

## **K. Consideration of Marginalized and Minority Groups in a National Disaster Risk Assessment**

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**Key words:**

marginalized groups, cross-sectionality, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, children, women, migrants, people with disabilities, older people

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This chapter will cover the essential stages of designing, implementing and monitoring a national risk assessment (NRA) that is inclusive of all within society. It will focus on different marginalized groups, whose differences need to be considered by the policymakers, officials and risk specialists when developing an NRA.

## Marginalized groups

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A natural or technological hazard can have different short or long-term impacts on various groups within society<sup>1</sup>. A person's gender, age, physical abilities, ethnicity and sexuality, for instance, can lead to a higher risk of death or injury, longer recovery times or greater risk of mental or physical trauma.

Equally, different groups may bring unique skills, resources and knowledge to reduce risk and overcome the aftermath of a disaster. The strengths and challenges of each group should be recognized at an early stage of preparing the assessment.

The Sendai Framework identifies the following groupings:

- **Women (or gender more broadly):** Women and girls may often face greater risks than men and boys in the aftermath of a disaster. This is often due to societal constructs, which can mean that they are less socially mobile, less economically independent and less educated.<sup>2</sup> The risks can also come from indirect outcomes of a disaster such as gender-based violence, which always increases after a disaster.<sup>3</sup> Women contribute on a number of levels in the aftermath of a disaster. Their high level of risk awareness, extensive knowledge of their own communities and experience in managing natural environmental resources all mean that they constitute a powerful resource in dealing with disasters.<sup>4</sup>

Those same societal constructs can also result in increased risks for men and boys. As assumed leaders of their community, men and boys will often be tasked with roles that increase the risk of injury or death. These types

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<sup>1</sup> Bankoff, G., G. Frerks and D. Hilhorst (2004). *Mapping vulnerability: disasters, development, and people*. London and Sterling VA: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Niaz, U. (2009). Women and disasters. *Contemporary Topics in Women's Mental Health: Global Perspectives in a Changing Society*. Chichester: Wiley.

<sup>3</sup> Enarson, E. (1999). Violence against women in disasters: a study of domestic violence programs in the United States and Canada. *Violence Against Women*, vol. 5, pp. 742-768.

<sup>4</sup> Aguilar, L. and others (2008). *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change*. San José: International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations Development Programme, Global Gender and Climate Alliance.

of gendered roles have been shown to lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues.<sup>5</sup>

- **Children and youth:** Children and young adults may experience the impact of a hazard differently, depending on their age. Children have developmental (physical and psychological) differences, which need to be recognized.<sup>6</sup> Children and youth are often recognized as agents of change and can bring innovative thinking to an emergency situation. This should be done within the proper legal and institutional framework and in no way that might exploit the young people.
- **Older people:** When a disaster occurs, more older people die or are injured than the younger members of a community. And more complex medical requirements, lack of mobility and exclusion from mainstream society are all factors that can contribute to increased risk.<sup>7</sup> Older people also have a huge amount of life experience and knowledge of previous disasters and can provide that experience to disaster risk reduction.
- **People with disabilities:** People with disabilities (e.g. physical disability, intellectual impairment or mental health problems) can be at a high risk from disasters.<sup>8</sup> Less mobility, speed and reduced sensory input can mean more risk of injury or death. Nonetheless, they are not deprived of certain capacities – as in the case of blind people, whose sensorial skills may provide them with a unique ability to evacuate an earthquake-stricken building in the dark. Specialist planning and attention is required to respond to the needs and requirements of this group during a disaster. A 2014 UNISDR report highlighted that only 15 per cent of people with disabilities had actually been consulted in their own community resilience plans.<sup>9</sup> Programmes around the world have shown how providing such persons with education and training creates greater levels of independence and reduces the number of injuries and death.
- **Migrants:** Because of poverty, language barriers or discrimination, migrants often struggle to access resources and means of protection that

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5 Neumayer, E. and T. Plümper (2007). The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 97, issue 3, pp. 551-566.

6 American Academy of Pediatrics. The youngest victims: disaster preparedness to meet children's needs. Available from [www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Documents/Youngest-Victims-Final.pdf](http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Documents/Youngest-Victims-Final.pdf)

7 Pekovic, V., L. Seff and M. Rothman (2007). Planning for and responding to special needs of elders in natural disasters. *Generations*, vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 37-41.

8 Smith, F., E. Jolley and E. Schmidt (2012). Disability and disasters: the importance of an inclusive approach to vulnerability and social capital. Sightsavers.

