

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This research is an output of the Learning Project of the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP). The DEPP was a 4-year programme funded by the Department of International Development and co-led by the Start and CDAC Networks. It was comprised of 14 projects implemented in 10 countries, each led by a consortium of international and local humanitarian agencies, and aimed to improve the quality and speed of response in countries at risk of natural disasters or conflict related emergencies. The programme included initiatives to address gender in emergencies and capacity building for women as humanitarians.

This report aims to build on existing literature by examining women's leadership and influence within humanitarian preparedness in DEPP and other similar programmes.

More information can be found at: <https://disasterpreparedness.ngo> and <https://startnetwork.org/disasters-and-emergencies-preparedness-programme>

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ACRONYMS

CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
DEPP	Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRRMC	Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LNGO	Local non-governmental organisation
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NHN	National Humanitarian Network (Pakistan)
NNGO	National non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

FOREWORD

The genesis for this research came from experiences about women's role in humanitarian action during the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP). The programme has had a wealth of innovation and collaboration with the rich engagement of women and men committed to improving our preparedness globally.

One of the challenges apparent during the four years of this programme is that despite great efforts, there are still situations where women are not as well represented, participate or influence where decisions are made to prepare, respond and recover from humanitarian crises. Even more so that the space women occupy in the programme itself has not necessarily been exemplary of more equitable approaches.

However, this is no surprise when we see this reflects the wider society that we come from, live, and work in. These issues often intersect gender, race, ethnicity, place of birth, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, refugee status and more. There are often a complex set of factors that emerge, and yet these are not reasons to do nothing.

For us the first signs of this was about the lack of clarity around disaggregated data. To me this speaks to the issue that is consistently advocated for by those serious in the endeavour of ensuring we leave no one behind. Disaggregated data alone cannot do everything, but we do need this data as part of the analysis for solution creation. We had a huge range of other insights and examples of the tenacity of women humanitarian workers that went beyond quantitative data. Once we faced the uncomfortable facts of what was not working for us combined with what

these insights were telling us it started a line of inquiry that asked a bigger question: where are women in the humanitarian system and more specifically, from our efforts on improving preparedness? The programme has gravitated towards themes of tackling who, how, and where decisions are made. These considerations are the same for early warning early action systems, localisation of aid, and protection mainstreaming. So it seemed natural to focus on decision-making and its intrinsic link to leadership.

In the current context of #MeToo and the corresponding safeguarding issues in the international development sector that many have been tackling before it came to prominence, the central question of leadership comes to bear even more so. All people have a role or a potential role to play in leading and participating in humanitarian preparedness and response. Women and girls alongside men and boys are part of the work we have to do in striving to meet the challenges ahead.

This is a modest piece of work for some huge questions of our time so we are not pretending to have all the answers. The value of this research has two elements. First, that we must reflect on what we have set out to do, what we have done and what we have learnt from our own actions and inactions. If we want to improve the world we should start with ourselves. Second, to share with others our reflections so that they can use these when they seek to take action themselves or advocate for a more balanced future.

Shveta Shah
Head of Portfolio, Disaster Emergencies
Preparedness Programme, Start Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores how women are involved as leaders and decision-makers within the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) and its networks. It further provides an insight into why investing in women as leaders is important, identifies drivers and barriers and examines the effects of women's leadership for advancing the rights and equality of other women. The research is based on a desk review of relevant literature and interviews with key informants from four of the DEPP operational countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines

KEY FINDINGS

Increasing women's participation is still the main topic of discussion rather than their roles as leaders. However, this slightly differs in contexts where there is relatively high representation of women leaders across INGOs and L/NNGOs and where they have played an important role in designing programmes and plans.

Evidence suggests that organisations are devising policies and adopting various strategies to increase female leadership. These alone however are insufficient and require dedicated staff that can champion these and ensure implementation. This includes supporting partners in developing gender-inclusive policies, recruiting gender advisors to encourage development of gender sensitive programming; developing policies that support retention of women in leadership positions, such as flexible working hours for mothers or extended maternity leave, and recruiting women into project facilitation roles such as needs assessment and training.

Women are taking up a central role in community and grassroots decision-making. Respondent views suggest that including women in decision-making forums could help ensure greater visibility of the needs of most vulnerable groups. Women within communities are increasingly leading and facilitating intervention activities such as nutrition, building shelters, developing

standard operating procedures for communicating with affected communities, disseminating early warning information, contributing to rescue efforts, advocating for protection needs of women during disasters, conducting tailored needs assessments and better supporting families through financial decision making.

Cultural contexts will dictate procedures for both men and women's participation.

In certain communities, establishing separate decision-making spaces for men and women enables women to raise their specific concerns. However, in other contexts it is considered important to involve male community members so women are seen as partners in preparedness activities.

Women affected by disasters have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives:

Women have specific needs during disasters and including them in decisions is crucial in ensuring these needs are catered for. Women's participation in decision-making is enshrined in international human rights policies and frameworks. However, it is not enough to recruit women leaders and assume they will address women's specific needs, as it is not certain they will have an understanding of the particular context. Rather, it is necessary to create and adhere to policies that advocate for the participation of disaster-affected women in programme design.

Evidence of whether women leaders advance equality for and interests of other women is mixed:

There were some important examples of women advancing equal opportunities for other women, such as in the Philippines, where a national women's coalition has built the capacity of women by providing training and advocacy for women's leadership in disasters and response. Nevertheless, it is also evident that women in leadership positions are heavily guided by their work plans and so focused on fulfilling their mandates and delivering the stated outputs. A recent assessment in Kenya explored whether having a female line

manager translated into recommendations for more female participants. The results showed that the difference was negligible.

At the grassroots, women leaders can ensure that the specific needs of women and vulnerable groups are accounted for. Women leaders are seen to play a vital role in identifying and advocating for the specific needs of women in disasters. Greater inclusion of women leaders in local-level decision-making is being argued for as well as the need to advocate for this within senior level decision-making spaces. Women leaders at grassroots level are seen to play three unique roles during disasters: first, they often have social networks that can be used to improve preparedness and response. Second, women's caregiving responsibilities equip them with the ability to identify the most vulnerable groups in their communities and to know what their needs are. And third, there are examples of women holding local and traditional forms of knowledge that are considered to be crucial to preparedness.

Multiple barriers affect the number of women coming into leadership positions: Common barriers identified across contexts include: cultural norms that limit women's role to their domestic responsibilities; difficulty in balancing work

life and family commitments; and women feeling a lack of confidence to speak up in male dominated environments. These are compounded by a lack of opportunity to practice and obtain leadership skills.

Organisations are putting Strategies in place to increase women's leadership – but more needs to be done: At an organisational level, women are encouraged to take up leadership positions due to organisational policies that not only promote gender inclusion, but also cater to specific needs of women, such as extended maternity leave. Women also acknowledge the important role of individual leaders in identifying opportunities for them and of the value of women's networks in creating a safe space for women to gain the leadership skills necessary to take on roles in more male-dominated environments.

The research concludes that there is a need to consciously include women in preparedness programmes by promoting the advancement of gender equality as an explicit goal in programming. This will help ensure that both men and women see it as a priority and it is included in work plans. More work is required to advocate for the importance of women in decision-making, particularly within local and national levels.

THE DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME (DEPP)

The research draws on the experiences of programme, project, and partner staff of the DEPP. The programme was implemented by a network of INGOs, each with their own organisational policies, and working with over 150 other stakeholders, across 10 countries.

At the most senior level, the programme management team is made up of three women and one man, while the board is made up of two women and seven men.

