

THE LEADING ROLE OF WOMEN IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AFFECTED BY EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

SA LIDERANÇA DAS MULHERES EM ORGANIZAÇÕES COMUNITÁRIAS AFETADAS POR EVENTOS CLIMÁTICOS EXTREMOS

LE RÔLE DE PREMIER PLAN DES FEMMES DANS L'ORGANISATION COMMUNAUTAIRE TOUCHÉ PAR DES CONDITIONS MÉTÉOROLOGIQUES EXTRÊMES ÉVÉNEMENTS

EL PAPEL PROTAGÓNICO DE LAS MUJERES EN LA ORGANIZACIÓN COMUNITARIA AFECTADA POR FENÓMENOS CLIMÁTICOS EXTREMOS

Monica Sanders¹

¹ JD, LL.M, Founder/CEO, The Undivide Project, Adjunct Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center; Affiliated Researcher, The Earth Commons, Georgetown University. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8970-7405>. E-mail: monica@theundivideproject.org.

Extreme weather events encompass a range of severe natural occurrences such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, and heatwaves. These events disrupt communities, causing significant damage to infrastructure, loss of lives, and economic setbacks. Beyond physical destruction, the impacts of extreme weather events extend to the mental and social well-being of affected populations. Vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and marginalized communities, often bear a disproportionate share of the adverse effects. For instance, during Hurricane Katrina, women, particularly those from minority communities, faced higher risks and challenges in evacuation, recovery, and long-term rebuilding efforts (Enarson, 2012).

Introduction: Importance of Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Recognizing the distinct experiences of men, women, and gender minorities during disasters is crucial for effective disaster risk reduction (DRR). Gender-sensitive approaches acknowledge that societal norms, roles, and access to resources vary across genders, influencing how individuals and groups experience and respond to disasters. Integrating gender perspectives into DRR policies and practices ensures that the specific needs and contributions of all genders are addressed, leading to more effective and equitable disaster resilience (UNDRR, 2022).

Women's roles in community organizing and resilience-building are indispensable. Their local knowledge, social networks, and caregiving responsibilities position them uniquely to contribute to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Research shows that women often lead grassroots initiatives to address the immediate and long-term needs of their communities in the aftermath of extreme weather events (Bradshaw; Fordham, 2015). For example, women's organizations have been pivotal in coordinating relief efforts, providing psychosocial support, and advocating for equitable resource distribution in disaster-affected areas.

Gendered Impacts of Extreme Weather Events

Women face unique vulnerabilities during disasters. Factors such as limited mobility, caregiving responsibilities, and cultural norms impact their ability to cope. Pregnant women, elderly women, and female-headed households are particularly vulnerable. Traditional gender roles can both hinder and enhance resilience. Recognizing women's roles as caregivers, community organizers, and knowledge holders is crucial, yet gender norms may restrict women's access to decision-making processes and resources (Sanders, 2023).

Women's Leadership in Disaster Response and Recovery

This chapter will explore case studies highlighting women's leadership in community organizing efforts during extreme weather events. Their resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability are inspiring. Examples will include initiatives where women played pivotal roles in disaster response and recovery, showcasing their capacity to mobilize resources, coordinate community responses, and advocate for equitable recovery efforts (Sanders, 2023).

Intersectionality and Inclusivity in Disaster Governance

Women often encounter barriers in accessing relief, information, and decision-making forums during disasters. Considering intersectionality, which includes multiple identities such as race, ethnicity, and disability, is essential to address diverse needs. Recognizing that women's experiences intersect with other factors, such as age, disability, and ethnicity, policies must be inclusive and responsive. Empowering women from marginalized backgrounds to actively participate in disaster governance is vital for ensuring inclusive disaster resilience strategies (UNDRR, 2022).

Mainstreaming Gender Considerations in DRR Policies and Practices

The chapter will conclude with policy recommendations for integrating gender perspectives into DRR. Advocating for gender-responsive policies that address specific vulnerabilities and ensuring women's representation in disaster planning, risk assessment, and decision-making bodies are key. Strategies for enhancing women's participation and leadership will include capacity-building programs for women in disaster management and promoting mentorship, training, and networking opportunities for aspiring women leaders (Sanders, 2023).

Part 2: Gendered Impacts of Extreme Weather Events

The impacts of extreme weather events are not evenly distributed across populations. Women, in particular, experience unique and compounded vulnerabilities during such events, often bearing the brunt of their effects due to existing gender inequalities. These differential impacts highlight the need for gender-sensitive approaches in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate resilience strategies. Understanding the specific challenges faced by women during disasters, as well as their critical roles in resilience-building, is essential for developing effective and inclusive DRR policies.

