

Reduction of Vulnerability of Indian Women – A Key Mitigation Process

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The objective

- **Working for the Government of West Bengal as a Block Relief Officer, I have been deeply shocked by the condition of women during any disaster.**
- **This paper is the result of my observations as a Govt. employee and my studies on the subject.**

The impact of natural disasters on human life is never entirely determined by nature.

It depends greatly on economic, cultural and social environment.

**The status of women
of a nation acts
like a mirror
that reflects the
condition of a nation**

The persistence of hunger and acute poverty in India and other parts of the developing world is due to subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment of women.

**The basic problem is
actually the
requirement of some
basic things, viz., food,
shelter and security.**

Indian women suffer in the area of

- Hunger**
- Malnutrition;**
- Poor Health;**
- Lack of Education;**
- Overwork;**
- Mistreatment
&**
- Powerlessness.**

Women at Risk

- **Poor or low-income women**
- **Refugee women and the homeless**
- **Women with cognitive or physical disabilities & chronically ill women**

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- **Indigenous women**
- **Senior women (specially widows and frail elderly)**
- **Women with language barriers**
- **Socially isolated women**
- **Women with numerous dependants**
- **Migrant or refugee women**

Key Factors to Vulnerability of Indian Women

- High illiteracy level
- Low ownership of assets
- Less exposure to the outer world
- Low social status
- Lower employment rate
- Socially constructed dependency on male family members

The impact of natural disaster on Indian women is the culmination of:

- Lack of knowledge of the disaster
- higher mortality
- increased risk of violence

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- non receipt of necessary health care
- denial of adequate relief aid or compensation
- experiencing ongoing economic vulnerability
- exclusion from a say in rebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

Some sad pictures



This woman of Kerala lost her two children in Tsunami 2004



An Indian woman wails after her house was damaged near the Marina beach in Tsunami 2004



A lady standing in front of her rumbled house in Rapar, Gujarat after 2001 earthquake



An army jawan rescuing children and women at Soro near Balasore after super cyclone 1999

Specific needs of Women in disaster situation

- Clothes
- Privacy for girls & women
- Food & clean water
- Hygienic & proper sanitation facilities
- Special care for pregnant women & lactating mothers

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- Special care for female relief workers
- Proper medicines & medical accessories
- Crèche for children
- Proper counseling

To improve this situation the following may be recommended:

- Health assessments should provide sex-disaggregated data and include gender analysis.
- Pre-disaster activities from hazard mapping to vulnerability analysis should integrate gender considerations.

CONTD.....

- To ensure the success of relief and/or disaster preparation efforts, the agencies must consult the effected community, especially women.
- Women's needs to be provided in gender sensitive manner.
- Women's physical safety should be ensured.

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- Affected women should be given long-term income projects/jobs.
- Chronically ill and frail elderly women should be identified as special risk population.
- Housing and land rights must be secured for displaced women.
- Gender training of people related to disaster management should become an integral part of staff training.

Thank you