The policies and practices relating to women's leadership differ across the implementing organisations. Nevertheless, many of the organisations in the network have implemented gender policies that actively seek to recruit and retain women, through quotas, affirmative actions, or generous maternity policies.

Whilst increasing women's leadership was not a specific aim of the DEPP, several projects have undertaken initiatives to promote women's engagement as part of their activities. This has included collaborating with women-led L/NGOs, running targeted leadership training for women, and recruiting gender advisors to design more gender-sensitive activities.

INTRODUCTION

Recent global agreements on disaster preparedness and response all emphasise women's participation and leadership as a requirement for effective humanitarian action including the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) commitments, and Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action.

Disasters affect women disproportionately. Research in recent years has suggested that a woman in a disaster-affected community is more likely to die in a large-scale disaster than a man, and that she will suffer greater economic, material, social and psychological losses in a post-disaster context.¹ Moreover, the impact of disasters on women is

compounded by their limited opportunities to influence preparedness and response efforts.² Yet research also suggests that women are not a homogenous group and do not experience disasters in the same way. Rather, their experiences will differ across contexts and will be defined by different economic, social and cultural factors.³

Yet women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles across the humanitarian sector. There are few women in the most senior leadership positions (for example, as of January 2016 only 9 of the 29 United Nations Humanitarian Coordinators were women), and women on the frontline have long been viewed as victims rather than as agents of change. There has been little research on the dynamics that limit women holding leadership roles in the sector.⁴

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP?

There is no single definition of leadership either within the literature on humanitarian leadership or within the broader literature on leadership. One interpretation highlights the ability to make decisions that affect one's private and public life and the capacity to influence others in line with the objectives and vision of an eventual outcome,⁵ another emphasises the skill of managing networks and responding effectively to change,⁶ and a third the ability of bringing aid workers around a clear vision.⁷ Leadership may or may not coincide with a position of authority.⁸ However, in all these definitions leadership is synonymous with influence – **it is the ability to have an impact on other people's ideas and behaviour.**

For the purpose of this report, we have adopted a broad definition for leadership: **it is the ability to influence others' behaviour and ideas, both as an individual and collectively.** The report focuses on how women's leadership plays out at the organisational and community level during preparedness programming.

- 1 S. Bradshaw, & M. Fordham, Women, Girls and Disasters: A Review for DFID, 2013.
- 2 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2017.
- 3 N. Osborne, Intersectionality and Kyriarchy: a framework for approaching power and social justice in planning and climate change adaptation, 2015.
- 4 A. Black et al. Women in Humanitarian Leadership, 2017.
- 5 T. O'Neil & P. Domingo, The power to decide: Women, decision-making and gender equality, 2015.
- 6 Jigsaw Consult, 'Building Leaders in research for development,' ICRC, 2015.
- 7 M. Buchanan-Smith & K. Scriven, Leadership in Action: Leading Effectively in Humanitarian Operations, 2011.
- 8 T. O'Neil & P. Domingo, Women and power: Overcoming barriers to leadership and influence, 2016.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

This research focuses on the role of women as leaders and decision-makers in disaster preparedness. There has been little research on this theme, and the majority of work so far highlights women's efforts to build community resilience. Nevertheless, emerging evidence on this topic suggests that women bring a wealth of knowledge to community preparedness. Their knowledge of the local context, skills in community mobilisation, and range of social networks through which they can identify the most vulnerable, enables them to be agents of change.⁹ Furthermore, a report by UN Women examining the effect of gender equality programming on humanitarian outcomes in the WASH and education sectors suggests that there are strong links between women's abilities to influence programmes, their satisfaction with these programmes, and improved outcomes.¹⁰

Women's participation and leadership in humanitarian action are also important in light of the 2016 WHS Commitments and the 'Leaving no one behind' agenda that arose from the Sustainable Development Goals, both of which emphasise the need to involve the most marginalised and affected communities in the decisions that influence their lives. There is a growing consensus that shifting power, resources, and agency to local responders should include investing in women's organisations and enabling them to make decisions about preparedness and response.¹¹

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND APPROACH

This report seeks to examine how women have been involved as leaders and decision-makers within the DEPP and its networks, and to explore the effects of their leadership.

It aims to identify the barriers to women's leadership in humanitarian preparedness and to provide insights for humanitarian actors on the opportunities that exist to further women's leadership and the reasons why this is important. The research addresses the following questions:

Why is inclusion of women leaders and influencers in preparedness important?

How have women been involved in decision-making in DEPP and its networks?

Is there any evidence of women in decision-making roles advancing the rights and equality of women and girls?

What are the drivers, barriers, challenges and opportunities for women leaders?

This report is an exploratory research piece, and is not intended to be a gender evaluation of the programme. It focuses primarily on the key highlights, challenges and learnings that have emerged on this theme, aims to complement the existing literature, and suggests areas for further research.

REPORT OUTLINE

This report explores the evidence for women's leadership in humanitarian preparedness. It begins with a description of the research methodology and an outline of the limitations. It then outlines the way women have been involved in decision-making at the national, organisational and community level. Next, it explores the evidence and interviewees' perceptions of why women's leadership is important. Finally, it outlines the barriers and enablers to women's leadership at the organisational and grassroots level. The report concludes with implications of the research and provides recommendations for further research.

9 Mirchandani, M. et al. The South Asia Women's Resilience Index: Examining the role of women in preparing for and recovering from disasters, 2014.

10 UN Women, The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes, 2015.

11 Yermo, F. Promoting localised, women-led approaches to humanitarian responses, 2017

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on data collected from a review of 57 documents, including external literature on women’s leadership in preparedness and more broadly in humanitarian action, and internal project reports. We also conducted 24 interviews with project staff and partners from four countries in which DEPP was implemented

(refer to Table 1). Finally, the findings were discussed during a workshop in the UK with DEPP Management and Learning Project staff.¹² The document review, interviews and survey were guided by a set of questions established in a research framework that was developed prior to data collection.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	SAMPLE	
DOCUMENT REVIEW (57 DOCUMENTS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 papers on leadership concepts and practices • 12 papers on women in preparedness • 25 DEPP project narrative reports and 11 project learning outputs 	
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (24 INTERVIEWS: 16 FEMALE AND 8 MALE)	DEPP project leads and partner staff ¹³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global (1) • Pakistan (6) • Ethiopia (5) • Kenya (7) • Philippines (5) 	Government representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakistan (1) • Kenya (1)
FINDINGS WORKSHOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEPP Management and Learning Project staff 	

Table 1: Data collection methods used during the research

DATA COLLECTION METHODS, RESPONDENTS AND SAMPLE

Qualitative data was collected between December 2017 and January 2018. The first phase involved a structured desk review of project documents and external literature that investigated the key questions in the research framework and identified themes to be explored further in the interviews.

Four countries were selected to provide case studies for the research: Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan and the Philippines. The countries complement those used for the independent programme evaluation¹⁴, except

Pakistan, which was chosen as it has the largest DEPP presence of the remaining countries. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with a broad range of individuals from international, national and local NGOs. Learning Project staff identified an initial list of potential interviewees, and snowball sampling was used to identify other relevant participants. Regional and Country Learning Advisors¹⁵ were engaged to conduct in-person short surveys with government representatives. The method protocols included a verbal consent process, and all participants were informed of how the research would be used prior to the interview.

12 The Learning Project is a project implemented as part of the DEPP to identify, document and share learning across the programme.

