



Gender Mainstreaming In Disaster Management A Manual



**Prepared for State Disaster Management Authority, Meghalaya
By
Ms. Maitreyee Mukherjee**

**Gender Mainstreaming
In
Disaster Management**

**A
Manual
By**

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FOREWORD

*Gender plays an important role in the management of disasters. Its importance is growing due to the various gender discriminations experienced in the aftermath of any disaster. Gender includes both male and female but gender discrimination is generally suffered mostly by women as they fall under vulnerable section of the society. There is also a gender differentiated impact of disasters which means that male and female experience varying degrees of impact of disasters. In order to generate greater awareness among the various disaster stakeholders this booklet on **"GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT"** prepared by **Ms. Maitreyee Mukherjee, Consultant**, I am sure will help in popularizing the issue of gender mainstreaming in disaster management.*

This is the first publication on such issue by Meghalaya State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and I hope that this will be an useful tool in spreading and sensitising awareness on Gender Mainstreaming among the various stakeholders in the field of disaster management.

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Special thanks to the members of various non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and women's groups working in the arena of disaster management for giving me their valuable time and sharing their insights, life experiences and suggestions regarding the implementation of various disaster management programmes and mainstreaming the concerns of women and people with disabilities therein. They have particularly been very helpful in enabling me to source various documents, publications and reports pertaining to the issue.

My sincere thanks, gratitude and salutations to the numerous men, women and children who have provided me with first hand account of the trauma and ordeal of living in relief camps in the aftermath of various natural and man-made disasters across India during my varied involvement with disaster management agencies for over a decade. Their valour has been my personal inspiration for preparation of this manual.

SECTION I

DISASTERS AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1.1 EMERGENCIES

Emergencies encompass a time period when extraordinary measures are taken to support human needs, sustain livelihoods, and protect property which may encompass pre-disaster, disaster alert, disaster relief, and recovery periods (Church World Service, 2000).

1.2 CATEGORIES OF EMERGENCIES

Emergencies can be classified into six types:

Natural rapid onset : Triggered by earthquakes, cyclones, volcanoes, and floods. This crisis is usually temporary.

Technological rapid onset : Fuel, chemical and nuclear accidents; disruption in information, communication and transport systems.

Slow onset : Triggered by natural disasters such as drought and pest attacks

Permanent emergencies: The result of widespread structural poverty requiring more or less permanent welfare measures

Mass population displacements : Both a cause and outcome of other types of emergencies

Complex emergencies : Usually characterized by conflict and associated with civil war, intimidation and harassment

1.3 DISASTER

Disaster suggests an intense and specific time period in which an event either man-made or natural, sudden or progressive causes serious disruption of the functioning of a society with widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of affected society to cope using only its own resources (Kent, R., 1994).

Though the terms disaster and emergency are used interchangeably, it is important to note that a disaster might be regarded as a particular type (or sub-set) of an emergency.

Disaster has always been defined in terms of loss whether it is life or property or both. Disasters are seen as the consequence of inappropriately managed risks. These risks are the product of hazards and vulnerability.

1.4 FEATURES OF A DISASTERS

A disaster has the following main features:

- Unpredictability
- Unfamiliarity
- Speed
- Urgency
- Uncertainty
- Threats

1.5 EFFECTS OF A DISASTER

- Loss of Life
- Injury
- Damage/destruction of property, cash, crops etc.
- Disruption of Lifestyle
- Environmental degradation

1.6 TYPES OF DISASTERS

Disasters are either natural or man-made and are of the following types:

Biological Disasters

- Bacteria Related
- Virus Related
- Fungal Related
- Food Contamination etc.

Chemical Disasters

- Toxic Gases and Nuclear Radiation
- Soil Contamination and Pesticides
- Water Contamination
- Food Contamination etc.

Geological Disasters

- Earthquake
- Dam Failure/ Dam Bursts
- Landslides and Mud Flows

Water and Climate Related Disasters

- Cyclones
- Storms
- Floods
- Hailstorms
- Cold Waves
- Avalanches
- Heat Waves
- Droughts
- Hurricanes
- Tsunamis

Man-made Disasters

- Rail Accidents
- Road Accidents
- Boat Capsizes
- Aviation Accidents
- Mine Flooding
- Mine Collapses
- Terrorist Activity
- Panic Exodus

- Ocean Oil Spills
- Forest and Urban Fires etc.

1.7 HAZARD

A hazard is a natural or human induced phenomenon which has the potential to negatively affect people and the environment and cause a disaster if not managed properly.

Natural Hazards:

- Earthquakes
- Tsunami
- Volcanic eruptions etc

Human Induced Hazards:

- Industrial accidents
- Rail, road and air accidents
- Terrorist attacks
- Dam failures
- Toxic waste leakage etc

Socio-Natural Hazard:

- Floods
- Landslides
- Droughts

1.8 VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is the condition determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or process, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards (Living with risk, UNISRD 2002)

Major indicators of vulnerability are loss of assets, entitlements, social exclusion, and physical or psychological exploitation

People vulnerable to disaster:

