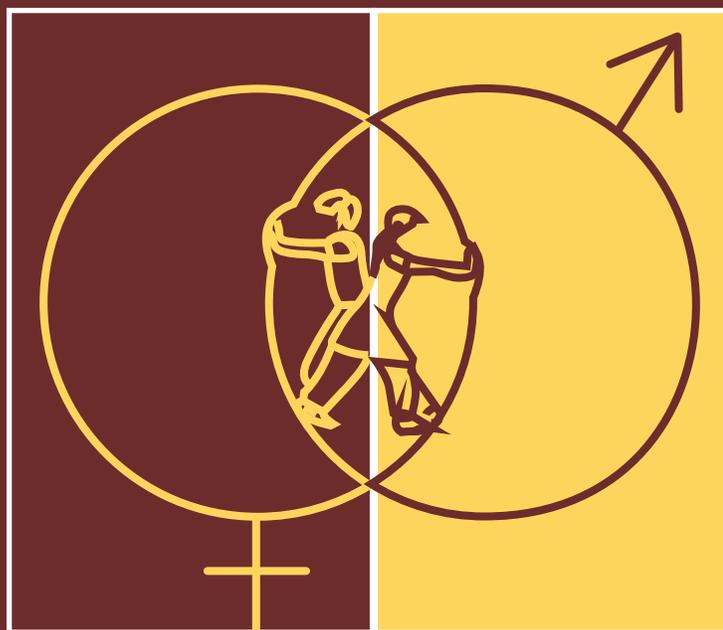


# Gender Sensitive Disaster Management

**A Toolkit for Practitioners**



Chaman Pincha

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*A Toolkit for Practitioners*

*Chaman Pincha*

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Oxfam America and NANBAN Trust



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New Delhi, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008

### **FOREWORD**

Chaman Pincha's new publication "**Gender Sensitive Disaster Management: A Toolkit for Practitioners**" and the companion volume titled "**Indian Ocean Tsunami Through the Gender Lens: Insights from Tamil Nadu, India**" are welcome contributions to the disaster discourse because they centre-stage gender analysis in the context of the post-tsunami responses of the Government, civil society and the disaster-affected communities. The Toolkit for Practitioners provides the nuts and bolts for mainstreaming gender sensitive interventions in disaster management in all phases of disaster management, including preparedness, mitigation, response, rehabilitation and recovery phases. In this Toolkit, Chaman Pincha has integrated the concepts and strategies related to gender, analysed disaster risk and vulnerability profiles, interfaced the logic with field insights garnered through interactions with disaster-affected communities and development practitioners and compiled the tools and techniques for mainstreaming gender in all phases of disaster management.

I am confident that this Toolkit will be a significant contribution to the disaster management literature in India. This Toolkit can also be a valuable resource material for Trainers and to the students of social sciences and humanities, especially to those pursuing their studies in social work, psychology, sociology and gender studies. I am sure that this Toolkit will also be welcomed by development practitioners and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations as it will provide them useful insights on gender-aware disaster management interventions. I hope Chaman Pincha's contribution in this field will encourage academics, practitioners and other stakeholder groups concerned with various aspects of disaster management to explore similar studies.

I wish both these publications all success and hope that it will benefit humanity by reaching out to those organisations, institutions and individuals working at the cutting edge level with disaster-prone communities.

(N. VINOD CHANDRA MENON)

## Preface

Oxfam International is a confederation of thirteen organizations working together with partners and allies around the world in over 100 countries to create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger and injustice. When disaster strikes, Oxfam and our partners move quickly to provide life-saving assistance to those in need. Once the immediate danger has passed, we work to rebuild lives and reduce the risk of future disasters. In this endeavor, Oxfam adheres to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which entitles all people to physical safety, secure livelihood, basic social services, a life with dignity, and a say in the decisions that affect them.

Oxfam believes that disasters result from the interaction of social vulnerability and natural hazards, which combine to put certain groups of people at greater risk than others. This understanding of vulnerability and risk is crucial to our efforts to address the differential impacts of a disaster on men, women, children, the elderly, and the physically challenged. Oxfam believes that disaster response and risk reduction activities—viewed through a vulnerability lens—have the potential to be important catalysts for social change.

Experience has time and again highlighted the particular vulnerability of women and girls in disasters. Oxfam seeks to respond to women's needs after a disaster and, equally important, to engage in work to address the root sources of their vulnerability (social, economic, and political). Oxfam works worldwide to help women campaign for legal reforms, acquire literacy skills, raise the income of their families, strengthen their voice, build peace in their communities, and understand their human rights.

Over the last few decades, Oxfam affiliates have conducted a number of research studies aimed at understanding and addressing the gender-differentiated impact of disasters. However, every disaster presents new challenges and opportunities for learning. The magnitude of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami triggered a massive humanitarian response; thousands of local, national, and international organizations rushed to the Tsunami-affected areas to provide assistance. Not all of them had previous experience in disaster response and recovery and many did not have a deep understanding of the gender considerations.

This Toolkit builds on a comprehensive research conducted by Ms. Chaman Pincha and her team on gender differential impacts of the Tsunami and gender mainstreaming strategies of NGOs in Tamil Nadu in their Tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts. The key strength of this Toolkit is that the tools for gender mainstreaming in disaster management are sharpened by a bright and committed group of NGO staff and grassroots women's federation members, with their insights, experiences, emotions, and inputs. The process of working with the NGO staff and grassroots women in developing these tools helped the author understand and address issues and facilitating factors in mainstreaming gender equity considerations into disaster management policies and practices.

We applaud and appreciate the committed work of the author and her team, which has yielded remarkable insights grounded in both concept and the field experience. We hope humanitarian agencies involved in disaster relief and risk reduction will find in it a useful tool for integrating gender-equal strategies and approaches.

**N. Hari Krishna**

*India Humanitarian Country Team Representative*

*Oxfam America*

October, 2008

## Acknowledgements

This Toolkit would not have been possible without the intimate revelations of women, men and Aravanis\* who readily participated in focus group discussions and in depth interviews and shared their turbulent experiences in settings marked by trust and mutuality. I am deeply grateful for their courage and willingness in recounting their painfully personal feelings and circumstances which cannot be adequately described in words.

I profoundly value the keen co-operation of the NGOs who, in spite of their busy work schedules readily spared time for us throughout our research process and were eager to be informed of our research findings. BLESS, AVVAI, CARE Trust, EKTA, FPAI, PEDDA, PURA, SASY, SNEHA, HOPE, and PRAXIS collaborated substantially with the research process described in the Toolkit.

The contribution of my team members has been immense. Terrence Berger convinced me of the relevance of the chapter on tools and also persuaded me that “a talk to me” sort of Toolkit would be more effective than a descriptive one. His illustrations are scattered throughout this Toolkit. Usha meticulously tested and validated most of the tools in the field along with me. Usha’s translation will help take the findings of this research across Tamil Nadu and reach the large Tamil Readership. Judy, a visual communication student at Loyola College, Chennai, worked hard to understand and translate the nuances of the content into illustrations.

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*\* A distinctly recognized, at the same time most marginalized and stigmatized group of persons in India. Some of them are born androgynous, and do not identify themselves with either male/ men or female / women. Contrary to popular perception, they prefer not to describe themselves as men trying to be women, although they like to wear women’s clothes. In different areas in India, they are also known as Hijras or Jogappas.*

Notwithstanding his busy calendar, Professor N. Vinod Chandra Menon, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India, put in long hours reviewing the draft and providing pointers for further refining and deepening the content through his insights and counsel. Professor Menon has encouraged me all through the process of finalizing this Toolkit and its title. The Toolkit has benefited immensely by his ideas and inputs.

Mr. N. Harikrishna, Humanitarian representative India, Oxfam America, has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. He tirelessly went through several versions of the chapters and his critical contributions helped me enrich the contents. The total engagement and intellectual rigor that he brought to bear on the draft versions have significantly added to the depth of this work. In addition, he contributed creative inputs to the cover design.

Mr. Russel Miles and Ms. Gabriel Kurk Wisner, Oxfam America too have gone through the draft version of the present Toolkit and offered new perspectives, the additions of which made the Toolkit more relevant to humanitarian agencies.

The participants from different NGOs and Federations in the Gender and Disaster workshop where the draft Toolkit was piloted deserve special thanks. Their viewpoints have made us take a fresh look, leading to major revisions in our work.

I value the editorial support from Dr. Kanchan Mathur and Dr. Shobhita Rajagopal, Professors from Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur, Rajasthan, for the first draft of the present work. Valuable contributions have come from the review of the second draft of the Toolkit by Dr. Thamizoli, Social Anthropologist; Ms. Kanchan Gandhi, Research Scholar, National University of Singapore; Dr. Bhanu, Chair Person, Inter-agency Group, Uttar Pradesh, and Ms. Nilovna, Director, SPARSH, Orissa. My special thanks to Ms. Deepa Venkatachalam for painstakingly going through the final draft and giving her valuable suggestions.

I thank Ms. Sunita Rabindranathan for working together with me in the preparation of the initial version of the Toolkit. My sincere thanks to Dr. Nalini Keshavraj, Manager, the erstwhile TNTRC for her advisory inputs. Many thanks to Ms. Bimla Chandrasekar, Director, EKTA, and Mr. Prithvi Raj, CARE Trust, for their participation in the consultation process to sharpen the initial version.

I greatly value contributions from members of the Gender Community of Solution Exchange. I had raised queries in the Gender Community in the process of developing this

Toolkit, and members' responses have been very useful. Please refer to *Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit in Disaster Response* at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/cr-public/cr-se-gen-06070701-public.pdf> for full text of the individual responses.

I thank Ms. Usha Thiagarajan for her crisp copy editing which sometimes extended into content editing. I specially wish to register my appreciation for her ability to understand the writer's intent and convey it effectively.

I am grateful to Earthworm Books, an alternative publishing house for issue-based literature, who happily agreed to publish the Toolkit.

Many thanks to Mr. A.N. Subramanian from Madras Graphics for the excellent work he has done in producing these books and providing me space and hospitality at his office, whenever necessary.

My heart-felt thanks to Brother James, Secretary, NANBAN Trust for hosting the publication and dissemination process. His generous support all through the publication and dissemination process kept me motivated. My warm acknowledgement to the support I received from all my colleagues at NANBAN Trust.

I fondly remember the support I received from Ms. Shanthi Devapiriam, Director, Anawim Trust, for hosting the first phase of the research project and initial version of the Toolkit.

Many thanks to Oxfam America without whose support for this independent study, the publication would not have been possible.

I dearly thank my family, especially my mother-in-law, Ms. Arokiya Mari, and my friend Indira Kadambi for their childcaring support without which I would not have been able to work on this project. I cherish Vishakha, my 12-year-old daughter's support by way of enduring my absences even while I was at my home - office, with a cheerfulness that amazed me. Her innocent belief in her mother kept my spirits high.

**Chaman Pincha**

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## Introduction

The risks and vulnerabilities that people face from natural disasters are as much a product of their social situation as their physical environment. Vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals and social groups evolve over time and determine people's abilities to cope with disaster and recover from it. Social networks, power relationships, knowledge and skills, gender roles, health, wealth, and location, all affect risk and vulnerability to disasters and the capacity to respond to them.

