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The Role of women as change agents for disaster risk reduction and resilience

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In Collaboration with

United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA)

Ahfad University for Women Creating Women Change Agents for DRR



Ahfad University for Women

- The first women university in the region
- A private, non-profit educational institution
- Dedicated to girls education for over a century
- Committed to community development and building an egalitarian society
- **With a vision and mission of women empowerment, gender equity & equality**



Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality in disaster risk reduction

- Building the resilience of nations and communities require social, economic and environmental investments.
- A number of countries involve women and men actively in disaster risk management and planning and have integrated gender dimensions into risk reduction and response plans.
- *However, women and their role as change agents in their societies are often overlooked in the disaster context, where they are often categorized as vulnerable*



Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality in disaster risk reduction

The context

- Global agreements and instruments on disaster reduction identify the need to address gender and women's issues.
- Since The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 1990-2000(IDNDR), a call for *'stimulating community involvement and empowerment of women at all stages of disaster management, which is an essential precondition for reducing vulnerabilities of communities to natural disasters'*



The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) & Gender

The HFA recognises that women and men are differently at risk from disasters and their *vulnerabilities* differ, that women and men are equipped with different skills and *capacities* for disaster risk reduction.

HFA underscores gender integration as a core factor in its implementation



The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) & Gender

- Engagement and role of women across all 5 Priorities for Action of the HFA **remain under achieved** against its specified intention.

‘A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training’.



Why gender why women in DRR?

- Women constitute more than 50% of the global population mass which implies :
- In case of **vulnerability** that much of people are at risk
- In terms of **capabilities** that so much of potentials must be utilized



Why gender why women in DRR?

- Gender based differences are observed in all aspects of women's life ..a big **challenge** in both cases of vulnerability and capability
- These differences are rooted in and a reflection of norms and attitudes and discrimination against women, in all fields.



Why gender why women in DRR?

Gendered asymmetries, deprive women of opportunities for participation and contribution, to bring their skills and experiences to effect decisions.

- Limitations and restrictions related to women's mobility and protection, resulting in greater tendencies for their exclusion from planning and strategic decision making processes.**



Why gender why women in DRR?

- Gender based perceptions of women and girls as *weak and inferior* resulted in categorizing women as weak and incapacitated in all aspects of disasters and acts as a barrier that isolates them from planning and decision making processes.
- Women and girls are often considered a *'problem'*, overlooking the fact they are *an integral part of resilience building*.
- This leads to the *perpetuation* and re- enforcement of the pre-existing parameters as evident in overall disaster management activities, including in communications and *media portrayal*.



Why gender why women in DRR?

- Gender-based inequalities in their totality shape women's *vulnerabilities* & *capabilities*
- *Vulnerabilities*: A greater degree of risk during disasters, including the risks of gender-based violence (GBV): mostly *sexual violence* and abuse..



Why gender why women in DRR?

- This also impacts on *capabilities*:
- Less ability to contribute to formal disaster management mechanisms
- To access and respond to early warning and other information
- Less ability *for preparedness* and survival, protecting livelihoods and productive assets



Why gender why women in DRR?

- Due to gender norms & practices *social* and *institutional dynamics* simultaneously exacerbate women's vulnerabilities and downplay their capacities and potential.
- *This demand recognition and corrective action.*



Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?

- Reports on HFA implementation indicate a **poor** reflection on gender integration.
- To take corrective steps in HFA2 it is important to identify **why???**



Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?

- Inappropriate approach : the paradigm of *vulnerability reduction*, rather than *capacity development*
- A challenge encountered in the HFA implementation is that DRR all along was taken as an *'add on'* to the development process.



Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?

- The integration of DRR and gender issues are getting largely isolated from the *mainstream* development and becoming the responsibility of a specialized parallel set of *institutions*.
- Ambiguity in *accountabilities*, which have not been clearly defined. The institutional decisions and actions implicating on *re-enforcing* gender based inequalities therefore are not held accountable.



Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?