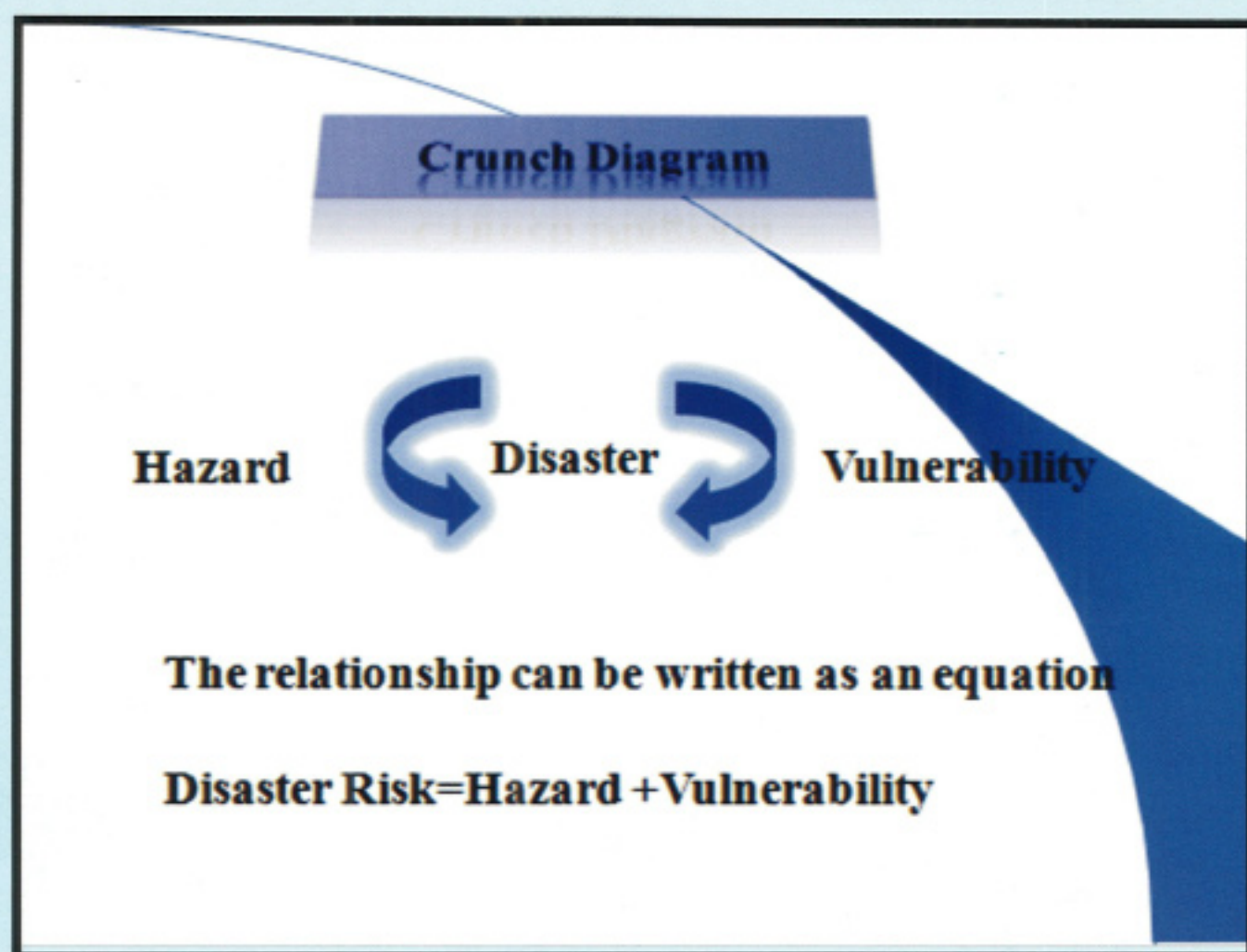
- Poor and low income households
- Single-parents households
- Socially isolated households
- Recently arrived residents, immigrants, foreigners.
- Senior citizens, children and young people
- People with a diseases or a mental or physical disability
- Undocumented residents; refugees; war veterans
- Indigenous population and subordinate ethnic groups
- Institutionalized population;
- homeless citizens
- Women

1.9 RISK

Risk is the probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (death, injuries, loss of property or livelihoods, disruption of economic activity or damage to the environment) resulting from interaction between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions (Reducing Disaster Risk, United Nation Development Programme, 2004)

VULNERABILITY= PEOPLE+PLACE+EVENT+CONDITION+TIME

DISASTER RISK = $\frac{\text{HAZARD} \times \text{VULNERABILITY}}{\text{COPING CAPACITY}}$



1.10 DISASTER MANAGEMENT:

- It is the Range of activities designed to mitigate the effects of a disaster and emergency situation and to provide a framework for helping people at risk to avoid or recover from the impact of the disaster.
- Managing disasters includes steps to be taken prior to, during and after the disaster and involve preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

1.11 DISASTER MANAGEMENT: STAGES AND CYCLE

The disaster management cycle consists of the following broad stages:

- **Disaster Event:** This refers to the real time event of the hazard occurring and affecting elements at risks. The damage is directly proportional to duration of the event.
- **Response and Relief:** This refers to the first stage after the calamities. Relief materials like food, clothing, medicine and other necessities are distributed to bring life to normalcy.
- **Rehabilitation:** It includes the provision of temporary public utilities and housing as interim measures to assist the long-term recovery
- **Reconstruction:** Returning the community to normal. Reconstruction of the affected area to return the community to normal conditions. Ideally the community should be put in a condition equal to or better than it was before the disaster took place. Examples: temporary housing; grants; medical care
- **Development:** Rebuilding after a disaster provides significant opportunities to initiate development programmes. Development programmes can be designed to decrease the susceptibility to disasters and their negative consequences.
- **Prevention:** Prevention means reducing the physical, economical and social vulnerability to hazards and threats and the underlying causes for this vulnerability.
- **Mitigation:** Mitigation means any action taken to minimize the extent of a disaster or potential disaster. Mitigation can take place before, during or after a disaster, but the term is most often used to refer to actions against potential disasters. Mitigation measures are both physical and structural, such as flood defences or strengthening building as well as non-structural, such as training in disaster management, regulating land-use and public education, among others.

- **Preparedness:** Preparedness activities are carried out in anticipation of a disaster and involve measures that enable governments, community and individuals to respond rapidly to disaster situations and cope with them effectively. It includes the formulation of viable emergency plans, development of warning systems, maintenance of inventories, training of personnel, search and rescue measures as well as evacuation plans for areas that may be at risk for a recurring disaster.



SECTION II

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

2.1 GENDER APPROACH FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Design of effective disaster preparedness and response programmes requires a gender approach in order to identify men's and women's differing vulnerabilities to crises as well as their different capacities and coping strategies.

Gender relations cuts across the various social structures and cultural and physical environments to pre-condition people's ability to anticipate, prepare for, survive, cope with and recover from disasters (Valdes, H. M., 2002). Gender analysis, therefore has important light to shed in understanding vulnerability and development of specific strategies to overcome it.

2.2 PRINCIPLES OF GENDER SENSITIVE DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Gender sensitive disaster management must be based on the fundamental Principles:

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS, therefore, relief efforts should not only be based on needs, but on ensuring that women's human rights are protected and promoted.

- EQUALITY of women and men
- NON-DISCRIMINATION against women

2.3 BENEFITS OF GENDER ANALYSIS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Gender analysis in Disaster Management helps to:

- Understand changes in gender relations and identities during crisis
- Highlight the potential for positive change
- Link short term relief assistance to disaster victims to their long term development goals
- Understand existing physical and organizational capacities of recipient groups
- Ensure that relief aid does not undermine people's subsequent abilities to plan, manage and achieve independent self-sufficiency

2.4 GENDER DIFFERENTIATED IMPACT OF DISASTERS

The different roles and responsibilities that men and women undertake in their day to day lives result in gender related differences and impact in times of crisis.

- Traditional unequal division of labour among men and women lead to additional physical work and burden for women at the time of disasters.
- When men die or get injured or move to other places to find work it is women who are the single care takers of the family and have to fend for and feed the children, the sick and the elderly and to care for the losses to the family.

- At the time of a disaster, though the livelihood problem becomes common for all, there are fewer opportunities for women. This is because men have the option of migrating and finding employment in rehabilitation/restoration work, while women stay back with their families
- At the time of a disaster, though both men and women are psychologically affected, women are more under psychological stress due to the risk perception to the family. The breaking down of household and social structures during disasters tends to make women more vulnerable to stress and anxiety.
- Gender insensitive relief and refugee camps have led to situation of increased sexual harassment (lack of private spaces, lack of protection etc.) and increased burden and stress on women (difficulty of providing for household in a relief camp, distances to water sources, lack of access to gender sensitive sanitation facilities etc.)
- Economic crisis created by a disaster often force women to sell their personal assets including valuables and jewels.
- Disasters often result in increasing the dependence of women on men and make them more susceptible to sexual exploitation(women may be trafficked or forced into sex work; young girls may be married off to widowed men) and domestic violence (post-disaster stress of men are more often led out in the form of physical violence)

2.5 WHY WOMEN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO DISASTERS?

Though both men and women suffer in varying measures during disasters, women are made more vulnerable to disasters through men's and women's differential access to resources and power within the household and community.