There is enough evidence that in any disaster disproportionately large number of women are affected more severely relative to men . Worldwide, it has generally been established that when gender issues are not addressed fully or sufficiently, in both development and disaster contexts, they perpetuate and in many instances augment existing gender-based inequities. Since the world conference on women in 1995, in Beijing, "gender mainstreaming" has been recognized as an overarching strategy to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated in all areas, sectors, and levels to promote gender equality. Mainstreaming gender in disaster preparedness and response involves viewing and analyzing situations through a gender perspective and render gender inequities explicit. To build gender-sensitive strategies and initiatives in disaster management process, it is necessary to address both the practical gender and strategic gender needs of women and men as well as transgender persons.

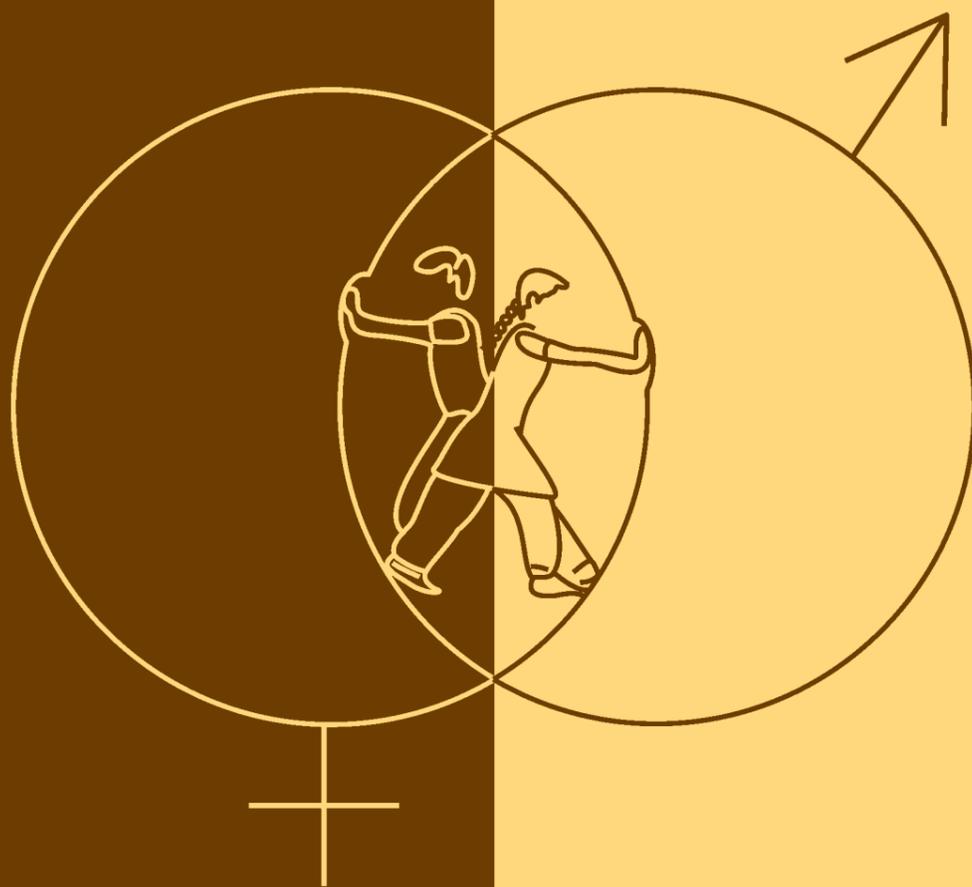
This Toolkit is the outcome of a research study undertaken to understand gender mainstreaming strategies used by NGOs and the Government in the context of their responses to and management of the Tsunami aftermath in Tamil Nadu. The field outcomes were analyzed through a gender perspective to understand the differential impact of disasters and coping strategies on women/girls, men/boys, and other marginalized groups, including Aravanis.

In the design and presentation of all components of this Toolkit, our chief focus has been on the development of the 'how-to' of incorporating a gender perspective in the overall planning and practices of disaster management.

The Toolkit is divided into four chapters. The first Chapter clarifies concepts related to gender. The matter is presented in a manner that both facilitates an understanding of the concepts as well as lends itself to being used by concerned agencies in gender sensitization exercises. The second Chapter spells out the consequences that arise when disaster and gender issues interact. The Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck Tamil Nadu in December 2004 is the broad contextual backdrop that illustrates some of the gendered consequences of disasters and disaster management. It comprises multiple cases and outcomes of numerous focus group discussions with the grassroots women, men, and transgender persons. The chapter demonstrates how to view situations through a gender lens. It helps answer the question 'Why gender mainstreaming?'

The third Chapter is populated with tools which when applied would promote good practices in integrating gender concerns in disaster response and preparedness. The last Chapter highlights some good examples of NGOs' (Non Governmental Organizations) gender sensitive interventions. The chapter also underscores the importance of gender analysis by focusing on some of the unintended negative consequences of seemingly gender sensitive interventions through field based evidences.

Although the Toolkit is location/region specific and draws from disasters in a specific context, it has developed the nuts and bolts for gender mainstreaming by building on the lessons gleaned from the Tsunami response. The tools are intended for use by all those engaged in the disaster management, i.e., policy makers, donors, NGOs and researchers in their efforts to build resilient and gender-just communities.



*LET US UNDERSTAND  
GENDER*

### **Before We Begin...**

Throughout this Toolkit on gender, our focus is primarily on women, not because gender is equated with them alone but because women typically suffer the burden of gender more than men. We are aware that in many instances men too are disadvantaged as a consequence of conventional gender related role expectations. We acknowledge these throughout.

The concept of gender essentially pertains to power relations between men and women. These power relations are further compounded when gender interacts with age, marital status, caste, ethnicity, religion, and refugee status, etc.

When we speak of men and women, we also mean boys and girls, depending on the context.

This Toolkit is largely derived from case studies that have been documented and analyzed in the year 2006–2007 in Tamil Nadu. In a few instances, cases from West Bengal's CBDP (Community-Based Disaster Preparedness) program have served to corroborate our findings in Tamil Nadu.

## Gender ≠ Sex



This chapter explains the basic and most critical concepts related to gender.

### What is Gender?

- **Sex** refers to **biological** differences associated with being male or female.
- **Gender** refers to the **socially** constructed stereotypes, roles, opportunities and relationships associated with being male or female.



We are born male or female; we are socialized to become boys and men or girls and women. In the process of socializa-



tion the sex differences that are only a few are given undue importance and become accentuated. The innumerable similarities on the other hand are made invisible.



These two categories of sex (male and female) and gender (men and women) do not include human beings who do not belong to any of these categories. In some of the states in India, they are known as *Hijras*, *Aravanis*, and *Jogappas*<sup>1</sup>. Let us call them transgender persons.

<sup>1</sup>Historically, the existence of transgender persons has not been accepted by mainstream institutions including the family. Consequently in our language, there are no words that describe their existence or world view.



## Remember

- Sex is given, static and does not change over time.
- Gender is dynamic and can change over time, within and across cultures.

## Gender Roles

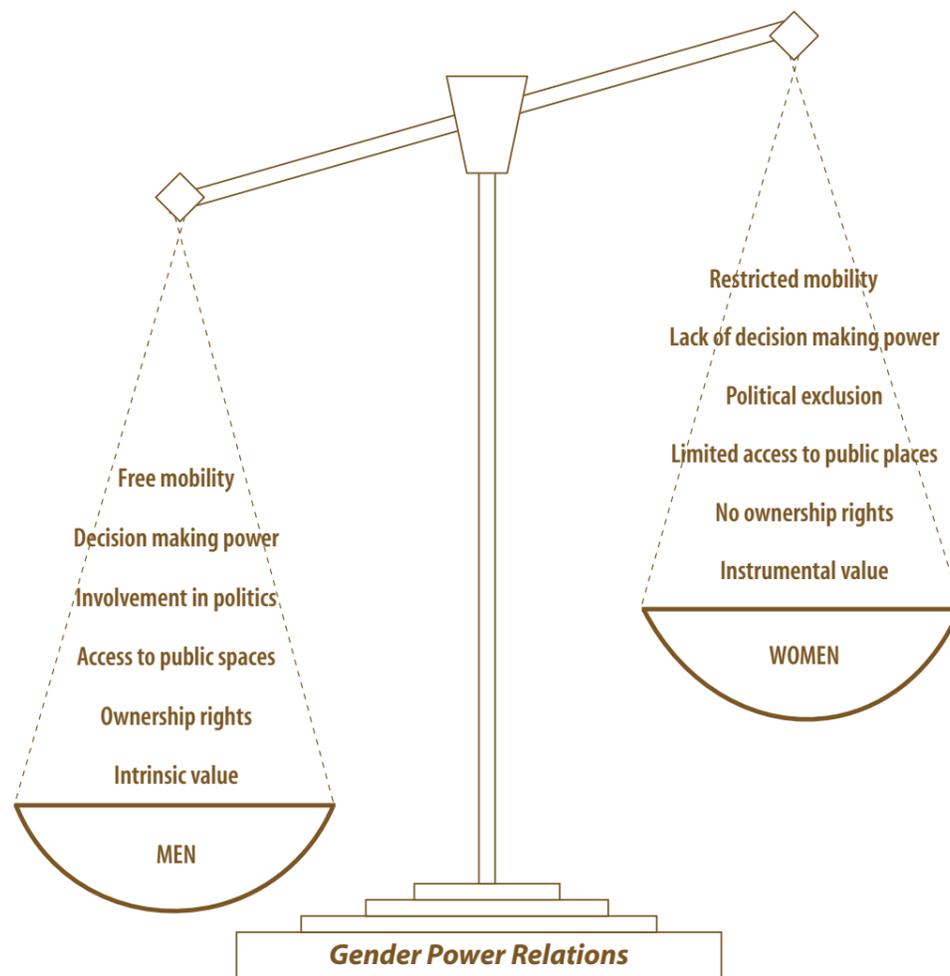
Traditionally, division of labour based on gender has existed in most societies. This has resulted in allotting one set of roles to women and another set to men.

## Gender Roles in Society

Roles	Women	Men
<b>Reproductive Role</b> <i>(Typically women)</i>	<i>Biological reproductive work:</i> bearing and breast feeding babies <i>Social reproductive work:</i> bringing up children, cooking, cleaning, laundrying, fetching water/fuel wood, etc.  Invisible and unpaid Favor dependent decision making*	Minimal reproductive work  Involves more mobility  Is optional  Is visible  Holding decision making power
<b>Productive Role</b> <i>(Typically Men)</i>	Livelihood activities Lowly paid (relative to men) Invisible/secondary importance Nature of work generally based on reproductive role	Livelihood activities Highly paid (relative to women) Visible Recognized as breadwinners
<b>Community Role</b>	Maintaining kinship relations, religious activities, social interactions and ceremonies (births/marriages/deaths) etc.  Unpaid work  Nature of work similar to the reproductive work	Political in nature Assigns prestige and power  Paid work  Highly visible

\*Women's decision making acts typically depend on the goodwill of the male members in the households.

