parties in their communities. In other words, many women whose social ties were weak (or weakened by the disasters) have taken on roles related to community organizing as a result of their participation in the project.



Members of a single mothers' group

The Good Practice

This project can be regarded as a good practice for the following reasons:

- It has empowered socially isolated women to become agents of community resilience.
- The project does not require a large amount of resources. It requires mainly a good understanding of the concept of “social capital”, the need to combat social fragmentation and encourage mutual aid.
- The project has leveraged available mechanisms in that the local women’s knowledge and pre-existing networks were indispensable for building the small communities.

Key success factors of this initiative include the following:

1. Focusing the women’s gatherings on activities that are both fun and useful; and
2. Creating an enjoyable, productive atmosphere attuned to the schedule, needs and feelings of each individual member. This is essential because of the heavy workloads faced by local women. But this is possible only in small-group settings.

To maintain the viability of such small thematic communities and their associated events, it was necessary for each member to take some responsibility for the group. By taking care of whatever is valued by each member, the group helps instil a sense of self-respect, which in turn leads to greater consideration toward other members.

Lesson(s) Learned

Some of the key lessons learned from the project include the following:

- In communities fragmented by disaster events, combating social fragmentation yields positive results in terms of both disaster resilience and quality of life.
- It is necessary to redefine “leadership”. Small communities do not need strong leadership but rather strong coordination and intra-connection. Furthermore, for them to become self-governing, there needs to be a sense of local ownership.

However, managing change is always an issue, so one challenge is how to adjust when participants bring new members into a group. Accordingly, the project has made it a policy to discuss how to create a welcoming atmosphere, bringing the issue out into the open.

Another challenge for Women's Eye as an organisation was that, due to the small scale of the activities, very few individuals would subscribe to them initially. A policy of ongoing consultations has helped to continually adjust the theme, timing, location, etc., of activities to create the best fit for the targeted women.

Women's Eye intends to continue expanding the project, incorporating the voices of more local women and increasing the number of local coordinators.

Potential for Replication

The project can be easily replicated. However, whatever the context, it is crucial to develop a relationship of trust with and among targeted women. This is something that fun events with relaxed membership criteria facilitate. Such events also function to connect local residents with visitors from outside.

Since the function of such thematic communities is to connect people, with each one forming a node in an expanding horizontal network, they form a viable strategy irrespective of cultural differences or the particularities of local issues. However, it is crucial that these communities be kept small in size, not least because small communities do not directly threaten established hierarchies and are, accordingly, unlikely to be subject to censure.

Lastly, as mentioned briefly in the Lessons Learned section above, this project, in which leadership roles and their contents vary from one community to another, highlights the necessity of a flexible notion of "leadership".

Acronyms & Abbreviations

RQW: RQ_Women's Support Center

WE: Women's Eye

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Myanmar



Cyclone-affected village women access to leading roles in disaster risk reduction, village administration

*Oxfam
Myanmar*



Project monitoring visit to
Zin Baung, Myanmar

Abstract

In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar affected some 2.4 million people and left over 80,000 of them dead. In 2012, under the European Commission programme DIPECHO²⁷ VIII, a women-led Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) pilot project was launched for 690 village women in the cyclone-affected areas. As part of the project, some of the trained women accessed true leadership positions, leading village disaster management committees/taskforces or village organisations. Some have even been appointed to formal village administration positions. Their leadership was recognized and viewed positively by male leaders and their communities. The project is being replicated under DIPECHO IX.

²⁷ DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness ECHO) is the disaster preparedness programme of ECHO or DG ECHO (Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission).

The Initiative

This initiative is a pilot project to implement the Women's Leadership component of the DIPECHO VIII programme of the European Commission (EC). The pilot project aimed to promote women leadership in Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) processes. The related activity was to provide DRR leadership skills training and support to community women in 12 villages, under a project focused on disaster preparedness. The project, which was carried out from June 2012 to December 2013, was implemented in coastal and rural areas of Rakhine Region and Ayeyawaddy Region.

The project was implemented by the Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience²⁸ (MCCR), which comprises six partners: Oxfam, Plan International, UN Habitat, Action Aid, HelpAge and Malteser. Two local organisations were also involved in the project: Action for Social Aid and Knowledge and Dedication for Nation Building. The specific role of Oxfam was to support, develop and provide DRR leadership skills training for community women in the targeted villages.

The project targeted 102,720 people in 93 villages, mostly affected by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, with special attention given to women, children, older people and differently able people. Cyclone Nargis caused the worst disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar, affecting as many as 2.4 million people and leaving over 80,000 people dead and some 53,000 missing.

Along with mainstreaming gender into CBDRR processes, Oxfam also initiated women-led DRR pilots in 12 villages. In three villages,²⁹ which stood out from the rest, women had been put in true leadership positions and viewed positively, in such positions, by their communities. The women are leading their DRR project committees or taskforces. In two of the three villages, a number of women were appointed to village administration positions (by local authorities), namely as *sel eain hmuu* (head of 10 households), and executive members of village organisations and pagoda trustees.

²⁸ The Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR) comprises 3 implementing partners (ActionAid, HelpAge and Malteser) and 3 technical partners (Oxfam, Plan and UN-Habitat). Besides focus on women and children, HelpAge's expertise is with older people, while Malteser has a strong background on working with disabled persons. Oxfam deals with the issue of gender, Plan with that of children, while UN-Habitat provides expertise on safer construction and earthquake awareness.

²⁹ Kyon Kan-Zin Baung and Kyon Kan-Latt Pan villages in Pyapon Township, and Aung Hlaing Village in Labutta Township.

Impact and Results

The overall impact of the project can be summarised as follows:

- Some women trained in DRR leadership, as mentioned earlier, accessed true leadership positions. In these capacities, they could express women's concerns, views and ideas, and could boost community mobilization.
- In three villages that stood out from the rest, the women leaders were viewed very positively by their communities. Community members and male leaders recognised them as legitimate leaders.
- In two of these three villages, women were appointed to village administration positions, namely as *sel eain hmuu* (head of 10 households), and as executive members of village organisations and pagoda trustees.