9 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2014). *Living with Disability and Disasters: UNISDR 2013 Survey on Living with Disabilities and Disasters - Key Findings*. Available from [www.unisdr.org/2014/iddr/documents/2013DisabilitySurveyReport\\_030714.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/2014/iddr/documents/2013DisabilitySurveyReport_030714.pdf)

are available to locals before, during and after disasters. Illegal migrants cannot even claim such access to protection.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, migrants may bring valuable knowledge of different hazards and send to their home communities remittances that often prove essential for reducing risk and overcoming disasters.

- **Ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples:** Minority ethnic groups and indigenous peoples often face difficulties in accessing their share of resources and assistance in dealing with disasters. Marginalization of these groups may also become exacerbated in the aftermath of disaster.<sup>11</sup> Traditional knowledge held by indigenous groups can provide alternative ideas for disaster risk reduction.<sup>12</sup> Integrating traditional knowledge within the administrative frameworks of a city or region must be done with a full understanding of how each will enhance or detract from the other.<sup>13</sup>

The categories detailed above are often those focused on, particularly by large international non-governmental organizations, in the aftermath of a disaster. However, care should be taken to recognize any other groups, within the local, national or regional context, that require separate consideration or have experienced marginalization. For example:

- **Sexual minorities:** People identified as sexual minorities within a community (largely associated with the Global North definition of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or intersex persons) will often find increased hostility from others in the community.<sup>14</sup> This can be compounded by the specific medical needs of some (HIV medication, hormone replacement therapy for transgendered people).

It is also imperative that the issue of cross-sectionality (also known as intersectionality) be recognized an inclusive risk assessment process is being designed and implemented. Cross-sectionality is the recognition that social identities will often overlap, and increase or decrease a person's vulnerability

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10 Sudmeier-Rieux, K. and others (2016). *Identifying Emerging Issues in Disaster Risk Reduction, Migration, Climate Change and Sustainable Development*. Springer.

11 Bolin, B. (2007). Race, class, ethnicity, and disaster vulnerability. In *Handbook of Disaster Research*. New York: Springer.

12 Le De, L., J.C. Gaillard and W. Friesen (2015). Remittances and disaster: policy implications for disaster risk management. *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Policy Brief Series*, vol. 1, issue 2. Available from <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/policy-brief-series-issue-2-remittances-and-disaster-policy-implications-disaster-risk-management>

13 Miller, M.A. (2014). Decentralized disaster governance: a case for hope from Mount Merapi in Indonesia? Asia Research Institute Asian Urbanisms blog. Available from <https://nus.edu/2pzpqtv>

14 Balgos, B., J.C. Gaillard and K. Sanz (2012). The warias of Indonesia in disaster risk reduction: the case of the 2010 Mt. Merapi eruption in Indonesia. *Gender & Development*, vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 337-348.

accordingly.<sup>15</sup> An older woman who belongs to an ethnic minority group within her society and has a form of physical disability would find recovering from a disaster much harder than a younger woman who is part of the majority ethnic group and has no physical disabilities.

## **Development of an inclusive process – the basics**

A national risk assessment that is inclusive and helps all within a community relies on the appropriate recognition, appreciation and understanding of marginalized communities.<sup>16</sup> This recognition will enable discussion and thought to be applied to steps that may have otherwise excluded or ignored at-risk people and groups. Development of an inclusive national risk assessment will also require work to build dialogue and trust between authorities and those sections of the community that have been marginalized or overlooked.

Marginalized groups should be included in risk assessment and DRR policy and practice. This inclusion must be made without tokenism and for the benefit of all within the community.<sup>17</sup>

Agreement should then be reached on which elements of society are most at risk, or most excluded, before, during and after a disaster within the country.<sup>18</sup> This could be in the form of achieving greater inclusion for specific marginalized groups or a better understanding of the risks associated with specific situations within a disaster outcome (reducing violence against women and girls, or increasing resilience and capacity of indigenous people).

Once these clear components have been established and the aim of the action has been decided, key stakeholders will need to be identified. These individuals or organizations will reflect the views and needs of all sectors of society, including the most marginalized and vulnerable, and provide the necessary knowledge and background for successfully incorporating the agreed aims into the NRA.

Civil society organizations, academic institutions, local and national government agencies and non-government organizations are a few examples

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15 Donner, W. and H. Rodríguez (2008). Population composition, migration and inequality: the influence of demographic changes on disaster risk and vulnerability. *Social forces*, vol. 87, No. 2, pp.1089-1114.

