



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



# Gender Perspective: Working Together for Disaster Risk Reduction

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

2007



United Nations





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**Please send your feedback and suggestions, including further case studies for consideration to:**

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# Foreword

Successful implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action requires the full, active and balanced participation of women and men, girls and boys. Yet gender issues have been long overlooked. They have received little attention because of poor understanding of gendered vulnerabilities and risks to disasters. Serious action needs to be taken and more effort needs to be made to promote gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

To increase the understanding of the gender vulnerabilities and risks, the UN/ISDR secretariat, in cooperation with GROOTS International, a network of grassroots women's organizations, have facilitated the compilation of "Gender Perspective: Working Together for Disaster Risk Reduction." The compilation is based on the many contributions from community-based organizations, NGOs and UNDP country offices and aims to trigger more action towards gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction process.

This publication highlights the fact that disaster recovery and rehabilitation provide good opportunities for women to play public roles with the support of their families and communities. It also underlines the importance of working with both men and women to promote a gender-balanced approach to disaster risk reduction.

Some of the good practices are on awareness-raising and capacity-building, others are on women's participation in and contribution to building safe communities and households and equal access to information. In a nutshell, the publication showcases women's valuable contributions to community resilience.

I hope this publication will help improve the current understanding of gender issues in disaster risk reduction and generate more interest in and commitment to gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction policies, strategies and programmes.

Sálvano Briceño  
Director  
UN/ISDR secretariat



# Preface

This publication presents a collection of 15 practices that advance gendered resilience building--a key principle that informs the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The examples shared describe the different roles played by women from disaster prone communities. These roles involve constructing disaster resistant housing; improving community access to services; upgrading livelihoods; increasing food security; collecting and disseminating information; and negotiating claims to rights and resources. While the examples provide a diverse range of practices, a single common thread binds these together. Each practice is an effort to shift the identity of women from beneficiaries to that of key actors in building, shaping and sustaining resilient communities. It is evident from the practices that in undertaking these multiple roles on behalf of their communities, women are being empowered not only to strengthen community capacities to cope with disaster but also to build an active citizenry that addresses development priorities, which are inextricably linked to reducing vulnerabilities.

We hope that readers will gain insights into how disaster risk reduction can be promoted by strengthening, scaling up and empowering grassroots women to build resilient communities.

Sandy Schilen  
Global Facilitator  
Groots international



# Introduction

This publication is part of ongoing efforts facilitated by the UN/ISDR secretariat to build a global partnership for mainstreaming gender issues into the disaster risk reduction process. Such efforts have become urgent because disaster risk reduction has long remained a largely male-dominated affair, yet it is clear that the full and balanced participation of women and men, and girls and boys make disaster risk reduction more effective.

The present good practices have been compiled to draw the attention of practitioners, policy/decision makers and stakeholders, be they men or women, to the fact that gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction is feasible immediately, even in rural community settings where gender insensitivity is generally pervasive.

But for a good practice to be effective at all levels, it must be replicable in and relevant to the reader's context. Hence, a major criterion for selecting the present good practices was their "potential for replication".

Many of the good practices have been collected from community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, and UNDP country offices. To make the task easier, contributors were asked to fill in a questionnaire by "bullet-pointing" very specific answers. The good practices were or are implemented by local NGOs, with support from international NGOs, donors and UN agencies. All practices involve disaster-vulnerable women, reflect the way gender issues in disaster risk reduction are "understood" and offer unique perspectives of and approaches to the subject.

For ease of reference, each good practice is presented in a format that enables the reader to go directly to a particular section of the case study (lessons learned, potential for replication, and so forth). And contact details for each good practice presented are available at the end of the publication.

As an initial step, this compilation provides an introduction to the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in risk and vulnerability reduction. It will be improved through future collections of similar case studies, as well as subsequent analyses of the trends and features observed.

R. Alain Valency  
Editor



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# Brazil



## Working with Both Women and Men to Promote Gender Balance

Coping with Drought: Empowering Rural Women, Men and Children to Reduce Disaster Risk

*Mott MacDonald*<sup>1</sup>  
*United Kingdom*



### The Initiative

This project is an applied research project entitled "Sustainable Use of Groundwater in the Semi-arid Ribbon Valleys of Northeast Brazil". By focusing on groundwater management to reduce drought risk, the project targets rural communities, seeking to empower women, men and children in sustainable and collective management of scarce water resources.

Given the important role of women and men in the use and management of water resources, the project reflects the importance of gender from its early stages. The role of younger community members is also recognized as they are the future guardians of the land and water environment and are the basis for establishing sustainable rural life. Land and water-focused environmental education form an important component of the project, not only in relation to the younger community members but also through the involvement of women (teachers and health agents) and men (farmers) in the education process. The project aims to help build resilience to drought.

The project kicked off in November 2003 and was completed in early 2006. Options for follow-up work were explored and contacts were made with the World Bank and the State Government, local NGOs and municipal governments. Despite these efforts, funds were not available. However, the environmental education programme has continued and expanded to cover rural schools in two municipalities with support from local governments. The educational material developed and published during the project implementation phase has been very useful and is still utilized today by local teachers and students.

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<sup>1</sup> Consulting Environmental Private Company, Jan van Wonderen, Divisional Director, Environment Division, [jan.vanwonderen@mottmac.com](mailto:jan.vanwonderen@mottmac.com)

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

Funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the project, which falls under the Knowledge and Research (KaR) category, was an international cooperation project involving the following institutions from the United Kingdom and Brazil: Mott MacDonald (UK), the University of Birmingham (UK), the Federal University of Pernambuco (Brazil), the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (Brazil), the Science, Technology and Environment Secretariat of the Pernambuco State (Brazil), the Secretariats for Education, Agriculture and Health of the municipalities of Pesqueira and Jataúba (Brazil), and Diocesan Centre for the Support of Small Food Producers (CEDAPP), Institute for Citizenship and Social Management (IFOC) and Water Users Council of the Bitury River Basin (ConsuBitury). The last two are Brazilian NGOs.

The project<sup>2</sup> was implemented in five rural communities located in the municipalities of Pesqueira and Jataúba in the semi-arid region of Pernambuco State in Northeastern Brazil. The community members' main economic activities are cultivation of irrigated vegetables such as carrots, pepper and beetroot (largely the responsibility of men) and production of lace ornaments such as garments for women and house decoration. The latter activity is carried out by women. Lace-making is the main source of income during drought periods, as there is limited profit from irrigated agriculture.

Capacity-building was achieved through participatory workshops for adult women and men on a series of themes related to land and water. Farmers, the majority of whom were men, were involved in all the activities. Training sessions were organized for teachers and health agents, most of whom were women. Farmers' experience and traditional knowledge were acknowledged and scientific knowledge was not imposed but incorporated into indigenous knowledge. The farmers, health agents and teachers played prominent roles at the workshops and the project team members acted mainly as facilitators. This helped create, amongst the communities, a sense of ownership of the messages and knowledge presented during the workshops. The farmers benefited from their participation and gained some confidence as most of them had a low self-esteem and previously did not rate their knowledge as important.



### Ground Rules for Interaction with Rural Communities

1. Appreciate the importance of local traditional knowledge -- this is highly relevant as it makes community members feel they can contribute.
2. Respect all community members regardless of age, gender and socio-economic status -- respecting all community members without distinction of gender, age and socio-economic status, makes each and every of them feel part of the solution. This helps boost self-esteem and empower under-represented groups such as women and the poorest.
3. Appreciate gender differences in all actions involving women and men -- this implies equal respect for women and men as well as for the contribution of each gender group. Activities undertaken by women and men should always be given equal importance.
4. Consider the importance of the knowledge held by elderly community members -- the elderly usually have a great deal of wisdom but sometimes do not have the opportunity to be heard. Efforts should be made to invite them to participate in activities.
5. Encourage community participation in all actions without imposing roles -- when preparing invitations for activities, roles should never be imposed on participants to enable them to contribute with spontaneity. This helps them feel confident about their contributions. It also helps them appreciate the importance of their contributions.
6. Ensure transparency in all actions -- transparency should always be promoted as a means of achieving successful outcomes.
7. Avoid raising false expectations among community members -- this is a very important rule which, if applied regularly, can be a success factor. Aims and objectives should always be made very clear so that false expectations are not raised.

Source: KaR Project

<sup>2</sup> In this project, Adelia Branco provided technical support as consultant for Mott MacDonald (adeliabranco@terra.com.br).

As school curricula were based mostly on the urban model and did not reflect the importance of rural traditional knowledge, the young female and male students benefited from their exposure to indigenous knowledge about land and water.

The teachers and health agents are visible women actors in the society and have a high status within the communities. This is not the case for women involved in household chores and lace-making: they have a low status and are generally invisible actors. Through the workshops, the health agents integrated newly acquired knowledge into their daily work and emphasized the importance of proper management of water for the wellbeing and health of family members. This helped empower those women who handle water for domestic consumption. The teachers also benefited from working with the farmers and learned how to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum.

## The Good Practice

The KaR project had a number of innovative elements, all of which contributed to its successful outcome. These aspects are considered important components of good practice.

The five rural communities fully participated in the preparation of the project's programmes and their delivery. Special attention was paid to balanced participation of men and women. Younger community members were involved as well through the land and water-focused environmental education programme, which was successfully introduced in rural schools. This generated better understanding of the influence of land and water on rural livelihoods, especially as school children were able to monitor rainfall and evaporation which are both essential to the availability of water resources.

In addition, community water governance was introduced to younger community members, which led to better understanding of and improved responsibility for sustainable resource management - as the younger members grow into adulthood. Also, children are powerful knowledge disseminators amongst family members, relatives and friends.

The above-mentioned innovative elements which involve younger community members were developed and implemented through the education programme within the conceptual framework of disaster risk reduction through capacity building and preparedness. The education programme involved local farmers and health agents, both of whom worked with teachers in the dissemination of knowledge to students. Such participation not only empowered the farmers - most of them were men without formal education - but also acknowledged the importance of local indigenous knowledge. It created a powerful dialogue of knowledge and contributed to improved gender balance (teachers and health agents were mostly women).

In fact, a key success factor was the involvement of different stakeholders. This helped pool resources, especially knowledge, and boosted partnerships because of greater mutual understanding.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is that it is important to work with both women and men to promote gender balance at community level and it is equally important to involve different stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, this helps pool resources, especially knowledge, and boost partnerships because of greater mutual understanding. In fact, this was the cornerstone of the project's success.

Another lesson learned is that it is possible to promote gender balance, give visibility to local women and men, and help build community resilience through a participatory approach to long-term activities such as education.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

### Impacts & Results

The project recognized the importance of gender roles in drought risk reduction and the empowerment of both women and men. It took into consideration the importance of indigenous knowledge and the integration of such knowledge through local farmers' involvement in activities undertaken in a formal school setting. This entails an empowerment process for both women and men in the communities. Empowerment of women was carried out through the participation of different categories of women in the project i.e. community women, teachers and health agents. But empowering both women and men contributed to increasing community resilience to drought.

### The Challenges

One of the biggest challenges was to reach and involve the women, as they did not have much time for attending workshops. Another challenge was to work in partnership with government institutions, the civil society, academics and NGOs. The work done by academics did not take into consideration the reality at grassroots level and the NGOs involved had never worked with academic and governmental sectors because of separate agendas. Also, the farmers and the women lace-makers had never participated in a project involving different stakeholders. Past negative experiences initially prompted the local NGOs and community members to resist participating in a government project. This challenge was overcome through a participatory methodology that called for the contribution of all the different sectors. Eventually, each stakeholder contributed and tried to achieve the main goal of empowering women and men to reduce drought risk and improve livelihoods.

### Potential for Replication

Though this project was linked to the local socio-economic context, it can be replicated in other regions/countries where resources are scarce, provided that some adjustments to distinct cultural settings are made. Ground rules for interaction with rural communities were developed during the project (see Box on preceding page): they are believed to be universally applicable and important to successful disaster preparedness.

# Honduras



## Indigenous Women's DRR Efforts Trigger Sustainable Development Process

Reducing Vulnerabilities in Marginalized Afro-Indigenous Garifuna Communities  
*Garifuna Emergency Committee of Honduras*



### The Initiative

This project involves grassroots women and communities in disaster risk reduction and environmental and natural resources management activities that reduce both poverty and disaster risk, increasing the resilience of the poor and most vulnerable.

After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, women-led community recovery and reconstruction efforts evolved into sustainable development activities with strategies for mitigating the potential impacts of future disasters.

After being empowered to lead post-disaster work, women and communities from the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna people developed strategies that simultaneously increased food security, reinforced important cultural values and practices, improved soil conservation, promoted environmental protection and biodiversity, increased women's participation and leadership, and improved income generation.

The project, which was developed in response to a crisis triggered by Hurricane Mitch, is still under way - in part because strengthening communities to withstand disasters is an ongoing process and also because hurricanes and tropical storms have, since then, continued to batter the north coast of Honduras. Accordingly, the project is still under way on the north coast in Colon Department, covering 16 towns from Guadalupe in the west to Cocalito in the east. The 16 towns are populated by the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna people.

The efforts began when grassroots community members and activists came together as volunteers upon witnessing the loss of life, injury, and risk of hunger caused by Hurricane Mitch in the marginalized Afro-indigenous Garifuna communities, and the then initial neglect of the communities by the government and international agencies. With time, the volunteers

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

formed a local NGO called *Comite de Emergencia Garifuna de Honduras* (Garifuna Emergency Committee of Honduras) which has remained accountable to the communities and to GROOTS International<sup>3</sup>.