Another impact of the project was key stakeholders' improved knowledge of, capacities and tools for including vulnerable people into DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) through:

- Training in WL skills for 690 women, mostly from Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and Task Forces (TFs). It is to be noted that men were also involved in the WL training.
- Increased women's participation in village affairs and greater confidence to express their opinions and take decisions, cooperate and articulate higher aspirations.
- Community endorsement of the need for an active role of women in DRR. A final KAP (Knowledge, Attitude and

Practice) survey showed that 98% of the respondents felt that women had an active role to play in DRR.

It also emerged from end-line Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with women trained under the project that the project was overwhelmingly popular and positively viewed. Video-making activities were part of the project and received special mention. In fact, some trained women have been subsequently hired by neighbouring villages to produce videos of cultural events.

The women themselves reported the following as a result of the project:

- They could participate actively/boldly in village affairs.
- They could cooperate better with others and work better in a team. They were also able to consult with local authorities and could compare with men.
- They aspired to lead. They acquired a heightened sense of responsibility and were more eager to help the community. They knew how to devote time to community/village affairs and could hold meetings on their own initiative. They were more self-reliant and able to find opportunities for self-development.

Even though the six MCCR partners promote empowerment through DRR work by focusing on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, the core component of the project was on disaster preparedness. Overall, the project contributed to increasing general local risk awareness, key actors' involvement in CBDRR, and local DRR capacity building as an ongoing process. The project also

entailed establishing VDMCs and training people to enhance their capacity to respond to early warning messages and emergency situations.

As far as disaster prevention is concerned, this project component was still in its very early stages as it was mostly done at national level and it focused on identifying earthquake risk. Lastly, small-scale mitigation investments were also made and valued very much by the local communities. In each village visited, people were very positive about the improvements that the project support facilitated (mostly new roads). Overall, the project brought tangible benefits to community development, which the evaluation team members could witness with their own eyes.

It is to be noted that the WL training itself contributed to the success of the project. Following the WL training, positive behaviour changes emerged to advance gender inclusiveness in various activities. Women, for instance, started joining carpentry training, a man-only activity previously. Also, both women and men consulted recognized that women were key players in the community and in DRR.

On gender inclusiveness in particular, Oxfam field officers provided training to MCCR partners' staff and beneficiaries. Oxfam also ensured that risk, capacity and vulnerability assessments were gender sensitive, and that action planning was too. Oxfam procured a Gender-Sensitive DRR Kit that was handed out in the pilot communities covered by its women-led DRR activities. Lastly, Oxfam ensured the meaningful participation as well

as space for women in leadership positions. As a result of MCCR partners' efforts, the VDMCs and TFs are now highly inclusive. Most of the gender targets were reached, although the number of women differed per TF.

Even though no other gender dimension/issue was addressed by the project, the women could also carry out or take part in the following self-confidence building activities:

- Participatory video production. A video was put together by women and children in various communities. The women reported that planning, working in teams, allocating jobs and managing the process all helped them build their confidence and put their leadership training into practice.
- Learning through exchange. Learning-through-exchange workshops on WL were conducted and the sessions were attended by female and male VDMC and TF members. Village administrators were also invited as well as members of women's associations.
- Policy Review. The project came up with a research document that reviews Myanmar's Disaster Management Law from the angle of inclusiveness. 300 copies were printed in English, 200 others in a translated version. The main recipients were government bodies working on DRR, Members of Parliament, and members of a DRR WG (Working Group).

The Good Practice

Some of the good practices in this project include the following:

- The project did not only promote women's leadership in DRR and gender inclusiveness. It was also implemented in a gender-sensitive and culture-sensitive way and was based on the "Do No Harm" approach.
- It showed to the targeted communities that having women in leadership positions helped all other women to articulate their needs and concerns which vary from one group/social group to another.
- The WL training was a good entry point for getting women's active participation and supporting women taking up leadership positions in VDMCs and beyond.
- The project, by creating space for women's leadership, helped to challenge deep-rooted social and cultural barriers to gender inclusion.

Another good practice was to include, in the WL training curriculum, sessions on setting goals. The women found this useful not only in their participation in DRR activities, but also for their personal lives and community development work. Lastly, the project also provided for advocacy to village administrators, many of whom would, afterward, change their attitudes towards women's leadership roles.

It should be noted that as the WL in DRR training focused on practical implications, it supported to some extent the women to be ready psychologically to take up leadership positions in VDMCs and TFs in spite of some challenges. Also, Oxfam field staff ensured that: (1) the desired women's participation was going to be genuine; and that (2) decision-making positions were there for the women. The Oxfam did so through advocacy, facilitating in electing VDMC members, and providing the necessary support after the women took up leadership positions. The trained women also actively participated in many of the risk, vulnerability and capacity analysis workshops and action planning.

The following key factors contributed to the project's success:

- The WL training process itself. Following the WL training, positive behaviour changes emerged to advance gender inclusiveness in various activities. Women, for instance, started joining carpentry training, a men-only activity previously. Also, both women and men consulted were proactive to recognize that women were key players in community and in DRR.
- Oxfam ensuring that women leadership promotion and gender inclusiveness were part of the CBDRR process.

- Involving men in the WL training.
- Creating space for the trained women's cooperation with MCCR implementing partners (IPs) and mainstreaming gender into the CBDRR process.
- Advocating to village administrators, men and other women: men and women consulted were proactive in recognizing that women were key players in the community.

Lesson(s) Learned

Key lessons learned from the project include the following:

- It was not an area where change could be achieved quickly. It needed concerted efforts over time, including working closely across all MCCR partners, not in a stand-alone way.
- It is important to include representatives of existing women's associations.

The project definitely encountered some challenges as it had to look beyond women's participation – which already was (and still is) a challenging task – to advance women's leadership. Overall, the challenges encountered by the project can be summarised as follows:

- Initially, most villages expressed nuanced views about women's potential to take leadership roles in their communities, expressing either mixed opinions or positive-yet-restrictive views.
- The communities initially could not understand what Oxfam was trying to do, as they were not familiar with the idea of promoting leadership and feared that this would make women aggressive.
- Even when men claimed to be supportive, they did not trust the women as leaders because they felt that such short training could not provide them with sufficient skills and experience.
- Some MCCR partners often found it difficult to facilitate the WL-trained women's participation in VDMCs. This was due partly to the fact that staff of MCCR partners did not have enough understanding about WL in practice as they had not been trained sufficiently on the topic. In this regard, Oxfam needs to work more on this to avoid such occurrences in the future.

