



The Daily Star
CELEBRATING
33
years of
JOURNALISM WITHOUT
FEAR OR FAVOR

READYING FOR THE NEXT BIG LEAP

SEGMENT 5

ANNIVERSARY SUPPLEMENTS 2024

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2024

FALGUN 15, 1430 BS

29

Gender disaster nexus: Toward an intersectionality approach



MAHBUBA NASREEN
is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor
(Academic), Bangladesh
Open University &
Professor & former
Director, Institute of
Disaster Management
and Vulnerability Studies,
University of Dhaka.
Email: mnasreen@du.ac.bd

The increasing rate of frequency and intensity of disasters, along with different impacts have identified Bangladesh as one of the most vulnerable countries. Living with hazards have contributed to develop disaster coping and adaptation mechanisms based on the affected people experiences.

Bangladesh is highly susceptible to natural and human-induced disasters due to its geophysical location, land characteristics, and anthropogenic causes. Over the last three decades, the region has developed disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigation mechanisms to address the adversities that populations frequently experience. However, there are inclusion challenges in 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 categorizations such as ethnicity, caste, aging, disability, mental health, sexual and gender identity, 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.

GENDER AND DISASTER
Although a disaster affects all segments of the population, there are gender variations to

vulnerability and resilience during disasters. Women and girls in disaster prone areas face number of problems due to their gender identity. As a result, women and girls in poor and marginal households become more vulnerable and distressed. All of the human population become vulnerable to time management and efficient productivity due to absence of employment opportunities. Pioneering study (Nasreen, 1995) argues that "disaster affects both women and men but the burden of coping falls heavily on women". For example, during an aftermath of a disaster, men in rural areas lose their places of work while women shoulder the responsibilities to maintain households' sustenance. However, even if poor and rural women have very few options open to them to overcome their problems, their role in disasters are certainly not simple: they relate to a complete range of socioeconomic activities. During a disaster, such as floods, women continue to be bearers and care givers to children, collectors, and providers of food, fuel, water, medicinal herbs, fodder, building materials and keeper of household belongings; they also represent a productive potential which was not discussed earlier. Despite challenges, women have proven an incredible potential to respond to disasters effectively, which often go largely unrecognized (Nasreen, 1995; 2019). It is women's strategies, developed over the years that are vital in enabling the rural people to become resilient to disaster (Nasreen, 2019). To build gender-sensitive resilient strategies

in the disaster risk reduction process, it is necessary to address the gender needs of all using an intersectional lens.

IS THE PANDEMIC A DISASTER?

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 a pandemic

the capacity of a community or society to manage such crises"; secondly, the pandemic is triggering risk and shocks for existing social structure on which the system has no firm control; thirdly, the pandemic also urges for managing risk and improve social safety net supports for the vulnerable people during a frequent disaster in a pandemic situation and finally, the experiences

Due to disasters, women face multiple challenges which have become more visible during the first and second waves of pandemic and are combined with i) increased burden of unpaid work; ii) increased domestic violence; iii) Increased rate of unemployment. Accompanying current health crisis, pre-existing health conditions, healthy practices, social behaviors, norms, and gender inequalities

of one party (especially women considering Bangladesh context) more vulnerable and victim to domestic violation, 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 executed.

REDRESSING GENDER AND DISASTER: WHY INTERSECTIONALITY MATTERS?

To build gender-sensitive strategies and initiatives in the disaster management process, it is crucial to address the needs and interests of different categories of people adopting intersectional approaches. Intersectionality offers a way to understand and respond to the ways different factors, such as gender, age, disability, and ethnicity, intersect to shape individual identities, thereby, enhancing awareness of people's needs, interests, capacities, and experiences. Intersectionality is extensively documented as one of the important and distinct contributions of feminist theory to critical thinking (The Intersectionality theory originates from Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, 1989), to understand how different forms of discriminations and power relations have impacts on individual's experience in an event of disaster). It is an



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Women are seen bringing water from a 2km walking distance in Khulna.

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

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 & Savit, 2020; Nasreen, 2020).

embedded in various sectors, compel to scrutinize pandemic impacts through gender lens. Gender-inclusive pandemic study is the demand of time as re-enforced gender roles often make gendered division of labor critical where violation

SEE PAGE 30

Congratulation on the 33rd Anniversary of The Daily Star

S. A GROUP OF INDUSTRIES
WORK HARD, MAKE HISTORY

MUSKAN | GOABINI | APPAYAN

চেনা স্বাদের টানে
হাসিমুখ
দেশের সবখানে

এস. এ. গ্রুপের মুসকান আর গোবিনী'র সব পণ্য
তৈরি হয় বায়োটেক সেরা উপাদান দিয়ে জার্মান প্রযুক্তিতে।
কি রান্নার আসে মারকপ খান।

HOTLINE +88 09609 200 555

TO REACH YOUR ULTIMATE ASPIRATIONS
WE PROVIDE THE PROPER DIRECTIONS!

We know your biggest aspiration require the best directions.
That is why we serve you with the best deposit
schemes and Loan offers.
With your dreams and our directions you can rest assured that your
success is guaranteed.

NATIONAL HOUSING
বস্তুবের আস্তা

National Housing Finance PLC