Gender used as a tool of analysis highlights the unevenness of relations between women and men.

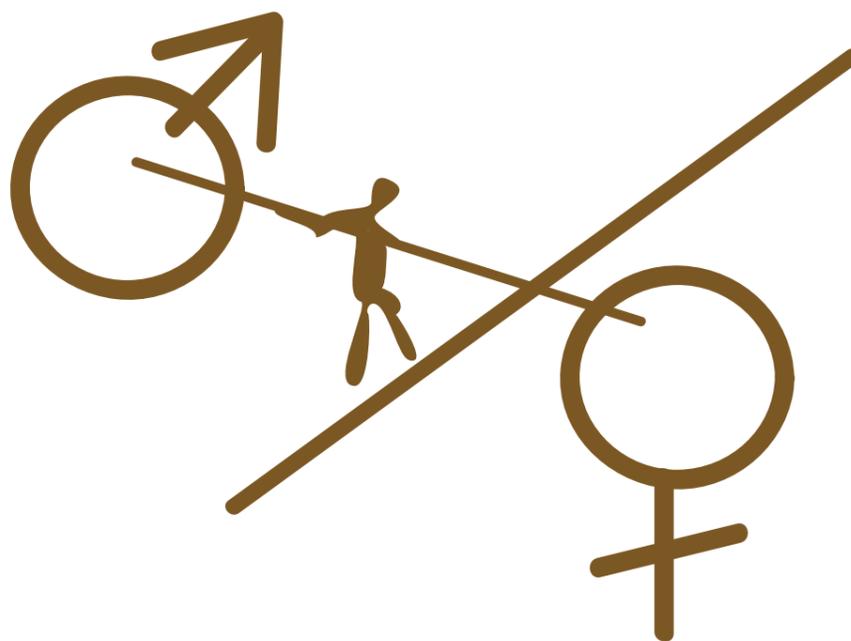


The process that recognizes that women and men as well as transgender persons do not function on a level playing field and hence have different needs and power structures and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies imbalance between the sexes is known as Gender equity. Gender equity recognizes that different approaches may be required to produce equality of results for all human beings based on individual aptitudes, abilities and interests, regardless of gender.

As in the case of sex and gender, it is important to understand the socially constructed distinction between biological and social reproductive work. Biological reproductive functions remain static and unchangeable: only women can conceive, go through pregnancy, and breast feed babies, while only men can provide the sperms to fertilize eggs (while this is largely true, science and technology are in some ways able to surpass it).

In contrast, socially reproductive work on the other hand is changeable and can be performed by both women and men. Raising children, cooking, and other household chores can be done by both. Traditional gender-based division of household responsibilities generally assigns this function to women.

We need to become conscious of the lack of any biological basis for the existence of these distinctions in socially reproductive work.



### Look around and see gender division of work

- A sharp division exists between reproductive and productive spheres, despite the fact that they form an inter-related whole and feed into each other.
- Women do most of the reproductive work which is completely unpaid.
- Women's reproductive work is less valued.
- Although women contribute significantly to the household economy, they are not recognized as breadwinners.
- Women are often excluded from decision making roles at various levels: Family, community and larger political bodies.

Women and men can both do reproductive as well as productive work of similar nature except the anatomically dependent biological reproductive functions mentioned earlier. Socially constructed gender boundaries are fluid and breachable.

**What do you see in the picture?**



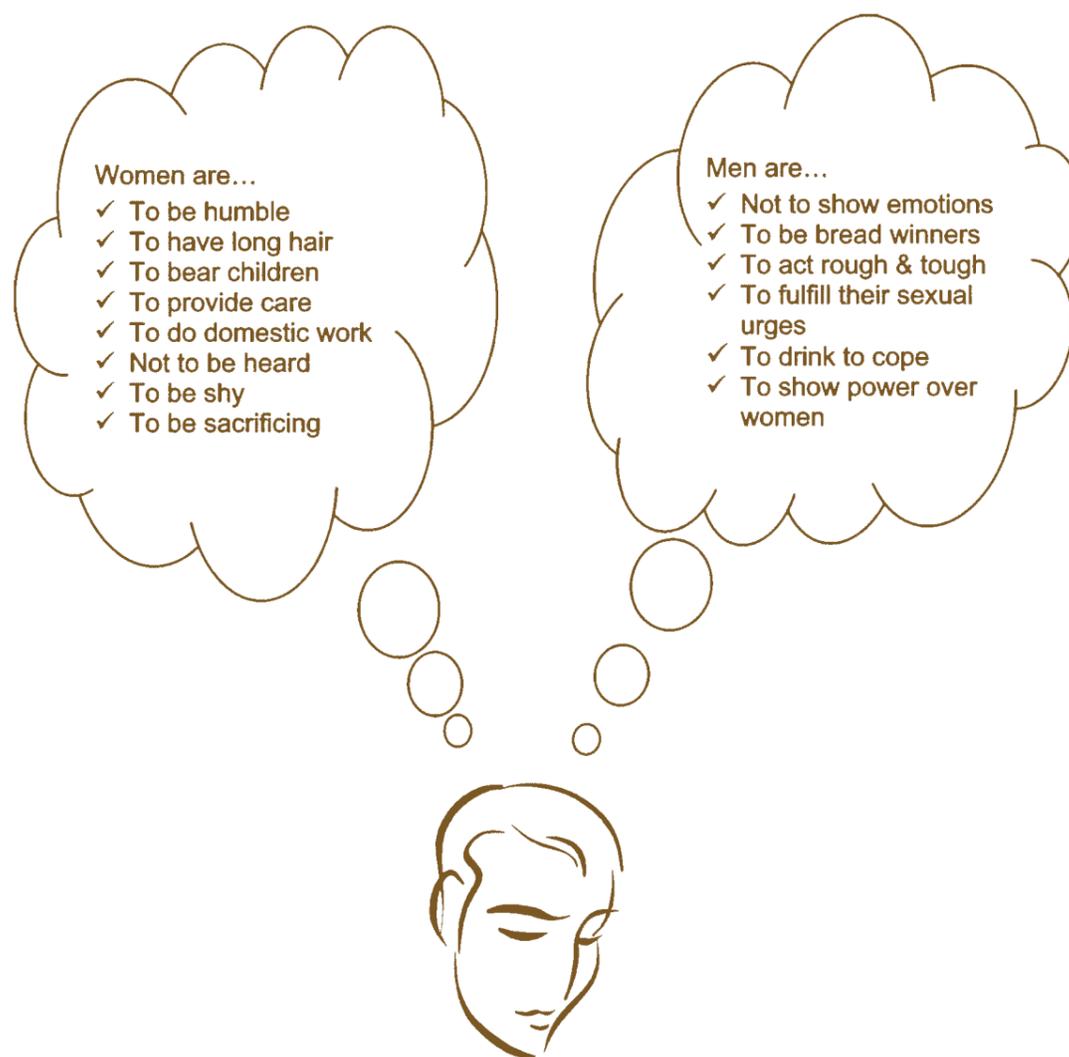


**What did you expect?**



*Nine out of ten people who saw the picture said they saw two men and two women and one was unable to decide.*

## GENDER STEREOTYPES<sup>2</sup>



Our assumptions led by gender stereotypes can sometimes cause us to make decisions that do not serve the needs of gender equality and gender justice.

To fully understand gender needs, we need to use a gender lens that will clarify the distinction between prevalent approaches in policy and programs that perpetuate conventional gender roles, and the new ones that are needed to transform them for achieving gender equality. The distinctions are highlighted below :

Practical Gender Needs (PGNs)	Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs)
PGNs of women and men relate to their socially accepted roles within existing power structures.	SGNs of women arises from their subordinate position in relation to men in their society.
The policies and programmes to meet women's PGNs tend to focus on ensuring that women and families have adequate living conditions, such as health care and food provision, access to safe water and sanitation, childcare as well as income-generation opportunities.	Policies and programmes to meet SGNs include increasing decision making powers of women, increased entitlement to leadership positions, equal access to employment, equal pay, equal legal rights, as well as protection from violence, reproductive rights, enhanced mobility and property rights etc.
These policies and programmes do not directly challenge gender inequalities.	Programmes and policies designed to meet SGNs challenge customary gender relation and subordination of women. They demand changes in relationships of power and control between women and men.

***In men too, certain very human needs of expressing freely, feelings of tenderness, grief and fear are not met as a result of their exclusion from traditional 'women's domains' such as childcare or the imposition of 'manly' roles and attributes that prevents them from displaying tender emotions.***

**Consider the following**

- A livelihood opportunity programme trains women in the skills of pickle making and sewing as home-based or small scale occupations.
- Another one trains women in masonry.
- Free distribution of bicycles to women and girls.
- A childcare center at father's workplace.
- A childcare center at mother's workplace.
- A community-based childcare center, with flexi timings.
- Induction of women in rescue teams in disaster risk reduction programs and induction of men in teams responsible for childcare.
- Women's representation in emergency planning and disaster management committees.

**Which needs do these programs address?**

- Training in pickle making and sewing may meet practical gender needs, while training in masonry allows a woman to transcend traditional gender roles and earn higher wages. This programme also affords leadership opportunities where she may lead a team of men and women in a masonry project meeting her SGNs.
- A woman receiving a bicycle may use it only for fetching water and household provisions meeting some of her PGNs. On the other hand a girl receiving a bicycle would make her more mobile, facilitate her education as it would enable her to travel longer distances to better schools, classes on legal awareness etc. It would enhance herself esteem and empower her. This programme would contribute more towards meeting women's SGNs.

- A childcare center at father’s workplace meets both PGN and SGN of women. A childcare center at mother’s workplace meets only her PGN.
- The other programs in the list may be similarly scrutinized. The objective of such an exercise is to underscore the importance of evaluating policies and programs through a gender lens to promote gender equality and gender justice.

### Remember

Programs based on skills-training alone are not enough. It is necessary to create equal opportunities and an enabling environment to optimally use these skills and benefit from them.



When policies and programmes either exclusively address SGNs of women or address them through programmes which meet their PGNs, they bring gender into the mainstream of development and disaster management objectives. Gender mainstreaming thus is a process to achieve balanced relationships between and among women as well as men together with the socially and culturally unrecognized groups, i.e., those from the transgender community.

For gender mainstreaming to occur, it is necessary to always use a gender lens. A gender lens does not take gender roles and relations for granted. On the contrary it

- 🔍 **Focuses** on SGNs and PGNs of women and men.
- 🔍 **Makes** women’s concerns visible in development and disaster policies, programs and implementations.
- 🔍 **Points** to the need for gender mapping before devising intervention strategies. Gender mapping involves looking at the relative spaces

and resource entitlements, women and men have in different institutions: family, community, markets and the state.

- 🔑 **Identifies** the stumbling blocks (threats, weaknesses, vulnerabilities) and stepping stones (strengths, opportunities, capacities, etc.).
- 🔑 **Envisions** those measures which diminish rather than augment vulnerabilities.
- 🔑 **Sees** clearly the nuances of a context affecting women and men differently due to different socio-cultural values applied to them.