13 Partner staff are local actors that implement projects in country.

14 This is being carried out by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.

15 Regional and Country Learning Advisors are staff members of the DEPP Learning Project. They are responsible for coordinating learning between different projects in each country, facilitating exchanges, and supporting collaboration.

Interviews were conducted over Skype and the data managed using KoBo Toolbox. The data was coded manually based on the guiding questions set out in the research framework.

LIMITATIONS

The findings presented in this report are specific to the DEPP and other projects in which the key informants have been involved. This research was designed to explore the perceptions of women as leaders in preparedness. It examines what interviewees thought was important, their attitudes and practices, rather than evidencing women's leadership in preparedness programming across the sector. The sample size is small and was purposefully selected to include

participants who would be able to provide insight into this topic, thus there is an inherent bias in the sample. Due to this, the findings are not generalizable to other programmes. We have also largely drawn on self-reported data from Key Informant Interviews; however, in order to triangulate data we compared this with findings from external literature.

Interviewees' experiences differ across contexts and are significantly influenced by a wide range of socio-economic factors, including gender. Due to the limited scope of the research, we have not explored in depth other factors. Similarly, whilst acknowledging the importance of power dynamics that are inherent in gender inequality, it has not been explored in detail, but could be addressed in future research.



The Pokot Women Empowerment Organization, a local organisation in Kenya, gained recognition from the Pokot County government after a World Humanitarian Day celebration organised with support from the DEPP Shifting the Power project. PC: ActionAid Kenya

COUNTRY STUDIES:

STATUS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PROVISIONS TO ENCOURAGE IT

Representation of women in leadership varies across the four study countries. The strongest examples come from the **Philippines**, which is rated as the most gender equal country in Asia (ranking 7th of 144 in the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report). The Philippines is home to a network of vibrant women's organisations that have actively campaigned for greater representation of women across public life. There is legislation to promote gender equality and participation in decision-making bodies, for example the '**Magna Carta of Women**,' which mandates the Government to ensure 40% of members on all development councils are composed of women. Nevertheless, men still hold the majority of leadership positions in all spheres and implementation of the '**Magna Carta of Women**' has been challenging, particularly in rural areas, where many communities remain strongly patriarchal.¹⁶

Women in **Kenya** are playing an increasingly active role in public life and were involved in the drafting of the 2010 Constitution. The 2017 elections saw six women win governor and senator positions for the first time.¹⁷ Nevertheless, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes and bodies, have less access to education, land and employment. Women play a significant role in preparedness and response mainly at the grassroots level by providing their input for preparedness activities, and act as sources of traditional knowledge on how to deal with disasters, identifying vulnerable groups within the communities and actively volunteering with INGOs to assist in response.

There are relatively high levels of gender inequality in **Ethiopia** in relation to economic and political participation. In Ethiopia, there is little evidence available on women's representation in national and sub-national disaster risk management structures; however, women's affairs departments exist at federal, regional and sub-regional levels.¹⁸ Women's grassroots networks are prevalent and include the Women's Development Army, a government-facilitated initiative that brings together groups of 25 to 30 women to solve socio-economic problems within their communities.¹⁹

Pakistan's humanitarian architecture includes several mechanisms that support gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and response. The 2010 floods, which disproportionately affected women,²⁰ led to the establishment of the Gender and Child Cell (GCC) of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in order to promote gender-inclusiveness in preparedness and response. The recent revision of the National Disaster Management Act has led the government to consider transforming the GCC into a separate department and establish it as a core part of the national disaster management system.²¹

16 Philippine Commission on Women, Leadership and Political Participation, 2009.

17 A. Ngele & A.L Joyous Begisen, Women strongly emerge as political leaders in Kenya, UNDP Kenya, 2017.

18 UN Women, Preliminary Gender Profile of Ethiopia, 2014.

19 Ibid.

20 Some reports suggest that up to 85% of the 20 million people affected by the 2010 floods were women. CARE Press Release, ReliefWeb, Women and children disproportionately affected by Pakistan floods, 2010.

21 Interview with NDMA respondent.

HOW ARE WOMEN LEADING IN PREPAREDNESS?

Women's participation in programme activities is often equated with women's roles as leaders. The distinction between the two is not clearly understood

The research questions focussed on women in leadership at the programme, organisational, local²² and grassroots levels. However, in their responses, interviewees predominantly spoke about initiatives to increase women's participation in preparedness forums and programme activities, as well as women's roles as facilitators, rather than as leaders or decision-makers, which indicates status of current practices are in terms of how women are perceived to be involved. It is therefore important to understand the distinction between the two: leadership here is defined as the ability to influence in pursuit of individual or group goals by mobilising people and resources,²³ while participation is the ability to take part.

Women's representation in national, local and community preparedness decision-making varies across contexts, with most representation occurring at community level in community forums. Specific arrangements, such as quotas, have been put in place to encourage women leadership within Government led forums

National policies related to women's participation and leadership in public spaces differ across the four study countries. Whilst it was not an aim of this research to identify the precise level of women's representation within national and local disaster management bodies, interviewees' perceptions provide a notable insight into this. The majority of interviews indicate that women are most represented in village and community decision-making bodies across the four countries. This includes forums for funding and coordinating preparedness activities, such as village committees in Ethiopia, Provincial

Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committees (DRRMC) in the Philippines, and County Coordination Management in Kenya. The exceptional case is the Philippines, where interviewees identified greater inequality in representation at the local levels such as the local government disaster risk reduction committees.

Several of the countries have introduced quotas for government-led forums. In Kenya, for example, the National Policy for Disaster Management requires that disaster management programmes include equal participation by all segments of the affected population including men and women, girls and boys. Affirmative action has also been taken to increase the number of female government officials in the most disaster-prone regions to address issues specific to women, such as gender-based violence.

Male and female perceptions regarding equality of female representation may vary

In general, across Kenya, Philippines and Ethiopia male and female interviewees expressed similar views. In Pakistan, however, female participants were more likely to indicate that representation was unequal. Male interviewees identified women participating in national decision-making bodies, including the Humanitarian Country Team, the National Humanitarian Network, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Forum as evidence of gender-equal representation. However, two female respondents reported that the level of women's representation in these forums was inadequate. Both male and female respondents agreed that in government bodies, women's participation is limited to the Gender and Child Cell.

22 'Local' is used to mean 'sub-national.' The two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the text.

23 T. O'Neil et al. Women's voice and leadership in decision making: Assessing the evidence, 2015.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES?

Preparedness-related decision-making bodies vary across the four country contexts. However, respondents identified national humanitarian coordination forums, national and local humanitarian networks, disaster risk management forums, technical working groups, and village committees, as examples of decision-making forums.

Lack of women's representation in decision making forums, such as farming and fisheries, impacts their abilities to access post disaster services and opportunities

In the Philippines, for example, interviewees emphasised that women should be included in the National Agricultural and Fishery Council and their local counterparts. They explained that many disaster-affected women are not registered as fisherwomen or farmers and that this impacts their abilities to access livelihoods support during reconstruction after a major disaster. Female representatives can therefore play a valuable role in promoting this, which way result in increasing levels of registration.