The above-mentioned challenges were overcome through:

- Awareness raising on the project objectives, especially on why women needed to be involved in CBDRR work.

- Frequent visits to the project villages by the field staff – to see whether the trained women's leadership was being accepted in the communities and to engage with the trained women.
- Advocacy – both formal and informal - to women and also to men and local authorities.
- Continuous support after the training, not carrying it out as a one-off activity.
- Regarding the last challenge mentioned above, overcoming it was quite difficult because of time constraints (the project start was delayed and when the rainy season came, it was very difficult to access some of the villages) and limited number of staff both at Oxfam and the IPs.

Meanwhile, the following measures can help to strengthen the project in the future and introduce similar projects:

- The lessons learned from the present project will be addressed under the DIPECHO IX programme.
- Oxfam will carry out gender mainstreaming into CBDRR processes in all project areas, no longer on a pilot basis.
- Videos led and shot by the trained women will be distributed widely.
- To reinforce awareness and mobilize people around the concept of and understanding about gender and women's leadership in DRR, Oxfam will provide the required training and workshops at the township level and, under DIPECHO IX, at the national level.

Potential for Replication

The project is being replicated in the ongoing DIPECHO IX programme. To do so, Oxfam has tested some of the gender inclusiveness tools with local partners.

Still, some constraints do exist for scaling up the project. In some areas, civil conflict is an obstacle. In most areas, women (and men) have limited time for training and for participation in VDMC activities, because they are busy with livelihoods and family care.

In light of the above, the following measures and initiatives are recommended:

- Some WL training should also be provided to high-ranking government officers.
- Women organisations/associations and village administrators need to be involved. This would help to make WL project gains sustainable.

- More integration and coordination are needed between village/field operation teams (implementing partners and technical support teams) and the project management team which is based in Yangon.
- More joint work is needed between MCCR implementing and technical partners in some areas, especially on how well to support all implementing partners evenly.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CBDRR: Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction

DIPECHO: Disaster Preparedness (Programme of) ECHO

EC: European Commission

ECHO: European Community Humanitarian Aid Office - renamed “European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection” (DG ECHO) in 2009

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

IP: Implementing Partner

KAP: Knowledge, Attitude and Practice

MCCR: Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience

TF: Task Force

TP: Technical Partner

VDMC: Village Disaster Management Committee

WG: Working Group

WL: Women’s Leadership

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New Zealand



Five Māori women community leaders volunteer to reduce earthquake impact on elderly residents in Eastern Christchurch



An informal collective of five Māori³⁰ women community leaders, Christchurch, New Zealand



Maori women community leaders at a tribal community centre in Christchurch

Abstract

In Eastern Christchurch, following the 2010–2011 Christchurch earthquakes³¹, elderly Māori residents with health issues and limited socio-economic resources were further marginalised through isolation in unsafe homes, which affected their psychosocial and functional wellbeing. In response, five Māori women, acknowledged as community leaders in the same Eastern suburbs, collaborated to facilitate social and material support for their elders. News of the project spread locally, prompting expansion of the initiative to address support issues faced by the wider elderly community in Eastern Christchurch. The initiative has also received international recognition.

³⁰ The Māori are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand.

³¹ A series of tremors that occurred within and near the city of Christchurch from 4 September 2010 to 23 December 2011. The first and most severe earthquake (magnitude from 7.0 to 7.1) struck on 4 September 2010. But a large, destructive aftershock (magnitude 6.3) on 22 February 2011 resulted in the death of 185 people.

Addressing the 2013 World Social Science Fellows seminar on decision making in times of uncertainty, the women's leadership collective outlined their communitarian approach to addressing the needs of the elderly. Key factors in the initiative's success have been the Māori women's collectivised approach to leadership, as well as the enactment of traditional cultural values and practices offering a counterpoint to more commonly applied 'command-and-control' approaches for managing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

The Initiative

The initiative, called Kaumātua Day (Elders' Day), is a community-based project developed by an informal collective of five Māori women with community leadership and service roles in Eastern Christchurch. Christchurch is the largest city in the South Island³² of New Zealand, and the country's second³³ most populated urban area. The eastern suburbs of Christchurch have many Māori elderly residents with health issues who have limited social and economic resources. Following the 2010-2011 Christchurch earthquakes, the elderly residents were further marginalised, became more socially and physically isolated in unsafe homes, and had reduced access to health and social services. Consequently, they experienced a substantial increase in incidence of ill health and a corresponding deterioration in psycho-social wellbeing. The women's collective was aware of this issue, met informally and developed a community-based project to facilitate psychosocial and material support for the Māori elderly residents in the community.

The Kaumātua Day project goals were to:

1. Reduce social isolation by supporting the elderly residents to meet one to two times a month;
2. Support social connectedness by facilitating group aspirations, entertainment, dinners and opportunities for intergenerational socialisation; and
3. Facilitate access to material, social and health resources/services for those who were mobility impaired, geographically or socially isolated, and assist the elderly in addressing their broader concerns.

The forms of support extended to the elderly were diverse and ranged from budgetary and taxation advice to transport, accommodation and shopping support as well as health care and family counselling.

The five women began developing the project in June 2011. Funding commenced in January 2012 and implementation started in March 2012. The initiative is still under way.

³² New Zealand is an island country comprising three main landmasses – the North Island, the South Island and Stewart Island – as well as numerous smaller islands

³³ Ranked second after Auckland which is located on the North Island.

The project has been implemented in Eastern Christchurch. The design and implementation collective comprises:

- Mrs Tania Mataki, the *kaiwhakahaere* (chairperson) of Te Puna Oranga (a women and families' social services organisation);
- Mrs Jacqueline Te Wani, a board member of the Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society (ACTIS) and coordinator of Ōtautahi Christchurch Māori wardens³⁴;
- Mrs Sally Pitama, a board member of the Christchurch Migrant Centre and also Māori counsellor at Nurse Maude Hospice Palliative Care Service Christchurch;
- Mrs Gabrielle Stewart, Christchurch administrator of the Te Tai Tonga Southern Māori parliamentary electorate; and
- Mrs Brenda Lowe-Johnson, Community Board member for the Hagley-Ferrymead Community Board.