With a predominantly female membership at all levels, the *Comite* promotes women's leadership and decision making roles as a critical element of its work. Another central operating principle and practice is collaboration with and support for other women and community-based organizations. Its steering committee operates from the town of Trujillo (in Colon Department) where the *Comite* was founded. To ensure maximum participation, democracy and ownership throughout the 16 Garifuna communities targeted, each village elects a local, women-dominated leadership body called "Tool Bank". This name derives from the fact that in its initial stages, one of the body's primary roles was to lend out to farmers in need, on a rotating basis, tools delivered by the *Comite* to each town. The *Comite* also works jointly with other organizations that vary from town to town: traditional women's dance groups, water collectives, teacher and parent groups, women's farming or business cooperatives, youth groups and even a group formed in a prison. However, the primary actors, decision makers, priority deciders and implementers are the communities themselves.

Over 9,000 members of the 16 communities benefit from the work. The *Comite* coordinates and seeks funding for the efforts decided upon, carried out and evaluated by the communities. Outside support and funding have come from sources that include: GROOTS International, the Huairou Commission<sup>4</sup>, the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the American Jewish World Service (AJWC), Edwards Foundation, Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, Horizons for Friendship, and the UNDP Equator Initiative.

Community members united after Hurricane Mitch, and resolved to be neither passive victims nor neglected by government and international agencies. They began helping one another repair roofs and carry food to villages where crops were wiped out by the hurricane. They also made personal visits to relevant contacts and dispatched faxes, e-mails, letters, radio and later video material to get the word out about suffering in villages that were being ignored. Pre-existing groups came together to prioritize needs; groups that included traditional women's dance clubs, youth soccer teams, local neighbourhood groups (*patronatos*) and water collectives. Some members of these groups formed a new local grassroots organization (the *Comite*) that later became an NGO that continues to work jointly with the other local groups.

When the *Comite* succeeded in getting donations and support for reconstruction, the Garifuna people developed lists of the most needy, handed over donations and monitored all the required activities, ensuring a much higher level of equitable distribution and transparency than was common after Mitch. As their top priorities, the communities identified the need to regain self-sufficiency and avoid hunger, with women farmers leading the way. Seeds obtained by the *Comite* were distributed, and women insisted that all who received seeds would then have the obligation to provide future seeds to other farmers. Tools were also given to each town on rotating basis, and (as explained earlier) each village elected a women-dominated "Tool Bank" to lend out the tools. The Tool Bank members served as local leaders and as liaisons to the *Comite*.

To organize and keep the communities mobilized over the long term, people went from house to house and used community bells, town surveys, musical groups, parades, celebrations, radio, even the calls of conch shells. As the activities and priorities were decided upon by the grassroots women and communities themselves, a strong feeling of ownership and investment in the work developed, making it easier to continue long after the disaster-induced crisis waned.

Helping communities recover their agricultural crops evolved in more complex forms over time, with farmers learning (from local community experts) techniques of soil conservation, organic composting, crop diversification, different methods to improve production, and strategies for marketing. They then replicated that training throughout the 16 towns.

The communities also protect the environment and manage natural resources at community level. They have reforested with wild fruit trees to stop the encroaching sea, planted wild vines - used for weaving - along jungle streams, and planted hardwood and grafted fruit trees. They also defend green and "protected areas" when such areas are subject to exploitation by loggers, ranchers, charcoal sellers, sand extractors, trash dumpers, etc.

Groups of women now run the mechanical mills used to grind manioc root so it can be quickly made into long-lasting dry bread called *casave* - which is another way of avoiding hunger in the aftermath of storms and hurricanes. The *Comite* also opened the first ever Garifuna farmers' market which allows farmers to sell their surplus and *casave*. The poorest farmers, who till the soil by hand and work on subsistence basis, began generating some income they could use for basic health, educational and nutritional needs.

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<sup>3</sup> Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood - International: a US-headquartered international network of grassroots women's organizations working with over 40 organizations in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America.

<sup>4</sup> The Huairou Commission is a US-based global network of grassroots women's organizations.

In terms of direct benefits, the Garifuna communities have benefited from better water and food supplies, better sources for traditional plants needed for craft industry and health purposes, reduced erosion, less damage from blowing coastal sand, higher incomes, and strengthened communities in general with greater public participation by women.

It is to be noted that women have been the majority at all levels throughout the process. Women who previously had been scared of speaking up and participating, began making their voices heard. This happened first in their own local meetings, later on at community forums, next to local and national authorities, at times even presenting their opinions and explaining their work in international gatherings.

Such a success has not been easy, and by no means is it complete (see the section entitled "The Challenges" below). One key strength is that, as defined by the grassroots women, the work is by necessity integrated and holistic: one cannot address recovery in agriculture without ensuring land rights; one cannot have enough wild vine for making the traditional strainers necessary for food production if the natural habitat of the vine is not preserved; one cannot be ready for the next storm if a better way to process the crops quickly right in town is not there; and so forth.

## The Good Practice

There are several ground-breaking aspects to this work. Nine years after Hurricane Mitch and long after international funds and projects have petered out, the community efforts continue in a vibrant and constantly evolving fashion. These efforts integrate community development, poverty reduction, and community empowerment - especially empowerment of women - with disaster risk reduction, recovery and resilience.

As mentioned earlier, a key strength of the project is its integrated and holistic approach; innovation is also a key strength. Innovations in this project include the following:

Reforestation of coastal lands with native fruit plants (sea grapes, almonds, etc.): this has helped reduce erosion, made the area less vulnerable to water and sand damage in the event of storm, provided environmental education to school children, improved nutrition and provided a source of income.

Local knowledge valued in terms of disaster reduction: solutions are more sustainable, appropriate and empowering when communities' local knowledge is valued in terms of disaster reduction. For instance after Hurricane Mitch, the

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned from this project is that grassroots women and communities come up with solutions that are more responsive to their local conditions when provided with resources over a sufficient amount of time. Their solutions are also more likely to be integrated and holistic (i.e. risk reduction combined with environmental protection, cultural preservation, poverty reduction, improvement of basic living standards and income generation).

A second lesson is that women are natural but invisible disaster responders and mitigators. This is because of the role they play in their families and communities (in health, education and childcare) and also because of their work outside the home. Their roles need to be seen, recognized and resourced.

A third lesson is that disaster reduction, recovery and resilience are opportunities for supporting and legitimating the work of women and for promoting more active roles for them - in the public sphere and even in government structures over time.

Lastly, more attention and resources directed to local, women's, grassroots and traditional cultural knowledge and expertise produce more efficient, relevant and cost-effective projects. Effective DRR, recovery and resilience building must involve support for communities and women's groups over several years - as opposed to short-term projects implemented by external consultants who leave the communities upon completion of their projects.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

women insisted they could not live on donations and instead needed assistance to make the land productive again and improve agricultural production. They even went beyond this, pioneering the implementation of mechanical mills to grind the staple crop, yuca (manioc root), which they turn into a dry bread that can last for months and thereby tide communities over in times of disaster and food shortage. With the mills, which they administer, they can rescue the yuca from the ground after a storm has occurred and process it before it rots.

Use of women's traditional knowledge: most innovative strategies emerge when local cultural knowledge, particularly women's traditional knowledge, is allowed to direct and inform an effort. For example, the women's knowledge about traditional medicinal plants has been the cornerstone of the following efforts: preserving wild areas, harvesting and utilizing the remedies in a sustainable manner, passing knowledge on to young people, reducing health costs and providing families with some income. Similarly, planting the wild vine used for weaving and requiring tall trees for growth, have been recognized by the UNDP Equator Initiative as both promoting biodiversity and reducing poverty.

Recognition of the community and grassroots women as experts: this has enabled to replicate successes by sharing lessons learned among communities and even to other countries. Honduran communities learnt from Jamaican grassroots women how to build hurricane-resistant houses. As actors - not passive "beneficiaries" - of projects, the communities not only implemented this in individual building and repairing, but also pressured donors to incorporate it into reconstruction work.

A key factor leading to the success of the project is the fact that the grassroots women could assess their own needs and generate their own innovative solutions. The most innovative ones emerged when local cultural knowledge, particularly women's traditional knowledge, was allowed to direct and inform the effort.

## Impacts & Results

The project has brought the following benefits to the communities: more land under cultivation by small farmers, healthier soil, better production, more crop surplus and resultant income, increased self-sufficiency, more and better protected green areas, growth of culturally important plants, and increased involvement of young people.

Also, the communities are now better organized and prepared, and are able to better warn about impending disasters, disseminate information, assist one another, evaluate damage, monitor reconstruction, fairly distribute resources, and interact with donors without being manipulated.

Unlike in most efforts put into the disaster risk reduction and recovery process, women have been involved here, from the outset, as the numerical majority and as the driving force. By focusing on the most marginalized and economically most vulnerable, the subsistence-driven farmers - most of them women - became the decision makers, planners, implementers and monitors. In addition to efforts to reduce poverty (through sustainable agriculture) and manage the environment in a manner that reduces risk, they have also monitored disaster-resistant housing construction and have become surveyors of risk and damage, trainers, political advocates and leaders. After some years, they have even entered into the political system and now are active as town council members, deputy mayors and mayors.

Because women are involved, housing design corresponds better to local needs (i.e. in cooking), projects have been integrated into schools (as women are so closely tied to their children's education), green areas are protected (as women have the cultural knowledge of where medicinal plants grow in the rainforest), resources are more fairly distributed (as women have greater information about the social and health needs of their families and their neighbours), to name a few examples.

## The Challenges

A major challenge in the project was neglect and ignorance of the already marginalized Garifuna communities in times of disaster. Despite the amount of funding poured into the country in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, the Garifuna communities were initially ignored and neglected. For instance, the government's crop and seed assistance focused on crops and seeds used by the dominant population and the big farmers (corn, beans, coffee, palm oil), ignoring Garifuna crops like manioc root and plantains. In some areas, there was also corruption and handouts to the elite rather than the neediest. Despite some attention paid eventually to marginalized communities and the significant success of small-scale community efforts, the Garifuna communities never received enough resource to ensure full recovery and reconstruction, not to mention risk reduction.

A second challenge was lack of interest in consulting the communities and involving their participation. Even when aid reached the communities, it was distributed without consultation and community participation. This sometimes prompted divisions, competition, individualism and dependency. Other faulty projects tried to deny the Garifuna communities the right to rebuild on safer ground, charged them for donated housing, ignored their input in project or housing design or provided items unrelated to community reality (i.e. dialysis machines with no hospital capacity for their use). In addition, there was no support for the Garifuna's struggle to protect their rights to their ancestral lands and control of their natural resources. They had to do so in their coastal areas so highly prized by developers, large-scale farmers, ranchers, loggers and others.

A third challenge - a current one - is the following: the Garifuna grassroots women have set an example in sustainable organic farming, soil conservation and natural resource management, but much larger stretches of land are under mono-cultivation of palm oil trees. This type of agriculture and water redeployment has exacerbated the damage caused by Hurricane Mitch, and is the source of many land struggles.

Last but not least, even though the initiative has a good track record that includes international accolades, it is difficult to retain donors', funders' and partners' interest in disaster risk reduction and long-term rehabilitation when the disaster is no longer in the limelight of the media.

## Potential for Replication

The Garifuna communities have gained, through the Comite, extensive experience in teaching about their successful practices in a specific context of both marginalization and "indigenoussness". This includes being part of a GROOTS International delegation that provided training for World Bank personnel in Washington DC and making presentations at venues as varied as the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, an international UN-Habitat gathering in Cuba, the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Japan, and other gatherings in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. It has also meant community-to-community sharing - along the Honduran coast itself and with tsunami-stricken villages in southern India.

Replication therefore is already under way. With support from GROOTS International, the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and the Huairou Commission, the Garifuna communities are also preparing themselves further to become trainers.

## India



### Enabling Women to Play a Lead Role in Disaster-Affected Marginal Communities

Gender Mainstreaming in Tsunami-Affected Areas

*Caritas India*

*Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala States*

*& Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India*



#### The Initiative

This initiative called "Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Programme" is a package of relief, rehabilitation, preparedness and development-related programmes initiated in response to the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Linking relief to development, the emphasis is on providing women with greater decision making and empowering them to play a lead role in reconstruction and preparedness programmes. The thrust is on building women's capacities for effective preparedness and risk reduction. The targeted population is predominantly the lower strata of the economic and social ladder of fishing and other marginal communities: a population with little bargaining power.

The programme also lays an emphasis on vulnerability identification and preparedness at all levels. On the community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP) front, the focus is on enhancing the capacity of women and men to contribute to disaster risk reduction. And in the "Housing Programme for Tsunami Victims", women's ownership of property/houses and boat fishing gears is emphasized as well as equal responsibilities to maintain them.

This Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Programme was initiated in January 2005 and is an ongoing programme linking relief to development. The thrust of the current ongoing "community mobilization" phase is to strengthen community capacity for self-help. It seeks to: (1) strengthen and establish linkages for disaster preparedness, and (2) respond to localized epidemics like chikungunya, fire outbreak and flood. All the initiatives taken under the CBDP component are

expected to be integrated into the ongoing/planned programmes of the respective Panchayati Raj<sup>5</sup> Institutions (PRIs) to ensure sustainability.

The programme covers the entire coastal belt of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh states (all in southern India) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands<sup>6</sup>. Twenty-six local partners of Caritas India are implementing the programmes. However, the present case study has been chosen from good practices by a few number of implementing partners operating in the following 89 villages:

- 45 villages in nine mandals<sup>7</sup> of two districts of Andhra Pradesh State (West & East Godavary)
- 11 coastal villages in Alleppey District in Kerala State
- Mulloor Village in Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala State
- 20 villages in three districts in Tamil Nadu State (9 in Pondicherry, 3 in Karaikal and 8 in Cuddalore)
- 12 villages in Kancheepuram District in Tamil Nadu State

As mentioned earlier, the targeted population is predominantly the lower strata of the economic and social ladder of fishing and other marginal communities: a population with little bargaining power that includes men, women, youth and children of fishing communities, a scheduled caste, scheduled tribes<sup>8</sup> and other marginal communities.