16 McEntire, D.A. (2005). Why vulnerability matters: exploring the merit of an inclusive disaster reduction concept. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, vol.14, No. 2, pp. 206-222.

17 O'Meara, C. (2012). Disability Inclusive Community Based Disaster Risk Management: A toolkit for practice in South Asia. Handicap International. Available from [http://g3ict.org/download/p/fileId\\_1001/productId\\_312](http://g3ict.org/download/p/fileId_1001/productId_312)

18 Benson, C. and J. Twigg (2007). Tools for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction. Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies/ProVention Consortium.

of key stakeholders. It is essential to foster a dialogue between all these stakeholders throughout the whole process so that everyone recognizes the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of the marginalized groups.

Using the aims, components and stakeholders identified, the NRA team will then need to decide on the best data collection methodologies and analysis process so as to produce a comprehensive and inclusive risk assessment.

The importance of include representatives of marginalized groups within this process cannot be overemphasized. These will assist in ensuring that aspects not normally considered by others outside these groups are heard and included. This stage also requires careful thought on intersectionality and conflict avoidance or reduction to ensure that the identification and reduction of risks does not inadvertently lead to a transfer of risk to another marginalized group.<sup>19</sup>

The incorporation of such marginalized groups should begin at the very initial stages of NRA development. Ensuring an effective and appropriate communication strategy to reach all sections of society from the outset is vital to understanding and considering how each of these groups may be affected by a disaster and allows for planning, design and risk reduction policy to be developed within the strategy.

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<sup>19</sup> Mitchell, T. and others (2010). *Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management, Strengthening Climate Resilience*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

## Box 1 - Key components of an inclusive process

**Recognition and engagement:** Understand which communities might suffer greater risks. Go into the community, engage with those communities, investigate and examine existing data, speak with external sources (INGOs, grassroots organizations).

**Data:** An inclusive NRA must be based on reliable data. Data help planners ensure all groups are considered.

**Implementation:** Identify key stakeholders who can help implement actions to increase inclusivity and reduce conflict on the ground.

**Communication:** Ensure effective communication with stakeholders and target groups within a broader communications strategy.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring the success of an NRA will help identify future vulnerabilities.

### CASE STUDY

## Box 2 - A case study

**Nepal:** In the Terai plain of Nepal, untouchable castes or Dalit constitute one of the marginalized groups that deserve attention in dealing with disasters. These people are vulnerable because they are often deprived of access to resources and means of protection in facing hazards (e.g. land and education that are available to other castes). Nonetheless, they also display a unique set of capacities that prove invaluable in dealing with disasters, (e.g. a detailed knowledge of their immediate environment).

Since the Dalit themselves best know their own needs and resources, they should be participating in identifying hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities to ensure that their own needs and strengths are taken into account. They should similarly contribute to planning for reducing the risk of disaster. Risk assessment and action planning should be done by the Dalit as a specific group and in the presence of other castes so that the latter recognize their unique vulnerabilities and capacities.

In a project conducted in the Saptari district in 2012, an older Dalit man was excluded from the risk assessment process for his ward by the (nonetheless well-minded) members of more powerful castes. On a map of their common village, the latter removed the markers plotted by the Dalit man representing a vulnerable electricity line that brings the much valued electricity to the Dalits' ward. However, the members of the more powerful castes, who had located a similarly valuable electric line in their own ward, quickly realized that they could not plot the electric line for the Dalit ward by themselves and had to call the Dalit man back. Ultimately, both the needs and knowledge of the whole Dalit group of the village were recognized by all castes and included in disaster risk reduction planning.

This example emphasizes the importance of fostering dialogue between marginalized groups and those with more power so that disaster risk reduction includes society's most vulnerable or excluded groups.

## Resources for further information

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High level multi-stakeholder partnership dialogue - Inclusive Disaster Risk Management – Governments, Communities and Groups Acting Together  
[www.wcdrr.org](http://www.wcdrr.org)

For information on building a gender-responsive DRR system  
[www.gdn-online.org](http://www.gdn-online.org)

Good example of an Inclusive Framework and Toolkit for Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction  
[www.preventionweb.net/files/48286\\_48286inclusiveframeworktoolkitforcb.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/48286_48286inclusiveframeworktoolkitforcb.pdf)

E-learning action, research, capacity building and policy advocacy project - Inclusive Community Resilience for Sustainable Disaster Risk Management (INCRISD)  
[www.incrisd.org/index.php](http://www.incrisd.org/index.php)

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