Leadership and implementation roles within the project management collective included:

- Designing and submitting funding requests to charitable trusts and other stakeholders;
- Managing transportation matters, including ensuring wheelchair accessible resources for the mobility impaired;
- Logistics management in relation to arranging meeting venues, activities, meals, services and information provision;
- Informing elderly attendees about safe ways to address DRR and disaster preparedness; and
- Advising attendees about recovery support resources and facilitating linkages with relevant services.

The members of the collective have worked collaboratively in accordance with Māori collective values. During the initial phase and depending on skills sets, two or three members of the collective would consistently be engaged in addressing each element of the project. As the project advanced, specific roles became inter-changeable in response to changes in funding and the availability of resources.

The project collective accessed seed funding worth 15,000 NZD for the first 18 months of implementation through two community support grants from two New Zealand private family foundations: The Todd Foundation and The Tindall Foundation. In response to the increasing outreach of the initiative, further funding was provided by the Christchurch City Council and other Māori and community stakeholders.

³⁴ Māori wardens are Māori community support and security volunteers that are funded and deployed by the Ministry of Māori Development. Wardens are trained by the New Zealand Police and mobilised where necessary to support the wellbeing of the Māori community.

Impact and Results

The project has reduced the social, economic, physical and environmental impacts of the 2010-2011 Christchurch earthquakes on more than 180 elderly Māori, immigrants and refugees residing in the eastern suburbs of Christchurch.

The project's effectiveness was rapidly identified and information regarding its specific strengths was disseminated locally and nationally through Māori and other stakeholder networks, prompting engagement by Government Ministries. The initiative has also received international recognition. As an example, in response to an invitation from the World Social Science Forum, the women's leadership collective addressed the 2013 World Social Science Fellows seminar on decision making in times of uncertainty. Members of the leadership collective gave a panel presentation on community-based approaches to addressing the needs of the elderly as well as facilitating DRR, disaster recovery and resilience.

Technically speaking, the five women community leaders have responded to Priority 4 of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) by addressing the impact of underlying disaster risks factors arising from altered social, economic and environmental conditions, on an ethnically diverse and vulnerable community. The project has been successful because the women's collective drew on Māori cultural norms. The women adopted a culturally accepted collectivised approach to leadership which sets aside hierarchical power relations, agendas and egos to focus on serving the needs of the community. The approach also reflects the traditional cultural role undertaken by Māori women as *ngā kairaranga oranga* (weavers

of wellbeing). It is to be noted that the Māori culture is a communitarian one that contrasts with the command-and-control models for addressing DRR.

Another key aspect of the women's leadership approach was that the approach was framed by Māori cultural values including: *kotahitanga* (act in unity); *manaakitanga* (extend support); *kaitiakitanga* (offer protection); *whakawhanaungatanga* (draw on genealogical/social connectedness); and the core value *aroha nui ki te tangata* (extend love to all people).

Although this initiative was not specifically designed to address gender issues, the leadership collective acknowledged that elderly men and women in some instances experienced differing stresses in response to disasters. In the Christchurch context, gender was, for the leadership collective, a consideration in that elderly men were more proactive in seeking assistance. The women's collective ensured that elderly women's views were acknowledged and acted on, and that their needs were addressed in an equitable manner.

Also amongst the elderly, single women residing in unsafe rental accommodation were the most compromised group, as most had reduced socio-economic resources - in comparison with their peers - and minimal, if any, family support. Professional networks were drawn on to mediate accommodation issues on behalf of the elderly residents.

Lastly, although elderly women in relationships more usually resided in their own homes and were less likely to be displaced, they experienced other challenges. Some were managing accommodation

problems as well as caring for dependent husbands or partners. In addition to sheltering other family members, several women were also parenting grandchildren. Cross-cultural social expectations, during times of adversity, commonly result in women, regardless of age, becoming the primary care providers for ill family

members, the elderly as well as children. The women leaders were conscious of the additional demands placed on the elderly women, and drew on links with community and government organisations to facilitate access to relevant professional, social and health services, as well as additional financial support.

The Good Practice

The project is good practice in that it showcases the value and successfulness of women's cultural approaches to leadership and addressing DRR.

In contrast to some cultures, the mature women in the collective have been accorded respect and perceived to be wise within their communities because of their age and the culturally accepted roles they undertook to support their multicultural and ethnically diverse communities.

A key gender consideration is that these women are genealogically linked to the local Māori tribe *Ngāi Tahu* which is matriarchal. This has provided them with considerable cultural and social capital and they have been able to exert considerable authority within their broader community.

The key success factors have been:

- Collaborative approach to leadership, characterised by collective responsibility, collective agency, collective action and collective authority;
- The value-informed foundation for the project and its valued-framed implementation; and
- The personal commitment of the voluntary women's collective to expand the initiative from addressing the concerns of elderly Māori to successfully support the needs of the diverse elderly community in the eastern suburbs.

These success factors contributed to the overall positive impact of this initiative in different ways:

- The collaborative approach to leadership, and enacting agency as well as the sharing of workloads ensured that the individual women leaders were not overwhelmed by

- excessive demands in relation to establishing and implementing the initiative.
- Māori cultural values that acknowledge the family as the key unit of cultural capital have ensured that the women's collective has also been able to draw on familial connections to secure additional support when required.
 - The value-informed foundation and valued-framed implementation of the project ensured that the initiative was culturally and personally acceptable to Māori elders, the initial recipients of support. As an exemplar, extension of support was reframed as "service for elders" - an accepted cultural practice that demonstrates respect and positive acknowledgement of the dignity of Māori elders. Protecting, sharing and valuing Māori knowledge are also core factors of Māori culture and elderly Māori are perceived as the guardians of such knowledge. Some cultural values were also shared by elderly participants from other minority ethnicity and migrant communities. Demonstrating respect, recognizing elders' wisdom and facilitating opportunities for the elderly to share knowledge inter-generationally reinforced elders' self-esteem and instilled in them a secure sense of cultural identity.
 - The personal commitment of the women's collective as well as their willingness to expand the initiative in order to support the needs of the wider elderly community was appreciated by Eastern Christchurch residents. The women leaders' recognition of the need for a non-denominational and culturally inclusive response to elder's needs was also welcomed by the diverse ethnic and church-based communities in Eastern Christchurch. The Eastern Christchurch community responded by offering additional resources to facilitate the wider outreach of support to the elderly. The positive relationships with community stakeholder groups have contributed to the women's leadership collective establishing liaisons with Government Ministries.