Number of women in leadership positions, especially in technical roles, at the organisational level is low, with the majority of female staff in supporting roles. Barriers to this include discrepancies in education, and women not choosing to do emergency response work due to family commitments

Interviewees reported that the proportion of women employed in their organisations varied considerably, ranging from approximately 17% to 100%, with **most female staff in supporting roles**. In Ethiopia, for example, one INGO staff member reported that in her organisation, there is only one woman working in a management role, as a Programme Coordinator. The Philippines is an exception, with women well represented in management roles, such as country directors, and programme and department heads. Nonetheless, interviewees noted that it is unusual to see female national staff in technical roles such as supply chain management, WASH, or protection. When asked about reasons for lack of women in technical roles, **interviewees identified discrepancies in education, and the fact that women may choose not to do emergency response work due to family commitments.**

Women at the grassroots level are leading as community mobilisers, particularly in their role as care givers

The role of disaster-affected women in decision-making and facilitation for frontline

preparedness and response activities has been documented in previous research.²⁴ All of the interviewees identified the roles women play in implementing, facilitating, and leading community preparedness activities. This includes decision-making on building shelters, in economic savings groups, and search and rescue efforts in disasters. **Respondents often equated women's participation in programme activities with women's roles as leaders, and it was difficult for them to draw distinctions between the two.**

All respondents highlighted women's roles as caregivers as their driver to lead community preparedness efforts. For example, in Ethiopia, women led community preparedness efforts by facilitating nutrition interventions and contributing to disease surveillance reporting in rural areas. One respondent suggested that involving women in preparing feeding plots for cattle and distributing fresh meat to pregnant and breastfeeding women, children, and the elderly resulted in these groups accessing nutritious food and helped reduce the malnutrition rate in that community.

Another respondent managing a public health preparedness initiative in the Gambella region of Ethiopia stated that training a high proportion (79%) of women health workers in monitoring community disease outbreaks helped to aid the effectiveness of the intervention.²⁵ The interviewee suggested

24 For example, see A. Barclay et al. On The Frontline: Catalysing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action, 2016. The majority of the external literature on this topic is related to women's decision-making at the community level.

25 This initiative trained 281 health volunteers in total, of which 79% were women.

that given their caring responsibilities, women are more likely to observe changes in health status and can report these to help prevent disease outbreaks.

Availability and flexibility of women within communities creates a greater pool of volunteers and enables their participation in response activities. However, specific activities are still attended by men for which male facilitators are required to encourage their participation

The Philippines data suggests that women's leadership in community preparedness may vary by sector. The majority of volunteers participating in community-based planning

and response actions are women, who are in the home with their children and therefore available to attend meetings during the day. There are also a large number of women-led community based organisations engaged in community preparedness and in many cases, women played vital roles as first responders in the aftermath of Haiyan. However, activities focussed specifically on farming, fisheries or WASH are likely to be attended by a majority of men. In Marawi, a conflict-affected region, women-led organisations will sometimes recruit male facilitators – such as an Imam – to encourage male community members to attend.

PAKISTAN: DEVELOPING SKILLS OF WOMEN AND INCREASING WOMEN LED COMMUNITY RESILIENCE EFFORTS HELP TO EXPEDITE RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

In Pakistan, women have taken ownership of community resilience-building efforts. One interviewee described how during a flood response in 2011, her organisation initially engaged more men in the planning and design of shelters for affected communities. However, later the staff observed that women were doing much of the work, taking interest in the construction, which resulted in the shelters being built on time.

Another respondent explained how during an Oxfam programme in South Punjab, local women were instrumental in contributing to communication and rescue efforts in the 2016 floods. Women were trained in early warning systems, how to send messages through mobile phones, and search and rescue. During the floods they joined in the collective rescue efforts with the men, which is uncommon in this context. Since then, DEPP's Transforming Surge Capacity project has built 15 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the flood-prone Layyah District. The CERTs include 150 women, who make up 40% of the membership. The women have been trained in basic life-saving skills in order to increase the response capacity of communities.

ETHIOPIA: WOMEN-LED SELF HELP GROUPS HELP COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAVE OR FIND ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME TO COPE WITH DROUGHT

As part of the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters project, Christian Aid and the Women's Support Association supported 68 self-help groups of 20 women to save or find alternative income sources to cope through the drought. Women were responsible for leading these small groups and were able to take out loans to buy and sell poultry, goats, coffee, wheat flour, tea and eggs. Most women had previously relied on financial support from their husbands, but as a result of these groups were able to save about 20 birr per week to help address livelihood challenges.²⁶

Respondents suggested that in a context where women's roles were traditionally confined to the household, such opportunities, that encouraged women to save or find alternative income sources, were vital for encouraging women to take greater ownership of activities and obtain trust from their communities.

INITIATIVES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE DEPP

PARTNERING WITH WOMEN-LED LNGOS, COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS OR NETWORKS HAS HELPED TO BUILD CAPACITY. HOWEVER, FINDING WOMEN-LED ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE REMAINS A CHALLENGE

Several of the DEPP projects recruited women-led LNGOs into their networks to help build the capacity of women-led partners working on emergency response, and increase their representation in the humanitarian space. Shifting the Power (StP), for example, supported staff from two women-led LNGOs in Ethiopia²⁷ to build professional skills in the Core Humanitarian Standards, proposal development, needs assessments, and organisational systems and procedures. It also supported their organisations to develop new policies, including gender-mainstreaming guidelines, administrative structures and funding application processes, and become part of a newly established NGO network, so they are able to participate in local humanitarian coordination forums and provide input into how response is conducted.²⁸ However, these organisations represented only 20% of the partners supported by the project. The project lead stated that **finding women-led organisations working in emergency response is a challenge in rural areas of Ethiopia where LNGOs tend to be male-dominated. This raises questions on the steps that need to be taken when women-led organisations simply do not exist.**

RUNNING LEADERSHIP TRAINING TARGETTING WOMEN, OFFERING SPECIFIC INCENTIVES AND TAKING MITIGATING ACTIONS HELPS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

To address the limited representation of women in senior management positions²⁹ both the Transforming Surge Capacity and Talent Development projects trained women in junior positions as part of their capacity development activities. As part of its Leadership for Humanitarian stream, Talent Development trained 104 women from Jordan, Bangladesh and Kenya. The gender balance of participants varied significantly from 26% in Bangladesh, to 38% in Kenya and 58% in Jordan. Of the participants across all countries, 23% were working for L/NGOs, 76% for INGOs, and 1% for the UN. **Participants were selected using a scoring system that ensured that female applicants that met the selection criteria were given special consideration. Other mitigating actions included proactive communication to encourage female applicants and offers of various subsidies (no fees, free accommodation, reimbursement of travel costs) for women.**

Similarly, the regional surge platform in Asia **identified limited membership of women in its roster. It addressed this by overhauling the nomination process and setting up a women's network for Go Team Asia's female members.** For the Pakistan Roster, although women were especially encouraged to apply, the numbers were still low. The project team considered several methods to boost female membership, such as **committing to a certain number of female staff participation in the roster.** A report published by ActionAid International on encouraging more women in surge, **30 recommended that INGOs provide women with direct incentives and develop specific policies on accommodation and employment packages.**

27 These are SoS Sahel Ethiopia and the Women's Support Association.

28 As the contribution and influence of LNGOs at the national level is limited, StP has worked with the Christian Relief and Development Association and the Ethiopia Civil Society Forum to develop a platform for humanitarian NGOs.

29 Senior management positions include Country Directors, Programme Heads, and Department Heads.
30 S. Ruparel, et al. How can Humanitarian Organisations Encourage More Women in Surge? 2017.

