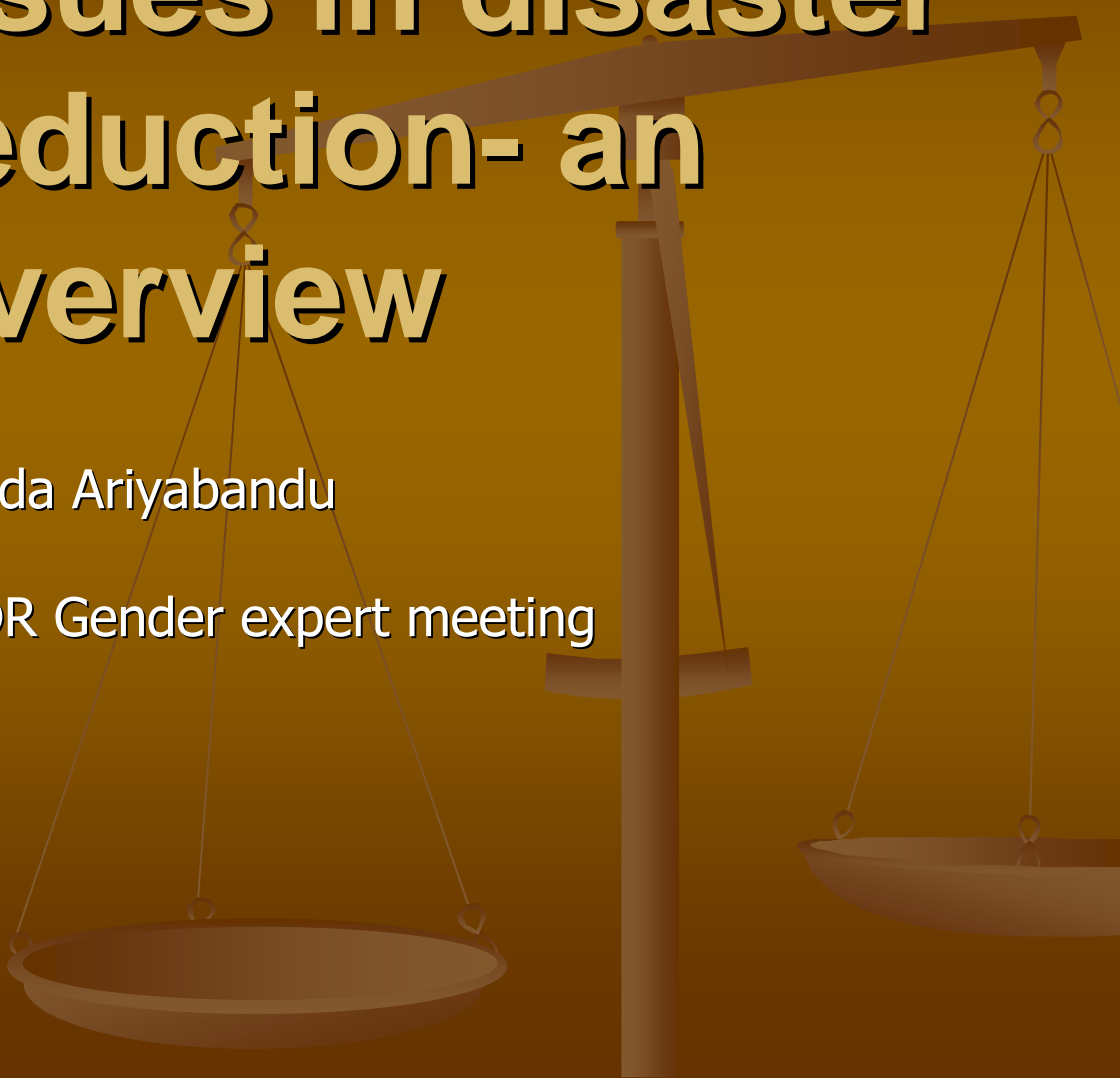# Gender issues in disaster risk reduction- an overview

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Gender Issues in Society

- Gendered Identities

- Perceptions

- Attitudes

- Status

Gender issues do not arise in disaster situations, but prevalent in society

Gender relations are socially, economically and politically imbalanced between men and women

More unfavourable towards women

Economic status

Women:

- All over the world are poorer than men

- Disproportionately employed in unpaid, underpaid in non-formal sectors of economies

- Inheritance laws and traditions deprive women ownership of assets and reinforce dependence

Access to resources unfavourable

Some issues related to social status

- Traditional expectations and home-based responsibilities limit women's mobility
- Fewer opportunities for political involvement, education, access to information, markets, and a myriad of other resources

