



ISSUE BRIEF

Drafted by the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN)

1. Stock-taking (*Overview of the evolution of the subject matter, setting the scene etc.*)

So called 'natural' disasters cause large numbers of human and economic losses every year but these are not distributed equally. Of specific interest to this discussion is the situation of women who have been evidenced, generally, as being killed in disasters in greater numbers and at an earlier age. This is not a natural outcome of a hazard but is the result of structural gendered inequalities. In the presence of more gender-fair socio-economic systems, these differentiated fatal impacts are reduced or disappear (Neumeyer and Plümper 2007¹). However, often States do not know how disasters impact people differently according to gender, age and many other characteristics of their citizens.

If, as set out in the Guiding Principles, of the current draft framework document², States have the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk then a necessary (but not the only) part of that duty is to establish baseline data monitoring systems in order to measure and report current risks and progress in preventing future risks to all its citizens.

The framework also suggests States' responsibilities be shared, not only according to national circumstances and systems of governance, but also operating across all scales, sectors and stakeholders. Such principles open the way to formal recognition of those groups working at grassroots levels and above to secure gender equality, protect human rights and effect the inclusion of the widest range of participants in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policy design and decision making.

Furthermore, risk management is understood broadly in the draft framework to refer to the protection of people, their property, health, livelihoods and productive assets, as well as cultural and environmental assets. This opens up the approach to DRR to encompass particular root causes of disaster vulnerability often regarded as beyond the mandate of disaster management concerns, and provides a route to integration with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs have made more radical advances in promoting

¹ Neumayer and Plümper 2007 "The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (3) pp 551-566.

² ADVANCED UNEDITED VERSION (CORR.1). Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. Further Streamlined Text (as negotiated up to 28 January 2015).

gender equity than has the DRR draft framework to date. The current drafting of the DRR framework is an opportunity to build effective bridges with other global policy agendas for maximum leverage through collaboration and alignment of aims.

While much of this issue brief refers to women, it is not the aim to exclude other social groups but to recognise that their interests may be highlighted by other advocates. However, when the term 'gender' is referred to here it is not to be equated with women, or even to just women and men, but is also inclusive of other social categories such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals (LGBTs), non-Western gender minorities, intersecting with age, race, ethnicity, income, migratory status, dis/ability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts (in line with categories suggested in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)).

Targets

Building on the existing Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the present draft framework aims to substantially reduce existing disaster risk and losses, and prevent new disaster risk over a timeframe yet to be confirmed but suggested as the next 15 years. While the detail of the text is still under discussion, seven global³ targets have been agreed in support of the assessment of global progress in achieving this aim⁴. However, the neutral and generic language of the present seven targets hides the differentiated nature of DRR policy and practice. For example, the unequal access to planning and decision making fora which obstructs participation of a range of social groups – women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals (LGBTs) and non-Western gender minorities, people with disabilities, those with migrant statuses, etc.; or the invisibility of the same groups' needs and interests across all stages of disasters. In principle and practice, the aims should be universal, to leave no one behind. The section below provides just one brief example of the gender gap that currently exists and which could be addressed by an appropriately inclusive, participatory and gender-balanced drafting process to create nationally and locally appropriate indicators of gendered disaster risk reduction (GDRR).

(i) Substantially reduce disaster mortality [2030]

The aim should be to equalize survival rates which means to reduce the overall excess deaths of women and girls but also the gendered deaths of men and boys where social and cultural expectations around masculine norms put them at greater risk. For these social groups we have some evidence (although this has not been systematically collected or disseminated) but there are many other social groups for whom we have no or very little data related to mortality, including most of those categories referred to above and highlighted in the SDGs.

(ii) Substantially reduce the number of affected people [by 2030];

Women and men ('people' in the most inclusive sense) are affected by disaster in

³ National targets and indicators are [shall] also contribute to the achievement of the outcome and goal of this framework.

⁴ Referred to in the latest version of the framework text as the outcome and goal.

different ways and in different numbers. Understanding why and how this happens, alongside legitimizing and supporting the political will to act, are necessary parts of any reduction.