- Women have less access to resources such as Social networks and influence, transportation, information, skills (including literacy), control over land and other economic resources, personal mobility, secure housing and employment, control over decision-making, freedom from violence
- Women are under-represented in the agriculture industry, self-employment and the informal economy, in under-paid jobs with little security and no benefits such as healthcare or union representation. The informal and agricultural sectors are usually the most impacted by natural disasters, thus women become over-represented among the unemployed following a disaster
- Because women are primarily responsible for domestic duties such as childcare and care for the elderly or disabled, they do not have the liberty of migrating to look for work following a disaster.
- Men often do migrate, leaving behind very high numbers of female-headed households. The failure to recognize this reality and women's double burden of productive and reproductive labour means that women's visibility in society remains low, and attention to their needs is woefully inadequate.
- Because housing is often destroyed in the disaster, many families are forced to relocate to shelters where inadequate facilities for simple daily tasks such as cooking means that women's domestic burden increases at the same time as her economic burden, leaving her less freedom and mobility to look for alternative sources of income.

- When women's economic resources are taken away; their bargaining position in the household is adversely affected.
- The increase in female-headed households and the fact that the majority of shelter residents are women lead to an increase in levels of domestic and sexual violence following disasters.
- Though reproductive and sexual health of women are beginning to be recognized as key components of disaster relief efforts, however attention to them remains inadequate and women's health suffers disproportionately as a result.

2.6 WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN DURING DISASTERS

Though it is seen that women are severely affected by natural disasters, this is only half the picture. Natural disasters often provide women with a unique opportunity to challenge and change their gendered status in society:

- Women have proven themselves indispensable when it comes to responding to disasters. Following hurricane Mitch in 1998, women in Guatemala and Honduras were seen building houses, digging wells and ditches, hauling water and building shelters.
- Though often against men's wishes, women have been willing and able to take an active role in what are traditionally considered "male" tasks. This can have the effect of changing society's conceptions of women's capabilities.
- Women are most effective at mobilizing the community to respond to disasters. They form groups and networks of social actors who work to meet the most pressing needs of the community. This kind of community organizing has proven essential in disaster preparedness and mitigation

SECTION III

GENDER SENSITIVITY IN IMMEDIATE RESPONSES

DURING DISASTER RELIEF PHASE

During the disaster relief phase, relief and aid agencies have to maintain gender sensitivity in the following spheres of relief action:

3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF AID

- Include women in aid teams. Women groups need to be at the centre of planning, implementation and management of food aid. There should be minimal involvement of military forces for delivery of goods in the aftermath of disasters.
- Special efforts must be made to reach out to women as in most societies, women feel too intimidated to collect aid supplies. In Pakistan, in the aftermath of the October 2005 earthquake a vast majority of women headed households were left out of the distribution system because in a conservative Muslim society women should not be seen in public unaccompanied by men.
- Women should be encouraged to access aid directly.
- Aid distribution points should have public toilets, including separate toilets for women, access to drinking water and shaded sitting arrangements.
- At aid distribution points, separate queues for women should be made, especially in cultures where gender segregation is practiced.

3.2 PROVISION OF FOOD AID

- The emergency relief supplies should be provided in such a way that the people affected by disaster do not suffer from hunger, thirst and malnutrition.
- Food distribution should be equitable, transparent and respect human dignity
- Food should be distributed to everyone who lost food security as a result of a disaster: to those who lost livelihoods and jobs as a result of a disaster, not only those who lost family members.
- Supply of food and drinking water should be steady and sufficient until people affected by disaster are able to resume their normal livelihoods which may take a long time
- Food distribution mechanisms should respect dignity of disaster affected people without making them fight for food or feeling like beggars
- Women should be receivers of food to ensure that food is not sold by men to collect money for alcohol.
- Food aid should be provided to pregnant and nursing mothers, widows, elderly, orphaned children and disabled until the period when their food security is ensured
- The food aid provided should be of appropriate quality and fit for human consumption
- Special care should be taken to ensure that the food aid is culturally appropriate and adhering to the food habits of different communities.

- Women should be consulted about the different components of the 'food basket' or food aid or essential food items for distribution .
- Care should be taken to include in the food aid a range of food items like cereals, pulses and fat sources so as to provide a balanced diet to the disaster affected people
- In case of families with infants, breast milk substitutes should be included in the food aid package as under stress and trauma conditions of disasters, breastfeeding mothers have lactating problems.

3.3 MEETING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF WOMEN

While making decisions regarding what to include in the immediate relief provisions relief agencies should consult women as they are well conversant with their own needs as well as that of their family. Some of the specific needs of women are:

- Drinking water
- Nutritious food
- Nutritional supplements (multi vitamins, iron etc)
- Baby food and infant milk formula
- Baby items such as diapers, blankets and clothes
- Bedding (mattresses, sheets, blankets, pillows)
- Culturally appropriate clothing (traditional clothing, e.g. sarongs, head scarves, hijabs, salwarkameez, sarees, etc.)
- Underwear and petticoats/underskirts
- Warm clothing
- Children's clothing
- Toiletries: toilet rolls, soaps, shampoo
- Towels
- Sanitary pads/towels and clean white cloth as in some cultures women are not used to commercially manufactured disposable pads
- Contraceptives, Mosquito netting
- Mosquito repellents and coils
- Spectacles, hearing aids, walking sticks

3.4 MEETING WOMEN'S MENSTRUAL NEEDS

Women's menstrual concerns need immediate attention in the aftermath of a disaster. Disaster relief practices must be gender sensitive to save women from any kind of humiliation and embarrassment during the distribution of sanitary napkins and underwear. As women are reluctant to approach men for their personal hygiene requirements, care should be taken to ensure that:

- Males are NOT involved in the distribution of sanitary napkins and underwear.
- Women ARE involved in the distribution of sanitary napkins and underwear.
- Adequate cloth and washing facilities are provided for menstruating women.