Gender lens requires that we cross out the myths and prejudices in our heads while devising, analyzing and evaluating a programme, activity or policy:

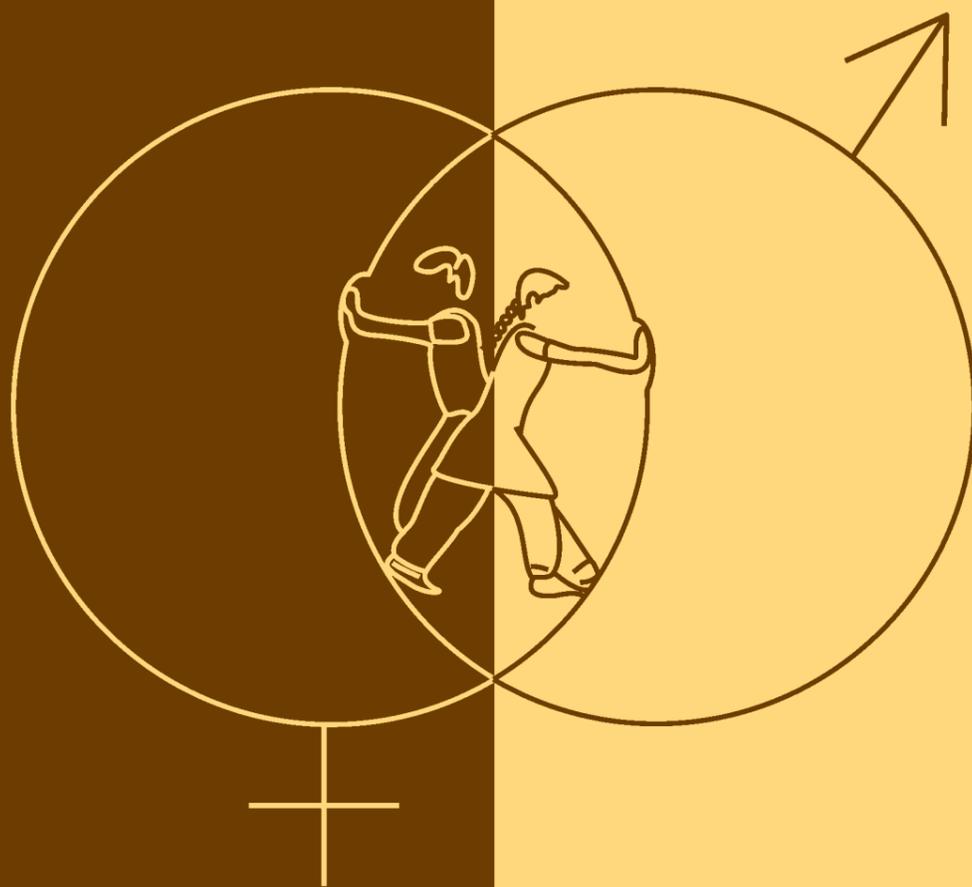
<b>Myths</b>	<b>Facts</b>
	
Women are vulnerable	Women are rendered vulnerable by social, economic and political arrangements of society.
Gender is women and their problems	Gender unpacks and questions the power relationship between women and men as well as the invisibility of transgender persons.
Addressing PGNs is enough to empower women	Interventions to be sensitive need to address both PGNs of women and men as well as SGNs of women
Only men do 'productive' work	Women's household work sustains the productive work of men and typically consumes more time than men's work.

*Continued...*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Myths</b></p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Facts</b></p> 
<p>'Access' is enough to empower women.</p>	<p>Access is different from having control over what one has access to.</p>
<p>Domestic violence is private affair.</p>	<p>Domestic violence impacts societal gender relations.</p>
<p>Domestic violence affects only the spouse (typically women).</p>	<p>Domestic violence against women affects the entire household, including children and the elderly. It is a far reaching problem, effecting all sectors of social system and demands to be in the forefront of political discourse</p>
<p>Income generation activities addresses the livelihood concerns of women.</p>	<p>For women livelihoods encompass the patterns of expenditure as much as the sources of income generation.</p>
<p>Transgender persons are abnormal.</p>	<p>Transgender persons are as normal as any man or woman.</p>

***Always wear a gender lens while  
 Assessing and Analyzing  
 Planning and Designing  
 Implementing  
 Monitoring and Evaluating***





*DISASTER  
THROUGH A GENDER LENS*

The focus in this Chapter is on the differential vulnerabilities of women, men, and transgender persons.



This chapter presents an analysis of issues through field-based evidences and information gathered from focus groups, facilitated in the Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu and flood-prone/affected areas of West Bengal.

The chapter underscores the need for looking at issues through a gender lens *consciously* and *consistently*. This is critical for changing disasters into opportunities to overcome gender-based vulnerabilities through empowerment of women, marginalized men, and transgender persons.

### **Let us remember that**

- Natural hazard in itself is not a disaster, although it has the potential to become one. For instance, a flood in an uninhabited area does not become a disaster.
- Natural hazard turns into a disaster when it interacts with populations without adequate capacities to respond to it. For instance, in the event of floods, a person who can swim is less at risk of drowning than a person who cannot.
- The lack of capacities is not predestined; they are the consequence of prevailing social, economic, and political inequalities.
- These adverse consequences are known as vulnerabilities.

From the concepts presented in the previous chapter, it may be inferred that prevailing gender roles and power relations determine to a great degree the nature and extent of capacities present in the various sections of a society. Gender roles and power relations directly influence how resources and opportunities are distributed and controlled, matters of access, and by whom decisions are made.

Lack of capacities constitute vulnerabilities. Greater the vulnerabilities, greater the risk of a natural hazard turning into a disaster for any given community! Some communities are more vulnerable to disasters than others as a consequence of socio-economic inequalities and political exclusions.



$$\text{Disaster} = \frac{\text{Natural hazards} \times \text{Vulnerabilities}}{\text{Capacities}}$$

As capacities of communities are increased, they become less vulnerable to disasters. However, within each community, gender cuts across all levels of vulnerabilities.

Most instances of women's vulnerabilities are also present in marginalized men, and these need to be addressed. However, it is necessary to emphasize that men rarely suffer from gender-based discrimination although they may face marginalization due to caste, class, ethnicity, physical conditions, and age-based discrimination. However, within each of these disadvantaged groups, women typically suffer more due to discriminatory practices associated with gender. In addition when women are single, divorced, or childless, their vulnerabilities are aggravated.

It is important to keep in mind the distinction between gender-based and other forms of social inequities such as caste, class and ethnicity, etc. Gender cuts across other forms of social inequities.

When gender concerns are not factored into a disaster response, and considered as an additional task, it augments the damage suffered by vulnerable sections of a community, that is

Examples	Type of vulnerabilities
Women may not get opportunities to build their capacities due to social taboos, gender stereotypes, restricted mobility and socially induced low confidence.	Social, political, and psychological
Women may not have any representation in the informal system of community governance. Hence, their needs are given low priority or totally ignored or may have token representation without substantially being heard in the formal structure of governance.	Political
Because women's voices are not heard, their needs may remain invisible or get secondary priority.	Social, psychological, economic, and political
Men are expected to act as courageous and hence may be exposed to risks.	Social
Men's risky behaviors are socially acceptable ways of coping with grief and setbacks, such as consumption of alcohol. Men's health may be badly affected.	Social, and psychological
Men may not have basic survival skills such as cooking and taking care of the households.	Social, and psychological
Transgender persons	Social, psychological, economic, and political

women, marginalized men, and transgender persons. It perpetuates the conventional perception that the urgent task in a disaster response is rescue and relief which will be hindered by accommodating gender sensitivity.

In the following sections we probe into issues of survival, health, livelihood, security, shelter, and political participation through the gender lens.

## Field Evidences



Sex, disaggregated data from the Government reveals that of the people killed a disproportionately large number were women and children (Government of India, 2005). In Tamil Nadu, the worst affected state, three times more women died on an average. In the floods of West Bengal in 2000 more women and children died than the men.



In certain places, the death toll sex ratio is even more skewed. In Samiarpet, Cuddalore district, for example, 12 times; in Chandrapadi Village, Nagai, 5 times; and in Silladi Nagar, a Muslim temporary settlement, 4 times more women died than the men.



Suresh, a 17-year-old boy, who lost his widowed mother, said that although he was not mentally prepared for marriage, the fear of managing a household caused him to marry a 16-year-old girl (wives are supposed to be younger than their husbands in an ideal marriage). He confesses, "I am not yet ready to take on the responsibilities of parenthood", but his wife is already pregnant, and they are very depressed.



Geetha, aged 25 years, could not save her two young children, aged 3 and 5, who slipped out of her arm in the huge waves. Those who tried to help her from drowning recollected her shouting to them that she did not want to live as she had not been able to save her own children. In the focus group discussion (FGD) the women who had heard her, reflected that Geetha might have lost the will for self-survival, as she may have felt that even if she had saved herself, she would have been accused by her family of being responsible for her children's deaths.



During the Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, strong internalized values of nudity and shame prevented women from running to safety as their sarees had been removed by the sheer force of the waves. The women preferred to drown rather than come out of waters without their clothes. Since the incident many of them have started using inner wear as it will provide minimal cover in case they have to discard or raise their saree and run.

## Highlights

- The capacity to survive is, to a large extent, determined by socio-cultural norms. In addition, the biological differentials put women at a disadvantage (pregnant women, for example).
- Because of social norms, women and girls despite living near the coasts or banks of rivers do not maintain their swimming skills, which as children they may have acquired.
- The restrictive nature of womens' dress and clothing such as sarees<sup>1</sup>, inskirts<sup>2</sup>, long hair, jewelry, have been obstacles to their survival during floods, Tsunamis, and earthquakes. (FGDs in Tamil Nadu and Nadia district in West Bengal).
- Women are considered to be solely responsible for their childrens' safety.
- Women often do not consider their life as worth living if something untoward happened to their spouse or children.
- Women are more prone to feeling guilty for not being able to save the lives of their children.
- The internalized concepts of a 'good woman' override their survival instincts.
- Men typically lack skills such as cooking, taking care of children, and household chores. Their unwillingness to acquire these skills or their reluctance to use them due to gender role stereotypes has an adverse impact on women.

<sup>1</sup> Length of cloth, of at least six yards, draped around the body, worn as the main garment by Women in India.

<sup>2</sup> A woman's undergarment that is worn from the waist to ankle under a saree.

## Field Evidences

Valarmathi, a construction worker, aged 35, fell down while running for safety and severely injured her neck. She can no longer carry headloads at construction sites. Not only is her family deep in debt, but she had to drop out of the self-help group (SHG) because of her inability to save for retaining her membership. Her daughter aged 10, studying in 5th standard, has now taken on the responsibility of all the household work that her mother used to do, i.e., taking care of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, and fetching water and firewood. She also takes care of her sick mother. She has not, however, dropped out of school although she has little time to attend to her homework.

Our focus groups in the affected areas report that many women and girls suppress the urge to defecate or urinate because of poor toilet conditions in the temporary shelter complex, and consequently suffered from frequent urinary tract infections. The unhygienic conditions caused painful vaginal infections and excessive white discharge. Typically these grievances were not voiced and had a negative impact on their health.



