



GRRIPP
Gender Responsive
Resilience and Intersectionality in
Policy and Practice

The Daily Star

Intersectionality in Redressing Gender & DRR: #BreakingTheBias

Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP), South Asia in collaboration with Gender and Disaster Network (GDN), Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies (IDMVS), University of Dhaka and The Daily Star organised a roundtable titled 'Intersectionality in Redressing Gender & DRR: #BreakingTheBias' on March 9, 2022. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, Regional Lead, GRRIPP South Asia, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Bangladesh Open University, Professor & Co-founder,

Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies (IDMVS), University of Dhaka

We are partnering with a project called Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP) which is a 4-year-long global collaboration and knowledge-exchange project, implemented by a collective of universities, led by the University College London, United Kingdom, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It aims to bring together theory, policy and practice to promote a gender-responsive approach to disaster management and development in the global south. The GRRIPP South Asia project is implemented by the IDMVS, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

We are implementing seven projects in South Asian countries including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. These projects were awarded through a rigorous global selection process. We are developing a curriculum on disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response and intersectionality in both Bangladesh and India. Another project is on human rights violations. It is being implemented in Bangladesh. Our third project in Bangladesh is on the impact of Covid-19 on reproductive health. In India, we are conducting gender audits. We are also studying the impact of Covid-19 on women in India. In Nepal, our projects are on



Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD)

The sixth assessment report of IPCC highlighted that

climate change is already happening, and it is getting worse. Therefore, we need to be better prepared. Unfortunately, we are not prepared.

The report also pointed out that funds for supporting adaptation in developing countries have largely not been spent very effectively. There are two big deficiencies in this regard. The first one is that most of the designs of these adaptation projects are top-down in nature and very prescriptive, and therefore not very effective. Adopting locally led adaptation models is the answer to this challenge. Intersectionality and gender issues are extremely important in this particular framing. We must put not just the local community in the centre but also gender and intersectionality issues in the design along with local people.

The framing of the research you are doing must be solution-oriented and you must have an audience to whom you can convey your findings and knowledge.



Mihir Bhatt, Founder and Director, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI)

A study conducted in the Sundarbans Delta found that, in reality,

the impact of disasters is not equally distributed, rather it depends on a variety of social and economic factors. Women and girls suffer more, and they face lingering impacts of disasters in comparison to men and boys. Therefore, we need to consider the long-term aspect of intersectionality very seriously.

Several studies pointed out that women and girls are more likely to drop out of social protection during disasters. The differentiated vulnerability to disasters is driven by gender inequality and socio-economic conditions, traditional practices, and access to technology.

Most importantly, we must promote women's leadership in every sphere so that they can lead the change.



Ramona Miranda, Head of the APP-DRR Stakeholder Group (GSHG), UNDRR

Over the years, it has been observed that concepts like gender or class alone cannot explain the entire discourse around vulnerability to disasters. Looking through a sole lens obscures how a number of intersecting factors further disadvantage certain people. Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic laid bare stark disparities in power in our society and showed how different social groups faced differentiated risks and coped differently with the consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to use an intersectional lens to address different types of vulnerability. We need to conduct extensive research to understand the issue of intersectionality in the context of disaster risk reduction.



A.H.M Noman Khan, Founder and Executive Director, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)

Earlier, we were not aware of the idea of intersectionality

and, as a result, different types of vulnerabilities often remained unaddressed. It is a positive sign that we are discussing how we can incorporate intersectionality in our development programmes. It will greatly help in addressing the various challenges faced by persons with disabilities. It will also make our policies more inclusive. Now in many committees, the representatives of persons with disabilities are being included. We would like to see representation of every disadvantaged group in all our policymaking forums.



Professor Ishrat Shamim, President, Centre for Women and Children Studies, Dhaka

Intersectionality is a new concept to us. It has broad

implications. It means we are taking the whole of society into consideration.

I am doing a study on inclusive disaster risk management in the coastal belt. It is a very vulnerable area. I am studying different groups of people – men and women, the elderly, widows, and so on. There are a lot of differences between those groups. It's not only gender but also age, class, religion, ethnicity, etc. – everything that comes into defining their identity. However, women are still more vulnerable than men. They are also more resilient. They know how to cope with the disaster as they are the first ones to take action when a disaster arises.