RECRUITING GENDER ADVISORS HAS HELPED PROJECT STAFF DESIGN GENDER-SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES, THAT FOCUS ON NEEDS OF WOMEN

Gender Advisors have provided support with developing gender-sensitive activities for Shifting the Power and the Age and Disability Capacity Programme (ADCAP). One advisor joined the StP Technical Working Group for a period of two years, in order to review the consortium's planned interventions and project outputs, and advise partners on planning gender-sensitive responses. The project lead reported that prior to this awareness raising, none of the LNGO partners had considered women's needs during response and had, for example, neglected to include sanitary pads or separate latrine facilities for women. Similarly, the ADCAP project lead reported that inviting a colleague with gender expertise to input on activities designed by a team of male staff led to designing more targeted livelihoods activities, such as gardening, for the women's groups the project was working with.

The Financial Enablers project in the Philippines provided Training of Trainers on Gender in Disaster to eight men and 21 women project-level staff. The training highlighted the special needs of women as well as children and senior citizens in disasters.



Community members in Gambella, Ethiopia participate in disease surveillance training. PC: Christian Aid

WHY DOES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN PREPAREDNESS MATTER?

Leadership opportunities, and women's participation in decision-making is a fundamental right as per international human rights policies and frameworks. Respondents, men and women, restated the importance of both having equal opportunities to make decisions on humanitarian preparedness and response. Recruitment of female managers alone will not resolve inequality of opportunities. Accompanying policies, training and retention strategies are required

Women's participation in decision-making is a fundamental right and is enshrined in international human rights policies and frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In interviews, both women and men repeatedly restated the importance of men and women having equal opportunity to make decisions on humanitarian preparedness and response.

However, it is not sufficient to recruit female managers and assume they will resolve inequality in opportunities available across an organisation. In Kenya, RedR carried out an assessment as to whether having a female line manager translated to recommendation of more female participants for RedR's project trainings. The results showed that the difference was negligible. The interviewee stated that, "for female line managers it was about getting the work done and having the right person to do the work not necessarily having female participants do that work".

Women's leadership therefore requires a more holistic approach that includes policies that promote active recruitment, training and retention of women.

Women may be able to better identify women's needs hence their involvement and leadership in assessments can increase visibility of women's needs during disasters

Women have specific needs during disasters. Research shows that when disasters hit, women are often the worst affected. For example, it is reported that during the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, for every male that died, four women lost their lives. This was due to a number of social and cultural factors, including women staying behind to look after dependants or vulnerable people, such as those with disabilities.³¹ This suggests that a **clearer assessment provides greater visibility of women's needs and ultimately addressing these during response planning is essential.**

Several interviewees suggested that **in some cases women will be able to identify women's specific needs in disasters that might remain invisible to many men.** In particular, interviewees in Pakistan, the Philippines and Ethiopia noted the **importance of including women in data collection during vulnerability assessments.** Four respondents working for INGOs suggested that their organisations are aware of the need to collect disaggregated data, but that if women are not involved in this process, some of their needs may not be identified. Cultural practices, for example, may prohibit men from speaking to women, particularly in traditionally conservative areas, or women may feel more comfortable in raising intimate concerns to other women.

Three respondents suggested that **women's influence in decision-making could lead to greater visibility of women's needs in disasters.** One respondent described how a woman elected as Deputy Representative of UN OCHA in 2016 pushed to change the

31 M. Mirchandani. et al. South Asia Women's Resilience Index: Examining the role of women in preparing for and recovering from disasters, 2014.

data collection methodology: previously only 20% of trained enumerators were women, however, the DR advocated that needs assessments teams had to consist of a minimum of three female staff to address women's distinct concerns. She states,

“This was a collective decision – and it came universally from the grassroots, from national and provincial organisations, to the national and provincial cluster coordination mechanisms, to the HCT. That we need to have more women gathering data otherwise we will not have disaggregated data.”

It is not enough to just recruit women managers to solve the issue of leadership. They are first and foremost managers mandated to deliver their projects and their backgrounds may not allow them all to have appreciation of realities facing women. Women affected by disasters must participate in decision-making to ensure their needs are effectively understood and addressed

Several respondents suggested that it is not enough to recruit women leaders at the INGO level and assume that they will ensure women's needs are catered for in disasters. This is due to three reasons. First, women are diverse and do not experience disasters in the same way. Research suggests that women in positions of power may hold a variety of, beliefs and interests.³² Second, management roles require projects to be implemented according to the project design and logframe: women project managers in Kenya, for example, explained that the focus of their role was implementing the project plan and they were hesitant to say they had pushed an explicit inclusion agenda. Third, a female national staff member from a middle-class educated background doing programme design does not necessarily have good appreciation of the particular vulnerabilities of women living on the margin in her country. As one female interviewee in Kenya noted:

“[how an] empowered woman at a high level sees or designs a project will be different from a lady in the community who is facing a different challenge and in a different

context. So being able to include the voices of women from different spectrums of the world would enrich the design.”

Respondents from every country therefore stressed the importance of policies that ensure perspectives of women at multiple levels. The Grand Bargain, made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit also emphasises the need to involve disaster-affected communities in decision-making, and respondents suggested that disaster-affected women should be involved in making decisions at national, local, and village levels. Interviewees in the Philippines explained that this might include local women reviewing standard operating procedures and being involved in decisions on the content, frequency and location of distributions.

Given their roles as caregivers in disaster-affected communities, involving women in local-level preparedness decisions can help ensure the needs of vulnerable groups are catered for

Women hold the majority of caregiving responsibilities in disaster-affected communities. Interviewees argue that this means they know who is most vulnerable and what their needs are, which is crucial for planning purposes. Such needs include protection measures (gender-based violence often increases during disasters), distinct sanitation needs, and nutrition concerns, particularly for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers and the elderly.

Moreover, women can often anticipate the practical needs of their families. In Kenya, ActionAid has worked with women-led local-level disaster management committees to identify the most vulnerable community members during drought. An interviewee in the Philippines also suggested that because women are often vulnerable themselves, they know how to anticipate and cope with the vulnerability during disasters through strong will and resourcefulness:

“We are already vulnerable - so we know already how to cope with that vulnerability. One of the weaknesses for women is that

we are physically more weak, but we cope with that through how strong willed we are, how strongly we push our families to do better, to make good with what we have. We are resourceful. In times of disaster, these traits help rural women in the Philippines to be looked up to for this resourcefulness. We never fall short.”

Interviewees described examples of how involving women at the community level in project delivery had supported better

project outputs and outcomes. For example, in Ethiopia, one respondent argued that including women in preparing and distributing fresh meat to pregnant and lactating women, children, and the elderly had helped to reduce rates of malnutrition. In Pakistan, women took the lead in building shelters for the whole community, at a time when men were harvesting crops. In the Philippines, women leaders have influenced local governments to improve evacuation centres, with latrines in well-lit areas, separate spaces for pregnant women and lactating mothers, and availability of sanitary kits.

KENYA: INCLUDING WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES TO ENSURE VULNERABLE GROUPS ARE ACCOUNTED FOR

In Kenya, Action Aid worked with county-level women-led Disaster Management Committees to identify vulnerable community members and for procurement and fair distribution of food. Interviewees stated that inclusion of women helped ensure a holistic response plan. In this example, male participants often focussed on vulnerabilities associated with the family's livelihood, such as pastures and livestock disease, while women identified issues that affect family members, other women, or groups requiring additional care, such as children, the disabled and elderly. These needs included availability of food in the market, or issues relating to gender-based violence, protection, or female genital mutilation.