This section delves into the various ways in which extreme weather events affect women differently. It explores how factors such as limited mobility, caregiving responsibilities, and entrenched cultural norms exacerbate women's vulnerabilities

during disasters. Additionally, it examines the impact of traditional gender roles on disaster resilience, showcasing both the challenges and the strengths that women bring to community resilience efforts. Through case studies and insights from gender and climate change research, this section provides a comprehensive overview of the gendered impacts of extreme weather events.

Unique Vulnerabilities Faced by Women During Disasters

Women face unique vulnerabilities during disasters, influenced by a variety of factors including limited mobility, caregiving responsibilities, and entrenched cultural norms. These vulnerabilities often stem from existing gender inequalities that are exacerbated in times of crisis.

Understanding these differential impacts is essential for developing effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies.

Limited Mobility: Women's mobility can be restricted during disasters due to physical, cultural, and logistical barriers. Pregnant women, for example, may have difficulty evacuating quickly due to their physical condition, which can complicate access to safe shelters and essential services. Elderly women, who may suffer from age-related mobility issues, also face significant challenges in evacuating and accessing relief services (ScienceDirect, 2021). Additionally, cultural norms in some societies may limit women's ability to move freely, further hindering their access to necessary resources during emergencies.

Caregiving Responsibilities: Women often bear the primary responsibility for caregiving within households, which can impact their ability to respond to and recover from disasters. This role can involve caring for children, elderly family members, and individuals with disabilities, which limits their capacity to evacuate or seek assistance promptly. For instance, during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, many women were unable to flee to safety because they were caring for children or elderly relatives (Academia.edu, 2021). The burden of caregiving not only affects women's immediate response to disasters but also their long-term recovery, as they prioritize the needs of others over their own.

Cultural Norms and Societal Expectations: Cultural norms and societal expectations can further exacerbate women's vulnerabilities during disasters. In many cultures, women are expected to prioritize their family's well-being over their own safety, which can lead to increased risk and exposure during emergencies. For example, women may delay evacuation to ensure their family members are safe, or they may lack the authority to make independent decisions about evacuation and resource allocation (UN Women, 2023). These norms also affect women's access to information and resources, as they may rely on male family members to convey important disaster-related information.

Impact of Gender Norms and Roles on Disaster Resilience

Traditional gender roles play a significant role in shaping disaster resilience. Recognizing and addressing these roles is crucial for developing inclusive and effective DRR strategies. Gender norms can either hinder or enhance resilience, depending on how they influence women's access to resources, decision-making processes, and their roles within communities.

Hindering Resilience: Gender norms can restrict women's access to decision-making processes and resources, limiting their ability to contribute to disaster resilience. For instance, women often have less access to financial resources and land ownership, which are critical for rebuilding and recovery efforts. This economic disparity means that women may have fewer savings to draw upon in times of crisis and less access to credit or loans for recovery (Springer, 2021).

Additionally, women are often excluded from formal decision-making forums, which can result in their needs and perspectives being overlooked in disaster planning and response strategies.

Enhancing Resilience: Despite these challenges, traditional gender roles can also enhance resilience by recognizing and leveraging women's roles as caregivers, community organizers, and knowledge holders. Women's extensive experience in managing household resources and caring for family members positions them uniquely to contribute to community-based resilience efforts. For example, women often have detailed knowledge of local resources and social networks, which can be invaluable during disaster response and recovery (IOM, 2020). Their roles as caregivers also mean they are often the first to recognize and respond to the needs of vulnerable family members during emergencies.

Women's leadership in community organizing can significantly enhance disaster resilience. Women-led initiatives often prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and work to ensure equitable distribution of resources. In many disaster-affected areas, women's groups have played crucial roles in coordinating relief efforts, providing psychosocial support, and advocating for the rights and needs of women and children (Google Books, 2011). These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also contribute to long-term resilience by building social capital and strengthening community ties.

Examples of Women's Differential Vulnerabilities and Resilience

Several case studies illustrate the differential vulnerabilities of women during disasters and their contributions to resilience-building efforts. These examples highlight the importance of integrating gender perspectives into DRR policies and practices.

Pregnant Women and New Mothers: Pregnant women and new mothers face unique challenges during disasters, including limited access to healthcare, nutrition, and safe

shelter. During the 2010 Haiti earthquake, many pregnant women struggled to access prenatal and postnatal care, leading to increased maternal and infant mortality rates. Relief efforts often failed to address these specific needs, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive disaster planning (UN Women, 2023).

Elderly Women: Elderly women are particularly vulnerable during disasters due to mobility issues and health concerns. During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, elderly women were among the hardest hit, facing significant barriers in evacuation and recovery. Many lacked the physical ability to evacuate independently and had limited access to transportation and healthcare services. This vulnerability underscores the need for targeted support and resources for elderly women in disaster contexts (ScienceDirect, 2021).