While formulating any policy we should prioritise the grassroots voices since they truly understand the developmental problems of their community and give the best suggestions to address those issues.



Naoki Matsumura, Country Programme Coordinator (DRR), JICA

The projection of several studies states that the effects of climate

change would be more severe in the future. Therefore, Bangladesh needs more disaster-related investment for building robust infrastructure in a planned way. Bangladesh needs to accumulate more gender-responsive and intersectionality-related data so that we can take proper action. Now is the time to adopt innovative solutions so that no one is left behind.

JICA has plans to provide more support to Bangladesh through a people-centered approach and innovative technology which will provide a new set of skills for breaking the bias. We are considering balanced technology to be applied to disaster risk reduction that will be acceptable to multidimensional people.



Shaila Shahid, Chief Operating Officer, Disaster Climate Change Support Unit, Department of Public Health Engineering

The concept of intersectionality focuses on the gaps between different groups of people. Sometimes these gaps can be small or quite big. People of different genders, disabilities, religions, and different backgrounds face a wide variety of setbacks and discrimination. Sometimes these setbacks act in a cumulative manner.

During a disaster, water and sanitation are the two key priorities for people. I would suggest that we create a capacity development manual for WASH, along with other cross-cutting areas such as climate change, DRR, entrepreneurship, food security, etc. The DPHE is already in the early phases of developing such a manual. A knowledge-sharing repository should also be established, where all the relevant people working in related fields, particularly WASH, can share their relevant case studies and documents.

Additionally, our national framework on loss and damage should integrate the idea of intersectionality to ensure vulnerable groups are receiving the necessary support. We must also ensure the participation of the general people during the establishment of such a framework.



Dilara Zahid, Acting Director, IDMVS, Dhaka University

Intersectionality is quite a new concept. We must make people aware of this idea.

I believe it will help address the needs of the vulnerable sections of society. Our target is to shift from vulnerability to prosperity through resilience, and in order to achieve this goal, we have to take the concept of intersectionality very seriously.

Abdul Jamil*, Representative of the Transgender Community

I have been facing adversity since my childhood. However, many kind-hearted persons have also provided me support in my journey. Currently, I am working as a driver in a government agency, and at the same time continuing my studies. I want to live a dignified life. The government can play a big role in improving our situation.



Nazia Maisha, Joint Secretary, DU Unit, Physically-Challenged Development Foundation (PDF), University of Dhaka

Females with disabilities, in the case of a disaster, face challenges in terms of their sanitary needs. A diverse range of disabilities exists, and not everyone is able to properly express their needs. We need to keep this diversity in mind when distributing relief in the aftermath of a disaster.

The system of washrooms in shelters should be accessible for everyone, but this is rarely the case for persons with disabilities. Women, especially women with disabilities, are likely to face sexual harassment in disaster shelters. Sometimes women with intellectual disabilities aren't even able to express the fact that they have faced harassment or violence. That is why we need to be vigilant about such issues when setting up shelters.

I would also recommend that disaster shelters have people who know how to use sign language, because otherwise persons with disabilities have problems communicating their needs.



Md Taher, Chair, Duryog Nivaran

In the past, we were not aware that among the vulnerable groups during a disaster, there were other groups such as persons with disabilities, minorities, and other marginalised people whose suffering was much more severe. Disaster affects different people differently, and we must keep that in mind. Once we noticed that the impact of disasters varied with gender, we realised that there are other groups such as persons with disabilities, older people, children, etc., who require more dedicated support during a disaster.

I would suggest that whenever we create new development concepts or terms, we do so in our mother tongue. For example, I have yet to hear a proper Bangla word for intersectionality. Local terminology that explains the concept more clearly can help more people understand it.



Kopoti Ghagra, Head Teacher, Nolchakra High School, Kolmakanda, Netrokona

A lot of indigenous people reside in both the Kolmakanda and Netrokona Upazila.

This means there are many indigenous students who are studying here. That is why it is important that the school curriculum is taught in the mother tongue of these indigenous students. Otherwise, our language and culture will slowly be erased, and this is happening in the two Upazilas.