Women hold local knowledge that is crucial to preparedness and survival and needs to be acknowledged

Local knowledge is all information and practices that are regarded as crucial for survival for people directly affected by crises. This includes a wide variety of self-protection strategies adopted by people such as signs used to anticipate floods or drought. In Kenya, for example, interviewees described how older women provided local knowledge - on how to preserve meat to last longer during droughts - that had been shared in village level committees. This type of local knowledge shared by elder women is also evident in external literature: in Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, women's groups have provided training to the community on local self-protection strategies to reduce life-threatening risks from lack of food, clean water, income, basic services, shelter and health issues; learning this information by consulting older women.³³

Women leaders often boast strong social networks through which information and knowledge can be shared and exchanged. Organisations therefore need to be aware of these and make use of them

Interviewees in the Philippines highlight the importance of women's networks in contributing to preparedness, which is reflected in external literature. For example, in Gaza, in 2014, women recruited volunteers by visiting neighbours' homes to encourage parents to allow their daughters to participate in the response, and through Facebook.³⁴ Similarly, in Ethiopia, women who were part of a savings and credit cooperative provided loans to people outside their group to assist them in responding to the drought between 2015 and 2017.³⁵ Another documented example is from the 1996 floods that hit Pakistan, when women's social networks were crucial for quick distribution of food aid and reconstruction of houses.³⁶ One respondent also described

33 N.Musa Konda et al. Women-led self-protection in Sudan, Forced Migration Review, 2016.

34 A. Barclay, A. et al. On The Frontline: Catalysing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action, 2016.

35 BRACED, Building financial independence and alternative livelihoods, Christian Aid, 2017.

36 M. Mirchandani et al. South Asia Women's Resilience Index: Examining the role of women in preparing for and recovering from disasters, 2014.

how women in a community in Pakistan disseminated early warning information to their networks using their mobile phones.

Related to this, interviewees in Pakistan and the Philippines emphasised that the majority of participants in community preparedness activities are normally women, who often have more time to participate in efforts. As a result, women may demonstrate greater ownership of activities designed to contribute to community resilience.

Women's groups have advocated for better protection in disasters

In the Philippines, women's civil society groups have played a vital role engaging the Government and security forces in dialogues about the rights of internally displaced persons. One female interviewee asserted that men are seen as more closely associated with the armed groups and therefore government forces have been less reluctant to engage with female civil society leaders.

PHILIPPINES: WOMEN LEADERS CAN PLAY A UNIQUE ROLE IN ADVOCACY

Findings from the Philippines emphasised the need to involve women in decisions relating to their protection needs. In the aftermath of Haiyan there was an increase in gender based violence (GBV) including domestic violence, harassment and rape at evacuation centres, and cases of trafficking. At evacuation centres, women were vulnerable when travelling to collect firewood, or to reach water sources and toilets that were often situated some distance from the centres. Despite the lessons of Haiyan, the same issues still arise during the regular storms that the Philippines experiences each year.

To improve preparedness for protection, one LNGO, PKKK, set up GBV 'watch-groups' which are composed of ten local women leaders. Women in the groups receive training on rights and are supported to advocate to their duty bearers. The local government in one province has since adapted the model in its own work: women have a mandate and budget to conduct consultations, identify problems, and provide input for community-level development plans. The women advocate for better evacuation centres, with latrines in well-lit areas, separate spaces for pregnant women and lactating mothers, and availability of sanitary kits.

PKKK is now working with the Philippines Commission of Women to share local perspectives on the burden of care and protection at the national-level.



Women in the Philippines coordinate activities to build disaster resilient communities using Communicating with Communities approaches. The Catholic Church, through NASSA/Caritas Philippines and the Diocese of Isabela, implemented this project. PC: NASSA/Caritas Philippines

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP?

The research highlighted barriers to women's leadership across the four study countries. These barriers are broadly similar although the individuals' specific experiences differ according to the cultural or social context. Barriers include cultural and social resistance, family and caring commitments, women's own confidence and stereotypes.

Cultural norms may result in humanitarian work being seen as a job for men, not women with technical roles being perceived as more suitable for men or international staff

Evidence suggests that in many contexts, gender norms³⁷ may limit women's roles in preparedness. In most interviews, women described expectations regarding women's

domestic and caring responsibilities. In some cases, these result in women who challenge these attitudes facing backlash from their communities or male figures of authority.³⁸ This may affect women's willingness to seek out leadership positions, as well as the nature of the work they wish to do. For example, two interviewees in Ethiopia suggested that there are low numbers of women engaged in humanitarian and emergency response work, particularly outside of the capital, as this work is too demanding in nature. However, whilst interviewees in Pakistan and the Philippines reported higher engagement of women in humanitarian work, national female staff were mostly responsible for implementing activities, with technical roles often seen as more suitable for men or international staff.

PHILIPPINES: IMPROVING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION REQUIRES SPECIAL LOGISTICAL AND CAPACITY BUILDING MEASURES THAT HELP FACILITATE THIS

In the Philippines, women are well-represented in INGOs and national level preparedness meetings. However, there are fewer female representatives at local government meetings, such as the provincial level DRRMCs, which are responsible for planning and assessments for tropical storms. One NNGO leader noted that her organisation would sometimes address this by funding women from disaster-affected communities to travel to the Provincial centre to attend meetings or committees, and another spoke of the importance of training local women leaders in how to engage with the government.

The need to balance work and family commitments may prevent women from taking up leadership roles. In cases where these roles are taken up some women feel guilty of neglecting their families but supportive management, and policies help to mitigate these challenges

Interviewees identified balancing work and family commitments, such as childcare and

household duties, as a key barrier to women taking up leadership roles in the sector, and this is reflected in the wider literature.³⁹ Taking up positions requiring extensive travel can be difficult for women with young children, and women may therefore choose roles that better accommodate their family obligations. Several women who had chosen roles with extensive travel described a personal feeling of conflict in "choosing" between time taking care of

37 Gender norms are ideas about how women and men should be and act. They are the standards and expectations to which women and men generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.

38 T. O'Neil T & P. Domingo, Women and power: Overcoming barriers to leadership and influence, 2016.

39 A. Black et al. Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action, 2017 and S. Ruparel, et al. How can Humanitarian Organisations Encourage More Women in Surge? 2017.

their own children and time taking care of “other mothers, other daughters, other sons.”

Nevertheless, several interviewees reported that supportive managers and the existence of maternity leave and childcare policies helped to mitigate this challenge. For example, one respondent in Kenya explained that her supervisor’s willingness to delegate travel assignments she could not undertake due to having had a baby encouraged her to remain in her role. In the Philippines, women-led organisations included budgets for childcare both in the office and during travel to safe field locations.

Related to this, the female leader of one national NGO in the Philippines spoke of the heavy responsibility of managing her organisation while her children are growing up. Her most significant challenge is staffing: she regularly recruits and trains staff who then move on to UN agencies or INGOs. She stated: “as a woman leader the most helpful thing would be to have the support to build a sustainable organisation... I have lost many staff, it is really a challenge to balance everything, I have sacrificed a lot of the time that should have been for my family.”⁴⁰ She added that continuing had only been possible because her partner is also working in the same sector and understands her passion for the work.

Extensive criteria required for leadership positions results in many women having neither the qualifications nor confidence to apply for senior roles

Interviewees emphasised that discrepancies in education amongst men and women, combined with the extensive criteria required for leadership positions results in women having neither the qualifications nor the confidence to apply for senior roles. This was highlighted particularly in the Ethiopia interviews, when respondents explained that it was difficult

to find female candidates with suitable qualifications and experience, something also reflected in a report by ActionAid.⁴¹

One interviewee stated that a lack of fluency in English or French also presented a barrier to accessing leadership opportunities, especially when working within English or French-speaking INGOs. One interviewee in the Philippines described feeling “looked down on” by male colleagues because she had not attended university. Research conducted by the Humanitarian Advisory Group suggests that women are highly concentrated in entry-level and mid-level positions in humanitarian sector organisations.⁴² However, four key informants suggested that this differs in organisations mandated to promote gender equality, such as UN Women, or LNGOs specifically dedicated to women’s empowerment. There is little available evidence on the make-up of women’s leadership across UN organisations or INGOs.