Female-Headed Households: Female-headed households often face economic and social challenges that make them more vulnerable to disasters. In many cases, these households have lower incomes and fewer financial resources, limiting their ability to prepare for and recover from disasters. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, female-headed households in Sri Lanka experienced higher levels of food insecurity and economic instability compared to male-headed households (Academia.edu, 2021). These challenges highlight the need for DRR strategies that address the specific needs of female-headed households.

Insights from Gender and Climate Change Studies

The intersection of gender and climate change further underscores the need for gender-sensitive approaches in disaster contexts. Studies have shown that climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, making women more vulnerable to its impacts. For instance, in regions where agriculture is a primary livelihood, women, who often manage subsistence farming, face significant challenges due to changing weather patterns and reduced agricultural yields. This economic vulnerability is compounded by limited access to financial resources and land ownership (Springer, 2021).

Additionally, gendered impacts of climate change are evident in the increased burden on women to secure water, food, and energy for their households. In many developing countries, women and girls are primarily responsible for collecting water, a task that becomes more arduous during droughts and extreme weather events. This increased burden can limit their educational and economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability (UN Women, 2023).

Studies have also highlighted the coping mechanisms employed by women and other vulnerable groups in the face of climate change. These mechanisms often involve leveraging local knowledge, social networks, and traditional practices to adapt to changing conditions. For example, in Bangladesh, women have developed innovative farming techniques and crop diversification strategies to cope with flooding and salinity

intrusion. These adaptive strategies not only enhance their resilience but also contribute to community-wide resilience efforts (Springer, 2021).

Strategies to Address Differential Vulnerabilities

To effectively address the differential vulnerabilities of women during disasters, it is essential to implement targeted strategies that recognize and address these unique challenges. The following recommendations provide a framework for developing gender-sensitive DRR policies and practices:

1. **Incorporate Gender Analysis in Disaster Planning:** Gender analysis should be an integral part of disaster planning and response. This involves collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data to understand the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, men, and gender minorities. Such data can inform the development of targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by different groups (UN Women, 2023);
2. **Promote Women's Participation in Decision-Making:** Ensuring women's participation in decision-making processes is crucial for developing inclusive and effective DRR strategies. This can be achieved through quotas, targeted recruitment, and capacity-building programs that empower women to take on leadership roles in disaster management. Women's involvement in decision-making can ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented in disaster planning and response efforts (Springer, 2021);
3. **Strengthen Economic Support for Women:** Providing economic support to women can enhance their resilience to disasters. This includes access to financial resources, credit, and insurance, as well as programs that support women's livelihoods and economic empowerment. Economic stability enables women to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, reducing their vulnerability (IOM, 2020);
4. **Develop Gender-Sensitive Emergency Services:** Emergency services should be designed to meet the specific needs of women, including pregnant women, new mothers, and women with disabilities. This includes providing gender-sensitive healthcare, safe shelters, and targeted support services. Ensuring that emergency services are accessible and responsive to the needs of women can significantly enhance their resilience during disasters (ScienceDirect, 2021);
5. **Foster Community-Based Resilience Initiatives:** Supporting community-based resilience initiatives led by women can strengthen disaster preparedness and response efforts. Women's groups and CBOs can play a vital role in mobilizing resources, providing support, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies. These initiatives can build social capital and enhance community resilience, ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable are addressed (Google Books, 2011). By adopting gender-sensitive approaches and promoting women's participation in disaster governance, policymakers and practitioners can enhance community resilience and build a more equitable and sustainable future.

Women's roles in disaster risk reduction are defined by more than their needs, but also their unique capacity to lead. Following are examples of the impact of women's ability to lead when properly resourced.

Part 3: Women's Leadership in Disaster Response and Recovery

Women's leadership in disaster risk governance is increasingly recognized as essential for effective disaster response and recovery. Their leadership in these efforts is vital for fostering community resilience and ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable are addressed.

Research indicates that women's capabilities in disaster recovery and resilience must be acknowledged, utilized, and supported to enhance community resilience. Women's unique perspectives, knowledge, and skills contribute to more comprehensive and inclusive disaster management strategies, ensuring that the needs of diverse populations are addressed (ScienceDirect, 2018; Tandfonline, 2020).

Several case studies illustrate the pivotal roles women have played in disaster response and recovery. These examples highlight the resilience, resourcefulness, and leadership of women in various disaster contexts, from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to the 2015 Nepal earthquake and beyond. By examining these case studies, we can better understand the critical contributions of women and the importance of integrating gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices.