3.5 PROVISION OF TEMPORARY SHELTER

- Everyone who needs shelter should get access to temporary housing facilities irrespective of whether they had their own houses prior to the disaster or not. For example, in Thailand, survivors who did not have proof of ownership of a house before the tsunami were denied access to temporary housing.
- Temporary shelters should provide adequate space and privacy
- Each family should have a separate space depending on the size of the family
- Married couples and children should have separate rooms
- Dressing rooms for women and rooms for breast feeding should be provided.
- Tents and temporary houses should not be constructed too closely together to provide some form of privacy.
- Location of shelters should be considered carefully. They should not be built on hills vulnerable to landslides or low lying areas vulnerable to floods during rainy season.
- Tents need to be designed with better secure fastenings so that it would provide a sense of security to women.
- In tent distribution, priority should be given to widows, women headed households, male-headed households who have physical or mental disabilities and the elderly, through direct door-to-door service.
- Temporary shelters, including tents, must be comfortable and habitable. In disaster situations, women tend to spend more time in shelters than men looking after children. Old-style tents with slanting sides need to be phased out as they leave no space for mobility. Tents with ventilation facilities need to be promoted. Cooling and heating mechanisms need to be developed for maintaining temperatures inside the tents. If not, they can be very cold in winter and very hot in summer.

3.6 PROVISION OF TOILET AND BATHING FACILITIES

Adequate hygiene and sanitation facilities are important because lack of them affects women's reproductive health.

- Women should have access to sufficient and regular supplies of clean water for bathing and personal hygiene. Average water provided / used for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene in any household should be at least 15 litres per person per day.
- The maximum distance from any household to the nearest water point should be 500 meters.
- Water sources and systems should be maintained to ensure availability of appropriate quantities of water consistently and on a regular basis.
- Women should have separate toilet facilities.
- Toilets and bathrooms should have walls, secure doors that can be locked and a proper drainage system. Toilets should be closed structures which enable women to use them with a degree of privacy.
- Toilets and bathrooms should be built of durable material to prevent making of peep holes in them.

- A maximum of 20 people should use one toilet. Camp management and residents must develop a system to maintain the toilets in a clean and hygienic condition to minimize the spread of fly and mosquito borne diseases.
- Arrangements should be made for sanitary disposal of solid waste.
- Within the camps, toilets and bathrooms must be located not far from the living quarters (50 metres) and provided with lighting to ensure safety of women
- Pathways to and from toilets and bathrooms must be well lit to ensure safety of women
- Private laundering areas should be available for women to wash and dry underwear and sanitary cloths.
- Dressing rooms for women and rooms for breast feeding should be provided.

3.7 PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

The right to health services is a fundamental human right guaranteed by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

- Health services have to be granted to all disaster affected people irrespective of their status: citizenship, migration, registration, medical insurance etc.
- Pregnant women and women with young children have to be identified and provided with free medical post natal and maternity care and additional nutrition
- Necessary vitamins and food supplements need to be provided to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- A conducive, sanitary and safe environment has to be set up for childbirth purposes.
- Female obstetricians and gynecologists are at hand to take care of maternity and child related health concerns.
- Women who delivered after a disaster need to be provided with extra reproductive and child health care and psycho-social counselling as they are more vulnerable due to the stress experienced during the disaster.
- Medical assistance need to be provided to lactating mothers who have lost their babies in disaster and have milk clotting in their breasts.
- Adequate provision and easy access to different forms of contraception is facilitated as soon as possible.
- Medical services are offered proactively by health workers through regular visits to camp, shelter and disaster affected communities.
- Female health workers are included in medical teams servicing camps and affected communities.
- Children are inoculated against childhood diseases within stipulated time periods
- Women have access to general health care clinics
- Hospitalized women need to be provided with shelter after they leave hospital and should not be asked to leave hospital if they have no place to go. Some of them may have become disabled as a result of the disaster.

3.8 SECURITY AND SAFETY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Violence against women, including sexual abuse, increases during disasters. However, because of stigma and ostracism related to sexual violence the cases go unreported. Increased alcohol consumption and substance abuse results in increased domestic violence and sexual harassment in camps

- Vigilance Committees need to be formed in the communities consisting of women to act as monitoring officers to ensure maximum security and safety for women
- Written and verbal safety guidelines have to be developed by these committees themselves for measures to avoid possible violations against women and children.
- Women have to be trained to raise immediate alarms against violations in the camp sites.
- Women police officers, and if necessary, women from the armed forces should provide security in the camps.
- Women police officers have to be stationed within the camps to record and address safety complaints made by women in the camps and monitor women's rights violations in the camps.
- Night security has to be maintained at camp sites.
- Security guards (male and female) should be trained to be sensitive to women's apprehensions and problems in order to facilitate assistance seeking by women
- Additional security measures need to be taken in camps and communities to prevent abductions of women and girls for forced prostitution, sex trafficking and trade in human internal organs.
- Accessible counseling services need to be provided for women victims of violence and other abuses
- Free legal services should be provided for women survivors of violence
- Full protection should be provided to victims of violence and witnesses from reprisals
- Medical examinations have to be made accessible on reporting of violence
- Reporting procedures should be made accessible when violence against women is committed
- Women should be made aware of their right to be free from physical, emotional and sexual violence
- Women should be made aware of the redress available when affected by violence (e.g. court process, police complaint, medical treatment, counseling, support groups)
- Self Help Groups consisting of women could be established within the camps to give emotional and other forms of support to women affected by violence
- 'Vigilant' Groups consisting of men and women should be set up to respond to violent incidents
- Police, government officials and non governmental workers should take women's complaints of violence and harassment seriously and take measures to assist women access redress mechanisms
- There should be a ban on sale of alcohol within camp sites
- Improved lighting and transport facilities should be provided to and from the camp to other community locations such as schools, bus stands, markets and shops
- Government policy makers should make an assessment of the potential impact of their interventions before adopting a policy such as offering financial assistance to sterilized women for re-canalization surgery and to newly married couples. Such policies led to new forms of violence against women: forced sterilization and "tsunami" marriages in post-tsunami India.

3.9 PROVISION OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL COUNSELING

- Psychological counselling for post traumatic stress should be provided for women and children, widows, elderly and disabled women
- Female counselors should be at hand to provide counselling services. Psycho-social counselling facilities should be set up at camps and temporary shelters
- Psychological care should not focus on prescribing anti-depressants, but on trauma healing and support.
- Self-Help Groups among the affected women should be formed to give emotional support to each other. Women can heal themselves in the long term when they are involved in helping each other overcome suffering.
- Psychological support and assistance in finding/ identifying dead or missing family members should be provided

SECTION IV

MID-TERM RESPONSES DURING THE RECOVERY PHASE

Women's participation in management of camps and temporary shelters is important to ensure that women's needs are met. When women's voices are not heard, it results in lack of separate toilets and bathrooms for women leading to sexual harassment and violence and lack of kitchens forcing women to cook in unsafe make-shift facilities resulting in fires.

4.1 MANAGEMENT OF CAMPS AND TEMPORARY SHELTERS

- Women should be elected to Camp Management Teams/Committees.
- Women should be encouraged to participate in camp decision making.
- Women should be consulted in the design and layout of camps and shelters.
- Women should be represented by male family members in camp management.
- Meetings on camp management should be held at convenient times for women to attend (for example, not late in the evenings or at night)
- If women traditionally do not come to community meetings, shelters or tents they should be visited individually to elicit women's views.
- Conflict solving mechanisms should be set up within the camps to deal with internal conflicts that may arise due to distribution of aid.