Lack of opportunities for women to build leadership skills

One respondent noted a lack of opportunities to build leadership skills for women working in the sector. She described that the capacity building training offered to her LNGO targeted HR Directors, who were male, rather than the women who worked in lower management. This suggests that quotas and affirmative action policies designed to encourage applications from women are futile if there are limited opportunities for women to acquire the prerequisite skills.

Four respondents suggested that women working in male-dominated environments may perceive that men are reluctant to include them in decision making or give them additional responsibilities, due to cultural and gender stereotypes. As a result, women might not have the confidence to participate or speak up about women’s issues for fear of being side-lined.

40 For more on the challenges of UN and INGOs recruiting local staff, see A. Featherstone, *Time to Move On: National Perspectives on Transforming Surge Capacity*, 2017.

41 A. Barclay, et al. *On The Frontline: Catalysing Women’s Leadership in Humanitarian Action*, 2016.

42 A. Black et al. *Women’s Leadership in Humanitarian Action*, 2017.

WHAT ARE ENABLERS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP?

Interviewees were more confident in identifying barriers than enablers to women's leadership – a trend that is also reflected in the wider literature. There is little evidence of the enablers of women's leadership in humanitarian contexts, although research does emphasise training opportunities as a key enabler.⁴³ While training was not a major theme in the interviews carried out for this research, participants did refer to the value of learning through doing – often considered a fundamental component of effective leadership training.

Policies and quotas that promote gender inclusion and accommodate specific needs of women may encourage women's representation in decision-making roles

Several interviewees reported their organisations employ affirmative action policies to support recruitment and retention of women in management roles. In Kenya, for example, job advertisements state that women are strongly encouraged to apply and several organisations have maternity leave policies that extend beyond the legally mandated six months. One organisation had implemented a flexible working hours policy to allow women to balance work and family commitments.

Six women commented that recruitment policies had helped increase the number of women in humanitarian organisations – and several noted the positive role of gender policies in their own careers. For example, in Pakistan, one respondent said that her organisation provides a free office taxi service so women can get to work and arrive home safely, which has helped with retention of female employees.

Several respondents also described their

efforts to implement quotas requiring women's representation in preparedness activities as well as decision-making bodies. One interviewee in Pakistan reported that his organisation had asked their LNGO partners, and those within the National Humanitarian Network (around 170 L/NNGOs), to adopt a quota of 33% women's participation for both training activities and committee membership.

However, not all respondents felt such policies were effective. Humanitarian organisations have had mixed success in recruiting and retaining women, especially in senior leadership roles. There are several reasons for this. First, the data from Kenya showed, for example, whilst female staff were aware gender policies exist, many did not know the details of the policies, nor how they are implemented. Second, policies may be insufficient to overcome other barriers such as cultural norms and inequality in access to education. Third, as one respondent in Ethiopia noted, policy does not always translate into practice:

“Every partner organisation agrees to women's participation, but [...] priority is not given to the agenda.”

Women's networks can enable women to build confidence to pursue leadership roles

While male respondents emphasised the need for policies, in Ethiopia and the Philippines, female respondents were more likely to mention networks in which they could participate. Women's networks and spaces can allow participants to share, listen to and learn from other women. Existing research suggests that lack of networks can act as a barrier to women's leadership.⁴⁴ Whilst examples of such networks were most prominent amongst women in the

43 See for example: A. Black et al. Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action, 2015 and UNISDR, Women's Leadership in Risk Resilient Development: Good Practices and Lessons Learned, 2015.

44 A. Black, Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action, 2017.

Philippines, respondents in Ethiopia also suggested that having the ability to be part of such structures, or share learnings in female only spaces, would be beneficial to enabling them to acquire skills and confidence to

pursue leadership roles. As one interviewee suggested, this helps women to practice self-organising and to “see that they can be involved in decision-making process in their homes but also outside their homes”.

HOW MUCH DO WE VALUE GENDER FOCAL POINTS? SUBSTANTIVE SHIFTS IN WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES REQUIRES SENIOR ROLES WITH THE POWER TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKING.

Two respondents highlighted that in many INGOs, NNGOs and LNGOs, positions dedicated to promoting gender-sensitive organisations and programming are often filled by junior staff and suffer from high turnover. Thus, for organisations to see substantive shifts in women’s representation in decision-making bodies (and in effectively addressing the needs of disaster-affected women) these junior roles must be changed into senior roles with the power to influence decision-making.

Participating in training that is relevant and targeted can increase womens skills and confidence. This also provides them a platform for sharing their knowledge and field experiences

Several interviewees reported their organisations had invested in training to increase the skills and confidence of women leaders, however, they noted that it must be pitched at the right level to be effective. One interviewee from a partner organisation in Pakistan noted that in her experience, most organisational training has targeted policy-making staff, for example, HR Directors, who tend to be men. There are fewer opportunities for women who work in operational roles to attend capacity building activities. She says,

“Women are mostly engaged at the lower level of management, and the capacity building tasks aren’t organised for this level. So LNGOs see the criteria and say ‘we can’t send our female mobilisers because this training is too advanced for them’.”

As a way of investing in capacity development of female staff, the Deputy Director of this LNGO encouraged two female staff to attend WASH training in Nepal organised by a partner organisation, despite being worried their low level of English would pose problems. She says, “If we’re investing in female staff, and using our funds, but they don’t understand anything, what happens? However, by using interpreters, the women were able to contribute their knowledge and field experience to the training, suggesting there is value in seeking out such opportunities.

Women in decision-making roles can create opportunities and spaces for other women to participate in decision-making. It is critical for organisations to invest in opportunities that build women’s leadership capacities

Women in decision-making roles can actively create opportunities to engage other women in leadership positions, networks and forums. Several respondents provided examples of having done this by encouraging women to contribute at events and conferences, requesting more women to participate in needs assessments, or by being willing to personally train new female staff. For example, one respondent described that as her organisation had little funding to train a human resources staff member, she took on the task, which resulted in another woman in employment.

Similarly, at the local level, women in the Philippines spoke of creating spaces for women to interact with local government:

“Most people see men as the main decision-makers. We have to regularly engage and mobilise women’s groups, so that they are exposed to different activities, and can experience how it feels to dialogue with a government official and bring their perspective”

Following on from this, several female respondents noted the critical importance of organisations investing in women and providing them with opportunities to pursue and develop leadership skills. Three respondents in Pakistan highlighted that this is vital particularly to women in LNGOs, so they are able to influence decision-making within local and national DRM structures.

PAKISTAN: ESTABLISHING WOMEN-ONLY SPACES CAN ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO TAKE DECISIONS, ESPECIALLY IN CONTEXTS WHERE PURDAH IS OBSERVED

Establishing separate village committees for women can facilitate women’s role as decision-makers, especially in contexts where purdah is practiced.⁴⁵ Four interviewees in Pakistan explained that women’s needs and concerns may go unnoticed in male-dominated decision-making spaces, if men do not wish to address them, or women feel uncomfortable raising them. This is a particular risk for sanitation-related needs, such as the placing of latrines in emergency settings. For example, one respondent explained that when deciding on the location of a hand pump in a village committee, the women did not object to the men’s suggestions, despite the location not meeting their needs. Later they stated their concerns to project staff in private, highlighting that they had not wished to challenge the men’s decision. The location was changed, but the interviewee recounting the story argued that agencies should be giving women the ability to voice their opinions in a separate decision-making space.