- A critical limitation lies in the progress *review mechanism*.
- *The 22 Core indicators of progress in the HFA Monitor do not include any for measuring progress in gender integration.*



A better measure of gender integration in DRR

- *“A more robust measure of progress for gender integration can be sex and age disaggregated data as a core indicator and DRR planning based on **gender analysis** as a means of verification” “(Towards the post-2015).*



Women's role as actors in DRR

1- At the family & household level:

- In the socialization of children and transmission of knowledge, values and skills (*using indigenous means, Culture of peace for man-made disasters and conflicts*)
- In their reproductive role they provide security and care (shelter, food, protection, curing & health...etc)



Women's role as actors in DRR

- In case of fleeing and forced migration they rescue children and household belongings
- Transmit information about early warning of disasters based on experience and indigenous knowledge



Women's role as actors in DRR

- Assume economic activity for livelihood especially in response and recovery stages
- In camps, outside camps offering their labour



Women's role as actors in DRR

- In case of climate change women employ ancestors' indigenous knowledge in managing food, medical plants, domestic animals and soil protection



Women's role as actors in DRR

- **At the institutional level:**
- **Women are part of the workforce in many institutions engaged in DRR, and other related institutions.**
- **They are rescue workers**
- **Aid and recovery service delivery & providers**
- **GBV service providers**



Women's role as actors in DRR

- They offer training and information facilities
- They offer feedback on policies and intervention viability based on experience and practice from a gendered lens/women's perspective
- Decision making and consultations



Women's role as actors in DRR

- ***At the community level:***
- Voluntary work within some NGOs
- Community mobilization and formation of self-help groups & CBOs to function in case of emergency and regularly
- Act as safety-nets by offering services (financial informal saving), social cohesion and resilience



Women's role as actors in DRR

- **Reflections from the conference papers:**
- 1- From the experience of (*Tuti Island*) in Sudan women were reported to contribute from there savings to the community fund especially established for DRR by CBOs.
- In specific community hardships (floods) women voluntarily offered their *jewellery* for community support, showing a good role model.



Women's role as actors in DRR

- **Reflections from the conference papers:**
- 2- In ***Somalia*** women voluntary saving groups provide a mechanism to cope with drought and its adverse impact on household livelihoods.
- Also women utilized and managed remittances of the family members in the diaspora(majority of whom migrated due to disaster related risks) as a mechanism of DRR



Recommendations to engender HFA2

- Pathway to gender equality and enhancing the role of women as actors in DRR lies in addressing the structural impediments .
- The HFA2 call is for a *paradigm shift* in approach from *reducing vulnerability* to *capability & resilience* building in a holistic and integrated manner.
- This is expressed in Strengthened resilience, grounded in confronting the underlying causes of risk and *inequalities*.



Recommendations to engender HFA2

- Use **knowledge**, **innovation** and **education** to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
- Change the approach to the engagement of women from the limited, token representation such as in **committees and taskforces**, often in stereotypical gendered roles, to more substantive, meaningful and **effective participation**.
- **This requires creating new spaces for women's experiences, interests, practical and strategic needs to be reflected in the policies, planning and program implementation at every level (Towards post-2015).**



Recommendations to engender HFA2

- To adopt actions for empowering and supportive of **self realization** and **building confidence** of women on their role and capabilities.
 - Trigger a changeover of social attitudes and acceptance of women in different roles.
- Gender mainstreaming in DRR*** is key to women empowerment.



Recommendations to engender HFA2

- Capitalize on good practices demonstrated by local women leaders, women's groups and networks, men and women champions for the cause of women's empowerment.
- Supportive legislations and policies such as quota systems in local governments and parliament representation which provide evidence for inspiration and further enhancing women's role as actors in DRR(Towards post-2015) .



Recommendations to engender HFA2

- *Strengthening women's leadership*
- *Monitoring and Measures of progress*
- *Accountability*



The role of Ahfad University for women (AUW) in creating women change agents for DRR

- **AUW is committed to women empowerment through higher education**
- **It assumes many responsibilities in general such as:**
 - **Teaching**
 - **Research**
 - **Training**
 - **Community service and outreach**



AUW & UNFPA partnership for DRR

- AUW has good linkages and collaboration with **UN agencies and international NGOs**
- AUW is building on a long standing collaboration with **UNFPA** in “Gender Equity, Equality and Women Empowerment” by recently working to enhance the role of women in DRR.
- Interventions for Gender mainstreaming, advocacy, community mobilization , training , resource availability ...etc are planned to support women especially in high risk areas such as Darfur.



Sources

- Documents related to DRR
- -Castillo et.al, A new framework for disaster reduction. www.pwc.com
- ISDR Hyogo Framework
- Global Protection Cluster ,Technical Note: Gender-Based Violence and Disaster Risk Reduction: Practical Approaches for Better Programming
- Towards the Post-2105 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2)



Thank YOU.....