(iii) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP by 2030;

Conventional measurement of economic losses excludes or obscures many women's, and other marginalised groups' economic losses (which are typically – although not always – at a smaller scale and located in the informal sector) and thus hides subsequent impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, same-sex partners, households and communities.

(iv) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, particularly health and educational facilities by 2030;

Definitions of critical infrastructure and basic services can similarly obscure fundamental social processes and needs which keep families and communities functioning. Women's reproductive health and childcare support are necessary but often invisible and under-funded functions which receive less protection and support; sometimes guided by funders' priorities rather than the needs on the ground. These are also concerned with violence against women and girls (VAWG) which is receiving more visibility in recent years but this does not necessarily translate into action on the ground or indicators for measuring its occurrence or treatment. The reduction of support for basic social safety nets seen in many austerity measures (before and after disaster) has knock-on effects to health, education, and social and economic reconstruction for women and girls in particular ways.

(v) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;

DRR strategies must also be gendered if they are to operate effectively to reduce the impacts referred to above. Gendered DRR (GDRR) encompasses contributions and leadership from women at all levels of operation up to the most senior. It also includes those social groups highlighted above.

(vi) Substantially enhance international cooperation in support of disaster risk reduction;

DRR practice rarely incorporates expertise from grassroots women's DRR practitioners and yet they hold substantial knowledge and insight, most often performed at a local level. There is a significant potential for south-south and south-north knowledge exchange between grassroots women leaders and other local and national DRR entities.

(vii) Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

Past failures to recognize the gendered nature of warning systems have been blamed for large numbers of excess female deaths in in regions around the world. While some lessons have been learned and more women are now involved throughout the warning system process, there is still much work to be done, not least in documenting good and poor practices. Similarly, communication and assessment processes must be inclusive

and participatory, reaching out to all citizens with special attention to the widest range of minority or marginalized groups; recognizing that simply to be an elder may mean marginalization.

These are just a handful of examples for illustrative purposes and which have been elaborated at length elsewhere. The main 'take home message' is that without a gendered DRR (GDRR), and one that incorporates the widest definition of 'gender' (i.e. beyond simple inclusion of women in a Western male-female binary but including intersections with other social categories and identities referred to above), interventions will be sub-optimal.

2. Overview (*Current opportunities, challenges, and achievements*)

A broader more inclusive approach has been signalled in the current draft through a recognition that DRR 'requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership'⁵ highlighting empowerment, inclusivity, accessibility and non-discriminatory participation. Particular attention has been drawn to 'people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest'. Furthermore, it states 'a gender, age, disability, and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted'. Thus, gender (and other categories) is at last firmly on the agenda. However, without frequent mention of women's, LGBTs' and non-Western gender minorities' needs and interests, and other marginalized or excluded groups, it is easy to overlook their inclusion in policy and practice. Specific and measurable indicators that capture this therefore are essential. Furthermore, while high level policy may mandate a gendered approach, regional officials and practitioners often do not know how to operationalize any response; and any responses – good or poor – are generally unreported. The development of a set of indicator prompts is a useful starting point (and no more than that) for those without experience or exemplars. The next step must always be to develop guidelines and specific indicators, with a focus on measurable outcomes, in partnership with all constituencies down to the very local level.

The draft framework also says 'special attention should be paid to the improvement of organized voluntary work of citizens' which is apposite in that many interventions made by and on behalf of women are carried out on an un-resourced voluntary basis. Support to such voluntary initiatives could effect considerable scaling up of operations without necessarily incurring high resource commitments at State levels. However, this should not be seen as a cheap alternative to fully funded and resourced State support.

Alignment with SDGs has already been noted above.

- **What is the expectation of your organization?**

The Gender and Disaster Network (GDN) www.gdnonline.org has been working since 1997 to gain visibility and agency for women and girls, alongside men and boys, in disaster and

⁵ Quotes here are taken from ADVANCED UNEDITED VERSION (CORR.1). Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. Further Streamlined Text (as negotiated up to 28 January 2015).

recovery contexts. GDN expects that the drafting of the present framework will provide the opportunity to formally recognise and protect the interests and needs of women and girls, men and boys, as well as LGBTs and non-Western gender minorities, before, during and after disasters. The development of indicators is a necessary (but not sufficient) first step towards transparency and accountability in the monitoring of progress.