Toilets in the temporary shelter complex

Most toilets in the temporary shelters did not have

- roofs above them
- strong doors
- latches/strong latches
- adequate light in and around them
- water/sufficient water
- ventilators at an appropriate height to ensure privacy for women
- comfortable distance from men's toilets/meeting places

## Highlights

- The health issues of women are linked to factors such as
  - √ conditions of toilets
  - √ distance they have to cover to fetch water and firewood
  - √ gender-based violence
  - √ overburdened schedules and low wages for productive work
  - √ no control over household income
  - √ lack of decision-making power
- policies promoting reversal surgery expand reproductive choices for women. However, if the cultural norms and gender stereotypes prevent women from making reproductive choices, family pressure to conceive as well as fear of rejection in case of failure to conceive post-reversal surgery may increase a woman's sense of inadequacy.
- If opportunity costs and realistic costs are not factored into the determination of compensation amounts for injuries and other health concerns, it may produce lifelong insecurities and vulnerabilities.
- Absence of sufficient number of women health workers and women doctors deter women from accessing medical services specific to their problems, resulting in debilitating conditions such as prolapsed uterus.

## Field Evidences

Unavailability of women doctors immediately after disaster resulted in many women suffering from agonies of prolapsed uterus, vaginal infections, breast injuries, heavy vaginal bleeding, etc. Many chose not to “Shame themselves” in front of a male doctor in general medical camps. (FGDs with women in Cuddalore, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu).

Anbuja, aged 37, lost all her four children to the Tsunami. She had gone through reversal surgery<sup>3</sup> in Chennai, which cost her Rs. 150,000 but has not yet conceived. She suffers from severe depression. Although the couple wanted to adopt children, her main preoccupation is on how to conceive and have at least one child of their own again. Her depression deepens when she hears news of other women who have conceived. Despite the Rs. 800,000 she received as ex-gratia payment—she feels her life is without meaning. She is offended when the community considers her privileged for her enhanced material status. Anbuja, however, feels that she is poorer, not happier, and more emotionally drained than before the Tsunami.



<sup>3</sup> Reversal surgery for women involves the process of reconnecting the fallopian tubes which had been ligated during sterilization to block the pathway to the ovum.

- Social norms where women and girls eat last/least also has an adverse effect on their health.
- With mothers ailing or injured, girls in the family bear disproportionate burden of household chores and caring activities.
- Many young boys have had to drop out of school to take up work and support household income.

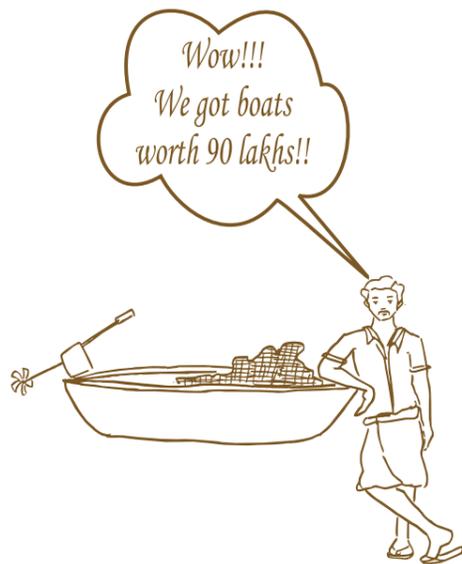
Physical and mental health of many men has been adversely affected by

- Social constraints on expression of emotions caused by severe losses they suffered in the Tsunami.
- Increase in alcohol abuse and aggression in men which are socially condoned expressions of grief.
- Loss of livelihood and resulting loss of self esteem as failures to be breadwinners.
- Gender-based allocation of tasks, such as rescue, night patrolling, removal of debris, etc.

## Field Evidences

Pushed by a dwindling income, increased expense on alcohol and battering by her husband, Kalyani sells XXX in the day-time and engages in prostitution in the night. Her daughter stays with Kalyani's mother in the night. She needs money for her daughter's upkeep and has dreams of educating her so that she does not have to lead a life similar to hers. She says she is not bothered about others' comments; that people do not feed her children and that it is her responsibility to feed and educate her children.

Pre-Tsunami, two SHGs together had run a business of selling dry fish. The SHGs had taken a loan of Rs. 200,000 and built the necessary infrastructure to dry fish. Additionally, they invested Rs. 100,000 for fish stock, salt, utensils, and other tools. They lost everything in the Tsunami. However, their loss has neither been compensated, nor the remaining loan amount of Rs. 100,000 (they had repaid half the loan, pre-Tsunami) been waived or rescheduled. The members have to repay the loan by incurring heavy debts and pawning their jewelry.



1.5 lakhs\* x 60 = 90 lakhs\*  
for one xxx village



Micro-credit for SHGs

\* 10 lakhs = 1 million

## Highlights

- The loss of women's assets are often inadequately accounted in disaster loss assessment. This may be due to the prevailing perception of a man as a breadwinner. It may also be because men often possess more productive and visible assets than do women. For example, in the Tsunami-affected areas in Tamil Nadu, damage was mostly equated with the loss of boats and nets of fishermen. As a result, more resources were allocated to replacing boats and nets and distributing additional ones to those who previously did not have any.
- Associating productive assets with men alone becomes a disadvantage for women who may use or own them. For example, catamarans were not distributed in the Tsunami-affected areas to women who use them for collecting edible shells. Their occupational marginalization was compounded by their gender.
- Livelihood issues for women are closely linked with the types of amenities provided in the temporary shelter complexes. For example, although most temporary shelters had a common shed built for men for social and community interactions, no such sheds or meeting places were provided for women. These common sheds would have provided the necessary space for them to resume their home-based occupations such as sewing, beading, hand-fan making, etc.
- Some elderly men may be excluded from the ownership of assets. This may compel elderly women to resume livelihood activities.

## Field Evidences



Home gone, Work gone!!!

Selvi, her face lined with deep wrinkles and a bent back, has been selling earthen pots on the roadside for years. Many years ago, she was thrown out of the house by her son and daughter-in-law. She gets pots from a potter on credit and sells them, and then makes daily payments to the potter. She does not know if she pays interest. Selvi lost all her earthenware in the Tsunami, not in the waters but in a stampede that followed it; some were stolen in her absence. Selvi did not receive any immediate relief or compensation for her loss; her ration card is with her son, with whom she has not had any contact for years. She sleeps on the roadside. Although an entrepreneur, she is not a member of any SHG and does not know about SHGs. She does not receive old-age pension as she has a grown-up son!

Noor Jahan, a single woman, engaged in the homebased business of making hand fans, was a successful entrepreneur, pre-Tsunami. She had a ready market for her products in Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai. Her house was destroyed by the Tsunami and she lost all her tools of trade and a huge stock of raw materials. The temporary shelter does not have enough space for her to start the business again. She also needs a minimum amount of Rs. 50,000 to restart her business. She is now too poor to avail credit from a bank or a private moneylender. She is confident, that given an opportunity and enough space to run her business, she can train many other women in the skill as well as provide them employment.

- An increasing number of women become sole breadwinners, due to the death of or severe injuries suffered by their husbands/sons.
- Although wage opportunities decrease after a disaster, men are more mobile and may migrate to find work.
- Due to scarcity of resources or death of male breadwinner/s, women previously engaged in household work may feel the need to engage in paid work; they may not be able to do so because of lack of childcare centers with timings sensitive to their schedules.
- Women who had lost both their husbands and their assets may not receive compensation for their losses. For example, in the Tsunami-affected areas, there were some cases of women who did not receive boats and catamarans. Similarly, unmarried women may not receive relief and rehabilitation packages in a culture where they are not recognized as individual units.
- Gender stereotypes put boys under pressure to drop out of schools and work on the boats to contribute to the family income. Many boys had to drop out of school and work on the boats in the Tsunami-affected areas of Tamil Nadu.
- Loss of livelihood increases frustration among men leading to alcohol consumption and increased sexual demands on women, which are socially accepted as coping strategies in many societies.
- The collective loss of assets of SHGs may not be compensated. For example, women were given money as loan with or without interest and not grants to recover from the disaster, even as men were given boats and nets as grants.

## Field Evidences

*The women requested us not to use their real names, names of their specific localities, and in some cases their occupations. Respecting their privacy and the sensitivity of the information revealed here, we are withholding the names, particular localities, and occupations, where required for the following cases.*



The Tsunami disrupted Raji's normal life and livelihood. Her husband earned much less during the post-Tsunami period than what he used to prior to the Tsunami. The scarce income that Raji brought home through sundry work such as cloth vending and running errands, was not enough to meet household expenses. Moreover she had to part with Rs. 20–30 everyday for her husband's drinking. Living in a temporary shelter, a worried and exasperated Raji resented her husband's spending on drinking and refused to have sexual relations with him. Apart from her resentment, with the children around in the temporary shelter, she did not consider it an appropriate place to have sexual intimacy with her husband. He often beat and abused her and their adolescent children. The children perceiving themselves the cause of the tension between their parents, decided to go with Raji's mother to their uncle's house. This would provide their mother much needed relief from her daily suffering at the hands of their father. Bereft of her children Raji's resentment against her husband deepened, but she succumbed to his demand for sex in the temporary shelter.



Indumathi, a young widow in Cuddalore, who lived with her children in the temporary shelter, encountered sexual harassment and began to stay with her mother at night in the nearby town. She wishes to get married for security reasons. However, she says she does not have courage to face the taunts of the community. She says "remarriage of a widow is not a socially accepted practice in my community".



Sarda, a 22-year-old in xxx district had frequent fights with her husband due to her inability to fulfill his sexual demands. The situation became aggravated to the extent that she committed suicide. Other women recalled that Sarda had told them that she felt very inhibited to have sex with her husband in the temporary shelter as there was no privacy.

## Highlights

- Lack of privacy in temporary shelters<sup>4</sup> may contribute to violence against women. Overburdened by productive and reproductive work and the resulting physical exhaustion, and decreased sexual desire, women may become victims of increased domestic violence.
- As many men lose their livelihoods, assets, and family members in disasters, the alcohol consumption increases among them as an escape strategy. This in turn may lead to an increase in domestic violence.
- The security of women may not be given a priority if insights into women's practical gender needs (PGNs) and strategic gender needs (SGNs) do not guide the design of temporary shelters.
- The internalized values of men as "protectors" despite evidence to the contrary often leave women more vulnerable and defenseless.
- Loss of income due to death of husband/male earning members, lack of other opportunities for livelihood, and responsibility of children, and family survival may push a few women into prostitution.
- Alcohol may be one of the significant, if not the only cause of deepening debts, increased work burden on women, and escalating conflicts within the home and community.



Although consumption of alcohol was prevalent pre-Tsunami, women now relate it more forcefully with poverty and violence in both public and private domains.

<sup>4</sup> Lack of privacy in the temporary shelter did not just mean lack of separate spaces for adults and children. The temporary shelters had no gaps between them had made the inhabitants feel they are in an open street. Those residing in neighbouring shelters knew whatever was done within the temporary shelter. Even the rustling of changing clothes, voices, and movements were heard by others. Within the temporary shelters it was reported that children and the elderly never slept soundly due to heat and insect bites.