Action Aid's implementing partners in this programme are:

- The Alleppey Diocesan Charitable and Social Welfare Society (ADC & SWS) and Malankara Diocesan Social Society, which are the local partners of Caritas India in Kerala State
- The Diocesan Social Service Society Elluru (DSSS) and two NGO partners in Andhra Pradesh State
- The Multi-Purpose Social Service Society (MPSSS) in Pondicherry
- The Chengalpattu Rural Development Society (CRDS) in Tamil Nadu State

These social development societies implement the programme in the three Indian states with the support/sponsorship of Caritas India, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and government agencies like the Spice Board.

All these partners play a facilitating role in the implementation of the programme. They work directly with the communities in the villages. They are local partners of Caritas India which is a member of an international network of over 162 National Caritas operating across the world in about 200 countries under the banner of Caritas Internationalis.

Initially the focus was on relief and reconstruction but it has shifted to CBDP and housing after the women began playing a decisive role. Drawing inspiration from previous successful experiences, women's monitoring committees were set up to monitor the CBDP and housing programmes. In all efforts/activities undertaken, community participation was given top priority, with a particular emphasis on community ownership and commitment.

The housing programmes provided secure shelters to the tsunami-affected communities, especially women and children. Participation gave women the strength to take further initiatives to reduce their dependency. The CBDP programmes have increased the knowledge held by women, men and children, and enhanced their capacity to address various disasters, natural and man-made.

Training on certain skills was provided to the women to generate alternative employment. In other words, the programmes enhanced women's participation and their capacity to take a leading role in development in their communities which, until then, was unimaginable. In all activities, priority was given to building women's capacity and encouraging equal participation of both men and women.

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5 System of rural local government with three ascending tiers.

6 The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are located over 1,000 km off the east coast of India, between the northern tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra and the southern tip of Burma.

7 Territorial and administrative unit (with a population of about 50,000 to 70,000) between the village and district levels.

8 Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are Indian communities that are accorded special status by the Constitution of India.

## The Good Practice

Good practices are reflected by many examples. For instance in Andhra Pradesh State when initiating the CDBP programmes, efforts were made to ensure that the programmes were led and controlled by women from the communities involved. Emphasis was also laid on utilizing local resources and reducing dependency on outside support. In some cases, special training was given to women on disaster issues. For instance, in a recent flood in Andhra Pradesh State, communities played a major role in the rescue programme, paying special attention to children, pregnant women, old people and the disabled. In some villages in this state, communities have created village emergency funds based on household "handful-of-rice" and "kitchen-utensil" contributions.

In Alleppey District (Kerala State), women comprise 50 per cent of task force committee members, 50 per cent of village-level disaster management teams, and 70 per cent of both central-level resource teams and central-level trauma counselling teams. More priority was given to widows and "weaker" women when selecting the beneficiaries of the housing programme. In Thiruvananthapuram District (Kerala State), village communities have taken initiatives to convert waste, which was a breeding ground for mosquitoes and diseases, into vermin compost. This helped address the chikungunya menace in the area.

In Pondicherry, women's self-help groups (volunteered and took the lead in supplying relief items to the affected community. Children in Chinavererapatnam village informed the Fire and Rescue Department when fire broke out. The taskforce in Chinnakalpet taught children swimming and helped to put out fire. Tsunami early warning systems have been installed at the Cuddalore

Harbour; and in each village, women read out weather forecasts, wave lengths and wind directions through local public address systems. In villages supported by the Chengalpattu Rural Development Society (in Tamil Nadu State, village development committees are formed, comprising 50 per cent of women who are responsible for the overall development of the village and they are doing very good work in addressing social and development issues.

The emergence of women leadership and improved gender relations is visible. Special attention is paid to widows and "weaker" women when selecting the beneficiaries of fishing equipment support and the housing programme.

### Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned from the practice are: community rapport helps in building bonds between people and programmes; projects should be rights-based and involve people from the beginning through community ownership and participation (with confidence -building); equitable role for men and women is possible; and knowledge exists within the community and utilizing it increases their ownership, positive impact and sustainability.

Other lessons are: enhancing attitudinal changes through the walk-the-talk principle/concrete example is possible, male involvement is important in empowering women and improving gender relations, and giving more importance to gender perspectives is a must in projects/programmes.

Lastly, building women's capacity increases their participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This yields greater benefit as women have better understanding of the felt needs of the communities, and they have unique perspectives about and an important insight into community danger and safety.

### Impacts & Results

The programme continuity and sustainability were achieved after the withdrawal of external support/funding, thanks to linkages with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). There are a greater number of women in task force committees; which has led to greater reduction of vulnerabilities and effective coping strategies, and there is now an equal participation of men and women and an improved role sharing in the home/reproductive and community management fields, as well as a shift in women's role as they came out of cultural barriers to take on leadership role.

The programme impact in gendering DRR is substantial increase in the number of women who took the leadership of different community-based organizations and who were gradually elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions and village development committees. This gave them the opportunity to play an active role in decision-making processes particularly related to development activities in their communities.

Additionally, women's ownership of property/assets and decision-making role have increased. In many villages where new houses are built on new plots of land, they are registered under men's and women's names but, for single women, the name of the eldest daughter is included. Women have become active in various social issues like road construction, water supply and sanitation, electricity connection, education facilities, and they also address alcoholism and exploitation by business middlemen. Lastly, participation in the CBDP programmes has enabled women and men to realistically assess risks and vulnerabilities with a gender perspective, and vulnerability aspects were built into the programmes.

### The Challenges

The major challenges were tradition and culture and resistance from men/husbands of the women. Sustainability of the programme/engendering process is another challenge.

These challenges have been overcome - to a certain extent - through awareness, capacity enhancement for women and children, sensitizing men and encouraging equal participation of men and women, and encouraging women's leadership with a strong focus on concrete results.

### Potential for Replication

It is to be noted that in this specific context, empowering women through CBDP has to be carried out gradually as follows: (1) securing a certain level of women's participation initially, (2) as the number of participating women increases, their participation in decision making become more acceptable, (3) as they participate in decision making, their contributions gain recognition, (4) as they gain recognition, they gain in self-confidence and get involved in many more issues. In a nutshell, a virtuous circle is triggered.

That being said, this practice can also be applied, for instance, to chemical disasters that may be provoked by over-use of chemical fertilizers in some of the villages. It can also be implemented as a livelihood promotion programme for organic products. In any cases, to replicate the programme, it is worth noting that self-help is a key strategy, self-help groups enable and strengthen self-help principles through capacity enhancement, and linkages and collaboration with different agencies can boost project quality.

# India

## Village Women Play Decision-Making Roles in Disaster Issues

Women Change-Makers in Post-Earthquake  
Maharashtra (1993- 2007)

*Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), Society for Promotion of  
Area Resources Centres (SPARC), Maharashtra State, India*



### The Initiative

In the aftermath of the 30 September 1993 earthquake in Latur in southwestern India, a network of 3,500 women's self-help groups actively addressed practical needs regarding credit, livelihoods, water and sanitation, health and education, among other issues. With the facilitation of a NGO called "Swayam Shikshan Prayog" (SSP), the women's groups began playing public, community roles by monitoring disaster reconstruction efforts. Reconstruction was the largest component of an Earthquake Rehabilitation initiative involving house repair and reconstruction activities - that covered 200,000 families across 1,300 villages in the two districts of Latur and Osmanabad in Maharashtra State in southwestern India.

SSP first of all organized women to oversee and manage disaster-safe reconstruction. Then it helped to create dialogue spaces for women in the form of Mahila Mahiti Kendra's (MMKs) or "Women's Information Centres". The Indian women used these spaces to access local decision-making structures, forge linkages with local governments and private entities, and addressed their economic challenges of increased income, easier access to credit and improved livelihood. Women leaders were appointed information agents by the Government to disseminate information on safe construction and entitlements for housing, monitor progress, and report back to government officials. Women-led reconstruction completely transformed gender relations in the community by creating a culture of acceptance of women's new public roles in the area of disaster. These new roles and the leadership roles carried over to subsequent development efforts by the women long after the reconstruction programme.

Two categories of implementing partners were involved: community partners and NGO partners.

*Community partners:* Initially, women's collectives organized for reconstruction formed Savings and Credit Groups (SCGs) that are now federated. Federations are key stakeholders in a community-led micro-finance institution (MFI). Federations are institutional structures owned by women's SCGs and an apex body of federation leaders supports and monitors the

groups' economic activities. The federations link groups and members to the community-managed MFI and other public and private sector institutions for financial services. The federations also service credit and skills needed for addressing the livelihood vulnerabilities of the poorest. They provide socially responsible credit (low or no interest) and advise and design initiative groups for addressing basic vulnerabilities (water and sanitation, education, health). Lastly, the federations provide a platform for lateral collaboration among groups to share and collate information and prioritize issues to advocate for and partner with different levels of governments, banks and private sector.

*NGO partners:* GROOTS International, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), SSP and Community Participation and Monitoring Consultant<sup>9</sup> for the Repair and Strengthening Programme converted the individual beneficiary-oriented programme into a community-managed programme, identifying clear leadership roles for women's groups. In 1998, SPARC-SSP embarked on the following activities: (1) networking internationally - through GROOTS International - with other disaster-affected regions of India and the world, and facilitating transfer of innovations for, by and through communities; (2) providing resource teams to support SCGs initially and federations currently; (3) raising funds and providing management support to innovative actions; and (4) undertaking state, national and international advocacy work.

Two categories of support were also involved: policy support and funding support.

*Policy Support:* The Government of Maharashtra implemented the initiative by establishing a policy framework that made community participation mandatory in the reconstruction programme. The official name of the programme is "Maharashtra Emergency Earthquake Rehabilitation Programme" (MEERP).

*Funding Support:* The World Bank, UNDP, DFID<sup>10</sup> and other international agencies funded the Government of Maharashtra who, in turn, funded SSP-SPARC.

The current savings and credit programme has a three-tier community structure through which it operates. The three tiers are: self-help groups, clusters and federations. To scale up rural women's access to resources and linkages, SSP has, since January 2006, promoted a community-owned Micro-Finance Institution. Groups are directly linked to the federations and to the MFI for micro-finance and insurance. The cluster-level network enables the groups to share information, file loan applications, widen their contacts, repay loans, and access economic inputs, training and other resources. The network also allows women to articulate their priorities and strategize their vulnerability-oriented advocacy programmes around basic service delivery and physical and financial access to information and resources for the poorest of the poor in their communities.

In general terms, after the 30 September 1993 earthquake in Latur, SSP-SPARC (Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres) was appointed "community participation and monitoring consultant" for a Repair and Strengthening programme of the Government of Maharashtra supported by the World Bank, UNDP, DFID, GROOTS International and other international agencies. After the completion of the earthquake rehabilitation project in 1998, SSP steered the women's groups involved in the reconstruction towards a broad-based community development strategy. SSP has facilitated, since 1998, the growth of a self-help group movement by forming savings and credit groups and member-owned federations of SCGs (at sub-district level). Based on the federations, SSP in January 2006 began promoting a community-owned Micro-Finance Institution to scale up rural women's access to resources and linkages.

In more specific terms, with a focus on the women's activities, the initiative was implemented as follows. The women were first engaged as information agents in the Repair and Strengthening programme during the rehabilitation period. They were able to learn about the construction of disaster-safe houses and they led the community management and monitoring of the construction process, established grievance redress systems, and liaised with local, *taluka*<sup>11</sup> and district-level government mechanisms. The process to organize women's self-help groups then began and Mahila Mahiti Kendra's (MMKs - Women's Information Centres) were established, providing spaces to nurture women's leadership and organizing skills. The MMKs created public recognition of women because of their ownership of such spaces/assets. The self-help groups federated as clusters of 10-12 villages around each information centre (MMK). New group formation was brought under the mandate of federations for simultaneous scaling up. The federations began offering livelihood credit packages, training and market research, etc. and a process was initiated to address basic service issues faced by women and

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9 This consultancy was implemented from August 1994 to June 1998 through the rural programme of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) on behalf of the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC).

10 DFID: Department for International Development (of the UK Government).

11 Sub-district level administrative unit comprising approximately 100 villages.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

social auditing of public health centres. The election of self-help group members to village, block, taluka and district governments was held and development programmes were accessed, ensuring that gender priorities were mainstreamed into practice by: (a) training more members in information collection through surveys; and (b) obtaining legal status for Women's Village Assemblies (Mahila Gram Sabha's) in local decision making. Finally came the establishment of community trainer teams to transfer strategies to other communities and to access and implement development projects all over the state; and a partnership was established with the state to scale up the initiatives.

### The Good Practice

This initiative is a good practice because it provides a model of effective government-community partnership and facilitates policy support needed to foster a culture of risk reduction. It also completely transformed the traditional roles of women in the society. Indeed, the women have led community initiatives ranging from addressing infrastructural vulnerabilities to addressing systemic vulnerabilities. They fostered responsive and partnership-oriented local governance, thus increasing accountability through: (a) collecting and disseminating information on entitlements and creating access to them; (b) creating spaces for advancing their priorities; and (c) getting members into local governance institutions.

The initiative also created and sustained effective mechanisms for ensuring successful recovery and resilience building, and it created and demonstrated mechanisms for transferring knowledge and skills to other disaster-affected and at-risk communities - through peer exchange and community resource teams.

#### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is that a disaster is an opportunity to transform women's role and status in the community. Also, there is a strong need for: (1) initial and continued government policy support to enhance women's role in local governance, (2) placing knowledge, skills and information in public domain, and (3) recognition and integration of existing community institutions in bringing transparency and accountability to disaster and development programmes.

There also remains a need for recognition of mechanisms of lateral collaboration among communities to ensure scaling up and sustainability. Risk reduction is a continuous process involving evolution of structures, institutions and partnerships at local, national and international levels; therefore, sustained support and commitment (financial and programmatic) are needed to achieve the developmental goals of a disaster-devastated region.