Local partners of the DEPP Transforming Surge Capacity Project receiving Community Emergency Response Team training led by Rescue 1122. PC: Youth Education Foundation (YEF)

Encouraging men to work with women leaders can increase their visibility and acceptance

Respondents in the Philippines noted the importance of involving men in decision-making, so that local women leaders are

seen as partners in preparedness. Where possible, women-led organisations said that they also encourage husbands and wives to attend meetings together.

45 This is the practice in some Muslim and Hindu societies of screening women from men or strangers.

MITIGATING THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP REQUIRES CONTEXT SPECIFIC STRATEGIES BUT MAY INCLUDE CREATING WOMEN ONLY SPACES, TARGETED COMMUNICATION AND WORKING WITH MEN

The most significant barriers to engaging women in preparedness decision-making at the community level were cultural norms and expectations surrounding women's roles. Some respondents worried that promoting women's engagement in public decision-making might result in backlash from male authority figures. Moreover, several respondents in Pakistan suggested that women in conservative communities might need to request permission from their male counterparts in order to participate in public decision-making spaces.

Interviewees identified three key mitigation strategies they found successful in engaging women in decision-making forums and in facilitating preparedness activities. These include establishing separate decision-making spaces for women (Pakistan and Kenya); using targeted communications to engage women in activities (Ethiopia); and working with men in the community as partners to support activities (Philippines).

However, four respondents in Ethiopia and Pakistan highlighted that that these strategies must be contextualised, and what is effective in one community might not work in another. One interviewee in Pakistan explains, "You have to be very flexible if you want to work with women and you have to understand their priorities and their problems in your context, because these differ in every society, and so do women's roles."

CONCLUSIONS

There are fewer women in senior decision making roles than men

Overall, the research suggests that the number of women employed in organisations working towards disaster preparedness varies widely. However, in most organisations there are few senior women leaders.

INGOs have attempted to address the gap through gender policies that support women to access employment opportunities

Both international and national organisations have put in place gender policies designed to support women to access employment opportunities. Some INGOs have developed policies for affirmative actions at recruitment. Others have maternity policies designed to make it easier for women to return to work and supporting with childcare commitments through reduced travel or budgeting for childcare support. The effectiveness of these policies in increasing the number of women in senior leadership is mixed. However, female interviewees noted that the policies had helped them to remain in their roles.

Most significant efforts to increase women's participation have occurred at the community level, and have primarily focused on women as implementers rather than as leaders

Increasing women's participation in programme activities and women's roles as facilitators still dominate discussions rather than women as leaders or decision-makers. The same pattern is observed in the literature review where the majority of papers give examples of women participating in decision-making at the community level. In particular, women had coordinated amongst themselves to respond to humanitarian crises, take part in reconstruction activities, and contribute to early warning preparedness and planning. Many of these examples show actions taken directly by women - rather than actions to influence or lead others.

At an organisational level, key arguments for women in leadership focus on equality rather than outcomes

Evidence generally suggests that more work is needed to give women equal opportunity to access decision-making roles. Interviewees were reluctant to identify ways in which they – as women – had been able to support better outcomes for women affected by disasters than their male colleagues. However, the research does support the need for women managers to be involved in designing and implementing needs assessments to make sure that women's issues are identified.

Grassroots women leaders facilitate preparedness

At the community level, women leaders can ensure that women's and other vulnerable groups' needs are catered for in disasters. This is achieved through their social networks, access to local knowledge, and ability to advocate effectively on certain issues.

Barriers to women's leadership include cultural norms and a lack of opportunity to build skills

The research identified three major barriers to women's leadership. First, cultural norms may limit women's roles to their domestic responsibilities. This is most pronounced at the grassroots level, but professional women also noted the difficulties they face balancing work life and family commitments – particularly in the humanitarian sector where leadership roles often require frequent travel. Second, women may lack the confidence to apply for senior roles because of the extensive criteria that are required for leadership positions. Third, women reported differences in educational opportunities compounded by lack of opportunities to build leadership skills.

Social and cultural norms can be a barrier to women's leadership in formal spaces, and a strength in community-level preparedness

The examples in the literature suggest that women's work in preparedness and response has benefited from wide and inclusive social networks. This is supported by findings from this research, which also identifies social and cultural norms as both a barrier to women's leadership in formal spaces, and as strength in community-level preparedness. For example, women's traditional roles in the home mean they are perceived to have more time to support community level activities, to have a better understanding of family needs, and to have the social networks to understand wider community vulnerabilities. Some consider that uniquely places women to advocate for the rights of IDPs in conflict affected areas.

Organisations have adopted diverse strategies for increasing participation

Organisations have adopted strategies to increase their recruitment and retention of women – from recruitment, maternity, and childcare policies for staff, to quotas for partnerships with women-led organisations, and training projects that target women. However, the research demonstrates that policies are not sufficient on their own. Effective implementation of these policies requires “champions” whose role it is to test their assumptions, advocate for change and adjust the policy as needed. In many organisations, gender advisor positions are filled by junior staff and suffer from high turnover. For organisations to see substantive shifts requires gender advisors recruited into senior roles with the power to influence all decision-making.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Women affected by disasters must be involved in preparedness decisions that affect their lives

The Grand Bargain, made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, included a commitment to a “participation revolution” that would include people receiving aid in making the decisions that affect their lives. This research reinforces that need: it is not enough to recruit women leaders and assume they will advance gender equality. Women leaders in humanitarian organisations do not necessarily understand the particular needs of women affected by crises in their countries. It is important that women are involved in all aspects of programming for preparedness, but it is also important to be mindful of the type of women being consulted. Participatory approaches are needed to make sure that the women most vulnerable to disaster are able to make decisions about the preparedness programmes designed to support them.

The research emphasises the need to fund programmes that specifically promote gender equality

In 2011-14 the OCHA Financial Tracking Service showed that in 2014 only 12% of funded programmes were designed to contribute significantly to gender enhancement as per the IASC Gender Marker. This indicates a substantial decrease from 2013, when this figure was 21%.⁴⁶ However, several interviewees suggest that efforts to promote grassroots women leaders will be limited unless it is a specific objective of programmes. At least two female interviewees admitted that they had not considered female consultation or targeting until they

noticed there was a low number of female participants in their project activities. Female and male project managers are focussed on delivering their work to meet logframe targets. It cannot be assumed that female managers will automatically further the interests of other women beyond their contracted role.

In many contexts, people require convincing evidence to persuade them that women’s leadership is important

There is a need to build awareness of the importance of involving women in decision-making, particularly within local and national governments. This will require detailed and context specific research that is focused on communicating clear messages to policy makers and officials. The research should explore:

- 1.** Case studies demonstrating the unique contributions that women provide to preparedness
- 2.** What is the evidence that gender equality programming works?
- 3.** What are the distinct barriers experienced by women-led organisations and how can they be addressed?
- 4.** What contribution do gender advisors play in decision-making and at what levels?
- 5.** How influential and effective are structures mandated to increase gender inclusive approaches (such as the Gender and Child Cell in Pakistan)?
- 6.** How far do quotas and policies that promote women’s leadership translate into practice?

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For more information about Action Against Hunger, please visit:

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