3. Way Forward (*Where to from here? Highlight opportunities, next steps, expectations post-Sendai.*)

Priorities for action

The current draft framework sets out a series of priorities for action which are presented in generic and neutral language for global application. However, as pointed out above, such language tends to render marginal groups 'invisible' and until their needs and interests are routinely recognized and acted upon it is necessary to highlight them frequently at global, regional and local levels. The suggestions below are indicative of some of the gendered interpretations of the currently offered priorities.

1. Understanding disaster risk

Establish baseline measuring and monitoring systems to collect data disaggregated by gender and age as standard. To address the full range of structural barriers to gender equality and to harness the synergies between gender equality and DRR, it is essential to include gender equality targets. The Post-2015 framework for DRR should strive to include gender and age disaggregated data at a minimum. Where capacities and political will obtain, then all other social categories mentioned above should also be collected and systematized in baseline data systems.

2. Strengthening governance [institutional arrangements / organizational, legal and policy frameworks] to manage disaster risk

Ensure representation and promote equal participation and leadership across gender categories. Ensure women's legal entitlements and practical access to assistance, services and resources such as basic (and, where required, specialised) health services (including reproductive and sexual health services with reporting systems for gender based violence), compensations, cash transfers, insurance, social security, credit, agricultural extension, productive assets, decent employment and land tenure. Strengthen the integration of gender equality commitments into legal frameworks, institutional commitments, organisational arrangements and capacity development, monitoring and accountability frameworks in the overall planning cycle of disaster risk reduction, and also in sectoral policy frameworks, including health, agriculture, natural resources and education. Two specific measures, gender-responsive budgeting - budgeting that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and ring-fencing of those funds to be spent accordingly - for assessments of all kinds, and participatory mechanisms for the monitoring process can help strengthen disaster risk governance.

While the recommendations above have been presented in the context of disaster risk reduction, they reflect fundamental human and social development concerns and thus an underpinning recommendation is to support States in the development of basic human rights and equality legislation.

3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

DRR investment must not be focused just at the level of critical national infrastructure and formal economic sectors but also including the informal sector in which much of women's work and livelihoods are located.

A vision for gendered disaster risk reduction - GDRR - should be established in a participatory manner at national, regional and local levels.

Additionally, such investments must include children, in particular girl children, in rebuilding lives and building resilience through, for example, children's play⁶.

4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to Build Back Better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

Rarely are women, LGBTs and non-Western gender minorities included in active decision making and management roles when recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction decisions are on the table. This has resulted in a number of failures, one of which is inappropriate and ultimately rejected house rebuilding. While at one level such rebuilds might satisfy *output* indicators (a box can be ticked to say that they have been done), they would not satisfy *outcome* indicators (because they did not have the desired impact) and can be seen to be an inefficient and ineffective use of scarce donor or government resources.

Process

Finally, although not of least importance, the *process* of establishing and agreeing monitoring systems is as important as defining the indicators themselves. Government departments around the world are already obliged to report on a number of different types of indicator.

Measurement of indicators should not become too large a burden in case it risks alienating those otherwise willing to engage with GDRR. However, minimum reporting standards (gender and age) must be ensured. Any additional indicators must garner consensus in the context of already constrained financial and human resources. This might best be obtained if evaluation of responses is built in and feedback is provided to those who contributed their views and experiences

The framework provides an opportunity to support such a consensus by making the global case for the need for gender disaggregated data, integrated with similar endeavours for other social groups usually marginalised or neglected in such monitoring processes, e.g. children, older people, people with disabilities, and other minorities.

The portfolio of indicators and their application should be as transparent and accessible as

⁶ See Article 31 and General Comment 17 (2013), UN Convention on the Rights of the child.

possible to citizens.