### Impacts & Results

Federations and the Micro-Finance Institution are linked to 3,500 groups composed of 40,000 members in over 1,064 villages in three Indian states and 800 villages in five districts of Maharashtra State. A large number of organized women's group members are now in local governance institutions. Village Women's Assemblies were established as spaces for setting women's priorities in village decision making and organized women's groups now occupy a central role in the implementation of development programmes.

The impact of the initiative in gendering DRR is that women have acquired and practiced knowledge of earthquake-safe building and they now have knowledge of do's and don'ts of relief, recovery and rehabilitation. Better information on assets and properties are available to women and there is an emergency credit support (for livelihoods and consumption) from their own savings handled by the groups and

federations. Also, there are now excellent women's peer groups to meet the psychosocial needs of the communities, and there is an increased knowledge of sources of services and information among women. Strong peer-to-peer communication network now facilitate: (a) the flow of reliable information; (b) risk reduction and effective response; and (c) an increased access to and control over basic services.

Also, women and vulnerable communities have been included through members' representation in local governments. Information on most vulnerable groups (widows, pregnant women, children, elderly) among women is updated periodically. Last but not least, a network was created, composed of technically and managerially skilled women capable of managing, monitoring and ensuring transparency and accountability in disaster and development programmes.

### The Challenges

The major challenges were bureaucratic hurdles and scope for corruption built into the Repair & Strengthening policy, non-integration of technical know-how into public sphere, dominance of engineers and professionals, and parallel implementation of corporate-led housing reconstruction that divided the communities.

In addition, traditional perceptions of women's role as housewives remained, and gender priorities in disaster or development context were not always recognized. Also, the Government was reluctant to enter legal or institutional partnership with organized women or community groups.

These challenges were overcome by: (1) transforming the Repair & Strengthening programme from being individual-oriented to a community-led reconstruction one; (2) turning women into information agents that bring information to public domain, which helped cut corruption; (3) creating networks for information sharing, collective bargaining and learning; and (4) establishing collaboration with state and non-state actors and across communities.

### Potential for Replication

Two factors were critical to the successful implementation of the programme: (1) the government policy framework that recognizes and opens up space for women's collectives (Mahila Mandals) to participate in and facilitate rehabilitation, and (2) the NGO partner's ability to convert the individual beneficiary-oriented programme into community-driven reconstruction.

That being said, successful replication of the practice was however carried out in the following regions and countries: in India's Gujarat State (after the 2001 earthquake in Kutch), in Marmara Region in Turkey (in 1999, 2002, 2004), in India's Tamil Nadu State (after the December 2004 tsunami).

To replicate this initiative better: (1) knowledge should be lodged in the community, which enables strong community ownership and rapid scaling up, and (2) community-to-community transfer of knowledge needs policy support to reach out to a wider population.

# Indonesia



## Using Political Momentum to Engender Legislation in the Reconstruction Context

Engendering and Strengthening Women's Legal Rights in Aceh

*United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)  
Mitra Sejati Perempuan Indonesia (MiSPI)  
& Jaringan Perempuan untuk Kebijakan<sup>12</sup> (JPuK),  
Aceh, Indonesia*



### The Initiative

The project is policy advocacy for gender equality and strengthening women's legal rights for a better future for Acehese women and their communities.

It emphasizes the protection of women's legal rights in relation to risks of losing access to resources (mainly land and property ownership) and protection against future disasters.

The project was implemented in January 2006 in Aceh Autonomous Province in Western Indonesia. Following the signing of the Peace Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) on 15 August 2005, a Law on Governing Aceh (LoGA) was developed. As there had been very limited women involvement in the peace process that led to the signing of the MoU, women's groups for the first time mobilized themselves to ensure that their concerns and aspirations were included into such a law that would impact their lives. Advocacy was conducted for the inclusion of specific gender equality provisions in the development of the LoGA and LoGA was adopted in July 2006. This project is now followed with another initiative focusing on engendering the bylaws (known locally as Qanun) to implement the LoGA provisions.

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<sup>12</sup> Jaringan Perempuan untuk Kebijakan (JPuK): Women Policy Network.

The indirect beneficiaries are all the women in Aceh and the implementing partner for advocacy of LoGA was Jaringan Perempuan untuk Kebijakan (JPuK - Women Policy Network.) JPuK drafted the specific inputs/provisions for the LoGA, lobbied the relevant stakeholders to support the provisions, and conducted media campaigns.

The project was funded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and implemented by its local partner, Mitra Sehati Perempuan Indonesia (MiSPI) which is the secretariat for the Women Policy Network. The follow-up initiative, that is to engender the Qanun (bylaws) to implement the LoGA provisions, will be implemented by UNIFEM with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

A lead role was taken by the Women Policy Network (JPuK) in the implementation of the project. They organized discussions, meetings, seminars and workshops to come up with a consensus on points proposed to be included in the LoGA that ensures gender equality and the protection of women's rights. Lobbying was also done at both the provincial and national levels of the House of Representatives since these are the bodies that would finally decide on the adoption of the law. Media campaigns garnered public support for the project and better public understanding on why this needed to be done. Women and men have benefited as their interests are equally protected. As a result of the advocacy work, the post-tsunami land distribution scheme allows for Acehnese women to have their names registered as individual or joint owner in the title deeds. Prior to the advocacy effort, the land titling policy for tsunami survivors was to give ownership to heads of a family unit, who are usually men.

## The Good Practice

As mentioned earlier, LoGA was developed/drafted following the signing of the Peace Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) on 15 August 2005. As there had been very limited women involvement in the peace process that led to the signing of the MoU, women's groups for the first time mobilized themselves to ensure that their concerns and aspirations were included into a law that would impact their lives. This is considered a good practice because women seized and utilized the political momentum to engender the legal process. It resulted in the development of a common understanding of the needs to strengthen and improve Acehnese women's participation in reconstruction after the December 2004 tsunami and in peace building after the 30-year-long conflict.

The innovative elements and results of this project were that the political momentum and better understanding of the need for gender equality measures also resulted in advocacy for the development of a Gender Policy and Joint Land Titling Policy by BRR (Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh dan Nias - Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias). More importantly, the Joint Land Titling Policy has enabled women to register their names in the title deed as exclusive or joint owner of land distributed by the authorities in the aftermath of the tsunami. Until such policy was in place as a result of successful advocacy efforts, men traditionally held exclusive ownership of property. Such a gender-responsive practice - pioneered by the post-tsunami Joint Land Titling Policy - sets new precedent for legal rights and economic empowerment of women.

The key success factors were that women were conscious and hopeful that they could participate and help determine the law (LoGA) that would impact on them; and they were proactively working on this. Public support was garnered through a series of seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions. All these were picked up by the media which then highlighted the need to introduce gender equality in the law.

There was also better understanding of the need for affirmative actions to ensure gender equality in the society.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is the need to utilize a particular momentum to ensure gender-responsive democratic governance that would indirectly contribute to future gendering of DRR policy and guidelines.

A second lesson learned is that women's groups and advocates of gender equality must be aware of the development process in their realm, and must be able to seize whatever opportunity that arises to push for their agenda. They need therefore to have a sustainable advocacy strategy.

A third lesson is that disasters can help open new opportunities to build a better future. These include instituting law and regulations that protect both women and men equally.

### Impacts & Results

The project has led to several concrete and verifiable results such as women's participation is ensured in the ongoing Qanun (bylaws) making process. Support for this gender inclusiveness is evident with various assistance programmes provided by donors. Regarding land ownership, out of 1,800 joint land titling certificates pledged by BRR (Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi Aceh dan Nias - Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency for Aceh and Nias), at least 200 have been awarded since the Policy was launched in late September 2006. Regarding the law drafting process, at least six gender provisions were included in the LoGA, which would ensure equal protection of women and men within the law. Both gender policy and joint land titling policy are the first of their kinds at provincial level to ensure gender mainstreaming in disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction processes.

### The Challenges

The major challenges in this project have been low capacity of those involved and poor understanding of gender issues, as well as cultural and religious perceptions of and norms on gender and the stereotyping of the roles of women and men. Other challenges were popularization and understanding of laws and policies and of how to use them to protect one's rights, as well as political will and commitment to fully implement the Gender Policy and Joint Land Titling Policy.

These challenges were overcome by avoiding a confrontational or antagonistic approach to cultural and religious practices.

### Potential for Replication

The UNIFEM initiative has revitalized and strengthened the capacity and role of the JPuK (Women Policy Network) in law and policy-making processes in Aceh, while the Gender Policy and Joint Land Titling Policy are first-of-its-kind developments in Indonesia. Though targeted for the rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in disaster-stricken areas, they could be adopted for the whole province and inspire others to also make the same commitments.

# Indonesia



## Grassroots Women Handle Quake Impact Unaided

Developing Grassroots Women Trainers  
on Disaster Recovery and Resilience Building

*GROOTS International<sup>13</sup> & UPLINK (Urban Poor Link)  
Java Island, Indonesia*



### The Initiative

After the May 2006 earthquake on Java Island in Indonesia, grassroots women played an active role and worked alongside men to organize their communities in the absence of external support. The women ran temporary shelters, community kitchens and aid distribution at a time when some communities had to run their own temporary shelters for as long as two months before they received external assistance. For most of the women involved, it was the first time they participated in decision making and played public roles on community issues. This formed the basis for subsequent efforts by a local NGO called UPLINK (Urban Poor Link) and the GROOTS International network to sustain women's participation in disaster-related decision making and to strengthen and transfer effective resilience building practices through women.

One of these efforts by UPLINK and GROOTS International is the present initiative which has two components: (1) women's initiative to cope with the impact of the May 2006 earthquake on Java Island in Indonesia, in the absence of external aid, and (2) efforts to build and sustain women's leadership and community coping capacities in disaster-affected and at-risk communities.

The initiative is under way in 10 villages (including Puchung Growong, Kategan and Manding) in Yogyakarta Province, Java Island, Indonesia. In May 2006, women responded to the earthquake along with their communities. Building on these initiatives, GROOTS International has worked with UPLINK to build the capacity of women's groups in Yogyakarta Province to sustain their participation and leadership. In December 2006, at a capacity-building workshop organized by UPLINK and GROOTS International, women leaders shared their experiences and identified skills they could share with other communities. Over the following few months, UPLINK has run training-of-trainers workshops to

<sup>13</sup> Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood – International: a US-headquartered international network of grassroots women's organizations working with over 40 organizations in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

strengthen the women's leadership and build their capacities to analyze and transfer their disaster response strategies. Follow-up activities are being planned.

The "beneficiaries" of the initiative are grassroots women from 10 earthquake-affected communities in 10 villages of Yogyakarta Province. In fact, the women happen not to be "beneficiaries" but key actors who organized community responses to immediate practical needs (food, shelter, childcare, etc.). Subsequently, their leaders identified their learning priorities. Grassroots leaders from a tsunami-affected area, Aceh (Indonesia), shared to them their experience and knowledge of safe construction supervision, composting and craftsmanship to enhance income.

On the basis of its work which consists of supporting communities by consulting them on what kind of aid they needed, UPLINK provided training inputs to the above-mentioned community training-of-trainers workshops. The inputs included confidence building, support for women in decision making, helping them create training tools, and helping community leaders train nearby communities on how to run community kitchens.

The grassroots women leaders and UPLINK are supported by GROOTS International, an international network of grassroots women's organizations that seeks to link with and learn from the experiences of other communities. GROOTS International is supported by the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) in initiatives to develop grassroots women trainers on disaster recovery and resilience building. Such grassroots women trainers include Turkish women leaders who organized themselves to address their communities' practical needs (pre-school education, livelihood, credit.) and have sustained, over the last eight years, their leadership and involvement in community development decision making.

The Turkish women leaders (from women's cooperatives) visited Yogyakarta to share their experiences and offer their advice. During their visit, they expressed readiness to remain available, as a resource team or advisory group, to Indonesian women who wanted to learn about their strategy of creating "safe multi-purpose spaces" for women and children.

In the 10 villages of Yogyakarta Province, men pitch tents in paddy fields close to the villages while women run community kitchens. In other villages, women (in spite of community resistance) participate in community meetings that take decisions about the use of aid and its allocation. In Kategan village, community members pitch tents in paddy fields where women run community kitchens for each cluster of families living in makeshift houses. Immediately after the earthquake, temporary shelters managed by the community functioned for two months until they got outside assistance. In the shelters, different functions are performed on rotating basis: running the community kitchen, patrolling the settlement, organizing a safe place for children to play.

The women have also organized to clean debris in their villages. It is to be noted that the women leaders have a clear idea of the kind of assistance that is useful and not useful to them. House repair materials, trauma healing and counselling for children are useful. A woman from Puchung Growong village said that once food and shelter were met, people needed work and income: "A lot of funding came at the same time, and all of it was for house construction. No one wanted to provide livelihood support." Similarly, other women said timing of aid was critical. "Plastic tents came when they were not needed. We spoke to the relief agency and returned them." The visiting Turkish women were impressed that the community organized to refuse to accept aid when it was not needed, instead of taking it and selling it or hoarding it.

At a GROOTS-UPLINK capacity-building workshop held in December 2006, the Yogyakarta women identified areas in which they could develop skills and knowledge they could offer to other disaster-prone communities, women's groups and other communities all over Indonesia. The skills demanded included how to distribute aid equitably, how to organize community kitchens for clusters of households, how to find safe spaces for children in the temporary shelters.

All told, the activities above demonstrate that women do have the capacity to create community consensus about which aid is needed and how to distribute them. In a nutshell, the women have created an entry point to participation in public decision making. They are now seeking to sustain their participation in the long term to address both development and disaster issues in their communities.

## The Good Practice

In a society with severe constraints on women's participation in public decision making, the post-disaster relief and recovery processes have been a rare opportunity for women to step into new public roles and get involved in community decision making. The two processes have enabled the grassroots women to demonstrate that they have the capacity to organize communities, manage collective resources and analyze the appropriateness of external aid reaching their communities. The work done by the women has dispelled the myth that grassroots women's efforts benefit women only. In fact, the women's efforts clearly have helped respond to family and community needs. In the process, they have also brought about some innovations.