Collectively, these success factors have contributed to the overall impact of the initiative by ensuring broader access to resources and support for the elderly.

Lesson(s) Learned

Key lessons learned from the project include the following:

- Communities are best placed to identify and, when adequately resourced, facilitate solutions to local DRR concerns.
- The five women's communitarian, cultural value-based and relational approach to addressing DRR has been highly effective.

It is to be noted that sharing of the lessons learned has prompted:

- Increased engagement by and offers of assistance from local stakeholders, health professionals and social services providers; and
- Material support from national service providers, i.e. the Ministry of Social Development.

Project implementation has not been that easy. Major challenges were encountered, including:

- Gate-keeping by local health and social services funding agents acting for the Canterbury District Health Board.
- Tensions that developed with social services and NGOs, which regularly provide support for the elderly. Such tensions arose from the collective's authority to act in the field of support for elderly residents.
- Unwillingness by local authorities and government actors tasked with supporting the community, to engage with the collective and/or provide resources.

However, these challenges were overcome by the collective by:

- Drawing on social linkages with key non-profit stakeholders (i.e. churches, charitable trusts) to access funding support;
- Drawing on familial support networks to ensure an adequate workforce and enhance material resources; and
- Collaborating with key Māori stakeholders and supportive business owners to address resource gaps.

It should also be noted that the project has expanded from servicing the needs of approximately 40 elderly Māori to addressing the issues of the wider elderly community in Eastern Christchurch. However, the project relies on an infrastructure that is contingent on the collective accessing adequate funding each year. Therefore, to ensure that the project remains sustainable, authorisation of regular COL³⁵-adjusted funding is required. Financial capital could be jointly resourced by local authorities, tribal/Māori stakeholders, non-profit organisations (NPOs) and social services with an interest in community resilience, such as service providers displaced by the earthquakes.

Ideally, adequate financing would enable to: (1) facilitate employment of permanent staff for project development, implementation and administration; (2) ensure adequate material resourcing; and (3) provide a platform for expanding the project, building new relationships with other disadvantaged groups, and facilitating the co-development of new community-based and targeted projects.

³⁵ COL: Cost of Living

Potential for Replication

This project could be replicated in a similar context through:

1. Developing a Lessons Learned report that documents and analyses the strengths, successes challenges and solutions identified during the development and implementation of the project.
2. Developing recommendations based on evaluations. This helps to: (1) enhance implementation and outcomes; and (2) facilitate contextualised adaptation of the project for implementation in a new situation.

Still, some social, economic, political and other constraints might hinder the scaling up of the project: (1) social marginalisation of the elderly and women; (2) poverty; (3) political unrest; (4) systemic resistance, within the local and national DRR infrastructure, to communitarian, value-based and relational approaches to DRR; (5) systemic resistance, within the same local and national DRR infrastructure, to partnering with communities to develop contextually relevant approaches to DRR.

So the following measures would be recommended for scaling up the project:

- Global ratification of and renewed commitment to all UN conventions that support and advocate the empowerment of women, including the right to free education.
- Support for women's leadership and representation of women at all levels where decisions around DRR are made.
- Acknowledgement of cultural differences as a source of strength within the area of DRR.
- Adequate funding for DRR initiatives that reflect the concerns of women and their families.
- Providing opportunities for training and mentoring the next generation of female leaders. Special consideration should be given to areas in which women experience social and economic marginalisation.
- Global support for women's leadership in communities that are experiencing the negative impacts of climate change.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ACTIS: Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society

COL: Cost of Living

IRDR: Integrated Research on Disaster Risk

NZD: New Zealand Dollar

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South Africa



Women scientists, villagers map out community's route for climate change resilience

*Umvoto Africa*³⁶



Abstract

Tsengiwe village is located in a drought-affected rural area in the south-eastern part of South Africa. The village community participated in a pilot project for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes tailored to Climate Change Adaptation (CCA). In 2012, a participatory study was launched by a woman-led team of mostly women scientists to gain knowledge of climate change, its direct impact on livelihoods, and how to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate hazards or disasters. Community CCA plans have been put in place with full community involvement, including women and young women. The CCA plans serve as a community road map for climate change resilience.

³⁶ Founded in 1992 by Geologist Rowena Hay, Umvoto Africa is an earth sciences consultancy firm specializing in environmental resource development, management and sustainability. "Umvoto" is the respectful word Xhosa brides use for water (Xhosa being several ethnic groups with related yet distinct heritages in south-eastern South Africa). Key areas of Umvoto expertise are groundwater and mineral exploration, environmental planning, geo-hazard assessment, and disaster risk management.

The Initiative

This initiative consists of a research and practice/implementation study on community climate change adaptation planning. The study was commissioned by the country's Water Research Commission (WRC) to be undertaken by South African earth sciences consultancy "Umvoto Africa" for a two-year period.

The study began in 2012, including three community workshops within a two-year period. It was completed in 2014 but the experiential facilitation tool tested in the study is currently being further refined and developed.

The major goals of the study were to: (1) gain an in-depth understanding of the rural challenges of adapting to climate change; and (2) understand the role of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and community-level coping strategies, and how to cohere and optimise these with local and district municipal resources and initiatives and sustainable water services.

The initiative was implemented in a rural community village named Tsengiwe in Eastern Cape Province in the south-eastern part of South Africa. Tsengiwe is located within Sakhisizwe Local Municipality (LM) which is a Water Services Provider (WSP) within Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM). The area was declared a drought-affected region, and it was recognized that it needed to initiate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes tailored to Climate Change Adaptation (CCA). Tsengiwe has also suffered from limited long-term disaster planning and coordination between water services and disaster management at the local municipal level.