4.2 COMPENSATION PAYMENTS AND REHABILITATION MEASURES

- Compensation schemes should be equitable and transparent. Compensation benefits must be provided to everyone affected by a disaster, directly or indirectly: those who lost livelihoods and jobs as a result of a disaster, not only those who lost assets.
- Government and aid agencies should ensure that relief and rehabilitation measures are provided equitably and impartially by adopting clear and transparent targeting mechanisms and criteria such as making public the list of disaster victims and the list of beneficiaries.
- Compensation payment should be made on individual basis, not to head of household.
- Cash compensation payments should be made to both spouses. Compensation should be paid to joint bank accounts, in case of married couples.
- Compensation for loss of assets such as houses/boats/equipment should be adequate and sufficient to replace lost assets. Adequate compensation is important to help people to restore their livelihoods and start earning income for the families.
- In disaster situations, death certificates should not be the main eligibility criteria for compensation for loss of a family member. In India, with thousands of people missing after the tsunami, women who could not present dead bodies of their husbands were not eligible for compensation for loss of their husbands.
- If married sons are given the right to claim access to benefits (the right to claim house damages), married daughters living with their parents should also be given the same rights.
- Government agencies should not set a short period limit to apply for relief assistance and compensations as disaster victims may have failed to apply within the given period because they were in hospital, observing mourning rituals or in remote areas without access to information on relief assistance.

- Recognise the right of persons living in rented accommodation or engaging in business in rented premises to receive compensation for their losses.

4.3 ELIMINATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD CONCEPT

- Support, including financial compensation, should be provided on an individual basis, rather than based on 'head of household' concept. In Thailand, the Government paid twice as much to families for the funeral expenses of men than for those of women based on the assumption that men are heads of households.
- Government and aid agencies should not identify the 'head of the household' as the main claim holder. In India, compensation for loss of children was given only to the hands of the men unless the husband died in the tsunami. This resulted in some men spending compensation money on alcohol on other things not related to family needs.
- 'Head of household' concept should be removed from legislation and Government policy implementation acts, including official documentation.

4.4 INFORMATION ON RELIEF AND REHABILITATION MEASURES

- Information on relief assistance, including clear procedures on applying for such assistance, should be disseminated to all disaster affected people in camps, temporary shelters and those living outside the camps and temporary shelters, including those in hospitals and remote islands, forests and mountainous areas.
- Special efforts should be made to reach out to women in their shelters within the camps as in some cultures women do not participate in public meetings where information is normally announced.
- Information should be in reader friendly simple language and should be understood by all.
- Special efforts should be made to disseminate information to illiterate communities and Women officials should be involved in the dissemination of information.
- The dissemination of information which provides information on facilities/ loans/ grants available for women to start on livelihoods such as coir work, pottery, and other small and medium enterprises should reach women directly and not via their spouses or other male relatives.
- All information should be shared with women who cannot access information easily due to cultural and religious constraints and that assistance should be to those who failed to apply for assistance due to lack of access to information.

4.5 CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Education and recreational facilities for children are one of the major concerns of mothers in disaster situations, particularly after the breakdown of the formal education system. To cater to this need of the women:

- Halls or community centers should be provided so that educational activities can resumed as soon as possible
- Food, school uniforms, books and other stationery items should be provided for children free of charge
- Schools should be relocated and rebuilt as soon as possible
- Temporary housing should be located close to schools
- Free transport facilities should be provided for children to travel to school

SECTION V

LONG TERM RESPONSES DURING RECONSTRUCTION PHASE

To ensure that women's needs are addressed, Government and aid agencies should involve women in the consultative and decision making processes: from camp administration and disaster management committees to policy making bodies for reconstruction efforts. Participation of disaster affected women at local and national levels in all aspects of recovery and reconstruction is important. Women must actively contribute not only to matters concerning women, but they should also be involved in issues concerning the community side by side with male members of the community. Aid agencies must make special efforts to reach out to women because in some cultures gender segregation and women's seclusion norms restrain women even from accessing food aid, let alone participating in community meetings to voice their concerns.

5.1 DECISION MAKING PROCESSES FOR REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

- Women should be included in all decision making structures at every level: national, local and village Governments, aid agencies, international and local NGOs and community based groups.
- The Government policies, procedures and practices pertaining to rehabilitation and reconstruction should be gender sensitive
- There should be coordination between the different agencies involved in rehabilitation and reconstruction in the disaster affected areas so that they serve all the affected people irrespective of official procedures (registered and non registered migrants, registered and non registered fishermen, ethnic groups)
- Post disaster, a unit that deals specifically with the concerns of women must be established within institutional structures set up to deal with post tsunami reconstruction
- All decision making processes concerning affected communities must be transparent, just, equitable and fair.
- Government and aid agencies should consult with the affected people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their assistance programmes.
- Affected communities, especially women, should be consulted about decisions concerning their lives: from closure of camps and temporary shelters, relocation and design of houses to employment generation and livelihoods opportunities.
- Relocation of affected communities must be implemented with community's consent and should not be linked to compensation conditions such as if people do not relocate they will not receive compensations for lost/damaged houses.
- During relocation and closure of camps and temporary shelters, women should be given ample information and time to move. The burden of packing and getting organized is the basic responsibility of women and they need time to plan according to the needs of their families.
- Women's involvement in decision making in conservative societies should be facilitated through affirmative action approach to assist in overcoming resistance from various stakeholders in every level of decision making.

- Women's empowerment in conservative societies, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, requires special process to overcome numerous obstacles in policy making and legislation, especially removing Shariah laws restricting women's movement and conduct.

5.2 RECONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES TO MEET WOMEN'S AND FAMILY NEEDS

Women have to be consulted about their housing needs and requirements as well as in matters related to the design of houses:

- Type of house, design and size depending on the family size
- Houses must have toilets, bathrooms and kitchens
- Houses must have water supply and sanitation systems and electricity
- Houses must ensure security, privacy and dignity of women
- The design of houses must take into account lifestyles, livelihoods and occupations of women.
- Adequate housing must allow access to employment options, healthcare, schools and other social services. There must not be excessive financial demands on the household with respect to transportation.
- Women's special requests should be taken into consideration in the allocation of land and housing such as cluster housing for extended families
- Special care has to be taken to prevent bias, favoritism and discrimination by officials – at national, local and village levels - responsible for the allocation of permanent housing.