A first innovation is that the initiative made the women aware, for the very first time, of their leadership potential and fulfilling such a potential helped them contribute to rapid recovery and resilience in their communities. Another innovation is that the initiative addresses both practical community resilience-building needs and strategic women empowerment needs, and it also seeks to strengthen and scale up women's leadership and knowledge of resilience building by helping grassroots leaders become trainers.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson from the initiative is that outside agencies often believe that disaster-affected people are not in a position to participate actively in information gathering, assessment or decision making relating to their own relief and recovery. Yet the present initiative shows that grassroots women and their communities are in a better position to respond to community needs and to decide on what kind of support a disaster-affected community requires.

Another lesson is that grassroots women and their communities are also well positioned to organize assistance. Therefore, external relief and recovery programmes, including those of governments, should build on these for the sake of efficiency and optimal use of resources. In fact, putting information and resources in the hands of grassroots women helps achieve equitable aid distribution and prevent wastage of aid resources.

Finally women can organize to address community priorities in a post-disaster context, but sustaining this in the following months can be difficult.

## Impacts & Results

Recognizing their own potential, the women created their own learning plans - in which they charted out the kind of training they needed to strengthen their leadership and training skills, so that they could transfer their skills and coping strategies to other disaster-prone communities working with UPLINK in Indonesia. Reflecting on the active roles they played after the earthquake, the women said they wished to organize themselves to work on development and participate in development decision making (social inclusion is a key element in the ability of vulnerable groups to cope with disaster impact).

Most of the Yogyakarta women who organized community kitchens, aid distribution and other activities, did not have prior experience of participation in community decision making. It is their post-earthquake work which created an entry point for women to play new roles and address community priorities with the approval of their families. The efforts made by the grassroots women were critical to their communities' survival.

### The Challenges

A major challenge for the women was, and still is, sustaining their participation in decision making. Therefore, GROOTS-UPLINK collaboration is also focusing on sustaining the women's leadership and participation in community decision making.

Another challenge is that grassroots women tend to see themselves as "trainees" rather than "trainers". Leadership training and training-of-trainers activities are also intended to address such an erroneous self-perception.

During the December 2006 workshop organized by UPLINK and GROOTS International, the following challenges in disaster response were identified by women and men grassroots leaders from disaster-prone communities in Indonesia:

- Disconnect between community needs and the aid delivered, along with poorly timed aid/entitlements;
- Exclusive focus on relief and lack of focus on the long-term processes of recovery and rehabilitation;
- No space, respect or requirement for communities/women to participate in decision making on relief, recovery, resilience; and
- Women's low participation in public decision making and implementation.

### Potential for Replication

This initiative does not address context-specific problems, but focuses on generic problems/challenges faced by communities in the aftermath of a disaster (poorly timed and mismatched aid, and no consultation with women). As such, it should be easier to replicate. However, it is also carried out under severe constraints on women's participation in public decision making in general, let alone in crisis situations such as in the aftermath of an earthquake. But this did not prevent it from achieving success with little social support, mainly because it genuinely addresses community priorities and needs, and it seeks to develop community trainers that can really go out and train others.

Such a success means that it may be replicated more easily in a more gender-sensitive context. In fact, the Yogyakarta women have already agreed to train women in nearby villages on aid distribution and on how to manage community kitchens.

# Jamaica

## Grassroots Women Skilled in Hurricane-Resistant Roofing and Safer Housing

Putting Safe Construction in Women's Hands

*Construction Resource and Development Centre (CRDC)  
Jamaica*



### The Initiative

This initiative supports women leaders to gain awareness and acquire skills to address disaster risk, map physical vulnerabilities in their communities, and learn construction techniques that help protect their houses against hurricanes.

This initiative literally places resilience building in the hands of women as they become informed about vulnerabilities in their communities and learn how to construct disaster-resistant housing with safe building materials. Furthermore, it is used to generate income while providing low-cost housing to poor communities. The initiative places grassroots women at the centre of disaster recovery and resilience building by enabling them to take ownership and leadership of disaster risk reduction activities.

The initiative was implemented in 28 communities in St. Thomas, Kingston, Jamaica, when hurricanes Gilbert (1988), Hugo (1989) and Mitch (1998) struck.

Since 1984, a NGO called "Construction Resource for Development Centre" (CRDC) has worked to get women involved in shelter and construction activities. When Hurricanes Gilbert (1988) and Hugo (1989) struck, it became clear that communities were poorly prepared to cope with the devastation. CRDC began working with communities in eight parishes to rebuild safer houses, conducting training that emphasized disaster mitigation through safe construction practices. From these activities, CRDC built up a bank of expertise and tools on building hurricane-resilient structures. CRDC then launched a project called "Safe-Roof Retrofitting Project" in 1994 and educated 17 hurricane-prone communities on how to build hurricane-resistant roofs.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

The Safe-Roof Retrofitting Project reached 1,050 households, half of which were headed by women. CRDC recognized that women were an integral part of reconstruction and thereafter focused on training women on how to use the expertise and tools CRDC had built up. When Hurricane Mitch hit in 1998, it left 500,000 people homeless and millions of dollars of housing and infrastructure damaged.

During the reconstruction activities, vulnerability mapping emerged as a key activity through which to create awareness on disaster risks as the first step towards building disaster resilience. By conducting a mapping of physical vulnerabilities in different areas, communities would know what they had to focus on to reduce risk. For example, not all communities faced the same vulnerabilities in a hurricane; some were more vulnerable to flooding than wind damage, while others were susceptible to soil erosion. Vulnerability mapping would help tailor disaster resilience strategies to each community. CRDC undertook vulnerability mapping in nine communities. In 2006, CRDC selected 28 women from 28 other communities to be trained in disaster risk analysis and risk reduction through safe construction and vulnerability mapping. CRDC looked to scale up disaster resilience by training the women to take their expertise back to their communities and train more women themselves.

The safe construction activities of CRDC continue to be scaled up as the community disaster experts train and transfer their knowledge and skills to other in-country and regional communities. The Safe-Roof Retrofitting Project has been adapted to four other Caribbean countries. And through an American Jewish World Service (AJWS) sponsored exchange, women community leaders from Peru and Honduras have been trained in mapping and safe-roof construction.

In addition, dialogue is under way between the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) and CRDC on partnership on community mapping, which would expand hurricane resilience and preparedness to the entire island.

Beneficiaries of this initiative include 1,050 households in eight parishes and 28 new communities in St. Thomas. In addition, safe-roofing knowledge and techniques have been transferred to communities in Peru, Honduras and four other Caribbean countries. As the project scales up through ADRA, the beneficiaries will be island-wide.

This initiative was implemented by GROOTS International and CRDC, which was founded in 1984 as a women's construction collective. The project is supported by the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and GROOTS International.

The initiative was implemented when the CRDC saw that the reconstruction programmes neither consulted nor engaged communities, they did not take measures to mitigate future disasters, and they were not gender sensitive. To address gender issues, the CRDC held a series of community meetings in hurricane-damaged areas. They showed videos on using the safe-roof strap technique in safer construction and invited everyone in the community to come learn how to protect their houses. Equipped with information, homeowners were then able to ask contractors to reconstruct their homes using the safe-roof strap method.

The CRDC then selected few damaged houses in each community (usually the houses of elderly women) and trained a team of people in each community to construct safe roofs. Local builders were enlisted to make the safe-roof straps while contractors made the safer roofing materials available; hardware stores bought and resold the materials.

The CRDC actively promoted the use of the safer roofing materials and techniques by distributing thousands of booklets. They trained builders who, before Hurricane Gilbert (1988), had not considered safe strapping roofs. The Jamaica Bureau of Standards then tested and approved the safe-roof strap, thus creating an industry-wide building standard.

CRDC also worked with women to identify priorities in disaster recovery, to turn them into experts in safer construction techniques and to promote the techniques to contractors. Since half of the households rebuilt with safer roofing were headed by women, CRDC trained a large number of women in disaster resilience. CRDC continued to work with these women as the need to map vulnerabilities in their communities emerged. As the women's expertise built up, CRDC undertook an initiative with GROOTS International and AJWS to enable the women to train other women on their disaster preparedness techniques, thus encouraging them to see themselves as empowered leaders and experts and facilitating resilience in other communities.

## The Good Practice

This is a good practice because: (1) it builds capacity and expertise among community actors who are most affected by disasters and enables them to take charge and protect their communities and homes; and (2) it equips communities with the information they need to mitigate disasters by building back safer.

The following factors were also key to the success of the initiative: (1) the initiative supported women's leadership and facilitated collective action that can be sustained by local ownership of the initiative, (2) the initiative can be scaled up in collaboration with local institutional partners who are eager to learn from and support these strategies.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is that when people are given practical information on how to prepare for disasters, they will use it.

Additionally, disaster resilience, community development and women's empowerment can be addressed through a single initiative.

This initiative has demonstrated that grassroots communities can handle their disaster preparedness strategies. Furthermore, these strategies are more sustainable, replicable and scalable as the experts do not leave after the projects are completed.

### Impacts & Results

Six parishes benefited by adopting safer building techniques and 1,050 households incorporated the safe-roofing techniques - 50 per cent of them headed by women. Also, this initiative has gendered disaster risk reduction by training women on practical techniques to identify vulnerabilities in their communities and build safely. This positions them as experts in disaster mitigation and also enables them to help other communities build disaster resilience.

The women disaster experts have participated in community and regional exchanges where they trained other women in disaster mitigation techniques. They have also participated in international conferences, during which their experiences in disaster mitigation helped inform and educate policy makers.

### The Challenges

A key challenge was how to engage the poorest and most vulnerable communities and how to handle the historical marginalization of female workers in the building sector. The establishment of CRDC in 1984 addressed this challenge by providing a collective supportive space for these women.

Another challenge was getting builders/contractors to shift to the practice of building back better. The builders were reluctant because the practice and materials involved were more expensive. But with the relevant information on the desired standards, house owners were able to challenge the builders.

The last challenge was, and still is that: grassroots communities need financial and institutional support to scale up the initiative. Indeed, communities need good partners to facilitate their work and link them to external resources, knowledge networks and policy makers.

### Potential for Replication

Safer housing construction is a practical tool that can be replicated or adapted to different regions. Through AJWS/GROOTS International, CRDC will update and distribute training material. Grassroots women also gain experience through this process in teaching and transferring their work.

CRDC is currently working with eight parishes across Jamaica to strengthen the participation of women and poor communities in water and sanitation programmes. Local authorities have also requested CRDC to conduct training for them.

The ongoing dialogue with ADRA on the need to conduct vulnerability mapping has the potential to create a countrywide partnership for disaster preparedness. Also, countrywide vulnerability mapping enables CRDC and local communities to develop a large-scale disaster risk reduction plan.

# Mexico



## "Endogenous Development" Approach to Gender & DRR Issues

Building the Capacity of Indigenous Peoples to Address  
Disaster Risk and Gender Inequality

*UNDP Country Office, Mexico*



### The Initiative

The programme is a Local Risk Management Programme implemented in several indigenous villages in southern Mexico, with a participatory and territorial approach and stressing the development of local capacities to cope with disaster risk and gender inequality. An innovative element of the Programme is an "endogenous development" approach that mainly consists of learning from local conditions and potentiality before adopting methods.

The Programme's Pilot Phase was launched after Hurricane Isidore struck in 2002-2003. Good practices, including gender-sensitive measures and methodologies, were developed, and a replication phase took place from 2004 to 2006. A Policy-Making Phase is being planned for 2007-2009. The Pilot Phase covered 15 villages in Yucatan in southern Mexico. The Programme is now under way in more than 500 villages and 60 municipalities in six southern states of Mexico: Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas and Oaxaca.

Beneficiaries are, properly differentiated by gender and other population groups, around one million people from 12 "indigenous peoples", particularly through community-based organizations (CBOs), local governments and community traditional authorities.

The implementing partners are the UNDP country office, 20 micro-regional teams of local experts and three sub-regional NGO networks, all sharing training and organizational tasks.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

The Programme is sponsored by UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), Small Grants Programme-Global Environmental Facility (SGP-GEF) as well as two international donors--Ayuda en Acción-España and Oxfam International--and the Mexican Government.

During the Pilot Phase, local experts and NGO members were trained, and methodologies both of the Gender in Development approach and the disaster risk reduction (DRR) protocols developed and adapted. At local level, communities and cooperatives had a risk analysis, emergency plans, damage evaluations, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction proposals that differentiated data on women and men, analyzed separate gender conditions and needs, and thus tried to address such needs in specific ways.

Gender-sensitive issues within DRR have been tackled in each micro-region in particular ways; e.g. male-female (adult-child) violence, women illiteracy, as well as reduced extra-community experiences.

### The Good Practice

The programme is a good practice because it involves an integrated approach, gender focus is present from the beginning in a real cross-cutting manner, it has systematizing methods and tools that help prepare replication, and it gives women - particularly those from indigenous communities in marginalized contexts - the chance and choice to protect themselves and their assets (women rights approach), which complies with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As mentioned earlier, an innovative element of the Programme is an "endogenous development" approach that mainly consists of learning from local conditions and potentiality before adopting methods, and so adapting to diverse ways to comply with the same equity goals.

Key success factors were the proper selection of Programme team and micro-regional experts among NGO activists already sensitive to gender issues (quota system to ensure that half of team members are women) and the strong theoretical and methodological training in Gender Equity (as part of the Programme's Diploma for Local Experts).

#### Lessons Learned

Even though gender-sensitive DRR measures and criteria are being accepted both at community and Federal Government levels, they have been rejected almost immediately at municipal government level and among local power elites because they deeply question and subvert their status quo. In the planned 2007-2009 Third Phase (Policy-Making Phase), direct work will be done with municipality mayors and "Protección Civil" (Civil Defence) local personnel to address distrust and fear. Also, an alliance has been forged with NGOs that strengthen the policy-making capacities of women leaders, some of whom may access decision-making positions in local governments.

