

Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive



system has no firm control. Thirdly, the pandemic also urges for managing risk and improving social safety net supports for the vulnerable people during frequent disaster in a pandemic situation. Finally, the experience of managing the Covid-19 pandemic has inaugurated rooms for redressing the multi-hazard, multi-risk and emergency management activities through strengthening risk governance (Revet, 2020; Montano & Savitt, 2020; Nasreen, 2020).

Due to disasters, women face multiple challenges, which have become more visible during the first and second waves of the pandemic and are combined with i) increased burden of unpaid work, ii) increased domestic violence, and, iii) increased rate of unemployment.

Accompanying current health crisis, pre-existing health conditions, healthy practice, social behaviour, norms, and gender inequalities embedded in various sectors, compel to scrutinise pandemic impacts through a gender lens. Gender-inclusive pandemic study is the demand of time as reinforced gender roles often make gendered division of labour critical, where violation of one party (especially women, considering Bangladesh's context) is more vulnerable and victim to domestic violence and economic stress (Nasreen, 2008). Policy response mechanisms do not always necessarily incorporate gender-analytical data or gender-responsive plans for Covid-19 (Dutta, 2020). To understand the broad picture of the relational analysis between Covid-19 and gender-based resilience and intersectionality, more in-depth research needs to be conducted.

This year, the theme to observe International Women's Day (IWD) is "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow". Aligning with the theme, GRRIPP South Asia will observe this year's IWD a day before the National Disaster Preparedness Day (NDPD) on "Intersectionality in Redressing Gender & DRR: #BreakingTheBias".

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Women in South Asia face greater challenges compared to men during a disaster or crisis. Despite challenges, South Asian women have proven to be of incredible potential in response to disasters effectively, which often go largely unrecognised.

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South Asian countries are highly susceptible to natural and human induced disasters due to its geophysical location, land characteristics and other factors. Over the last three decades, the region has developed disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigation mechanisms to address the adversities that the people frequently experience. However, there are inclusion challenges of risk management in the region as, in most cases, exclusion cuts across intersectional groups and contexts.

Physical, economic, and social factors of vulnerability are closely linked with people's age, gender, (dis)abilities and other identities. "Intersectionality" refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as ethnicity, caste, aging, disability, mental health, sexuality, class, religion, indigeneity, membership to certain groups, etc. as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Women in South Asia face greater challenges compared to men during a disaster or crisis. Despite challenges, South Asian women have proven to be of incredible potential in response to disasters effectively, which often go largely unrecognised. To build gender-sensitive resilient strategies in the disaster risk reduction process, it is necessary to address gender needs of women and men using an intersectional lens.

Among the international drivers of DRR, the Hugo Framework of Action (HFA, 2005-2015) is the first to address strategic DRR mechanisms with guidelines on mainstreaming gender. For example, HFA recommended including

and addressing gender issues in all actions as a cross-cutting agenda for reducing vulnerability. However, at the implementation stage of HFA, women were primarily identified and classified in the "vulnerable" category rather than resilient.

Following critical analysis, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR, 2016-2030) was developed with a broader scope for addressing and integrating the gender approach in a comprehensive manner. The pioneering researcher's efforts in identifying women as major contributors in disasters have been acknowledged, and women were focused as crucial role players in "designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive DRR policies, plans and programmes."

Countries started providing specific emphasis on gender and social inclusion, participation, and leadership of women in DRR and resilience building, adopting a whole of society approach. Although "intersectionality" was not prominent as a concept in the SFDRR, the realities of intersectional categories, for example, elderly, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, people living under difficult circumstances or locations, and other marginalised categories were addressed with special attention.

Bangladesh played crucial role in strengthening women and men's indigenous knowledge-based disaster response and provided support to build resilience of the different categories. Government, non-government and development sector, academia, and other actors unitedly contributed to make the country a resilient one. Bangladesh has been identified as "role model" in facing the challenges of disasters.

However, despite overcoming many

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challenges, the Covid-19 pandemic – an unexpected disaster – calls for a new preparedness for Bangladesh as one of the affected countries around the world.

Now, the question arises: can the pandemic be termed as a "disaster"? Several reasons have been identified for linking Covid-19 pandemic with a disaster. Firstly, from the perspective of the concept of disaster ("a relatively sudden event which causes threats for lives, properties, and go beyond the capacity of a community or society to manage such crises"). Secondly, the pandemic is triggering risks and shocks for existing social structure, on which the

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