## Field Evidences



Vijaya, aged 17, was not interested in marriage, rather wanted to continue her studies. She was forced to marry due to the rumor that Rs.20,000 would be given by the Collector. She resisted going to her husband's house. The traditional Panchayat decided that either the girl should go to her husband's house or pay Rs.30,000 as fine. Vijaya sought help from an NGO who not only recruited her but also encouraged her to continue her studies. Vijaya borrowed the money from her supporters to pay the fine rather than succumb to the pressure from the community.

In many instances, widows, women heading their households, unmarried, and the elderly women were not on the list of the affected, which was prepared by traditional Panchayats exclusively represented by men. The gender-based exclusion deprived women and their children of much needed relief and rehabilitation benefits and put them and their children on the brink of starvation. Among single women, those without children were more discriminated against, than those with children because of the social perception that the lives of women without children are less worthy than those who have children.



## Highlights

- When there is no representation and active participation of women in the traditional controlling mechanisms of a community, women's voices remain unheard and their needs remain invisible.
- Unmarried women, widows, especially without children, the aged women, and the homeless women and men, did not figure in the beneficiary lists prepared by the male-exclusive traditional Panchayats. As a result they were excluded in matters of distribution of relief goods and rehabilitation assets (FGDs in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam with single women, shelterless women, and elderly dependent women).
- Unmarried women in households remained severely marginalized in both private and public domains (Interactions with unmarried women living in the households).
- The homeless and migrants are generally not taken into account while preparing lists of the affected.

## Field Evidences

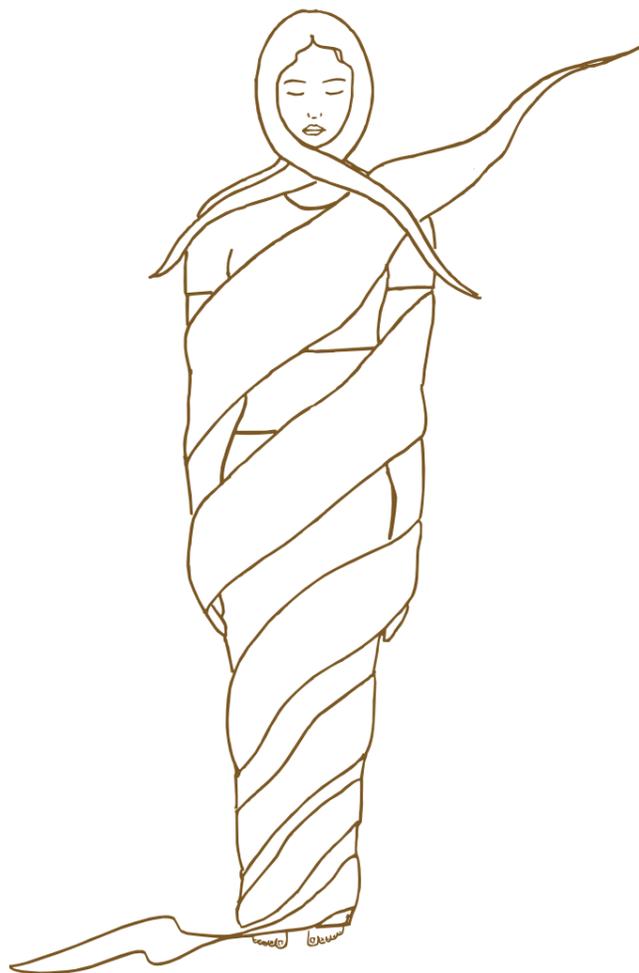


Manohari, a 45-year-old woman, mentioned, that since the age of 7 she started accompanying her mother who sold fish on the streets. For her, school was a place full of fun and laughter but out of her reach as her father was not in favor of sending a girl to school. Her mother supported the household as her father spent most of the money he earned on drinking. As her mother aged she developed constant neck pain from carrying head-loads, Manohari took over the occupation. Being young, she faced constant harassment at the local fish market but quickly learned to tackle harassment in many forms: molestation, snatching off a good catch of fish by local goons, etc. The experience made her tough and ever more resolute to work harder so that she could educate her younger brothers. The brothers grew up, got married, and started living separately. They never contributed to the household, either financially or emotionally. Manohari in the rush of life forgot to think about herself. She remained unmarried because she never had time to think of her future, nor anyone in the family considered that she could have an existence other than making money for supporting the household. Even though, a bread winner, Manohari does not have a ration card in her own name.

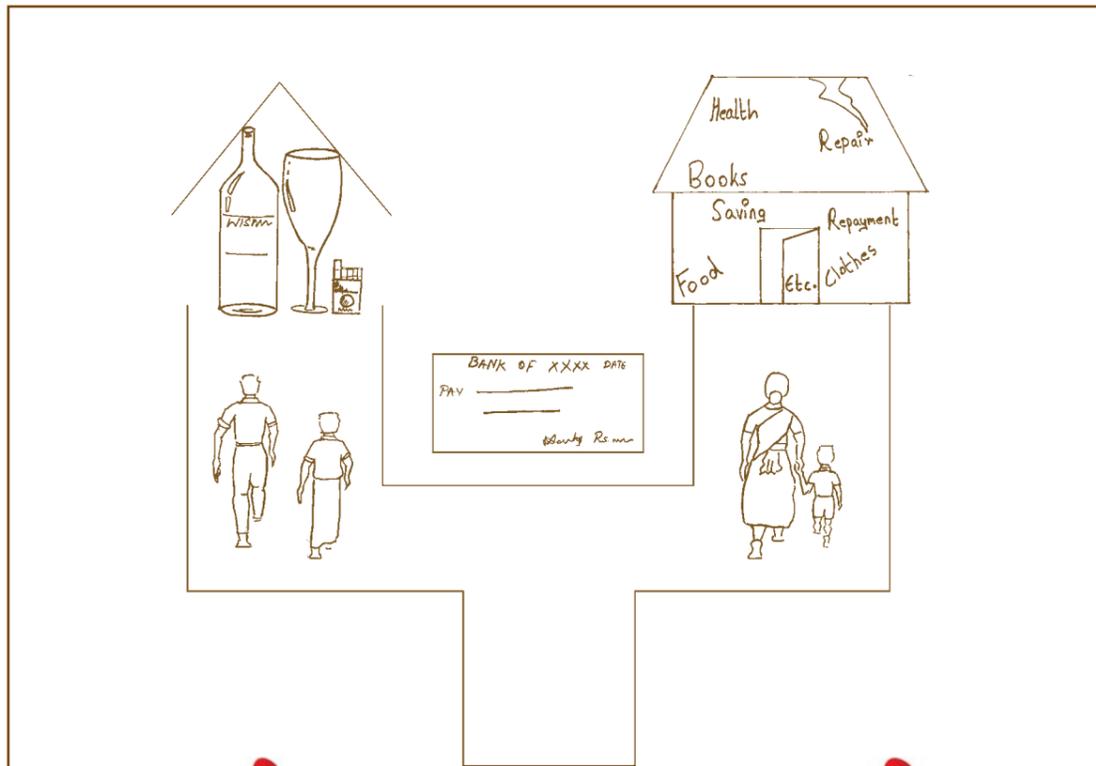
The unprecedented joint ownership of the post-Tsunami housing left Manohari bitter and wondering. The houses in the name of women jointly with the spouse after all are accepted by a community which never allowed a woman to own a house or a piece of land. Changes were happening around her. However, none cared for women like her, who are virtually heading as well as supporting the household. The post-Tsunami house is in the name of Manohari's old parents. Once the parents die, Manohari says, the house would be inherited by her brothers. She thinks about the time when she will find herself old and shelterless or living on the goodwill of her brothers in the house. She realizes she deserves a house in her own right as an individual, and it was time for the Government to recognize this right. Giving unmarried women separate ration cards and housing would have given them the much needed dignity and security, Manohari asserts. Manohari and many women like her, see how policies impact on their personal lives. Manohari is hopeful that if this personal need could become a collective demand, there will be positive changes in their life situations.

## Remember

- Gender-violence inheres across issues mentioned earlier.
- It may manifest itself in different facets, not just in the form of physical violence against wives.
- A violent domestic environment also affects children and the elderly.
- Gender violence may be emotional, psychological, physical, verbal, and political or a combination of all these. For example, forced and early marriages, are a combination of physical, emotional, verbal and political violence.



## Field Evidences



Mr. Shankar, aged 55 years, lost three of his five daughters, one boy, and his wife in the Tsunami. He got an ex-gratia<sup>5</sup> amount of Rs. 1,000,000 (Rs. 200,000 per death). With the money, he married a young girl, and bought a car. He also got his daughters aged 16 years and 22 years married off with a dowry of Rs. 50,000 each.

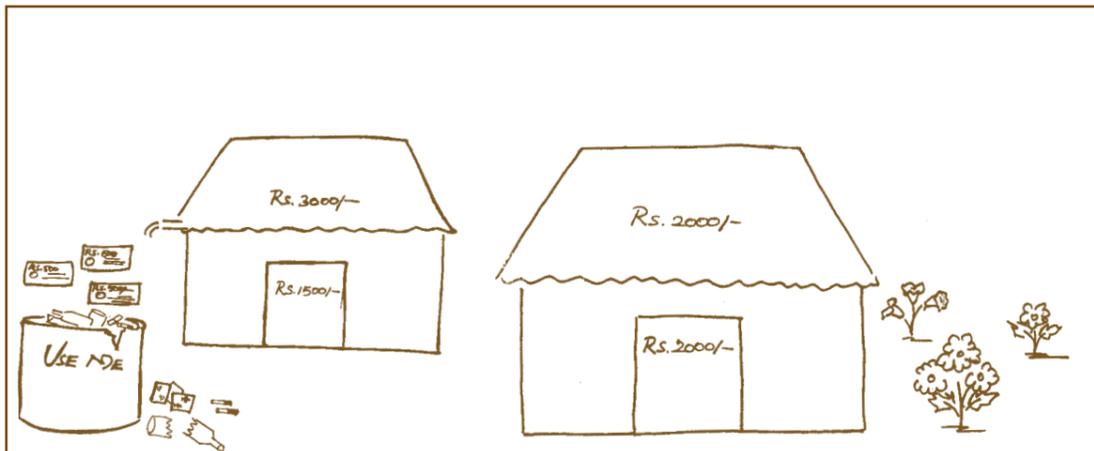
Amudha received Rs. 200,000 as compensation for the death of her husband. She borrowed another 200,000 from a moneylender to get her daughter married. She is now repaying the loans through the wages she earns every day and by taking loans from the SHG she belongs to. To pay off the debt she had to resume the work, she had left 4 years ago due to advancing age.

<sup>5</sup> Ex-gratia is a lump sum cash amount, given by the Government on its discretion to the injured or to the kin of those who lost lives in a calamity: natural or human made. It is neither a conditional cash amount nor an interest-free loan. It is a 'no-liability and no strings-attached money'.