5.3 OWNERSHIP RIGHTS TO LAND, HOUSE AND PROPERTY

- The Government must prioritise allocation of land to communities that have to relocate from disaster affected land.
- Laws and policies should be created that guarantee women's equal rights to ownership of land and property allowing them to own and inherit land from their husbands/fathers.
- It must be ensured that wives and daughters inherit the land and property in societies with strong religious or customary laws where property inheritance rights go to the deceased husband's brother in case of absence of a son.
- It must be ensured that dowry property belonging to women prior to disaster is maintained.
- Special care has to be taken to ensure a total rejection of the 'head of the household' concept as it could result in women losing their rights to land they owned prior to the disaster.
- The right of spouses to joint ownership of land, house and property should be recognized. New policies made in the aftermath of disasters should break existing patriarchal norms. For instance, land allocated to replace land lost to disaster, should be registered in joint ownership of husband and wife, rather than giving full claims only to the (male) head of the household.
- In dispute situations that tend to occur in post-disaster situations, the government must respect land, property and housing rights of women and protect them from violence and eviction.

5.4 ACCESS TO LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

- In post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction, employment and income generation assistance for women must facilitate their food security, women's access to natural resources and poverty alleviation at the community level.
- Reconstruction programmes must have a special focus on women's economic empowerment and offer them income generating opportunities. In disaster situations, women who lost their husbands/breadwinners face difficulties accessing income generating assistance because the existing opportunities normally target men.
- Small grants should be provided for women to help restore income generating activities that they were involved in before the disaster: food processing, cooking food for sale, sewing, lace and rope making etc.
- Women should be given easy access to working capital, materials and resources for income generating activities, technical and marketing assistance.
- Women should be offered training in new skills aimed at facilitating their access to new areas of income earning activity.
- Women's access to bank loans for small business development should be facilitated.
- Banks and other finance, trading and business institutions should be supported and encouraged to create special structures for providing financial aid and investment advice to small and medium women entrepreneurs in the disaster-affected areas.
- Support to employment generation must be monitored and evaluated to make sure that access to loans and credit do not lead to increased indebtedness and overexploitation of natural resource towards commercialization
- Banks and other lending institutions must grant loan repayment holidays to persons who obtained loans prior to the disaster.
- Governments must provide livelihood alternatives to relocated communities and ensure that in relocated areas communities must have access to employment options, healthcare, schools and other social services.
- Women should have complete control of their livestock in camps and temporary shelters so that they can access milk from their dairy cows.

5.5 RAISING WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's groups should use post disaster reconstruction processes to break the old patriarchal norms and educate women about their human rights: from right to have national identity cards, separate bank accounts to land and property rights.

- Human rights awareness education programmes for women must be carried within the camps and in their homes if it is not possible to meet elsewhere convenient to women
- Women must be provided with necessary skills to face new challenges as heads of households due to male family members' death, disappearance or incapacitation.
- Male family members must be provided with the necessary skills to take on new responsibilities of child care due to the death, disappearance or incapacitation of female family members
- Young female orphans should be supported with advice on looking after themselves due to death of parents or adult family members.

- Awareness programmes must emphasise that forced marriage of girls under the age of eighteen is illegal and attracts penalties.
- Gender awareness programmes for camp officials and security personnel must be provided.

5.6 MOBILISATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mobilisation and empowerment of disaster affected women is important for protection of their rights, especially in conservative patriarchal cultures with women's seclusion norms. In Aceh and Pakistan, religious leaders further marginalised women by blaming them for invoking disasters with their 'immoral' behavior. Furthermore, in Aceh, they enforced stricter Islamic laws with shariah police beating women for failure to wear a headscarf. As a consequence, women were intimidated even to come out of their houses, let alone, voice their needs and concerns. It is therefore important that:

- Women's organisations set up coalitions/alliances to advocate for human rights of women in disaster situations
- Women affected by disaster are organised among themselves to advocate for their rights and support each other.
- Advocacy efforts are made for removing of laws restricting women's movement and conduct.

5.7 PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED GROUPS

States have an obligation to promote, respect and fulfill fundamental human rights of people affected by disasters irrespective of gender, race, caste, class, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, migration and registration status and other factors.

- Disaster relief should be based on a humanitarian and human rights approach.
- Government and aid agencies should engage in relief operations and reconstruction activities without discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age and other factors.
- Government and relief organizations must make a special effort to reach out to marginalized groups such as migrants, dalits, ethnic and religious minorities, sex workers, workers in the informal economic sector (small fisher folk) to ensure they have access to basic needs as food, water, shelter and health services.
- Women should be mobilised to advocate for policies that secure the rights of vulnerable groups of women such as migrant workers, dalit women, stateless persons, women belonging to different ethnic groups, sea gypsies, women in service sectors etc
- Migrant workers must not be discriminated against, whether they are documented or undocumented workers and have access to relief assistance: food, shelter and health services.
- Governments must not arrest and deport migrant workers during disasters.
- Governments must protect migrant workers' rights by reviewing the existing laws and registration processes to ensure that migrant workers have access to registration and legal status.
- Governments must take measures to protect women migrant workers from exploitation and violence at home and at work.

5.8 REACHING OUT TO WIDOWS AND WOMEN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS, DISABLED AND ELDERLY

Special efforts must be made to reach out to widows, women headed households, disabled and the elderly. In some cultures, widows face ostracism and abuse and can be left out of general assistance efforts.

- In cultures where women's seclusion is practiced, it must be ensured that the disabled, the elderly and women headed households have access to aid supplies.
- Housing, land and property rights of widows (widowed pre disaster and due to disaster) and women headed households must be protected.
- In camps and temporary shelters, toilets and bathrooms must have elevated facilities for use by people with disabilities
- If camps do not have facilities for disabled people, they should be provided with shelter in existing specialised facilities for people with disabilities.
- Aids such as walking sticks, hearing aids, spectacles, should be provided as soon as possible.

5.9 PROTECTION OF WOMEN – VICTIMS OF DISASTERS AND ARMED CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Women – victims of disasters in armed conflict situations are most vulnerable to deprivation, violence and abuse by conflicting groups. Efforts must be made to provide assistance and protection.

- Governments and international aid agencies, especially UN, must prioritise reaching peace agreements between the conflicting parties
- All military actions in disaster zone must be ended as soon as possible
- Humanitarian aid agencies have to let into such conflict ridden disaster zones as soon as possible
- Free movement of people and distribution of relief have to be ensured
- People should not be prevented from accessing livelihoods sources like the sea, forests, agricultural land to ensure food security
- Military personnel should not be stationed in IDP camps "for security reasons" if they are one of the conflicting parties. In Sri Lanka, government military presence in camps caused deaths of civilians when Tamil Tigers launched attacks on the government forces.

SECTION VI

GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE AND COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING

6.1 GLOBAL RESPONSE

- An international women's disaster response agency needs to be created which would reach out to disaster hit areas and provide advisory assistance for gender sensitive disaster management to Governments of the affected country and aid agencies involved in relief and rehabilitation activities.
- A standardized manual which focuses on the type of assistance for women is a critical need which would allow disaster teams to, at least, provides basic assistance immediately.
- Women-focused disaster management policies need to be main-streamed into international Government and non-government agencies which take a primary role in disaster management.
- Patriarchal institutions such as armed forces should only play a role in rescue relief operations at the first stage of disaster response. All management of relief operations, especially with respect to camp management and relief distribution needs to be managed by peoples' organisations, with at least 50% women's representation.