Community Organizing in the Aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated many coastal communities across South and Southeast Asia. In the aftermath, women's leadership was instrumental in organizing relief efforts and rebuilding communities. In Aceh, Indonesia, women took on leadership roles in local organizations, coordinating the distribution of aid and resources to affected families. Their deep understanding of community needs and social networks enabled them to effectively prioritize and address the needs of the most vulnerable, including women, children, and the elderly (UN Women, 2023).

One notable example is the work of the Acehnese Women's Network (Jaringan Perempuan Aceh, JPA), which played a pivotal role in mobilizing resources and advocating for gender-sensitive approaches in the relief and reconstruction efforts. The JPA's efforts included setting up women's centers that provide psychosocial support, skills training, and livelihood opportunities for women affected by the tsunami. These centers not only addressed immediate needs but also empowered women to actively participate in the recovery process and contribute to long-term community resilience (Google Books, 2011).

In addition to these efforts, women in Aceh organized and led community meetings to discuss recovery plans and prioritize resource allocation. Their involvement ensured that the voices of women and other marginalized groups were heard and considered in

the decision-making process. This inclusive approach helped to rebuild trust within the community and foster a sense of ownership and collaboration in the recovery efforts.

Furthermore, women-led initiatives in Aceh focused on addressing the specific needs of female-headed households, who were particularly vulnerable after the tsunami. These initiatives provided financial assistance, vocational training, and support for small business development, enabling women to rebuild their livelihoods and gain economic independence. By empowering women economically, these programs contributed to the overall resilience of the community and reduced the long-term impacts of the disaster.

Women-Led Disaster Response in Nepal Earthquake 2015

The 2015 earthquake in Nepal caused widespread destruction, affecting millions of people. In the aftermath, women emerged as key leaders in disaster response and recovery efforts.

Women-led organizations and networks, such as the Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC) and the Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj (NMES), were at the forefront of relief operations, providing essential services and support to affected communities.

These organizations leveraged their grassroots networks to ensure that aid reached the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, and marginalized groups. WOREC, for instance, established safe spaces for women and girls, where they could access health services, psychosocial support, and legal assistance. These safe spaces also served as hubs for disseminating critical information on hygiene, nutrition, and disaster preparedness, thereby enhancing the overall resilience of the community (Springer, 2021). In addition to direct relief efforts, women leaders in Nepal played a crucial role in advocating for inclusive policies and practices in disaster management. Their efforts led to the incorporation of gender-sensitive approaches in national and local disaster response plans, ensuring that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls were addressed in the recovery process (ScienceDirect, 2021).

One of the significant impacts of women's leadership in Nepal was the emphasis on psychosocial support. Understanding that mental health is a critical aspect of recovery,

women-led initiatives provided counseling services and support groups for those affected by the earthquake. These programs helped individuals cope with trauma and rebuild their lives, contributing to the overall resilience of the community.

Women's groups in Nepal took on the responsibility of rebuilding homes and infrastructure. Through collective efforts, they organized labor, secured building materials, and worked with local authorities to ensure that reconstruction efforts were safe and sustainable. Their leadership in these activities not only expedited the recovery process but also ensured that the rebuilt structures were more resilient to future disasters.

Women's Leadership in Disaster Response in the Caribbean

The Caribbean region is frequently affected by hurricanes and other extreme weather events, which pose significant challenges to local communities. Women's leadership has been a critical factor in enhancing disaster resilience and response in this region. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017, women in Puerto Rico and Dominica took on leadership roles in community organizing and relief efforts.

In Puerto Rico, women's organizations such as Taller Salud and Proyecto Matria played pivotal roles in coordinating relief efforts and providing essential services to affected communities.

These organizations focused on addressing the specific needs of women and marginalized groups, including access to healthcare, housing, and legal support. Taller Salud, for instance, established community health brigades that provided medical care, mental health support, and hygiene supplies to women and families affected by the hurricane (Academia.edu, 2021).

Similarly, in Dominica, women leaders were instrumental in the recovery efforts following Hurricane Maria. The Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW) mobilized resources and coordinated with international organizations to provide relief and support to affected communities. Their efforts included the distribution of food, water, and essential supplies, as well as the establishment of safe spaces for women and children. The DNCW also advocated for the inclusion of women in decision-making processes related to disaster recovery and resilience-building, ensuring that their voices were heard and their needs were addressed (Springer, 2021).

In addition to immediate relief efforts, women in the Caribbean have been active in promoting disaster preparedness and risk reduction. For example, women-led organizations have conducted training sessions on emergency response, first aid, and sustainable farming practices to enhance community resilience. These initiatives have empowered women to take on leadership roles in their communities and contribute to long-term disaster resilience.