## Highlights

- The availability of lump sum unconditional cash had negative impact on men. Some previously healthy men developed wheezing and asthma and medical conditions related to malfunctioning of liver with excessive alcohol consumption. It was reported from focus groups with Muslim men and women in Silladi Nagar, Nagapattinam, that men who previously had abstained from alcohol had taken to it due to peer pressure and availability of large cash.
- Unconditional ex-gratia in the hands of men mostly resulted in intra-household inequalities in the form of access to and use of the money for household use, forcing women and children into secondary poverty.
- Unmarried women, who have been supporting but not heading households, did not receive any share in the ex-gratia amount, although the focus groups in Keechankuppam, Nagapattinam, stated that it was shared among brothers.
- Women receiving ex-gratia for the death of their spouses generally spent the money on meeting livelihood needs, children's education, settling debts incurred by their husbands, daughters' marriages, repairing houses, and/or for providing healthcare to children and elderly parents, while typically a large portion of the same was spent by men on drinking, socializing, and expending on remarriages (those who lost their wives in the Tsunami).

## Field Evidences



Rajan, aged 35 years, with a daughter and a son, lost his wife in the Tsunami. He used up the ex-gratia money for drinking. His drinking continues unabated with borrowed money. Rajan has abandoned his parenting responsibilities. The children are now living with their maternal grandparents, who themselves lost their assets in the Tsunami. Rajan never comes to see them and when asked to pay for the maintenance of the children, he abuses his wife's parents. He has even refused to pay any money toward the children's educational expenses, which would have helped the grandparents to tide over the difficult situation.

- Although transgender persons had lost their lives in the Tsunami, no ex-gratia was paid to their closely knit community, which is a network of filial relationships.
- When ex-gratia is based on headcounts of those who lose lives, and not on the basis of survivors, it creates discrimination.
- Ex-gratia sometimes resulted in a death wish among those who are physically challenged and/or elderly.



## Field Evidences

Transgender persons may be born inter-sex and generally see themselves as neither women nor men. They dress in women's clothes and tend to get married to men. They are known by different names in different parts of India, most notably Hijra in north India and Aravani in south India (Definition derived from FGDs with transgender persons).

40-year-old Savithri (a person from transgender community) married a man and was well accepted in his family, especially by her mother-in-law. Savithri's name was included in the ration card. But she lost both her husband and mother-in-law in the Tsunami. The ex-gratia amount for her husband's death was taken by her father-in-law, who subsequently threw her out of the house. She had nowhere to go and had to migrate against her wishes to Mumbai to make a living.

Hasina, aged 22 is a qualified plumber from an ITI (Industrial Training Institute), but remains without a job and shelter. She used to live in her boy friend's house before the Tsunami and begged for a living to save for her studies in Bangalore. However, after the Tsunami, the friend threw her out of the temporary shelter. She was forced to sleep in the open. She has been gang-raped several times. She feels a common shelter for people from transgender community, with basic amenities, would give them a sense of security and, to some extent, prevent the type of trauma she is going through.

## Highlights

- If an invisible group like transgender community is not specifically accounted for at policy level, there is a likelihood that their concerns may not be addressed. For example, in the Tsunami related Government Orders there was no specific mention of this population. Poor implementation of Government Orders\* (non-Tsunami) concerning their welfare rendered them invisible in the relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction agenda.
- Deaths and losses incurred by transgender persons or the subsequent trauma they experienced were not recorded.
- Ex-gratia was denied to them (our field study has brought out only one such case but it is indicative of the potential for their human rights violation).



*Who cared for us!!*

\*In December 2006, the Government of Tamil Nadu issued an order to promote the overall welfare of transgender persons (*Aravanis*). Subsequently a welfare board for *Aravanis* has been formed.



*An Irula family in Indira Nagar, Cuddalore*

“We always work together whether it is going for fishing, cooking or looking after our child. When the child is with me, my husband cooks and cleans and vice versa. When we both work together and our child is playing, we both keep an eye on her”.

“It is only recently that separate groups of women and men are being formed. We would have been quite comfortable in mixed groups”.

### **Tribal group: A case of the Irula in Tamil Nadu**

The focus group discussions with Irula women and men highlighted that:

- There was a high-level of predisaster vulnerability and invisibility of this tribal group.
- This social discrimination and invisibility became evident in the initial stages of relief and rehabilitation.
- The absence of necessary documents handicapped them in claiming their entitlement for compensations.
- Since both women and men in this community were gender free in their practices pertaining to household chores, childcare, and occupational engagements, the women and men were equally affected by the initial delay in the relief operations and political resistance from the dominant groups (in this case fishing community) to their access to relief and rehabilitation entitlements.
- Being unaware of the gender fair culture that prevailed in the Irula community humanitarian agencies unwittingly introduced some mainstream sex- and gender-based practices of segregation that proved detrimental to the community. For instance, forming of women's and men's SHGs rather than mixed SHGs. Likewise handing over the ex-gratia money in a community which would have welcomed collective investment for its livelihood, related to their vast knowledge on environment and forests would have been extremely valuable.



*Woman Azhi Picker*



Azhi pickers are dalit women and men who engage in picking Azhi<sup>6</sup> in the back-waters of Cuddalore; Azhi pickers spend nearly 8 hours each day in the scorching sun, neck deep in the waters, with their catamarans.



*Catamaran is my asset*

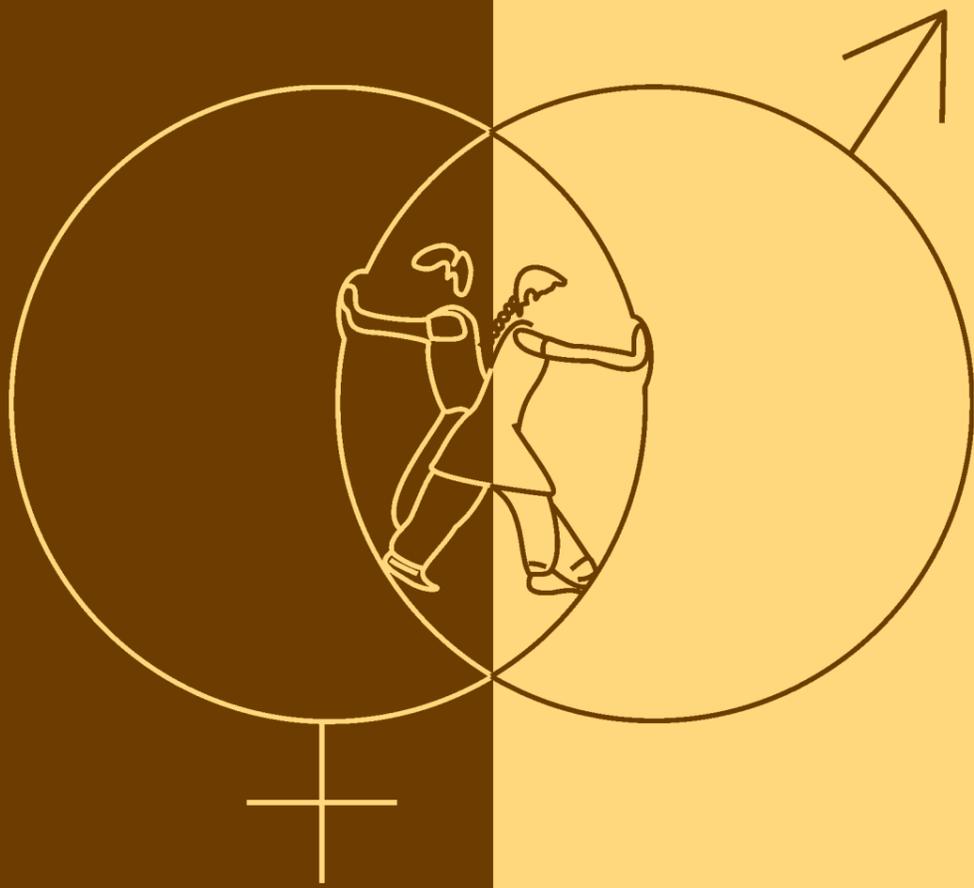
<sup>6</sup> A type of shell, mostly available in the backwaters.

## Dalits: A case of the Azhi pickers

A gender analysis of their occupation and community depicts the following issues:

- Infections and fatal injuries on the feet and fingers due to *Azhi* bites make them temporarily disabled at times. It has different impact on women and men. Women still have to manage the household chores, while it is considered normal for a man with injuries to drink to forget the pain and rest until it heals.
- Women suffer severe abdomen and hip pain, giddiness, and excessive bleeding when they menstruate, while pushing their catamarans with one hand and picking up *Azhi* with the other.
- Post-Tsunami, deposits of thorny bushes, rubbles, and debris in the backwaters have increased the risk of injuries for both women and men.
- Some humanitarian agencies have provided goggles and gloves to men *Azhi* pickers to protect their eyes from the sun, and their hands from *Azhi* bites. However, women were not provided such protective outfits.

*Most vulnerabilities depicted above are pre-existing gender-based vulnerabilities. These become exacerbated when disaster strikes. A gender analysis of vulnerabilities and capacities of women, men, and members of transgender community in the course of disaster management will enable programs to focus on reducing these vulnerabilities. It should be recognized that to achieve this objective, concentrating on the practical gender needs is not enough. For reducing vulnerabilities, which are an outcome of unequal power relations, strategic needs of women and persons from transgender community need to be addressed. The first step is to look at the issues at program, and policy levels through a gender lens. This is what this chapter has attempted to do.*



***PROACTIVE MEASURES***

## TOOLS FOR UNFOLDING AND ANALYZING GENDER ISSUES

This chapter introduces the tools and conceptual frameworks, that will assist field practitioners and policy makers to understand:

1. Where we are in relation to gender equality.
2. What are the areas we need to focus on to address gender-based vulnerabilities.
3. How to understand the impact of policies and programs (P&P) in relation to gender-based vulnerabilities?
4. What are the action points needed to integrate gender concerns into disaster preparedness and risk reduction programs and policies?

While using these tools and the conceptual framework, we must fundamentally look for:

### Who has the POWER?

*Who makes the Productive Decisions?*  
*Who makes the Reproductive Decisions?*  
*Who makes the Community Decisions?*

For example, the following questions may be asked to map the power dynamics along gender lines in a community:

#### For Productive Decisions

- Who decides what job/enterprise the members of the family can do?

- What places can the members go to in relation to their job/enterprise?
- Who decides whether to remain or leave the job/enterprise?
- Who decides who would market, where to market, how to market, and to which customers?
- Who takes the loan?
- Who will repay and how?
- Who makes the decisions about high-value resources?

### **For Reproductive Decisions**

A few examples:

- Whether to have children or not, if yes, when to have them and how many?
- Whether to have sex or not, if yes, when to have it and where?
- Which school should the child go to?
- What types of schools for girls and boys?
- On what aspects of the household expense should the money be spent?
- Which hospital and when should men, women, boys, and girls go?
- For performing reproductive roles, who should go where, when, and by what means of transport?

### **For Community Decisions**

- Are women involved in the political bodies?
- Who are included and who are excluded from participation in traditional and elected structures of governance?

- Who is participating formally and who is participating substantively?
- Are there any alternative structures that negotiate with these structures?
- Are women and men organized in any manner?
- Are there informal and formal groups such as clubs, self help groups (SHGs) for women, men, and transgender persons.
- Are these groups working as pressure groups?