An Umvoto Africa study team was involved in this initiative, comprising various specialists with complementary skills. Team leaders included Umvoto Managing Director (MD) Rowena Hay (DRR, water and gender issues), Umvoto Senior Environmental Scientist and Climatologist Paul Lee, and Umvoto Social Anthropologist Paula Hay. On the village side, there was full community involvement, with representatives providing feedback on hazards and risks faced by the community and how these had changed over time. Action-reflection learning brought people together to learn from one another's experiences. There was emphasis on people studying their own particular situation, clarifying objectives and working together to address obstacles.

It should be noted that Umvoto Africa provided strong role models through its prominent female leadership (a woman MD and senior scientists). Also, within the Tsengiwe community, there were individual women who were at the forefront of initiating and expanding local projects, culminating in a health centre called *One Stop Centre*. The health centre aims to make traditional and Western medicine available to the community, support home care for HIV/AIDS patients, and improve food security through home and school vegetable gardens. This food security initiative was initiated by Dr Lily Mlisa who works at Fort Hare University and has a home in the village.

Impact and Results

The initiative helped develop a common vision and purpose - from village to district municipality level to the provincial Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) - to improve assurance of water supply. Plans prepared were developed by villagers and necessary contacts with government long-term support programmes and officials were facilitated by the Umvoto team. The purpose was to secure sustainability in the initiative to build resilience at village and household level, through efficient use of water and sustainable use of land.

The initiative also enabled the community to map its water sources, reticulation and storage and the municipal service delivery process. Community-led CCA and other DRR measures were catalysed and partnerships strengthened between the community and Local Municipality (LM), District Municipality (DM) and provincial and national stakeholders and local mentors.

In addition, the Umvoto team facilitated communication between Tsengiwe community and Sakhisizwe Municipality, the Department of Water Affairs (DWA), Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR), Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and other officials. This helped gain their support with and input into the CCA processes initiated within and by the Tsengiwe community. The team further facilitated links between Tsengiwe and nearby school greening projects, Mbewula and Three Crowns.

These measures all served to catalyse an evaluation of DRR measures that could be undertaken at the community level, culminating in community CCA plans, each led by a committee and a committee leader. The CCA plans are based on water supply and reticulation, agriculture and crop cultivation, animal grazing management, soil erosion and school greening.

In short, the community progressed from expectations of receiving towards aspirations and documented ideas on what they could do.

The project interaction was designed to allow space for men and women to give voice to concerns and ideas. Men and women facilitated the project interventions and all ages were represented. Links between women teachers and principals at different schools were established, which was an emerging recognition that women's support to each other in leadership roles contributes to potential for a sustainable initiative.

Also, even though only men were elected to lead the various committees for the CCA plans, both young women and young men were trained to undertake monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of progress in implementation of the CCA plans.

The Good Practice



The initiative is a good practice because the action-reflection learning involved brought all members of the community together on an equal footing to learn from each other's experiences. Site visits to the surrounding school-greening projects gave good examples of how women had taken up leadership roles and gave them a platform to share their knowledge.

It should be noted that as a result of the traditional division of tasks, even though women tend to be responsible for cultivation and possess knowledge of crop production, local biodiversity, soils and local water resources, they continue to be excluded from decision making processes in new agricultural water management approaches.³⁷ Also, women head many households and do not have the time beyond coping with daily life, raising children and grandchildren and often being caregivers to be leaders in the community as well.

As a result, women who have a position and a personal sense of authority are in a better position to exercise leadership roles. Women in paid positions, such as education/rural health

³⁷ See Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN) web page: http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_10/091012_gender2.htm

clinics or traditional health practitioners, illustrate the capacity to lead and set examples unfettered by traditional perceptions. They are strongly motivated to improve their own and the community's circumstances.

The study was informed by theories around Participatory Action Research (PAR). This involved a spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning a change, acting and observing the consequences of the change, and reflecting and re-planning. The adaptive process of PAR was applied throughout the study, through specific techniques such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Constructive Dialogue, and Participatory Mapping.

In line with the PAR approach, a facilitation tool game was designed by the Umvoto team to provide an experiential basis from which to discuss risk, choices to reduce risk and consequences if risk reduction options are not taken. The game, called *Riskopoly*, was effective in highlighting the need to prepare simultaneously for several different unpredictable hydro-meteorological hazards and for cooperation.

Levine and Levine (2011)³⁸ argue that it is precisely because humans have the capacity to imagine their world in multiple ways, that they feel hopeless when they are blocked from doing so. One of the roles of the catalyst or change agent is to restore people's sense of their own resources and capacity to respond to the world in which they find themselves. Change agents should first strive to understand the world in which people live and then see possibilities of responding to that reality. It was in light of this understanding and a drive to move away from linear patterns of thinking that the Umvoto team used the facilitation tool to stimulate imagination and insight, as well as introduce the energy of fun and possibility. So the community started out with expectations of receiving and, through the provision of tools and interaction with a multi-disciplinary team, moved towards aspirations and documented ideas on what they could do.

The presence of the Umvoto team and the workshops gave structure to interactions between technical experts, local authorities and local communities. This enabled channels of dialogue which had not been established before to this extent.

³⁸ Levine, E. G., & Levine, S. K. (Eds.). (2011). *Art in Action: Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change*. Jessica Kingsley

Lesson(s) Learned

Some of the key lessons learned from the initiative include the following:

- Communication and local mentorship between community leaders, District Municipality councillors and municipal officers was important for reaching an understanding of what the community perceived as risk and what local authorities defined as potential risks for the area.
- The Riskopoly game highlighted the importance of doing risk management - and the consequences of not doing it. The process of playing the game and feedback from the participants highlighted the necessity of cooperative team work.
- Players gained insight into key elements of risk reduction: (a) have a back up – hazardous events will occur; (b) prioritise what you want to buy and invest in; (c) work together; (d) spend wisely on important items.
- The participatory mapping exercise and the game brought together community members of different generations and gender and facilitated communication and discussions of possible CCA initiatives. The map, created by the Umvoto team, was a GIS image of the community, showing topography, the borders of the village and houses. Local knowledge was drawn directly onto the image, allowing groups who could not read a topographic map to share information.

It is to be noted that major challenges were encountered in risk assessment - due to the community's conflation of hazard and risk. Drought was perceived as one of the worst risks by the community. However, they considered risk on the basis of the hazard they experienced as the worst, as opposed to that which occurred most often or most severely or against which they were least prepared. In addition, the following factors also contributed to exacerbate drought and the problems experienced by the community: land degradation, ineffective governance by local and regional leaders, and limited service delivery. In this instance, if the causes of the increased impact of drought were not addressed, mitigation measures related to actual temperature and rainfall changes might not be effective.