The leadership of women in the Caribbean has also extended to policy advocacy. Women's groups have worked with local governments and international agencies to develop gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction plans and policies. Their efforts have ensured that the specific needs and perspectives of women are considered in disaster management, leading to more inclusive and effective strategies.

Women's Leadership in Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, and storm surges. Women's leadership has been crucial in the country's efforts to enhance

disaster resilience and recovery. After Cyclone Sidr in 2007, women in the coastal regions of Bangladesh played a key role in community organizing and rebuilding efforts.

Women's groups and local organizations, such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Association for Social Advancement (ASA), were at the forefront of relief operations. These organizations provided emergency aid, including food, water, and shelter, and implemented programs to support long-term recovery and resilience. Women leaders in these organizations facilitated community meetings, mobilized resources, and coordinated with government and international agencies to ensure that the needs of affected communities were met (UN Women, 2023).

In addition to their roles in immediate relief efforts, women in Bangladesh have been active in promoting disaster preparedness and risk reduction. Through community-based disaster management programs, women have been trained in early warning systems, evacuation procedures, and emergency response. These programs have empowered women to take on leadership roles in their communities and contribute to building a culture of resilience (Google Books, 2011).

One of the significant achievements of women's leadership in Bangladesh has been the establishment of community-based early warning systems. Women have been trained to monitor weather patterns, communicate warnings, and coordinate evacuation efforts. This grassroots approach has proven to be highly effective in reducing the impacts of cyclones and floods, saving lives, and minimizing damage.

Women's groups have also played a critical role in rebuilding livelihoods after disasters. By providing training and support for small businesses and agricultural activities, these groups have helped women regain economic independence and stability. This economic empowerment has been a key factor in enhancing community resilience and ensuring sustainable recovery.

Assessing Gender Leadership and Cultural Aspects in Disaster Response: The Beirut Explosion

The 2020 Beirut explosion highlighted the critical role of women in disaster response and recovery in a highly complex and challenging context. Women-led organizations in Beirut mobilized quickly to provide immediate relief and support to affected communities. These efforts included distributing food, medical supplies, and hygiene kits, as well as offering psychosocial support to those traumatized by the explosion.

Organizations like the Lebanese Women's Council and other local NGOs focused on addressing the specific needs of women and children, who were disproportionately affected by the disaster. Their work emphasized the importance of understanding cultural contexts and leveraging local knowledge to effectively respond to and recover from disasters (Oxford, 2020). The leadership demonstrated by these women was instrumental in ensuring a coordinated and culturally sensitive response, highlighting the value of women's involvement in disaster governance.

One of the key strategies employed by women leaders in Beirut was the establishment of community kitchens and food distribution centers. These initiatives not only provided essential sustenance to affected families but also created spaces for community members to come together, share their experiences, and support one another. This sense of community solidarity was crucial in the aftermath of the explosion, helping individuals cope with the trauma and stress of the disaster.

Women's groups in Beirut also played a vital role in advocating for the rights and needs of marginalized communities. By working closely with local authorities and international organizations, they ensured that relief efforts were inclusive and equitable. Their advocacy efforts led to the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and practices in the recovery process, addressing the specific challenges faced by women and girls.

Studying Up on Women and Disaster: Elite Women's Group Following Hurricane Katrina

The response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 offers a unique perspective on women's leadership in disaster contexts. An elite group of women in New Orleans, the "Women of the Storm," known for their social and political influence, played a significant role in the recovery efforts following the hurricane. These women leveraged their networks and resources to advocate for equitable distribution of aid and to address the long-term recovery needs of the community (SAGE Journals, 2010).

Their efforts included fundraising, policy advocacy, and the establishment of initiatives aimed at rebuilding and revitalizing affected neighborhoods. This case study underscores the importance of leveraging the skills and influence of women across different social strata to enhance disaster response and recovery efforts. It also highlights the need for inclusive approaches that recognize and support the contributions of women from diverse backgrounds in disaster management.

One of the significant achievements of this elite women's group was the establishment of a fund to support the reconstruction of schools and community centers in New Orleans. By prioritizing education and community infrastructure, these women ensured that the recovery efforts addressed not only immediate needs but also the long-term development and resilience of the community. The group also played a crucial role in advocating for policy changes at the local and national levels. Their efforts led to the implementation of more inclusive and equitable disaster management policies, ensuring that the needs of all community members were considered in the recovery process.

The case of Hurricane Katrina highlights the importance of diverse and inclusive leadership in disaster response. It demonstrates how the influence and resources of elite women can be leveraged to support comprehensive and sustainable recovery efforts.