Within the same class/category women have less power to change

Perceptions and attitudes

Gender based prejudices and divisions in many societies mainly affect girls and women and view them as:

- Physically and emotionally weak
- Inferior in comparison to men and boys
- Burden to family
- Dependent, sub ordinate
- Weak, passive, victims in need of rescue (in crisis)
- Incapacitated who need help

This mask the skills and capabilities of women as individuals, as a group

Gender based attitudes and perceptions form the nature of interactions at personal, family and institutional levels

Gender based differences

- Women and men have different life experiences due to gendered roles, responsibilities, social expectations, gendered identities

- Gendered views, attitudes lead to observations, decisions and actions by the informal (family, society, fellow men and women) and formal institutions state and other

Gender based inequalities

Gendered inequalities are observed with respect to:

- Enjoyment of human rights
- Social, political, and economic status
- Ownership of assets
- Exposure to sexual and other forms of violence

These inequalities make women more vulnerable before, during, and after disasters

Gender Issues in disasters

In disaster situations, generally prevailing gender disparities surface in greater degree than in the 'normal' situations

Women get a disproportionate brunt

Double edge: Specific vulnerabilities, specific capacities

Due to gendered identities:

women's vulnerabilities get highlighted, capacities downplayed

Men are expected to be strong and in control, vulnerabilities not recognised.

Cont…

The impact of disasters is different on men and women due to gendered social construction

Vulnerabilities and capacities of men and women are different

- Gender Division of Labour
- Patterns of mobility
- Socially expected behavior patterns

Capacities

Men and women play different roles in life, which extend to disaster management process:

Preparation, Risk reduction, Emergency management
Recovery

As a result develop different skills and capacities
Women's engagement formally less recognised due to gender based prejudices and attitudes

Vulnerabilities

Specifically vulnerable groups:

Older women and men
Women and men with disabilities
Pregnant and nursing women
Women with small children
Young girls and women

Progress in gender mainstreaming into DRR since Ankara and Hawaii

- Greater awareness- more awareness/recognition there is an issue, less on what the issue is
- Frameworks, policies

MDGs, indicators of progress, WCDR, Hyogo framework – priorities for action

ISDR strategy, BCPR UNDP next 5 year strategy, other UN agencies

Number of INGOs working on gender mainstreaming

Factors contributing to Progress

- More discussion, research
- Active and dedicated groups, networks, knowledge products,
- Visibility brought by Asia Tsunami, Katrina, and Kashmir quake
- International frameworks- pressure for implementation

Factors hindering gender balance in DRR

- Understanding on Development- DRR link weak at conceptual and practice levels

- Gender continue to be seen as 'add on' , as women's concern

- Organisational and individuals attitudes (socially ingrained)- stereotyped views

Cont..

- Lack of information/methods/tools. expertise what to do and how to do
- Poor awareness and acceptability by men at the decision making levels
- At community level gendered perceptions of both women and men are guided by social and cultural norms
- Gaps in capacity to implement recommendations/frameworks at the global level

Factors contributing to obstacles

- Continuity of the emergency response focus
- Poor grasp on development – DRR linkages, poor integration, sector/programme/project focus
- Recovery processes repeating same faults of previous disasters
- Gaps in the accountability mechanisms both at higher and lower levels
- Focus on short term interventions, lack of vision on long term changes in attitudes
- Haphazard and uncoordinated way of working

Challenges –Facing the reality

- Despites much discussion, activism, frameworks, guidelines marginal progress made

- Poor reflection of disaster- development linkages both at DRR, Humanitarian and regular development programmes

- Separation of gender from 'real work'

- Gender integration limited to a few points or a para in international frameworks

Cont…

- Poor understanding and resistance from the government officials, communities, cooperative leaders
- Getting rid of the notion gender is about women
- Getting more men on board

Making a change

- Make use of the heightened interest resulting from recent disasters, MDG commitments, HFA

- Use the crisis situations showcase the issue- pick up from there to move in to gender sensitive, gender inclusive risk reduction- where it is not so visible

- Work at policy /strategy levels and practice/implementation levels at the same time: Macro solutions and what you can do

- Use the bad examples where the state and society has failed in gender sensitivity

- Use the best practices to convince on the positive changes

Cont..

- Information made available on what to do and how to do
- Stronger and continued push of ideas, information by the committed
- Stronger accountability mechanisms for the governments, UN, NGOs
- Specific indicators tied with the accountability
- Bring in the rights based perspective in get men's and women's issues in DRR and development

Cont..

- Bottom line:

The crux: context specific Gender analysis to identify specific issues – social, cultural, economic for sustainable development and DRR integration

Gender disaggregated information

How about providing specific guidance on the implementation of HFA ensuring gender integration?