Many of our indigenous students are forced to work in the fields to support their education. The stipend that they are receiving is not enough to support their education completely. Here, the government can play an important role in bringing indigenous students, who are already falling behind, to a level playing field.



Nayem Molla, General Secretary, Physically-Challenged Development Foundation (PDF), University of Dhaka

The charity model doesn't help persons

with disabilities in any way. As far as people with disabilities are concerned, their needs are divergent, and those needs should be taken seriously when formulating an inclusive disaster reduction plan. In the aftermath of

a disaster, for example, we should try to give financial support to entrepreneurs so that they can continue their businesses.

Persons with disabilities or mental illnesses are vulnerable to exploitation in shelter centres. We should ensure safety in these spaces. Persons with disabilities who have trouble moving should be provided with transport facilities during disasters.



Mohammad Juel Mia, Lecturer, IDMVS, University of Dhaka

We should consider the impacts of the digital divide. They heighten the effects

of the existing socio-economic division. A person with disability, for example, doesn't have access to every kind of digital device. There is also a gap between men and women in terms of access to digital devices. As a result, these groups of people lack proper information which hinders their progress. When we talk about intersectionality, we should talk about men too because in many cases men suffer the most.



Mohammad Dolon Uddin, Research Associate, CWCS, Dhaka

We shouldn't neglect the vulnerabilities of men. It is necessary to address the needs

of both men and women using an intersectional lens. In an ongoing research study in the coastal area, we found that men with disabilities are the most vulnerable group during a disaster. So men need to be incorporated in our development plans. Intersectionality is an indication of that. This should also be reflected in our policies.



Raisa Imran, Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator, GRRIPP South Asia

Globally, persons with disabilities are seen as "receivers" rather than "providers". To eradicate this traditional outlook, an inclusive rights-based approach needs to be put in place. This will help improve their conditions by changing the perception of intersectional communities to contributors who can help address ongoing humanitarian needs.

Professor Mahbuba Nasreen

We would like to incorporate everyone's view in GRRIPP. That's why we have invited people from different categories of the society in today's roundtable.

Women are in the most disadvantageous position in our society. A woman who has a disability or belongs to the poorer section of society faces a diverse range of discrimination. To reduce inequality, we need some to address the challenges women face using a positive mindset. However, there is a gap in addressing gender needs using an intersectional lens in the disaster risk reduction process. Besides gender, there are also other identities such as religion, class, caste, ethnicity, (dis) abilities and other identities. Indigenous knowledge based disaster response should emerge in order to bring intersectionality into the mainstream at a larger scale.



Shamsuddoza Sajen, Commercial Supplement Editor, The Daily Star & Moderator of the session

Bangladesh has made significant progress in disaster risk reduction. However, there is a gap in addressing gender needs using an intersectional lens in the disaster risk reduction process. Besides gender, there are also other identities such as religion, class, caste, etc. We must look at the disaster reduction efforts through the lens of intersectionality which, according to Crenshaw, helps us see how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.

***Name has been changed to protect the identity of the individual.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Address gender needs using an intersectional lens to build gender-sensitive resilient strategies in the disaster risk reduction process in the South Asian region.

➤ The intersectionality issue should be seriously considered in the data collection process.

➤ The concept of intersectionality should be popularised on a wider level.

➤ Grassroots voices should be given priority in formulating disaster risk reduction policies.

➤ Intersectionality should be an integral part of the locally led adaptation model and the regional and international frameworks on loss and damage.

gender, disability and the pandemic. Our last project is on how the public sector can be made accountable to address gender and intersectional categories.

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



Professor Maureen Fordham, Professor of Gender and Disaster Resilience Centre Director, IRDR Centre for Gender and Disaster

Gender is never just about gender. People

are never defined by one characteristic. They don't experience privilege and justice in just one way. Intersectionality is about complexity. We often hear about women and girls who are most vulnerable to disasters. But we don't probe further into who these women and girls are, the circumstances that they are under, what is happening or why it is happening. Intersectionality helps us understand the bigger picture and look at issues holistically.

Intersectionality is not just about an individual's complex personal identity. It is about the operations of the power structures in a society that intersect and interact to create a system of injustice as well as privilege. We need to understand intersectionality and put it into action.