The case studies highlighted in this section vividly illustrate the critical role that women play in disaster response and recovery. Their unique perspectives, deep community

ties, and adaptive strategies significantly enhance disaster resilience and ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable populations are addressed. These examples underscore the importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices. Recognizing and supporting women's leadership is not only essential for immediate disaster response but also for fostering long-term community resilience and sustainable recovery. By recognizing and supporting women's leadership, policymakers and practitioners can enhance the effectiveness of disaster risk reduction strategies and build more resilient communities.

Part 4: Challenges Faced by Women in Accessing Resources and Decision-Making Processes

Disasters exacerbate existing social inequalities, often leaving women disproportionately affected. One of the critical challenges women face during disasters is accessing essential resources and information. Relief efforts frequently overlook the specific needs of women, such as reproductive health supplies, sanitary products, and gender-sensitive medical care.

Moreover, logistical issues and cultural norms can restrict women's mobility, limiting their ability to reach relief centers and access aid (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021).

Additionally, women are often excluded from decision-making forums during disaster response and recovery phases. Traditional gender roles and societal norms frequently relegate women to secondary roles, despite their significant contributions to community resilience. This exclusion not only hampers the effectiveness of disaster management strategies but also perpetuates gender inequalities. Women's voices and perspectives are crucial for comprehensive disaster governance, yet they remain underrepresented in policy-making bodies and emergency planning committees (FEMA, 2021).

Intersectionality, the concept of considering multiple, overlapping identities and their impact on an individual's experience, is essential in addressing these diverse needs. Women of color, women with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds face compounded barriers during disasters. For instance, a Black woman with a disability might encounter both racial discrimination and physical accessibility challenges when seeking disaster relief (IGI Global, 2022). Recognizing these intersecting identities is crucial for creating inclusive and effective DRR policies.

Importance of Intersectional Approaches in Ensuring Inclusivity

To ensure inclusivity in disaster governance, it is essential to adopt an intersectional approach that recognizes and addresses the diverse experiences and needs of women.

Intersectionality considers how various factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location interact to shape individuals' experiences during disasters. Policies and practices that fail to account for these intersecting identities often fall short of addressing the real and varied needs of affected populations.

Women's experiences during disasters are not monolithic. For instance, elderly women might face mobility issues that younger women do not, while women from ethnic minority groups might experience discrimination that affects their access to relief services. By incorporating an intersectional lens, disaster governance can become more inclusive and responsive. This approach acknowledges that policies must be flexible and adaptable to cater to a wide range of needs and circumstances (Lund University, 2021).

One of the critical steps in adopting an intersectional approach is ensuring that data collection and analysis during disaster planning and response are disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant factors. This detailed data can help identify specific vulnerabilities and capacities within communities, enabling more targeted and effective interventions. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, gender-disaggregated data revealed that women, especially those in frontline health roles and informal sectors, were disproportionately affected by the crisis (Wiley Online Library, 2022).

Empowering Women from Marginalized Backgrounds to Actively Participate in Disaster Governance

Empowering women, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, to actively participate in disaster governance is vital for creating resilient communities. This empowerment involves addressing structural barriers that prevent women from participating in decision-making processes and ensuring they have the resources and support needed to engage effectively.

One effective strategy is the establishment of deep relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and women's groups focused on disaster preparedness and response. These groups can serve as platforms for women to voice their concerns, share their knowledge, and take collective action. For example, in many rural areas, women's groups have successfully mobilized resources and coordinated community responses to natural disasters, leveraging their local knowledge and social networks (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021).

Capacity-building programs tailored for women can enhance their skills and confidence to participate in disaster governance. Training on leadership, negotiation, and technical aspects of disaster management can empower women to take on more prominent roles in their communities. For instance, programs that teach women how to conduct risk assessments or develop emergency plans can significantly improve community resilience (IGI Global, 2022).

Mentorship and networking opportunities are also crucial for supporting aspiring women leaders. By connecting experienced female leaders with emerging ones, mentorship programs can provide guidance, support, and inspiration. Networking opportunities, such as conferences and workshops, facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among women in the field, fostering a strong community of women leaders who can drive gender-responsive DRR efforts (Day One Project, 2022).

Legal and policy reforms are necessary to create an enabling environment for women's participation in disaster governance. This includes enacting laws that protect women's rights and ensure their representation in decision-making bodies. Policies should also address specific barriers such as land and property rights, access to financial resources, and protection from gender-based violence. Strengthening these frameworks can promote gender equity and ensure that women have the support they need to contribute effectively to DRR (FEMA, 2021).

Finally, fostering an inclusive culture within disaster management institutions is essential. This involves promoting diversity and inclusion at all levels, from local emergency response teams to national disaster management agencies. Training programs that raise awareness about gender biases and encourage inclusive practices can help create a more supportive environment for women. Institutions should also implement policies that promote work-life balance and support women's professional growth and development (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2021).