Another challenge was the question of scale. It was important to address it in order to prioritise climate change planning and strategizing. The District Municipality highlighted snow and strong winds as priority hazards in the ward area where Tsengiwe is situated. It was likely that both were significant hazards at ward level. But at village community scale, Tsengiwe did not consider snow and strong winds as pressing because of the more urgent need, on a local level, to address drought and water and food insecurity.

Other challenges needed to be addressed in the study approach. The line between action research and development planning is complex to manage and requires contact time. Multi-disciplinary studies do not fall clearly into any one WRC (Water Research Commission) directorate focus and lack of flexible funding limits responsiveness for participatory action research (PAR).

Therefore, to strengthen the initiative or introduce a similar one, a flexible budgeting process is required for the PAR approach which is an adaptive process. Indeed, the PAR approach is useful for giving voice to vulnerable community members and facilitating communication between diverse role-players but it is an adaptive process. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process too needs ongoing support and mentorship until community members are adequately skilled to fulfil them on their own.

Lastly, ongoing community engagement can add significant value to the revision and further implementation of CCA plans.

Potential for Replication

The facilitation tool called “Riskopoly” provided a real-life and experiential basis from which to discuss risk and unpack issues of scale and of defining hazard and risk. The process highlighted the role of games as facilitating tools in increasing community understanding of slow-onset hazards and how to prepare for multiple hazards simultaneously in order to reduce compound risk.

Conducting a scale-appropriate risk assessment which simultaneously draws on community knowledge and specialist input allows for a diverse group of role-players to reach a common understanding. Community perception of risk must be taken into account as it may be difficult to motivate community self-help when the perception and evaluation of risk differ.

Involving multiple generations and women in the M&E process ensures diverse perspectives and accountability. This is of particular importance in order to include traditional leadership and vulnerable groups in active decision making. The M&E of the study was designed to overcome adversarial leadership in the community and training tools were provided to support self-reflection on issues inhibiting progress.

However, replication may also face some constraints. For instance, the initiative was initially planned for three years but funding was allocated for two years, so additional time - up to five years at least - is recommended. This is because it takes time to build trust and grow constructive relationships between villagers and officials, who do not necessarily stay for any length of time in a position. Yet such relationships are, at village level, necessary to establish knowledge of government process and sustainable programmes that are aligned with government programmes.

Meanwhile, the following measures are recommended for any replication of the initiative:

Recognise positive deviants³⁹;

- Understand what is required to facilitate these persons' insight, natural leadership abilities, build their skills, and facilitate and support opportunities for reflection and partnership.
- Grow the conversation about the relationship between constitutional law and traditional law in rural areas and the practice and access of women to justice under both.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CBO: Community-Based Organisation

CCA: Climate Change Adaptation

CHDM: Chris Hani District Municipality

DEA: Department of Environmental Affairs

DRDAR: Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform

DM: District Municipality

DWA: Department of Water Affairs

GIS: Geographic Information System

LM: Local Municipality

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

WRC: Water Research Commission

WSP: Water Services Provider

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³⁹ Positive Deviance (PD) is commonly defined as an approach to behavioural and social change based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviours and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges.

Vietnam



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Women's leading roles emerge in disaster risk reduction system, draft legislation gendered

Oxfam,

UN Women,

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD),

Vietnam Women's Union (LHPN Vietnam),

UNDP Vietnam



Local risk assessment in
Chieng Xom, Son La province

Abstract

Vietnam is prone to a number of hazards, storms and floods being the major ones. The country has made progress in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) but women's potential role was untapped. To address the issue, an initiative is under way under a UNDP Vietnam DRM programme in partnership with UN Women and Oxfam in Vietnam. The initiative seeks to have women leaders in the male-dominated DRM system, and women represented at all levels. Women's leading roles and their voices are now emerging in the DRM system. Gender equality is reflected in the revised draft DRM legislation. The Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) has been legally recognised as part of the DRM system. VWU has also become a member of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control.

The Initiative

This initiative is part of an ongoing UNDP programme with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to *Support for Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Disaster Risk Management in Vietnam*. The UNDP programme has supported and facilitated comprehensive and inclusive DRR law and legislation in Vietnam, with its 2008-2012 Phase 1 being now completed and its ongoing Phase 2 running from 2012 to 2016. The initiative is also contributed by the UN Women project on *Strengthening women's capacity in disaster risk reduction to cope with climate change* (2010-2016) and Oxfam project on *Building resilience to disaster and climate risks of men and women in Ben Tre province, Vietnam*.

The overall goal of the joint initiative is to have women leaders in the country's formal Disaster Risk Management (DRM) system, and to ensure that women in general are effectively represented and voiced at all levels of the same DRM system. The specific project objectives are:

- To build key Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) stakeholders' and Women Union's capacity on gender equality, so as to help mainstream gender equality into DRM legislation and promote gender leadership into the DRM institutional system;
- To ensure that women are represented in the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC), which plays a focal role in DRM; and
- To develop women voices and their representation capacity to promote gender mainstreaming into community-based DRM.

The initiative targets all of the country's 63 provinces as well as members of the CFSC at national level and in the provinces. To help implement Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), 6,000 communes are targeted for legislation development guidance and training materials via the facilitation of core groups of 23-25 senior male and female leaders, DRR experts and CBDRM trainers per province. So far, the initiative has responded to different levels of community needs in 20 disaster-vulnerable provinces that are the most in need of gender equality promotion. Women representatives are in position as members of commune/provincial committees for disaster prevention and control in almost 63 provinces, and in the majority of the 11,400 communes in Vietnam.

Involved in the initiative are: the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) and its system; the CCFSC; the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and its supporting agencies; the Disaster Management Center (DMC), the Standing Offices of the CCFSC and PCFSCs (Provincial Committees for Flood and Storm Control); the National Assembly; and other stakeholders (the Disaster Management Working Group - DMWG).

