

Gender Issues in Disaster Management

Milind Bokil

Field Representative

Oxfam-Community Aid Abroad, Pune (India)

Neelam Gorhe

Stree Aadhar Kendra

Maharashtra

What are Gender Issues in Disasters?

- More women than men died both in Maharashtra (1993) and Gujarat (2001) earthquakes.
- Most of the widowers got married within one year of Maharashtra earthquake, widows remained widows forever.
- Widows' rights challenged by the in-laws.

- In Rajasthan (1999), drought increased the work burden on women.
- Recurrence of drought forced young women to join flesh-trade.
- Mumbai riots (1992 & 1993) – Women were the worst victims.
- Orissa cyclone (1999) – Women died as they could swim or climb the trees.

Present process of disaster management is not gender sensitive. It is discriminating against women

Gender Issues – Conceptual Framework

- Rescue and Relief Phase – Physical and Biological Spheres - Practical Gender Needs
- Rehabilitation and Recovery Phase – Institutional Spheres - Strategic Gender Interests

Schematic

Parameters	Post-disaster phases	
	Rescue-Relief	Rehabilitation
Sphere of action	Physical	Institutional
Sphere of impact	Peripheral	Structural
Time span	Short term	Long term
Gender elements	Practical needs	Strategic interests
Gender limitations	Practical constraints	Structural deprivations

Practical Gender Needs

- Women have specific bodily needs. Special needs of pregnant and lactating women.
- Water and sanitary facilities during relief phase.
- Women's need of privacy.
- Relief items do not reflect needs of women (*Sarees are provided without petticoats*).
- Unisex footwear (slippers).
- Employment.

Gender Constraints

- Men-women trained differently in life saving skills.
- Traditionally women are kept away from funeral rites.
- Low level of literacy of women.
- Malnourishment and nutritional deficiency.
- Girl students drop out of school after disasters.

Strategic Gender Interests

- Right to compensation
 - Loss of life
 - Injuries
 - Damage to assets
- Right to property
 - Land or house titles go in the name of men.
- Participation in decision making
- Legal aid & information support

Gender Deprivations

- Remarriage
- Joint family
- Patrilocal residence
- Widowhood
- Destitution
- Caste and class deprivations
- Unconventional trades

Policy Measures

- Due recognition to gender issues
- Sensitization of police, para-military forces and government officials
- Settlement of legal claims and positive discrimination for women
- Joint ownership of assets

Programmatic Measures

- Special assistance to women survivors and hospitalized women
- Separate enumeration of single women
- Addressing the specific needs of women
- Gender sensitive relief items – protecting honor and self-respect of women
- Shelter needs of women headed households

Programmatic Measures...

- Prevention of drop out of girl students
- Women centred income and employment generation programs
- Rehabilitation measures to pave way for upgrading knowledge and skills
- Establishment of Women Support Centres after disasters
- Women as first stakeholders in housing

Conclusion

- Where gender inequality persists, disasters provide yet another occasion for discrimination.
- Hence, practical gender needs and strategic gender interests needs to be fulfilled.
- Gender constraints and deprivations need to be overcome.
- Approach needs to be impregnated in policy and needs to be implemented through relief and rehabilitation programs.

Thank You...