### Impacts & Results

Women in the rural indigenous communities now get more and timely information about prevention (vulnerability reduction measures for housing, livelihood projects.), preparedness and response (early warning, life and asset protection), humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction alternatives.

Women have increased their decision making power and other negotiation assets (room for manoeuvre) while occupying positions into local risk management structures and participating in formal and non- formal discussions on rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. Furthermore, disasters are used as an opportunity to challenge existing unequal gender conditions; e.g. housing reconstruction programmes may ask women partial or full legal ownership of a house as a condition for grant or loan approval.

### Lesson(s) Learned

Although particular attention to differentiated gender (and other) needs requires a larger initial investment of money and time during the design and operation stages, its project/policy effectiveness and efficiency is highly cost-effective.

### Potential for Replication

The Mexican context, especially in southern and southeastern rural regions, is neither gender-sensitive nor gender-friendly to social equity and participation. Some aspects of indigenous peoples' traditions, such as male-only leaderships, challenged the Programme. But of indubitable help were the pre-existence of NGOs and CBOs work, support from gender and DDR experts from the UNDP country office. Methods and tools are being systematized and published; they will be made available online. Sharing of local experiences, in a "farmer-to-farmer" style, may also help adapt the practice to different contexts.

# Pakistan

## Negotiating Cultural Roles, Power Patterns through an "Incentive" Approach

Advocacy vs. Incentive-Based Approach to Rehabilitation and Development

*SUNGI Development Foundation, Pakistan*



### The Initiative

This initiative is about leading local communities to acknowledge that women are also stakeholders by tactfully making women's participation a "prerequisite" for development-oriented support from relief agencies.

This initiative, which opts for an incentive-based approach as opposed to an advocacy-based approach, was launched in Pakistan during the disaster relief phase that followed the 8 October 2006 earthquake. The areas covered are Mansehra and Battagram districts in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), northern Pakistan. It has generated unprecedented women's participation in the two traditionally conservative areas.

The initiative is being implemented in the earthquake-affected zone by the Pakistani non-governmental organization SUNGI which is primarily funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD). SUNGI's work has a strong focus on women's empowerment.

SUNGI hires and trains women "field coordinators" (FCs) who establish roots within the community and become a representative of the target population, helping them identify and address disaster risks and vulnerabilities. The FCs create village committees comprised of both men and women, and provides training on a regular basis.

## The Good Practice

The initiative is a good practice because it brings "policy dialogue" to local community members and empowers them to take responsibility for the participation of women in community affairs. This minimizes gender-based social friction. The simple rule is "no intervention if women are held back".

### Lessons Learned

The most important lesson is that cultural roles and patterns of power are negotiable. To improve similar initiatives, it would be fruitful to tactfully overcome male dominance by making women's participation a prerequisite of the project to be implemented, through an incentive-based - not advocacy-based - approach.

### Impacts & Results

The initiative has helped take disaster preparedness out of the "male" domain and make it gender neutral. The outcome is measurable by the number of women participants in each village and their relative empowerment compared to non-participants.

### The Challenges

The biggest challenge obviously was the local culture's traditional conservatism. It was overcome in part by making the process as culture-sensitive as possible with the help of local women who are both qualified and strongly aware of local norms.

### Potential for Replication

To replicate the initiative in a different context, there is a need to gain the local community's support and confidence through negotiations and dialogue based on the above-mentioned incentive-based approach. Such a practice could be most useful in all elements of disaster risk reduction.

## Pakistan



### Promoting, Protecting Women's and Girls' Rights among Disaster Survivors

Empowering Communities to Promote and Protect Human Rights Following Disaster

*Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy, (PODA)  
Pakistan*

#### The Initiative

Following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, problems related to legal rights emerged within earthquake-affected communities, including women's and girls' rights surrounding compensation, victim assistance, litigation on inheritance and property ownership. The present initiative is a Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) project aiming to sensitize and educate communities on their legal rights, with a particular focus on the above-mentioned rights of women and girls.

As an organization, PODA seeks to ensure that: (1) the specific needs of women are addressed when aid agencies focus on community infrastructural needs, and (2) women's rights and gender equity are strategic focuses of disaster response in Pakistan.

Launched in December 2005, this initiative is still under way in the earthquake-affected districts of Bagh and Chakwal in Kashmir in northern Pakistan, with its second phase ending at the end of 2007. PODA plans to continue addressing the overlooked post-disaster needs of women and girls in these areas. These plans may include livelihood initiatives as well as further development of women's centres through which women and girls can continue to learn about their rights and livelihood skills, and receive psychological and legal counselling and ongoing advocacy support.

PODA implements the initiative, based on its mission to empower marginalized rural communities - especially women, children and youth - through social mobilization, capacity development and human rights advocacy to build a gender-equal, democratic society conducive to sustainable livelihoods and good governance.

As many families lost male income earners in the 2005 earthquake, the women they left behind were left destitute because they were not culturally ready, properly educated or even encouraged to work to support themselves. Additionally, many women, especially widows and single women, found themselves competing with other male relatives for relief and property rights. PODA concentrated on the plight of these women left without a means to provide for themselves and their children.

PODA identified and brought together core groups of youth and women, providing them training on human rights and women's issues. The core groups evolved into a Women's Rights Network. Additionally, PODA is partnering with local

support and service networks to address women's needs that PODA cannot directly respond to. It is also partnering with local radio stations to air human rights programmes.

Since the beginning of relief and rehabilitation work by PODA in October 2005, all members of PODA project communities have been actively involved, including the elderly and children. PODA organized volunteers into groups of young boys and girls who have helped in hosting and organizing legal sessions and identified the victims of post-earthquake violence. The above-mentioned Women's Rights Network has been another important support for community participation in rehabilitation and awareness raising activities. PODA also involves communities in community theatre and community dialogues.

Funded by various donors, the PODA post-earthquake initiative has four components: (1) expanding legal rights awareness for Kashmiri communities, (2) helping women create tools for understanding and defending their rights, (3) helping youth develop an understanding of basic needs and basic rights, and (4) linking women survivors of violence to support and service networks.

PODA trained a group of 20 Kashmiri women and men on how to organize legal rights awareness sessions. The participants were selected locally based on their community leadership potential. After their initial training, they organized ongoing legal sessions for at least 20 new participants. The participants discussed issues of concern for displaced communities, their rights and which avenues through which they can access their rights. Regarding inheritance and property disputes, the communities have been linked with legal experts for professional guidance. PODA has hired a local lawyer in Kashmir to provide legal information. It is estimated that 200 Kashmiri men and women will benefit from the legal rights awareness sessions.

In addition, PODA is developing a legal manual in Kashmiri, Urdu and English with illustrations and guides for trainers. PODA is also reviewing existing material and manuals on women's rights to develop more relevant, updated and user-friendly versions adapted to the needs of women in Kashmir. By the end of the project, PODA hopes to complete a manual on legal awareness sessions on women's human rights. The manual will be handed over to women's networks.

PODA is training local youth and women in accessible areas to prepare short radio programmes on human rights, which are then broadcast on local public and private radio stations. The ultimate goal is to create a core group of women and youth who can continue to talk about women's human rights issues on the radio.

In 2006, PODA conducted a series of legal rights sessions with women in Kashmir. During these sessions, PODA learned of cases of women who were exploited by their husbands or other male relatives to get earthquake damage compensation. There were also reports of male family members who received compensation destined to female family members. The women requested legal support and PODA hired lawyers for their cases. The women were additionally provided with information about how to identify various forms of violence, including economic, social, cultural, emotional, psychological and physical violence. Women and girls were also taught how to protect themselves from these various forms of violence. A core group of Kashmiri women will be organized to receive training on how to provide similar training to women in their communities.

## The Good Practice

This initiative implements many good practices including basic gender analysis methodologies. PODA works with women to identify their concerns, the existing barriers, power relations and available resources (material and human) that can help them ensure cultural appropriateness of the process. The approach ensures that women and girls are not only part of the project but also exert direct control over the activities from the outset. By additionally making informational resources available to them from the outset, women and girls felt more empowered to become directly involved in the implementation.

An innovative factor that helped throughout the process and continues to do so is the linkages established between the participants and other networks of women and gender-minded professionals. Networking is crucial to any social group or movement working for gender equity.

Not only is it a success that more women and girls are now able to access humanitarian and legal aid, the larger participation of women and girls in promoting and protecting their rights is also a notable achievement.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned from this initiative is further reinforcement of the belief that there is a need to integrate gender analysis and women's active role into all post-disaster response and thinking. An engendered response to the needs of women cannot be approached separately from all other sectors - health, shelter, legal, educational, livelihood: it needs to be integrated into them. Involving women and youth in the programming from the very beginning has helped the communities develop better understanding of the needs of women and children and take steps to consider these needs in their disaster responses.

Another key lesson is the importance of making information available, understandable, relevant and timely to women and vulnerable youth from the beginning. Such an early information delivery and awareness-raising strategy, combined with women's focused networks, help address women's needs immediately after a disaster event rather than as an afterthought.

## Impacts & Results

As this PODA initiative is still under way, specific quantitative results cannot yet be fully measured. However, the project's goals include: (1) increased number of women trained in and using human rights information, (2) lower number of early marriage of girl children and increased number of girls getting education in local schools, (3) increased interest of the community in radio programmes on human rights issues, and (4) increased demand for human rights information from women and the community at large.

## The Challenges

The major challenge in this initiative is addressing cultural, religious and legal systems that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls. Partly as a result of the earthquake, there has been an opening up to aid workers in Kashmir, but equally there has also been a strengthening of traditional values. Also, the traditional approach to emergency aid has been an obstacle to the PODA project: most aid agencies have failed to look at post-disaster response with a gender lens.

PODA is addressing these concerns by identifying key partners in the community who can influence the degree of attention paid to women and girls in Pakistan following the 2005 earthquake. This in turn helps elevate the status of women's post-disaster needs and approaches to disaster.

### Potential for Replication

The project could not be successful without the direct involvement and networking of women in the region with other women who have higher levels of expertise. By making information accessible and understandable to women, the project enables women to take greater control of the relief and rehabilitation process and therefore greater control of responses to their needs. Direct empowerment of women at the onset of a disaster is crucial to minimizing their legal exclusion.

Whereas PODA did not specifically use gender analysis as a tool, their overall process incorporated many of the tenets of gender analysis in its project implementation. To ensure gender equality in emergency assistance and disaster response, women need to be supported to identify their concerns, obstacles, power relations and available resources (material and human) that can help them. Cultural appropriateness of the process should also be ensured.

# Peru

## Grassroots Women Produce Safe Building Materials and Build Disaster-Resistant Houses

### Women Building Disaster-Resilient Houses and Communities

*Estrategia, Peru*

#### The Initiative

This project works with grassroots women leaders in disaster-prone areas in Peru to undertake reconstruction work with safe building materials. The women are involved in resilience-building work as they are trained on how to build disaster-resistant houses with safe building materials, providing low-cost housing to poor communities. Furthermore, the women generate income from the building materials which they produce themselves.

In this project, grassroots women are at the centre of disaster recovery and preparedness through their ownership and leadership of disaster preparedness activities. The project is innovative and successful because it links empowerment of women and poor communities to disaster preparedness and risk reduction - both of which are beneficial to development. In addition, the women mobilize their communities through a variety of strategies, including door-to-door surveys of basic conditions and tying risk reduction together with other human settlement issues.

The project was initiated in 1996 in earthquake-prone areas in Lima, Peru, by a NGO called Estrategia (Strategy) and a community-based organization, Mujeres Unidas para un Pueblo Mejor (Women United for a Better Community). Grassroots women learned to produce building components (i.e. earthquake-resistant roofing panels or domes, blocks, etc.), built houses using the components, ran businesses producing the components, and trained others in all these skills. As the project has been successful locally and recognized by the municipal government, it is in a scaling-up phase and efforts are being made to adopt it countrywide. In addition, the trained women, who are now community experts, are training other communities and countries in the region. The project is also a long-term strategy as it is a source of income generation for communities.

The project benefited 55,000 families in Ventanilla District, Callao Province, Callao Region (near Lima) in Western Peru.

GROOTS International<sup>14</sup> and Estrategia are the implementing partners. Estrategia, which is a 16-year old Lima-based NGO supporting women leaders in poor communities, initiated the project to create an affordable housing construction model. The National Institute of Housing Research, SENCICO, helped design the production process. In the first year of the project, 240 people were trained in Pachacutec. They learned how to produce building components using local

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materials and used the components and materials to build nine housing units. Estrategia negotiated with local authorities and NGOs to create strategic partnerships to increase the geographic scope of the work and to garner financial support.

Seeing the result of the work, the Mayor of Ventanilla District launched a "Municipal Housing with Gender Equity Programme" which helped the women in their attempts to advocate for fair housing policies for the poor and for countrywide adoption of the Pachacutec project model. The Mayor and the Ventanilla local government also entered into a contract with the trained workers to help scale up the project. They also linked Estrategia to the National Housing Association as well as the media.

The initiative was implemented in collaboration with the National Institute of Housing Research. Women were trained through extensive and long-term courses to produce earthquake-resistant materials and components, build houses using the components and materials, and run businesses producing the components and materials. They built nine houses and a comuna (common) dining room. The women mobilized through assemblies and events (supported by GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission<sup>15</sup>) in September 2006 to demand the approval of housing policies that benefit poor women and men. They raised the issue of grassroots women's needs with municipal authorities and the press.

## The Good Practice

This is a good practice because: (1) it does not build the capacity and expertise of NGO professionals but those of community actors (especially women) who are most affected by disasters, and (2) it enables them to take charge and take care of their communities. Therefore, the practice supports leadership in the community and facilitates collective action that can be sustained through local ownership of projects.