Part 5: Mainstreaming Gender Considerations in DRR Policies and Practices

To effectively mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events and build resilient communities, it is crucial to integrate gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices. This integration ensures that the unique vulnerabilities and contributions of women and gender minorities are recognized and addressed, leading to more inclusive and effective disaster resilience strategies. The following policy recommendations aim to mainstream gender considerations in DRR:

1. **Advocate for Gender-Responsive Policies:** Policymakers must prioritize the development and implementation of DRR policies that address the distinct vulnerabilities and needs of women and other gender minorities. This includes recognizing the differential impacts of disasters on various genders and designing interventions that cater to these differences. For instance, recovery programs should provide targeted support for female-headed households, which often face unique economic and social challenges during and after disasters (UNDRR, 2023);
2. **Ensure Women's Representation in Disaster Planning and Decision-Making:** Women's representation in disaster planning, risk assessment, and decision-making bodies is crucial for creating inclusive and effective DRR strategies. Women bring valuable perspectives

and local knowledge that can enhance community resilience. Efforts should be made to include women at all levels of disaster governance, from community-based organizations to national disaster management authorities (UNDP, 2021);

3. **Develop Gender-Sensitive Indicators and Monitoring Systems:** Establishing gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring systems ensures that DRR policies and programs are evaluated for their impact on different genders. These indicators should measure progress in achieving gender equity in DRR, such as the number of women in leadership positions, access to resources and services, and the effectiveness of gender-specific interventions. Regular monitoring and evaluation can help identify gaps and areas for improvement, ensuring continuous progress towards gender-responsive DRR (UNDP, 2021).

Strategies for Enhancing Women's Participation and Leadership

Empowering women to participate and lead in disaster management is essential for building resilient communities. Enhancing women's participation and leadership in DRR not only addresses gender inequities but also leverages women's unique perspectives and skills to strengthen disaster resilience. The following strategies can enhance women's participation and leadership in DRR:

1. **Encourage Capacity-Building Programs for Women in Disaster Management:** Capacity-building programs that provide training and resources for women in disaster management can enhance their skills and confidence to take on leadership roles. These programs should cover various aspects of disaster management, including risk assessment, emergency response, and recovery planning. Additionally, training on leadership, negotiation, and advocacy can empower women to effectively participate in decision-making processes and advocate for their communities (Day One Project, 2022);

2. **Promote Mentorship, Training, and Networking Opportunities:** Mentorship programs can connect experienced female leaders with emerging leaders, providing guidance, support, and inspiration. Networking opportunities, such as conferences and workshops, can facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among women in the field. These initiatives can help build a strong community of women leaders who can drive gender-responsive DRR efforts (UNDP, 2021);

3. **Implement Gender-Responsive Budgeting in DRR:** Gender-responsive budgeting ensures that financial resources are allocated to address the specific needs of women and other gender minorities in disaster management. This involves analyzing budget allocations and expenditures from a gender perspective and ensuring that sufficient funds are directed towards gender-responsive programs and initiatives (UNDRR, 2023);

4. **Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks to Support Gender Equity in DRR:** Legal and policy frameworks should be strengthened to promote gender equity in DRR. This includes enacting laws and policies that protect women's rights and ensure their participation in

disaster management. Legal frameworks should also address issues such as land and property rights, access to resources, and protection from gender-based violence in disaster contexts. Strengthening these frameworks can create an enabling environment for women to participate and lead in DRR efforts (UNDP, 2021).

There is a pressing need for tailored policies and practices that acknowledge and leverage the contributions of women in disaster management. By implementing these policy recommendations and strategies, policymakers and practitioners can create more inclusive, equitable, and effective disaster resilience efforts. Mainstreaming gender considerations into DRR policies and practices not only addresses the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women but also leverages their unique contributions to enhance community resilience. Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers must prioritize gender equity in all aspects of disaster resilience efforts. This commitment to gender inclusivity will ensure that all members of the community, regardless of gender, are empowered to contribute to and benefit from disaster resilience initiatives.

References

ACADEMIA.EDU. **The Confluence of Poverty, the Digital Divide, and Disaster Vulnerability on Children: Baltimore and Puerto Rico as Case Studies.** Retrieved from: <https://www.academia.edu/49821091/The_Confluence_of_Poverty_the_Digital_Divide_and_Disaster_Vulnerability_on_Children_Baltimore_and_Puerto_as_Case_Studies>. 2021.

BRADSHAW, S.; FORDHAM, M. **Women, Girls, and Disasters: A Review for DFID.** Department for International Development. 2015.

