

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)

Policy Brief, Series 1

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“Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance ensuring Gender Equity and Social Inclusion”.

Introduction

With the promulgation of the Constitution, it is significant for the government of Nepal to align its development strategy and priorities with overall development process in tune with the Sustainable Development Goals. Women, children, elderly, PWDs and economically & socially marginalized communities and individuals are the most affected by disasters. GESI needs to ensure inclusiveness of increasing their accessibility, representation and meaningful participation in all the spectrum of DRRM.

Nepal has made significant progress developing policy frameworks and institutional arrangements on DRRM. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2074, National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2018, Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action (2018-2030) have prioritized the engagement and participation of women and vulnerable groups in different processes of disaster risk management however the National Council and Executive Committee have not ensured adequate representation of women. There is only one women representation is reserved in the National Council though not appointed yet.

It is obvious that women’s representation at national level governance structures facilitates gender sensitive localization of policies and plans. Recent data shows that 593 local level has prepared the DRRM Act and 646 local level have formulated DRRM fund mobilization guideline; but the concern is does the policy formulation process GESI sensitive, do women and at-risk groups were consulted in this process. The local DRRM Act has accepted the role of women, elderly, PwDs and other vulnerable groups only as a victim of disaster but not active agent of social change through their engagement and partnership.

Why understand GESI in DRRM

Inclusive DRRM recognizes that people face different risks and barriers based on their capacities and capabilities. Building equal opportunities and scope of action on risks will make a difference for excluded people, and the whole community will be more resilient because everybody will be safer. Inclusion promotes equity and rights in DRRM actions so that everybody is less vulnerable. Excluded people at risk are often more vulnerable than others. DRRM processes are often blind to the needs of the excluded, and they may in fact generate more risks to them.

GESI in DRRM ensures the access to information on relief of state, address diverse needs (women, elderly, PwDs, LGBTQI, children, excluded and marginalized) and enable to participate and raise voices. It enhances the leadership potential within women and excluded group and demonstrate their ability.

Key Issues of Representation and Meaningful Participation

- **Representation of women in policy structures is not well addressed:** Despite the constitutional provision of 33% women representation at all state organs, representation of women in policy structures of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is nominal. The committees provisioned in DRRM Act 2074 have not ensured the required seats to women and no seats to represent other vulnerable groups (PwDs, Elderly, LGBTQI and marginalized/excluded). It challenges in the GESI sensitive disaster risk reduction and disaster management activities and during response the need of at-risk groups are often overlooked.
- **Roles not recognized:** Though women representation is nominal but their leadership role in humanitarian response at local level is appreciable. Women leadership is successfully reflected in Covid-19 response at local levels. Women's role is not well recognized and acknowledged within the patriarchal society of Nepal. Women elected representatives' voices are unheard in decision making process and as always dominated by men. Male dominating social stigma in most of the communities discourage women to come ahead and lead their role. In some local levels, husband of women elected representatives attend the meetings and participate in decision making process challenging the role of women elected representatives.
- **Acceptance as pitiable group:** Women and vulnerable groups are mostly considered as victims of disaster in pre, during and post-disaster context. Their experience, knowledge and capacity is mostly overlooked in all the spectrum of disaster risk reduction and management. Women, elderly, PwDs including other marginalized/excluded groups can be engaged in risk reduction and response activities. They can actively participate in the spectrum of social change. It has been reflected in the local level DRRM model act. Women and to be at risk groups are considered as a victim but not an active agent of social change.
- **Access to opportunity and capacity development:** At local level, women representatives have inadequate capacity on DRR policy frameworks and guidelines. In addition, the knowledge and understanding of disaster risk management is less. This has reflected their nominal access to capacity development opportunities as well as less realization of the central level policy makers on policy orientations and inductions. They are involved in policy planning process without required inductions resulting gap in gender equity and social inclusion friendly committees and policies. This gap is prominent in the women members of ward committees. They are often not consulted and participated in the program policy formulation and program planning discussions.

Voices in Policy Discussion

Federal voice: Government has demonstrated adequate efforts to ensure participation across the DRRM cycle. Provisions are in place to ensure their voices which are based on national and international instruments SFDRR, SDGs. During the last three years period and this COVID 19 pandemic, much work on setting ground has been done, now focus must start on its effective implementation to ensure meaningful participation of women and at-risk groups.

Way forward: Policy frameworks can be amended but the male dominating mindsets need to change and opportunities are confined within elite groups hence marginalized groups have no access. Women Cells needs to be promoted to actively function in these areas should increase women and social groups' engagement at all stage of DRRM. Support local level in effective implementation of policies and plans to ensure meaningful participation of women.

Province Voice: It the responsibility of government to monitor and facilitate the GESI sensitive DRRM structures. Though the province level action plan includes GESI perspective, its implementation and monitoring should be done in their leadership and engagement. Province should strictly monitor the plan formulation process to address GESI.

Way forward: Provisions and policies are adequate, realization to implement effectively has to increase at all level. It also depends on the personal capacity and their proactive ness to implement in their position. Reality and practice has to be assessed, positive contribution of women has to be recognized by changing mindsets.

Local voice: Women at local DRR committees are only for the representation but not to fulfil the responsibilities. They have no capacity to play their role in managing community level response and risk reduction. There has to be sufficient resource allocations and decisions making opportunities for them so that they can protect them and their communities.

Policy Recommendations

- Ensure meaningful representation of women in DRRM policy structures as envisioned in Nepal's Constitution by moving forward to amend the DRRM Act 2074 (First Amendment 2075).
- At local level, DRRM model act should be revised to ensure gender role and engagement of at-risk groups in risk assessment and preparedness for effective disaster response.
- National Council, Executive Committee, DRR Expert Committees envisioned in DRRM Act 2074 and Disaster Management Committees at province, local and community level should be reformed ensuring gender equity and inclusion.
- Representation of PwD, Elderly, Dalits and excluded/marginalized in DRRM policy structures should be prioritized.
- Federal government should conduct DRRM policy induction and orientation to local level so as to facilitate GESI sensitive policy and planning process. Federal level policy makers should ensure proper guidance to localize central policies, developing localization guidelines and toolkits.

CSOs Voice

Skilled human resource is needed and the youth participation and engagement is necessary especially in disaster response.

Youth (male/female) is less active, they need to be actively participated in the process of DRRM planning.

Gender dimension needs to be interlinked with the generation dimension for the effective and efficient participation.

- Local government should initiate discussions in understanding the barriers of women's meaningful participation, leadership and should act on changing male personals mindsets towards women.
- Leadership role of women should be strengthened providing access to opportunities and success stories of women representatives needs to be recognized and acknowledged. Women representatives should be empowered and given leadership role to lead the DRRM policy formulation and action plan development process including implementation to ensure gender sensitive and inclusive implementation.

Reference: This policy brief is prepared based on the policy dialogue with Bagmati Province, conducted by CDMS/WHDRRP in collaboration with TSK/AFN/NDWA with support of UN Women on date 6th Nov 2020.