6.2 NATIONAL RESPONSE

- In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, gender balanced disaster relief committees should be set up which would focus on women's needs for providing relief to disaster-hit communities.
- Training of disaster relief committees need to be carried out with respect to assessing women's needs in a disaster situation.

6.3 SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

- Food aid needs to be culture specific and vary in kind: people cannot be expected to eat instant noodles everyday for several months. Women's groups need to be at the centre of planning, implementation and management of food aid.
- Basic food aid, including milk and sugar, should be provided regularly until disaster affected people start earning income to sustain themselves. For families with children, especially infants, milk should be a must food item. In addition, vulnerable categories especially pregnant women, widows, elderly and children without mothers need to be provided food aid until economic security for these groups has been ensured.
- Food aid needs to be provided through humane distribution mechanisms without people made to feel that they are beholden to, or have to beg camp management for food.
- Women should be encouraged to access aid directly. Aid distribution points should have basic facilities such as toilets, water and shaded sitting areas.
- In conservative societies with gender segregation practices separate queues should be available for women for easy access to aid and their comfort levels at aid distribution points.

6.4 CAMP MANAGEMENT

- Camp management committees composed of women should be created to ensure women's safety. Written and verbal safety guidelines should be provided to be further developed by committees themselves against possible violations against women and children. Women should be trained to create immediate alarm against violations on the camp sites.
- Night guards should be maintained at camp sites. The guards (it is presumed guards will be men but need not be) should be trained to be sensitive to women's apprehensions and maintain a body language which makes them available for assistance-seeking women, instead of being perceived as possible violators.
- Camp grounds need to be managed to provide safe walking area against rain and snow, as well as against perpetrators.
- Public areas, such as pathways, washroom areas and playgrounds must be well-lit to ensure easy and safe access for women, the elderly and children.
- Affected people must be consulted about the time and process of closing camps and temporary shelters. Women should be central to this dialogue and should have ample information and time to move. The burden of packing and getting organised is normally basic responsibility of women and they need time to plan according to the needs of their families.
- Separate toilets and bathing rooms for women should be provided at any camp site.
- Toilets and bathrooms need to be located not far from the living quarters and well lit so that women can access them day and night without fear of being harassed.
- Material used for toilets and bathrooms need to be proof against easy tampering.
- Special efforts must be made to ensure tent distribution to widows, single women, male-headed households which have physical or mental disabilities and the elderly, through direct door-to-door service.
- Old-style tents with slanting sides need to be phased out as they leave no space for mobility. The newer tents with ventilation facilities need to be promoted. Cooling and heating mechanisms need to be developed for maintaining temperatures inside the tents. Otherwise they can be very cold in winter and very hot in summer and tents are the primary space occupied by women.
- Built-in storage space should be part of tents for bedding and clothes to keep them safe from getting wet or spoilt.
- Tents need to be developed with more secure fastenings so that it would provide some sense of security to women.

6.5 ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

- Trauma cares centre's need to be a primary focus of all relief assistance policies, for men, women and children.
- Traumatized women, especially those who had lost their husbands and children, need to be given special attention, including motivating them to come out to join a larger community. Support groups from the camp sites should be formed to assist external health workers.
- Pregnant women and women with newly born babies should be provided special attention through trained health professionals. Women health workers should be part of every camp and provide door-to-door visits.

- Ensure that mobile health services include a full range of reproductive and family planning health services.
- Integrate post disaster public health outreach with existing community-based health systems and informal health care providers, e.g. anganwadicentre's and midwives.
- Target mothers and grandmothers in post disaster grassroots campaigns promoting public health.
- Incorporate knowledge about women's increased risk of violence into post disaster public health education. Provide increased resources to grassroots women's groups responding to women hit both by violence and disaster.
- Provide training for mental health providers on gender-specific factors in post-traumatic stress, targeting highly vulnerable groups such as women heading households, grandmothers caring for orphans, battered women, women with disabling injuries, newly widowed women and men, farmers and others at risk of suicide.
- Prioritize the health needs of disabled women recovering from the earthquake, women whose injuries are permanently disabling, and those recovering from temporary disabilities. Support their immediate family caregivers, e.g. through respite care, financial assistance, and extended counseling services.
- Allocate resources for elderly women's health needs as their well-being will be vital to the extended family.
- Medical aid compensatory packages should be broadly publicised and be given directly at medical centre, as families with affected household members find it difficult to access medical aid during the crisis period. A trigger mechanism should be set at medical aid facilities itself which would allow health workers to identify and help needed beneficiaries. Women with disabilities should be moved to special care centre's equipped with facilities for disabled people. In any case, they should not be forced to live in tent camps.

6.6 COMPENSATORY PACKAGES

- Compensatory packages need to be planned in accordance with the special needs of women, especially vulnerable groups such as widows, single women, and women with disabilities or women who have men in the household with disabilities. In addition, patriarchal practices and norms need to be well understood and policies need to be developed to prevent discrimination against women based on patriarchal norms.
- Specifically, when granting cash compensations, mechanisms need to be created where recipient women would be the sole authority who would have control over the compensation money. Long-term follow up mechanisms need to be developed which would allow women's groups to ensure that benefits go to the actual beneficiaries.
- If married sons are made eligible to compensation, such as compensation for house damages, married daughters living with parents should be given the same rights.
- New policies made in the aftermath of disasters should break existing patriarchal norms. For instance, land given in place of land lost to disaster, should provide space for joint ownership between husband and wife, rather than giving full claims only to the (male) head of the household.
- Women's groups should use the space created after disasters to break the old patriarchal norms and educate women about their human rights: from right to have national identity cards, separate bank accounts to land rights.

6.7 SHELTERS FOR WOMEN

- Women's shelters must be operated by women. Control over women's groups by men, especially by the Armed Forces is not acceptable.
- Women – residents should be consulted and involved in all decision making processes.
- Single males should not be provided space in shelters made for women and their families. Adult males even if they are part of the family should not be given living space within shelters.
- Women's shelters should be open to visitors and women should be able to reach out to others who would like to be of assistance. This issue remains a problem because many exploitative groups can also access women, but a safe and secure environment needs to be ensured for women.
- As "temporary" shelter is often long-lasting, make women's safety a priority in the social organization of temporary camps, e.g. through adequate lighting, on-site security, provisions to protect privacy, etc.
- Provide space and services in temporary accommodations for the care of post-operative and newly disabled survivors and their caregivers.
- Increase housing security for women by deeding permanent housing in the name of wives and husbands equally.
- In determining priorities for occupancy of new housing, target highly vulnerable women such as single mothers, widows, below-poverty and unemployed women, socially marginalized women and others identified at the local level by knowledgeable women.
- Provide women fair access to construction-related employment. Include employment-relevant job training. Seek out women with technical qualifications for training on specific projects, e.g. as temporary engineers overseeing housing construction.
- Contract with women-owned businesses and solicit the participation of women professionals in the construction industry and related fields.
- Promote the participation of women across caste and class in decisions about community relocation, the siting of new settlements, the design of new structures, and construction of new community facilities.
- Collaborate with local women in planning housing design innovations which may reduce or simplify women's work load or otherwise improve living and working conditions for women and their families

6.8 LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

- Beneficiaries should have complete information and knowledge of the policies and programmes developed for their use and benefit. They should be given exposure to the opportunities offered to them. Otherwise, if asked in a vacuum, many women do not have the experience or information to be able to access various opportunities such as vocational training.
- New challenging vocational training needs to be provided along with conventional vocations such as livestock breeding, sewing and stitching.