The project is innovative because it links disaster resilience to income generation and poverty reduction. Low-income women develop their communities through the use of disaster-resistant construction as an income generation tool. Scaling up this initiative and adopting it countrywide in collaboration with local institutional partners would empower poor communities and women, generate income and build disaster resilience. In actual fact, it is a pioneering initiative because it puts grassroots women in the leadership role of promoting building safety practices and incorporating risk reduction into land use.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned from this innovation is that disaster resilience, community development, building safety, poverty reduction and women's empowerment can be addressed through a single initiative.

Also, disaster recovery and resilience programmes can be good opportunities to empower women and poor communities; and grassroots communities can manage their disaster preparedness strategies. Furthermore, as local experts do not leave after the project is completed, these strategies are more stable, long term and replicable.

To improve similar projects, grassroots communities need financial and institutional support to scale up the initiative. Good partners are also needed to facilitate their work.

## Impacts & Results

The initiative provided an entry point for women to negotiate with the local government to develop housing policies for the poor. As a result, low-income communities can now face disasters with better information, increased visibility to local institutions, stronger social networks and safer houses.

The initiative also enabled low-income women to deal with hands-on management of disaster preparedness, poverty reduction and community surveying. By doing this, the women gained in development terms, which enhanced their capacity to cope with disasters.

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15 The Huairou Commission is a US-based global network of grassroots women's organizations.

### The Challenges

The major challenge at this stage is lack of resources to replicate and scale up the initiative. Partnerships are being established to address this, such as with Mi Fund Vivienda which will hopefully take the project to national level in Peru.

Another challenge is that women, especially low-income women, generally are not supported to participate equally in the public sphere. Furthermore, the work they do after the occurrence of disasters to sustain their communities often goes unrecognized. Support for grassroots DRR initiatives is needed to help sustain grassroots women's efforts to become effective community leaders and experts.

### Potential for Replication

Safer housing construction is a practical tool that can be replicated or adapted to different regions. Initiatives sponsored by AJWS (American Jewish World Service) and GROOTS International have enabled grassroots disaster experts to train each other on their techniques and experiences. Grassroots women also gain experience in teaching and transferring their work.

Various communities in Peru have expressed interest in implementing this initiative. Estrategia is partnering with a number of organizations and a local government in a Pilot Housing Programme that will provide housing grants for low-income families to build their houses. This effort will hopefully take this initiative to national level in collaboration with the Housing Ministry.

# Philippines



## Engendering Information: Education and Communication Campaigns

Engendering Geohazard Assessment and Mapping Project: The Philippine Experience

*Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR)  
Philippines*

### The Initiative

The project entitled "Engendering Geohazard Assessment and Mapping Project" aims to generate information through geohazard susceptibility maps. One of the emphases is to provide women and men with equal access to information that indicate the geohazard susceptibility of pilot communities. As women are badly affected by geohazards such as landslides and floods, providing them with information as to the susceptibility of their communities is a way to help them cope better in times of such natural hazards.

One of the most important components of the project is gendered Information, Education and Communication (IEC) which aims to empower women (and men) through the information provided by the geohazard susceptibility maps.

The project was first implemented in 2004–2005 as a pilot initiative under the Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Shell Programme of the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The project is currently a major programme of the DENR Mines and Geosciences Bureau. In 2004–2005, gendered IEC campaigns of the "Engendering Geohazard Assessment and Mapping Project" were carried out in the following areas: Baras in Eastern Rizal (Northern Philippines); the cities of Naga and Legaspi in Bicol Region (southeastern end of Luzon in northern Philippines); Panaon Island in Southern Leyte (Southern Philippines); parts of Surigao City and Gingoog in Misamis Oriental; and parts of Davao City in Davao Province (Southern Philippines).

The direct beneficiaries of the project are the local population and local government units (LGUs). The geohazard maps and information help them formulate geohazard management policies and programmes.

The project, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was spearheaded by the DENR Planning Service that as the project holder of the ENR Shell Programme, was responsible for overall project management. Project implementation was handled by the DENR Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Geohazard maps such as flooding and landslide susceptibility maps were developed for the targeted areas. To impart information better, the maps were the subject of IEC campaigns targeting women and men.

## The Good Practice

This is considered a good practice for it specifically seeks to provide women and men with equal access to geohazard information, making them more aware of risks and helping them manage disaster risks at local level. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, women are badly affected by geohazards such as landslides and floods, and providing them with such relevant information is a way to help them cope better in times of disaster.

An innovative element in the project is the inclusion of a gendered IEC component that targets both women and men.

### Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned from the project are that it is important for both men and women to undertake geohazard survey, assessment and mapping; but it is even more important, in the context of a vulnerable community, to provide women and men with equal access to information. This is also a way of empowering both women and men, making them aware and enabling them to recognize their roles and relevance, and participate actively in DRR efforts at community level.

### Impacts & Results

The project's concrete results are reflected by the increasing number of women attending IEC sessions and the presence of women IEC resource persons. More importantly, the gendered IEC component has become a regular component of similar projects.

It is to be noted that integrating gender concerns in geohazard projects is difficult as usually it does not feature in project implementation design. However, including an IEC component focused on providing women and men with equal access to information has helped integrate women's and men's concerns in the technical aspects of the project.

### The Challenges

The major challenge was how to put gender at the core of disaster risk reduction activities such as geohazard surveys and assessments. In this project, designing the gendered IEC component was carried out in the latter part of the project.

### Potential for Replication

Conducting the gendered IEC campaigns provided a much needed link between the project's technical outputs (the geohazard maps and the information from the maps) with those who are likely to be affected by geohazards in the targeted communities. As women groups are highly vulnerable to geohazards, involving them in the IEC campaigns help them cope with geohazards better, in addition to providing them with the necessary knowledge on such natural hazards.

This practice can and should be replicated in a different context. Developing and integrating a gendered IEC campaign into DRR initiatives should be a standard component of all DRR initiatives.

# Sri Lanka



## Marginalized Tsunami: Widowed, Displaced Women Help Design Safer Homes

Safer and Practical Houses for Marginalized Tsunami-Widowed and Tsunami-Displaced Women

*Practical Action & FAHSOD*

*(Forum for the Advancement of the Human Science of Development), Sri Lanka*



### The Initiative

This project is about building houses for a group of tsunami-widowed and tsunami-displaced women marginalized because of economic, ethnic and gender issues. The houses were built to improve community resilience to future disaster events, especially cyclones and tsunamis, using appropriate technology and an integrated approach.

The women were closely involved during initial consultations on house design. They played a significant role in defining the living spaces of their new homes. Spaces for kitchen, utilities, water storage, worship (shrine rooms), separate male and female halls specific to Muslim communities, were some of the ideas that emerged from gender-inclusive community discussions.

The project kicked off in 2005 and ended in 2006 in Sri Lanka in Batticaloa and Ampara districts of Eastern Province and Hambantota and Matara districts of Southern Province. The project to initially build 11 houses for an extremely marginalized group of tsunami-widowed and displaced women was part of a larger effort to demonstrate sustainable housing technologies and a participatory approach towards post-disaster reconstruction. Based on the model developed by the project, 125 houses have been built in six locations of the two tsunami-affected provinces. Although the housing project has concluded its hardware aspect, certain elements - such as the participatory and integrated approach, the housing technology and the technologically appropriate materials - are being promoted through capacity building and demonstration exercises in other tsunami-affected areas.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

The beneficiaries were a tsunami-widowed and displaced community consisting of 11 female-headed households. The implementing partners were Practical Action in the two provinces and Forum for the Advancement of the Human Science of Development (FAHSOD) in Eastern Province, with technical (approach and construction method) and capacity building support from Practical Action partners and full funding from Christian Aid.

Practical Action's Integrated Housing Services (IHS) team was tasked with rebuilding homes in southern and eastern Sri Lanka. The principle of participatory planning was the underlying motivating factor guiding the IHS team's approach. The beneficiaries had been previously identified and data collection sheets were available at the time of the team's visits to the targeted communities. The next step was to assess their individual housing needs. In most instances, the two-member IHS team (a male and female) arranged for a meeting with a cross-section of the targeted community and dealt with them collectively. The team insisted that both male and female members of each affected community had to be reasonably represented at the discussions. In the case of the widowed community, the representation was solely female.

The fundamental approach used was to invite community members present at the meeting to draw their own concepts of the house they desired. Some individuals needed help in executing the required sketches of the plan form they anticipated. A very salient point was that most beneficiaries were capable of producing sketches that were quite adequate for developing the needed final plan forms. Remarkably, a comparison of the sketch plans produced by the widowed community indicated that all of them expressed interest in a single type of house with a kitchen and a lean-to *cadjan*<sup>16</sup> structure located outside the house. The features of a smoke-free kitchen that can be located inside the house were explained to the beneficiaries. Some opted for the alternative suggestion; others preferred to have their future kitchens outside the house.

The finalized plan were usually developed overnight by project officers on computer and approval was confirmed by the beneficiaries the next day. The IHS team made sure that the discussions with each community were held in a relaxed environment conducive to ready responses from community members who were asked to participate in the assessment exercise.

### The Good Practice

This is a good practice because the project beneficiary communities play a key role in the design of the houses by articulating their needs and priorities. This is not the case for most post-tsunami housing schemes which, in Sri Lanka, were constructed without any kind of community involvement, with housing plans and settlement infrastructure designed fully by external consultants.

From a gender perspective, such a community involvement is particularly important as far as spaces such as kitchens and toilets are concerned. The rural homes built under the project often have a kitchen in a semi-detached form and toilets in a fully detached form, which is not the case for most housing built for tsunami victims in Sri Lanka, where the kitchen and toilets are incorporated within a single unit. Some homes do not even provide space for fuel wood cooking even though this type of cooking is the most affordable one in Sri Lankan rural households.

Innovative elements of the project were that all Practical Action houses incorporated women's suggestions. Some houses were built with semi-detached kitchens and that livelihood considerations were taken into account as some families needed shop-houses to conduct small grocery outlets from home. Additionally, flat concrete roofs were introduced in lieu of traditional tile roof as a safeguard against cyclones and tsunamis, enabling people to climb onto the flat roofs to protect themselves against storm surges triggered by tsunamis and cyclones. In southern Sri Lanka, domestic rainwater harvesting tanks were incorporated into the design to improve household water security.

#### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned is that it is vital to consult women when planning recovery interventions. This helps respond to their specific needs - both practical and strategic. Also, gender-based social and cultural aspects must be looked into in order to consult women in a meaningful manner (i.e. having female members in consultation teams, understanding local customs in the area).

To improve similar projects, they should be perceived clearly as an entry point for engaging and empowering women for better gender relations in the longer term.

16 In English Cadjan means "tile roof".

### Impacts & Results

A concrete and verifiable result was successful women's contribution to building sustainable settlements. The impacts of this project in gendering DRR were the empowerment of marginalized widows to design their homes according to their own priorities and needs, increased ownership of the project, and the built houses and the common settlement infrastructure. The project also increased awareness of the need for disaster resilience among the communities involved and the beneficiaries' ability to plan for DRR in individual households as well as in settlements.

### The Challenges

The major challenges were that the low literacy rate among the widowed women made consultations difficult in the beginning. Some could not even illustrate their needs coherently and the field officers had to help out those who could not draw up their desired plans.

Also, some sensitivity was needed toward the cultural aspects of segregation in the community. This was demonstrated during discussions with Muslim communities which requested separate hall areas for male and female interactions, and it was difficult to gather widowed women for meetings since many of them were employed or working in the fields to support their families.

### Potential for Replication

The project has great potential for replication in both its approach (participatory planning, gender sensitivity, integrated infrastructure design process) and the technologies used. In fact, technologies that have proven to be cost effective will be replicated and promoted among other agencies and included in construction training programmes in the country.

# Sri Lanka



## Gendering DRR Capacity-Building for Tsunami Recovery Service Providers

Laying the Foundation: Gendering Capacity-Building for DRR

*UNDP Sri Lanka Tsunami Recovery Unit, Sri Lanka & Institute of Bankers Sri Lanka (IBSL)*

### The Initiative

In a post-tsunami recovery context in view of long-term disaster risk reduction (DRR), this initiative seeks to build Gender & DRR awareness among capacity building institutions in Sri Lanka by helping integrate gender-specific aspects into the training curricula of a key capacity building institute, the Institute of Bankers Sri Lanka (IBSL).

This programme, funded by the Government of Germany through the Tsunami Flash Appeal, is a part of the UNDP Sri Lanka Tsunami Recovery Programme launched in March 2005, covering 14 tsunami-affected districts in Sri Lanka's Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern provinces. The implementing bodies were the Institute of Bankers Sri Lanka (IBSL) and the UNDP Sri Lanka Tsunami Recovery Unit.

The IBSL, a leading training/capacity development organization serving the development sector, has been entrusted with building the capacity of service provider organizations/individuals that provide livelihood recovery support in all tsunami-affected districts in Sri Lanka. Their role was to build the capacities of service provider organizations to deliver services that can help develop livelihoods better with long-term sustainability. The service provider organizations included micro-credit organizations, rural marketing organizations, skill development organizations and women's groups. The final beneficiaries were service provider organizations in tsunami-affected districts that assist livelihood recovery and tsunami-stricken women and men who depend on their services for livelihood recovery.

It was observed that the IBSL regular training curricular initially had no gender sensitivity, and the IBSL training resource team and programme coordination team, comprised of all men lacked awareness of and exposure to gender issues, especially in a disaster context. In identifying these gaps, efforts were made to support the integration of gender-specific aspects into the IBSL training methodology and to include skilled resource persons into the trainers team.

The training programmes were conducted in each administrative district, with three programmes targeting the same group in each district. The programme curricular included accounting, book keeping, human resources management, and the issues related to identification and liaison with the clients, in particular those who are not familiar with the formal aspects of business/ enterprise management. In terms of the gender aspects, the training programmes addressed specific problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in accessing credit due to lack of collaterals and access to productive resources, gaps

in their ability to prepare business plans, and prejudices and social acceptability at marketing and decision-making levels as well as among formal institutions.