ENARSON, E. **Women Confronting Natural Disaster: From Vulnerability to Resilience.** Lynne Rienner Publishers. 2012.

SANDERS, M.C. **Day One Project.** Using a Digital Justice Framework to Improve Disaster Preparation and Response. Retrieved from: <<https://www.dayoneproject.org/ideas/using-a-digital-justice-framework-to-improve-disaster-preparation-and-response/>>. 2022.

FEMA. **Building Alliances for Equitable Resilience.** Federal Emergency Management Agency. Retrieved from: <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_rnpn_building-alliances-for-equitable-resilience.pdf>. 2021.

GOOGLE BOOKS. **Gendered Impacts of Extreme Weather Events in Latin America.** Retrieved from: <<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=tBlzFssoovMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA62&dq=Gendered+Impacts+of+Extreme+Weather+Events+in+latin+america&ots=AsenWO1DzK&sig=sZDGOOkdZLUdpnn7sA-NPe2r0hxI#v=one>>. 2011.

IGI Global. **Intersectional Approaches to Disaster Management: Lessons from COVID-19.**

- Retrieved from: <<https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/article/315125>>. 2022.
- IOM. **The Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Girls: The Response of IOM in the Field.** Retrieved from: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/impacts-of-COVID-19-gender_1.pdf#page=75>. 2020.
- LUND UNIVERSITY. **Enhancing Community Resilience through Social Capital and Connectedness: Stronger Together.** Retrieved from: <<https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/20301>>. 2021.
- NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE. **Enhancing Community Resilience through Social Capital and Connectedness: Stronger Together.** The National Academies Press. Retrieved from: <<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26123/enhancing-community-resilience-through-social-capital-and-connectedness-stronger-together>>. 2021.
- OXFORD. **Assessing Gender Leadership and the Cultural Aspect of Disaster Response in Developing Contexts: Focusing on the Case of the Beirut Explosion.** Retrieved from: <<https://oxfordre.com/naturalhazardscience/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389407.001.0001/acrefore-9780199389407-e-493>>. 2020.
- SAGE JOURNALS. **“Studying Up” on Women and Disaster: An Elite Sustained Women’s Group Following Hurricane Katrina.** Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/028072701002800205?casa_token=HZfJdz0VBdMAAAAA:RAi0_bZqr9oQA01zBQnKgCh1fsMglZKqBYGs59Sp9YpAOpPqbzeMk-zgAbfUbbx7cKU-pl7M48r2>. 2010.
- SANDERS, M. C. **Repairing Us: The Case for Acknowledging the Massive Loss of Life and Opportunities in BIPOC Communities.** Medium. Retrieved from: <<https://msanders-4103.medium.com/repairing-us-the-case-for-acknowledging-the-massive-loss-of-life-and-opportunities-in-bipoc-4b519eb7fcec>>. 2023.
- SCIENCEDIRECT. **Role of Women in Disaster Risk Governance.** Retrieved from: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877705818301796>>. 2018.
- SCIENCEDIRECT. **Women’s Health and Climate Change.** Retrieved from: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2212420921004258?dgcid=coauthor>>. 2021.
- SPRINGER. **Gender and Climate Change: Impacts and coping mechanisms of women and special vulnerable groups.** Retrieved from: <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-4-431-54249-0_10>. 2021.
- TANDFONLINE. **Women’s capabilities in disaster recovery and resilience must be acknowledged, utilized and supported.** Retrieved from: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09589236.2020.1801397>>. 2020.
- UNDP. **Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive: Policy and Practical Guidelines.** United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from: <<https://www.undp.org/publications/making-disaster-risk-reduction-gender-sensitive-policy-and-practical-guidelines>>. 2021.

UNDRR. **Gender-Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction.** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Retrieved from: <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/policy-brief-gender-responsive-disaster-risk-reduction>>. 2022.

UNDRR. **20-Point Checklist for Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive.** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Retrieved from: <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/20-point-checklist-making-disaster-risk-reduction-gender-sensitive>>. 2023.

UNDRR. **Gender-Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction.** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Retrieved from: <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/policy-brief-gender-responsive-disaster-risk-reduction>>. 2022.

UN WOMEN. **Gendered Impacts of Climate Change: Evidence from Weather Shocks.** Retrieved from: <<https://wrds.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WB-gendered-impacts-climate-change.pdf>>. 2023.

WILEY ONLINE LIBRARY. **Intersectional Approaches to Disaster Risk Reduction: Addressing Gender Inequities in the Context of COVID-19.** Sustainable Development, 30(1), 53-63. Retrieved from: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/sd.2684>>. 2022.



Rio Jaru/RO

Autor: Secretaria de Estado do Desenvolvimento Ambiental de Rondônia (SEDAM-RO)