- Assume women are economic providers and plan accordingly; target the informal sector.
- Implement economic initiatives which reflect the economic losses of women whose work depends on sustainable natural resources, e.g., salt farmers, agricultural labourers, gum harvesters. Prioritize the restoration of economic resources vital to their recovery, e.g. water systems, salt ponds, fodder systems.
- Target self-employed artisans and home-based women workers for grants and loans to replace damaged or destroyed tools, work space, equipment, supplies, credit, capital, markets and other economic resources.
- Expand women's limited employment and work opportunities as possible in the process of redeveloping local and regional economies.
- Recognizing that women are primary resource users and managers, seek their input to identify needed changes to be implemented as assets, spaces, and systems are restored or replaced, e.g. household and community rainwater harvesting systems, fodder storage, etc.
- Monitor access to work wages, training, and working conditions in private and public relief work projects and assess their impacts on women and girls.
- Commit to long-term monitoring of the indirect economic effects on the drought and earthquake on women's livelihoods, e.g. disrupted markets, loss of clients, forced sale of assets, involuntary migration, increasing proportion of female-headed households, secondary unemployment, etc.
- Develop gender accountability measures, e.g. percentage female in construction trade employment, numbers of disabled women trained, proportion of economic recovery grant and loan funds received by women, etc.
- Evaluate women's ability to participate in and benefit from economic recovery packages, e.g. how mobile are women, as compared to men? Are child care centers operating? How available are alternate health care services for injured family members?
- Incorporate gender analysis into all empirical assessments. Collect or generate gender-specific data to make this possible.

6.9 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's local knowledge and expertise are essential assets for communities and households struggling to rebuild their lives. To capture these capacities, disaster responders must work closely with women, remembering that the greatest need of survivors is for empowerment and self-determination.

- Integrate disaster mitigation initiatives into on-going community activities and concerns. Know what local women are doing and partner with them, resourcing their efforts to the degree possible.
- Ensure that women who are knowledgeable about women's issues are proportionally represented when key decisions are made about the distribution and use of donated relief funds and government funds.
- Plan now for on-going and long-term consultation with grassroots women in affected areas, women's bureaus, and women's advocacy groups. Formalize their participation. Strengthen or develop informal social networks between these groups and disaster-responding agencies and offices
- Organize reconstruction planning meetings and events with attention to women's ability to participate, for example by providing child care and transportation and meeting at times and in places convenient for women.

- Monitor and respond to women's need for legal services throughout long-term recovery, e.g. in the areas of housing, employment, and family relations.
- Monitor the relief and rehabilitation process for possible gender bias and inequities which may develop over time, e.g. the unintentional overburdening of women who have extensive overlapping responsibilities at home, at work, and in the community.
- Support women's dual responsibilities as paid and family workers; work with employers to develop or strengthen "family friendly" policies for those needing time to apply for assistance, move into new housing, help injured family members, and in other ways promote family recovery.
- Extend government stipends to family caregivers as needed throughout the long-term recovery period in order to support caregivers economically and ensure continuity of care to the injured, unaccompanied children, and the disabled
- Monitor to the degree possible the degree to which relief and recovery assets are equitably distributed within the household.

6.10 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND FULL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Gender mainstreaming also calls for facilitation of full participation and particular attention to the needs of people who have difficulty moving, hearing, seeing, communicating, and or Learning.

In normal times, People with Disabilities (PWDs) are marginalized, and so are worse off during disaster times. Women with disabilities are rendered critically vulnerable in disaster situations. This calls for taking into consideration the special needs of persons with Disabilities in every stage of the disaster management cycle, so that they are able to uphold their dignity at family and community levels, which take them forward to achieve their rights.

- Mainstreaming disability into emergency responses and preparedness, by making disability issues and persons with disabilities visible in national and international actions plans and policies, is essential to ensure equality and human rights for all.
- Non-discrimination against PWDs has to be practised in the case of aid distribution for disaster victims. Disruption to physical, social, economic, and environmental networks and support systems affect persons with disabilities much more than the general population. There is also a potential for discrimination on the basis of disability when resources are scarce. This causes severe inequities in access to immediate response, as well as long-term recovery resources for people who have disabilities prior to the disaster and those who acquire a disability as a result of the disaster
- PWDs need to be identified during the pre-disaster phase including the disability they face, and what their needs will be during and after the disaster their. It is also crucial to identify barriers or obstacles that PWD can face when trying to evacuate people out of the danger zone at the time the hazard has struck
- Training and exercises should be conducted on evacuation of persons with disabilities and should emphasise on special aspects such as emergency sign language and finger spelling, use of specialised mobility equipment, safe handling procedures for people with different kinds of disabilities etc. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster it is equally important that a person trained in assisting PWDs is included in every search and rescue team

- The medium for early warning for disasters and the mode of dissemination of such warning has to be appropriately selected so that it can be accessed by people with different kinds of disabilities. Systems of early warning could include house-to-house notification by law enforcement, fire, or other emergency response personnel, basic emergency sign language for persons who are deaf or hearing-impaired, Telecommunication devices for hearing/speech impaired persons etc. among others.
- Accessible transportation vehicles and guidelines should be provided to evacuate persons with disabilities needing assistance
- Relief and rescue operations must have the appropriate medical equipment, supplies, and training to address the immediate needs of people with disabilities. Affected individuals may require bladder bags, insulin pumps, walkers, or wheelchairs. Relief personnel must be equipped and trained in the use of such equipment.
- Personnel and staff at camps or care centres should also have had some prior training in working with PWDs so that it is easy for them to identify the needs of PWDs in their care centre
- Shelters or care centres will have to be made PWD friendly. For example there will be ramps for easy access, and latrines may have to be fitted with wider doors to allow easier access for wheel chairs.
- Special medical needs shelter should be established to particularly cater to the health needs of PWDs, offer counselling and advise to check the incidence of disability or to prevent a minor impairment from turning into a major disability as well as provide referral services on a case to case basis.
- Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts must not only be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all people, including persons with disabilities, but should include the participation of persons with disabilities, to ensure that their needs and rights are respected. Women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group whose needs should be included at all stages of recovery and reconstruction efforts.

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