A broad range of gender-related issues has been raised through the project, including the following: formal representation and leadership of women in the DRM system; the unrecognised roles of women in the DRM system - regardless of their key contribution over the previous decades; women's effective participation in CBDRM; lack of financial and policy support to promote women-led good practices in DRM. After being addressed via research activities and policy papers, these issues were reflected in a revised draft DRM legislation and revised legal and technical guidelines.

A specific leadership role has been identified for women under the initiative - the VWU has to be the lead agency to document and represent women voices and opinion on the need to recognise the important contribution of women/girls to DRR in Vietnam in all DRM processes (from risk identification and risk governance to risk reduction). To that effect, DRR stakeholders were encouraged to support the VWU to justify the case through DRR practices, human interest stories, policy dialogues, legislation development processes, and help other DRM leaders understand how instrumental gender equality is to the DRM system and activities.

The initiative has received funding mostly from Australian Aid⁴⁰ (AusAID) and UNDP, with some components co-funded by UN Women and Oxfam in different phases. Since 2008, UNDP, UN Women and Oxfam have closely collaborated to consistently advocate gender equality in DRR and climate change in Vietnam.

Impact and Results

Overall, the initiative has achieved the following tangible results:

- Since October 2013, the VWU has been legally recognised as part of the DRM system, and is now an official member of the CCFSC.
- Women's leading roles are gradually emerging in the male-dominated DRM system.
- Gender equality is reflected in a revised draft DRM legislation and in revised legal and technical guidelines.
- DRR and CCA (Climate Change Adaptation) practices have been made

much more effective. Community-level DRR practices too have improved, now addressing local needs and capacity gaps more efficiently and making local communities more proactive and better prepared against disaster and climate change events.

In all this, the VWU top leader's strong commitment was instrumental, as were the dedication of VWU senior experts. Also very committed were National Assembly parliamentarians, UNDP, UN Women and Oxfam in bringing women voices to the DRM policy development process and practice.

⁴⁰ Australian Aid (AusAID): Australian Agency for International Development

The Good Practice



The initiative is good practice in that it empowers women, while engaging constructively with the male-dominated system without necessarily challenging it. Furthermore, women's skills and leadership have been used directly in and for risk reduction, boosting the resilience-building capacity of members of the VWU and other women organisations.

Some of the key success factors of this initiative include the following:

- The VWU top leader's final push to MARD/CCFSC;
- Participating agencies' senior experts' commitment to and patience in pursuing the agenda (including in field trips, research activities, policy dialogues, etc.); and
- A well-coordinated process for policy influence and change in practice.

Lesson(s) Learned

The following key lessons have been learned from the initiative:

- A clear approach in coordination and linking up with past and ongoing work, helped to attain another level of in-depth knowledge and practice for gender in DRR/CCA.
- After a policy discussion paper on gender and climate change in 2009⁴¹, several initiatives to promote gender equality were taken forward in UNDP, UN Women and Oxfam projects, including documentation of good practices of stakeholders in 2011. These initiatives clearly were helpful.
- The project was initiated at the right time, when practices on the ground matured and case stories enriched. A consultation workshop was then held, with the active participation of DRR and CCA practitioners from international and local NGOs following their gender project interventions over the previous 5-6 years⁴².
- It was very helpful that the stakeholders paid due consideration to previous experience and coordinated efforts properly. Otherwise, they might just have come up with a mere repetition of each other's lessons learned, and missed collective in-depth understanding of gender issues.
- Successful interaction with key policy makers, notably National Assembly members and government leaders, can be achieved through: (1) a well-prepared workshop to gather relevant experience from local community members and leaders; and (2) a writeshop involving various levels of expertise (including from the UN, international NGOs and government bodies) to shape relevant policy issues and recommendations⁴³. Such a consultative process is innovative especially in that it capitalizes on diverse experience and combines this with international expertise on both practice and theory, which generates strong interest from leaders and policy makers. This innovative consultative process also helped to develop policy brief papers and other material that served as effective and practical tools for making different audiences learn about the issues.
- The participation of relevant National Assembly members helped to introduce significant changes in the draft DRM legislation which reflected gaps in gender analysis. The parliamentarians' involvement confirmed their roles in appraising and revising relevant legislations, in this case promoting gender equality. They subsequently revised the draft DRM legislation to reflect gender analysis and concerns more concretely.

⁴¹ http://www.un.org.vn/en/component/docman/doc_details/110-responding-to-climate-change-in-viet-nam-opportunities-for-improving-gender-equality.html

⁴² http://www.un.org.vn/en/component/docman/doc_details/110-responding-to-climate-change-in-viet-nam-opportunities-for-improving-gender-equality.html

⁴³ http://www.un.org.vn/en/component/docman/doc_details/268-policy-brief-gender-equality-in-climate-change-adaptation-and-disaster.html

It is to be noted that challenges were also encountered when implementing the initiative. Negotiating for additional resources for gender equality promotion in DRM was expectedly a challenge. There is a need for further evidence-based research on the degree of effectiveness which gender mainstreaming can bring to DRM practice. It is also critical to ensure that highest-ranking leaders hold final dialogues to make final decisions. This is because clear and well-agreed final decisions are a good start for implementation and action, and help to minimize risks of failure and poor impact.

Potential for Replication

The practice can be easily promoted in other contexts, particularly at grassroots level. As a matter of fact, it is continuously evolving in Vietnam under partnerships between UNDP and UN Women and Oxfam on one hand, and VWU and MARD on the other.

However, scaling-up faces some constraints, such as poor government financial support to promote such scaling-up under its national programme. So far, UNDP has tried to raise the momentum and hopefully additional resources can be mobilised in the future for introducing the desired change at community level. UNDP and UN Women are also seeking international assistance for building capacity for women representation in the formal DRM system as well as equipping all members of Committees for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control at all levels with the necessary knowledge and skills for gender mainstreaming.

Meanwhile, the VWU on its part should take stock of its first year of involvement as an official member of the DRM system, and share its findings with others. This would help to learn from its experience and ensure that women leadership in DRM is taken up effectively in all provinces.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CC: Climate Change

CBDRM: Community Based Disaster Risk Management

CCFSC: Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control

CSCNDPC: Central Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control

DMWG: Disaster Management Working Group

DRM: Disaster Risk Management

MARD: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

PCFSC: Provincial Committee for Flood and Storm Control

VWU: Vietnam Women's Union

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