The training resource group included key national-level trainers who are also connected to many other training programmes for national-level decision makers within institutions such as the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and a number of other development and rural banks that deliver rural credit and development-related services, which opens scope for furthering the gender and DRR concepts, and application issues.

## The Good Practice

The initiative is a good practice because it addresses gender blindness in development and DRR; it raises gender & DRR awareness among individuals and organizations in the immediate and long-term; it helps infuse a leading training organization with gender sensitivity; it leads to the involvement of women as resource persons at the decision-making level, and creates more opportunities for women entrepreneurs in disaster-prone areas.

The training programmes convey the messages to a range of organizations and individuals in the development and DRR sectors. Additionally, the initiative provides women with more space to participate, develop businesses, be part of credit and insurance schemes and expand their livelihood options. This will help reduce their risks to disasters and enhance their capacities.

Further, the initiative leads to a gendered understanding of development and DRR concepts, how they are applied on the ground and how gender based differences can lead to discrimination, marginalization and increased vulnerability. Therefore, it is an important step towards changes in long-term gender relations at institutional and application levels which aim to influence decision makers and the public through fundamental gender & DRR messages.

The innovative element in this initiative is that in contrast to the general practice of including women as 'trainees' or 'beneficiaries' this initiative mainstreams the issue into the training curriculum itself. This helps address Gender & DRR issues in a more strategic and sustainable manner.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned from the initiative is that members of the IBSL management team need to be led to act as advocates for mainstreaming gender into DRR. To encourage similar initiatives in the future, there is a need to monitor the programme for its impact and support it further with capacity development resources. The initiative offers scope to integrate gender issues into nation wide credit and insurance schemes -- as a risk reduction measure through the IBSL resource team.

## Impacts & Results

Immediate outcomes of the initiative is the revision of the IBSL regular capacity development curricular to integrate gender and the inclusion of a gender trainer into the resource team. The overall capacity development programme therefore is geared to address gender & DRR issues in livelihood development, livelihood security.

## The Challenges

The major challenges were the strong lack of awareness about gender issues and gender issues in disasters within the IBSL management and resource team; the poor awareness of gender issues among the service provider institutions (the targeted trainees) and the limited time available to implement the programmes as part of tsunami recovery. To overcome the challenges, human and material resources were provided to the

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

IBSL team to conduct the training programmes, and gender issues were incorporated into the internal progress monitoring of the training programmes.

Key failure factors are that while the initial integration of gender issues into the training curriculum has taken place, and the relevant resource persons included in the team of trainers, most of the resource persons in the team did not demonstrate sufficient awareness of and conviction about the issue. Furthermore, while follow-up, support and monitoring at least for a year might help reinforce IBSL commitment, no mechanism has been put in place for such activities since the Recovery Programme has already completed its activities.

### Potential for Replication

The context of implementation was tsunami recovery. The benefit was in terms of gendering the capacity building programmes that guided the recovery programmes.

The initiative can be replicated in a development context. More specifically, it can be promoted in the capacity building components identified as part of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

# Turkey

## From Makeshift Women's Centres to Sustainable Women's Cooperatives

Women's and Children's Centres in Turkey: Spaces for Recovery and Resilience Building

*Kadin Emegini Degerlendirme Vakfi*<sup>17</sup>

*(KEDV - Foundation for the Support of Women's Work)*

*Turkey*

### The Initiative

After the August 1999 earthquake in the Izmit-Adapazari regions in Northwestern Turkey, Kadin Emegini Degerlendirme Vakfi (KEDV) responded immediately by setting up "women's and children's centres" in tent cities. The makeshift centres in the tents and containers not only served as sanctuaries for women and children but also introduced a long-term, women-led community building perspective to the initial relief efforts.

During the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, the "centres" moved from temporary to permanent settlements. They became places for a range of community services and income-generating, saving, housing and governance activities. To ensure the sustainability of child care and other community services, the women's and children's centres are owned by independent organizations of local women groups (cooperatives) with collective businesses. The women also established women's housing cooperatives for house tenants - as opposed to house owners - who were not entitled to replacement housing from the Government after the earthquake.

The initiative was initially implemented in Marmara Region in northwestern Turkey, in Adapazari, Izmit and Duzce provinces affected by the 1999 earthquake, but the women's and children's centres have expanded to other regions such as southeastern Turkey, and KEDV also has, since 1986, worked with women living in low-income neighbourhoods in Istanbul and surrounding areas.

KEDV began working in the earthquake-affected region of Marmara in the immediate aftermath of the August 1999 earthquake. It applied its experience of bottom-up approach to practical needs by providing collective space (the women's and children's centres) and participatory processes. This built collective empowerment to act and negotiate with decision makers to address more strategic needs.

By 2002, the women's groups had been able to form six women-owned, locally registered cooperatives that run eight women's and children's centres in Marmara Region. The cooperatives were engaged in a range of community services and income-generating, saving, housing and governance activities. Between 2001 and 2004, women leaders from the

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17 In English: "Foundation for the Support of Women's Work"; KEDV was established in 1986 to support low-income Turkish women.

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

cooperatives were involved in peer learning exchange of experiences with similar disaster-affected women in India<sup>18</sup> and Iran (the Bam earthquake), and with earthquake and tsunami-affected women from Yogyakarta and Aceh in Indonesia. The exchanges were sponsored and facilitated by GROOTS International with funds from Ford Foundation.

The local cooperatives that emerged from the tent-based women's and children's centres have continued their work, evolving into sustainable organizations with access to government resources due to the quality services they provide to communities (e.g. pre-school education services).

The women's groups are currently preparing training curriculum and material to train other disaster-affected grassroots women on relief and recovery strategies and on how to build women's leadership through addressing practical community needs.

Some 300 women benefited from the initiative in the initial post-earthquake stage. By 2005, the number of women involved in the women and children's centres had grown to 10,000.

Implementing partners were GROOTS International, KEDV and grassroots women leaders from Marmara Region. The grassroots women leaders took the lead in organizing and running the women and children's centres. The women leaders are now involved in preparing training curriculum and material to train other groups within and outside Turkey.

KEDV negotiated with local government and NGOs to identify the best sites for the women's centres. It worked with the Social Services and Child Protection Administration to cut through bureaucracy to build and furnish the centres, and also with other government departments like the Ministry of Tourism to market the products of women in the centres.

As economic recovery was a priority issue for the women, KEDV established a micro-credit programme with a fund worth 1,000,000 USD from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and began distributing loans to women entrepreneurs in 2002.

Funds were also provided by the Netherlands Organization for International Development Corporation (NOVIB) and the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) to set up eight centres, while the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the ICSC funded and provided technical assistance for income generation activities. GROOTS International sponsored exchanges between Turkish women and an Indian NGO called Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) and also with women's groups in Iran and Indonesia for mutual sharing of post-earthquake strategies to organize women.

How the initiative was implemented? The initiative began in Marmara Region after the 1999 earthquake which left more than 18,000 people dead, some 48,000 others injured, and over 350,000 homes damaged or destroyed. Immediately after the disaster, 121 tent cities were established for 800,000 people who needed temporary shelters. During the relief phase, women began to organize themselves in the makeshift shelters to secure food and usable items, care for the injured, attend community meetings, direct relief aid to the neediest and gather information from local government representatives.

KEDV used the opportunity to shift from providing aid to supporting and empowering women who were active in the tent cities. KEDV supported the women in establishing women's tents in the tent cities, which the women then used to distribute food, hold support group meetings, and generate income. Next to the women's tents, the women created children's tents as safe spaces where women could bring their children. In the recovery phase, communities were moved from the tents to pre-fabricated temporary settlements where they stayed for at least two years. Here too, women organized to negotiate for space in which they set up and ran their women's and children's centres. The centres became spaces which women were able to use for multiple purposes based on their needs at different stages in the recovery and reconstruction phases and now in their transition to development work. In prefab settlements far from the main city, self-managed centres provided easy access and good quality pre-school services.

The centres were used as meeting spaces and for running pre-school education, childcare, livelihoods workshops, information gathering and dissemination. The women have also organized themselves to address various issues including credit and livelihoods, pre-school education and housing.

When women and men moved to the pre-fabricated temporary settlements, they have also benefited from this initiative. The women organized themselves into groups to conduct surveys in the settlements and visited 9,000 prefab units and analyzed the number of tenants entitled to or ineligible for housing and the services that were needed in the settlements. In some places, the information they gathered contradicted the official data by about 30 per cent. The women also invited technical staff to help them learn more about earthquake safety. They undertook repair activities in their communities. They

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18 Indian women from areas affected by the 1993 earthquake in Maharashtra State and the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat State.

visited the construction sites of permanent houses and talked to engineers, supervisors, technicians and workers to find out if the new building sites and the construction of new houses were earthquake safe. As a part of information gathering, they called on local authorities and national government officials to explain the earthquake-safe features of the permanent housing and to learn about business opportunities the government might provide as well as resource allocation for their centres. They prepared themselves for these visits by gathering information, formulating questions and rehearsing/role-playing the visits. Finding that the government programmes were only supporting house owners not renters to get replacement housing, the women organized to form their own cooperatives and savings programmes to start exploring housing options for renters.

It was the first time Turkish grassroots women organized themselves and created their own institutional structure. It was also the first time that Turkish women created housing cooperatives. The cooperatives today sustain themselves by accessing public resources. In Duzce Province, a 58-member women's cooperative of house renters (who were not given replacement housing) began constructing housing with its own funds. Through funds received during the relief and recovery phases, the women also initiated microfinance programmes starting with the disbursement of 5,600 loans.

## The Good Practice

This initiative is a good practice because it helped grassroots women articulate and apply their strategies for addressing practical community needs in the immediate post-disaster stage to secure basic services and support from officials, and to organize their communities. The initiative combines strategies for addressing practical needs and strategies for addressing women's strategic interests.

It also engaged communities in relief efforts and countered top-down approaches that can often debilitate disaster survivors. Even though the onslaught of emergency aid can transform survivors into passive recipients, the women organized to provide relief and support to each other, and advocated for an adequate space to do so.

Finally, the project helped position women as disaster recovery experts who, as we have seen, can train and support other women in disaster relief and recovery efforts. Most resilience-building projects focus and depend on external professional expertise that withdraws from communities after projects are completed. Here, the grassroots women experts are part and parcel of their communities, and their decision-making capacities and roles are enhanced on an ongoing basis.

### Lessons Learned

A key lesson learned was that disaster recovery programmes are good opportunities for women to play public roles with the support of their families and communities; and that a community or community organization practice which combines empowerment, development and resilience/risk reduction requires sustained work over several years as well as support from good partners.

Another lesson was that women can respond to short-term issues in the relief phase as an entry point for addressing long-term community priorities including economic, social and political inclusion of low-income women - which is a key aspect of resilience building. Also, it is possible to start building more resilient communities from the relief phase itself.

A third lesson is that grassroots women's organizations can play different roles at different stages - relief, recovery, reconstruction, transition to development.

When sharing their experience with their counterparts from Yogyakarta and Aceh in Indonesia, the Turkish grassroots women leaders identified several key elements of their women-led, community-based response strategy. As a priority, women should have a space to gather and organize themselves. And for them to be able to take part in meetings, they need a safe and healthy place to leave their children. Also, needs assessments are required to enable women to prepare their meetings and negotiations with government bodies on the basis of reliable facts. Lastly, women's organizations -- whether they are loose collectives, savings groups, cooperatives or unions - need to have a democratic and participatory process in place, and collective leadership is more effective than individual leadership.

### Impacts & Results

The concrete and verifiable results of this initiative are that there are now six women's cooperatives and 22 women's and children's centres all over the country. The centres are a hub for community networks to gather and plan collective action to build social capital that can be counted on in times of crisis and explore how the centres can be shelter/information hubs in the event of emergency.

Organized low-income women in some communities such as in Istanbul have identified disaster preparedness as a priority area that they would like to address in their communities. More importantly, women are now engaged in decision making, have access to information and therefore are involved in shaping development in their communities. They have developed skills to gather and disseminate information and use it to negotiate. These are all skills that can be used by communities to make institutional actors accountable.

Last but not least, the initiative has helped build resilience because it creates stronger community networks that are better informed and have linkages and access to local officials and international institutions. This initiative has open spaces for women to be active and productive in a post-disaster situation that can be debilitating and traumatic. The women have created spaces to secure basic services for their communities, support each other, create income-generating activities, negotiate with officials, and train other women affected by disasters.

### The Challenges

Some major challenges were countered directly by the women's initiatives to address the practical needs of their communities and their ability to sustain their participation and leadership. Among them was the poor distribution of entitlements after the disaster: (1) vulnerable groups very often did not receive relief aid, (2) house renters, who were poorer, were not provided replacement housing; hence the need for the women to organize housing cooperatives.

There was also a disconnect between community needs and aid delivered, poorly timed aid/entitlements, along with an exclusive focus on relief, and lack of focus on the long-term processes of recovery and rehabilitation. And women's participation in public decision making and programme/project implementation was limited or inexistent.

Another challenge was that: the government supported exclusively government-run pre-school education services in spite of high-quality pre-school services provided by the communities.

### Potential for Replication

Replication has already been under way, as witnessed by the women leaders' interactions with their Indian, Iranian and Indonesian counterparts. The women leaders from the Marmara region are also reaching out to women in other parts of the country. At the same time, women's cooperatives are also developing training material and tools which they can use to train other communities.

It is worth noting that the following factors have been key to the success of the initiative: (1) providing spaces for women to meet and help each other, (2) helping them start livelihood-related activities and form their own organizations, (3) encouraging them to use these organizations to build ownership, leadership, capacity and sustainability, and to secure recognition, (4) using post-disaster activities as an opportunity for women to play public roles, and (5) providing them with opportunities to engage in partnerships.

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