

A reflection from Plan International Asia Pacific DRM team for International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 based on the experience in DRR work linked with the gender transformative perspective.

Key words: gender-sensitive DRR, disaster risk, gender equality, girls

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many sectors in the society. It has also unmasked inequality in prospects that different groups of affected people are experiencing and coping with the crisis. Gendered impacts started to arise, unfolding the pre-existing inequalities.¹ The pandemic proposes no new fact – girls oftentimes encounter a range of gender-specific barriers in returning to education and face protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence.² A gender-sensitive humanitarian response may grow but it rarely targets children.³

The following five reasons explain why local Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies need to take on gender lens.

1 It is important to consult the perspectives of girls and women in developing local DRR strategies and creating a space for them to be decision makers.

Crises affect disproportionately girls and women. Gender aspects existing in society create substantial differences in the way men and women of all age groups face and deal with disasters, before during and after they strike. Therefore, engaging with locally-based women organisations and female youth groups can gain diverse perspectives for the community-based DRR.

2 Ensuring inclusive education on DRR and climate change, especially for school children, girls, boys and young people, is key to increasing individuals' and community's knowledge about hazards.

When DRR strategies are developed through proper gender, age and inclusion study, local leadership will be better able to generate suitable policy instruments and programming responsive to different needs and to ensure children and youth, especially girls and boys with disabilities, are included and prioritized in education on DRR. Therefore, gender-sensitive local DRR strategies will be more agile to tackle the intersectional vulnerabilities via a robust inclusive education system.

3 Gender-sensitive local DRR strategies uphold the notion of multi-stakeholder engagements in collectively reducing risks.

Local DRR strategies must be sensitive to engage with different stakeholders to prepare for the disasters so that all children, including girls will attain the full enjoyment of their human rights, regardless. This not only encompasses local capacity building but also suggests knowledge sharing among local and national stakeholders to prepare and respond for disasters. Gender-sensitive stakeholders should also drive the process more critically to ensure no one is left behind in disaster prevention and response as well as find a long-term, flexible financing arrangements of different sources to support outcome-based programming, allowing innovation and adjustments.⁴ This strategy will propel opportunities for young women to have more knowledge, skills in disaster risk reductions while develop diversified livelihoods that withstands disaster impacts.

¹S. Goulds, I. Fergus, and E. Winslow. Halting Lives: the impact of COVID-19 on girls and young women. *Plan International*, 2020 p. 4

²IFRC. New report shows risk of gender-based violence rises after disasters. 2018. IFRC. retrieved from <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/new-report-shows-risk-gender-based-violence-rises-disasters/>

³H Thompson. A time of transition: Adolescent in humanitarian settings. Plan International, 2016, retrieved from <https://plan-international.org/publications/time-transition-adolescents-humanitarian-settings>

⁴J. Fullwood-Thomas. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus: what does it mean for multi-mandated organisation? *Oxfam Discussion Paper*, June 2019. p.3

Gender lens enables DRR multi-hazards approach to further strengthen the community resilience.

Analyzing the potential risks through gender lens will more accurately discover multi-hazards and their impacts on different groups. Girls and boys, for example, have unique perspectives on risks, vulnerabilities and capacities and the consequences of the risks on their rights, their family and community. They are able to identify social protection issues such as abuse, parental distress, and neglect oftentimes overlooked by adults⁵ as well as local risks, including accidents, water safety and poorly constructed infrastructures. When risks data, resources, and capacities are locally institutionalized, community will be more prepared for the known and unknown hazards.

Girls, boys and young people have voiced up their opinions and called on the duty bearers.

The “[Guardians of the Planet](#)” Report⁶ that gathered the voices of over 9,000 children and youth (C&Y) in 12 countries in Asia-Pacific region states that almost all of them have experienced disasters with cyclone, floods, and drought as the most-affecting within the last year. It also confirms that climate crisis is their top concern followed by access to employment, access to education and disaster impacts. C&Y called on their governments to pay particular attention to the needs of C&Y with disability, develop curriculum on resilience building and include them in decision-making. Girls and young women have also shared their vision post-COVID-19, through “Better Normal: Girls Call for Revolutionary Reset”⁷ publication in holding governments accountable for making sure their participation and leadership in the decision making, equitable distribution of resources, and CCA education.

In conclusion, we all need to view DRR governance as a mechanism wherein all national and local stakeholders address discriminatory gender norms in a longer-term development investment and disaster risk reduction, not only in immediate response. Such process should be developed across the cycle of disaster risk management, reflected in the local leadership, national and local disaster risk reduction strategies to challenge the system that perpetuates gender inequality.

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⁵Plan International (2018). Child-centred multi-risk assessments: a Field Guide and Toolkit. United Kingdom: Plan International

⁶C. Chan, M. Leung, and N. Pulmano. the Guardians of the Planet: Asia Pacific Children and Youth Voices on Climate Crisis and Disaster Risk Reduction. August 2020. p.53

⁷Phuong Anh *et.al.* A Better Normal: Girls call for revolutionary reset. Plan International. 2020, p. 10-33