### Who performs TASKS?

*Who performs what types of Productive tasks?*  
*Who performs what types of Reproductive tasks?*  
*Who performs what types of Community tasks?*

### Who performs what types of Productive Tasks?

- Who performs the highly paid (relatively) tasks?  
For example, ploughing the fields, masonry, or work involving technical know-how such as plumbing, electrical work automotive servicing, machinery maintenance etc.?
- Who performs the low paying jobs such as weeding, sowing, carrying headloads etc.?
- Who performs the home-based productive tasks?
- Who performs tasks with machines and highly valued assets: tractors, harvesting machines, printing machines, boats etc.

## **Who performs what types of Reproductive Tasks?**

- Who takes care of the babies and children?
- Who drops and picks up the children from school?
- Who does the cleaning, laundering and cooking?
- Who buys groceries?
- Who collects ration from fair price shops?
- Who takes care of the sick in the house?
- Who pays the utility bills?
- Who fetches water?
- Who collects fuel wood?
- Who manages loans and savings for household consumption?

## **Who performs what types of Community Tasks?**

- Who handles the community funds?
- Who manages the community property, i.e., community halls, panchayat buildings, public marriage halls etc.
- Who resolves the various conflicts in the community: Families, caste-conflicts, conflicts involving cultural norms and values etc.?
- Who decorates the streets and religious places during the festivals?

Who uses and controls  
the RESOURCES?

*Who has access to the immovable resources?*

*Who has control over it?*

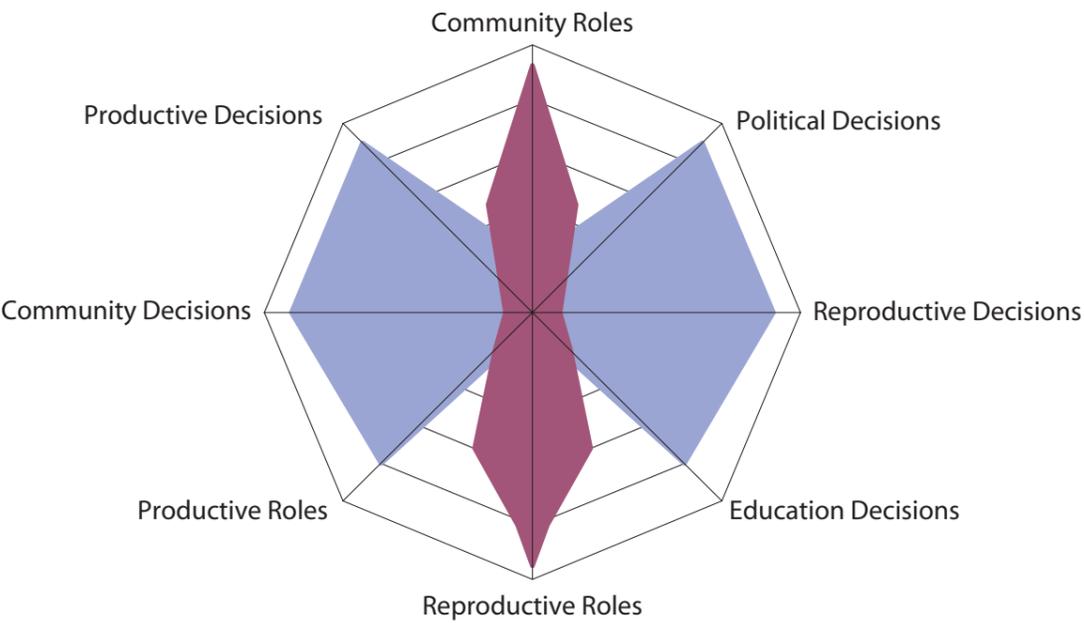
*Who has access to the movable resources?*

*Who has control over it?*

- Which resources do men use? Women? Both?
- Is it women, men, or both who use the resources of high-value such as land, livestock and technology, boats and nets, etc.
- Which resources do women have control over? Men? Both?
- Is it women, men, or both who make the decisions about high-value resources?
- Among the women and men of different socio-economic groups, who are the resource-rich? Who are the resource-poor?
- What are the links between women's labor and their use and control of resources?
- What are the links between men's labor and their use and control of resources?

# **Engendering Participatory Tools**

### Butterfly and Spider tools



**Participants:** Women from Panchakuppam, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu State, India.  
**Facilitators:** Chaman and Usha, with logistic support from BLESS.

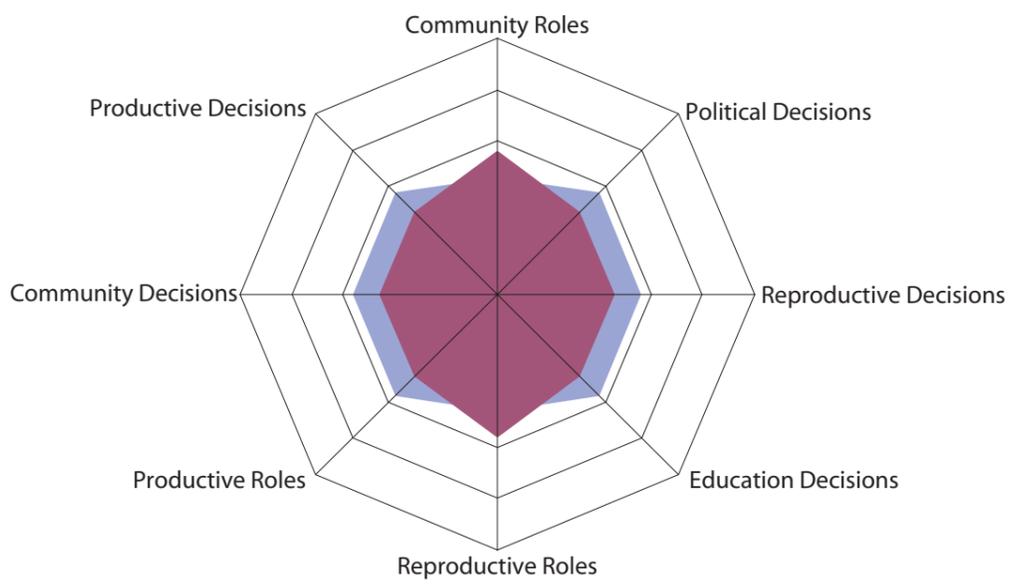
Consider this your first and most useful tool. With the application of this tool, you will be able to understand the rationale underpinning the categorization of the three core types of gender roles as well as the decision makers associated with each role.

1. Assemble separate focus groups of women and men (a maximum of 20 in each group).
2. Members of focus groups should come from similar backgrounds, with proximity being the rule for selection. Allowing groups to self-select is another option, but ensure that the final composition of the group is homogenous with respect to general backgrounds.
3. Facilitate the activity separately for men's and women's groups.
4. Place a large circle before them with eight smaller circles inside it.
5. Give them two pebbles of different colors (to represent men and women) per question per category (a maximum of 50 pebbles)
6. Ask them, collectively, to place pebbles in each circle, representing the relative level of control they perceive the group to have over each category (refer to the previous section for sample questions. You may add to them according to the context).
7. Record the pebbles collected for each circle and map them for your analysis.

Do you see a butterfly? If so, you have a possible situation mostly dominated by men. Power is concentrated within the men of the

## Butterfly and Spider tools

### Who Performs and Who Decides?



**Participants:** Women from, Panchakuppam, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu state, India.

**Facilitators:** Chaman and Usha, with logistic support from BLESS.

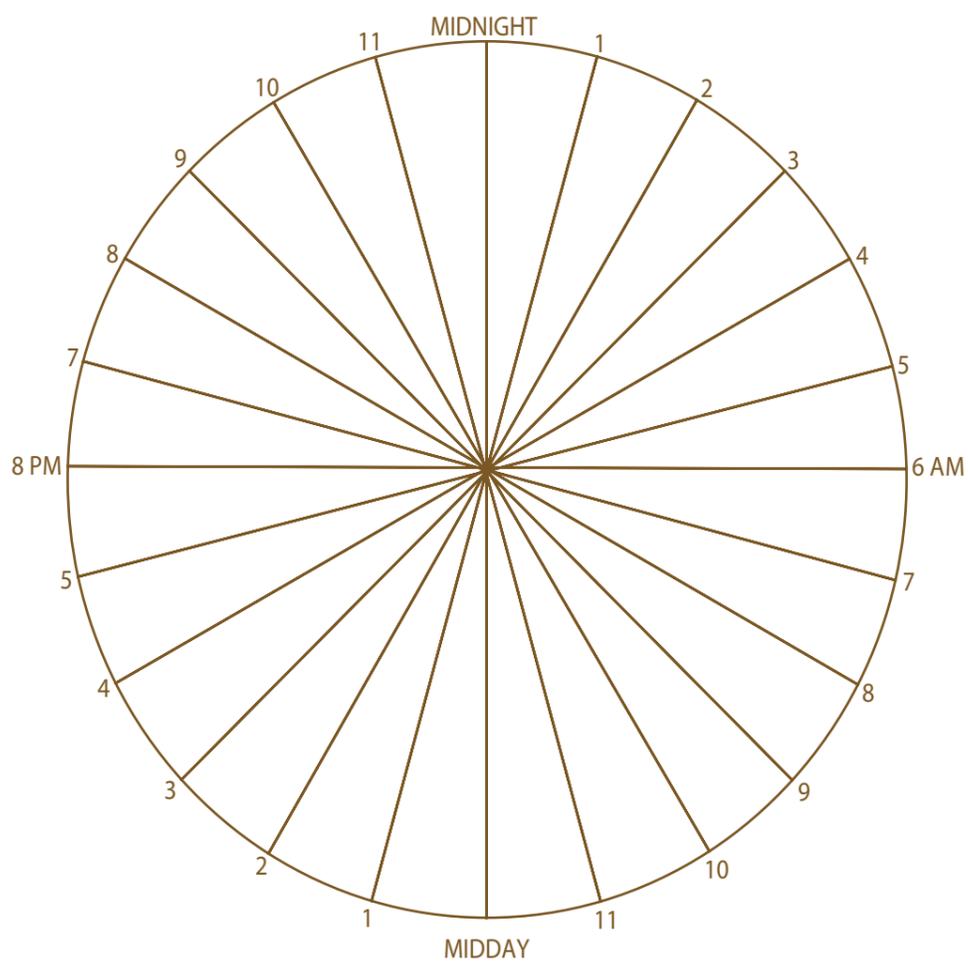
community (see the drawing on the left). If you see something other than a butterfly, say a spider's web, it is indicative of a 'better than worst case scenario,' but be careful to understand what the relative shifts are. In the women's area, look for spikes/points radiating away from the center. These are areas where the women feel that they have some ownership. If it falls into a decision making arena, be sure to enquire how it evolved, looking for key elements or events that precipitated the current state.

These tools can be used with the communities to inform programming and increase knowledge of gender within organizations as well.



Performance generally falls within the purview of duties associated with a gender role and is obligatory, whereas any act of decision making is political (be it at an individual, family, community, market, or state levels), and is an exercise of power.

### Daily Activity Clock



**Participants:** Women and men in the training on Gender and Disaster, organized by Nanban Trust, with support from Oxfam America.  
**Facilitators:** Dr. Nalini Keshavraj, Chaman Pincha and Usha

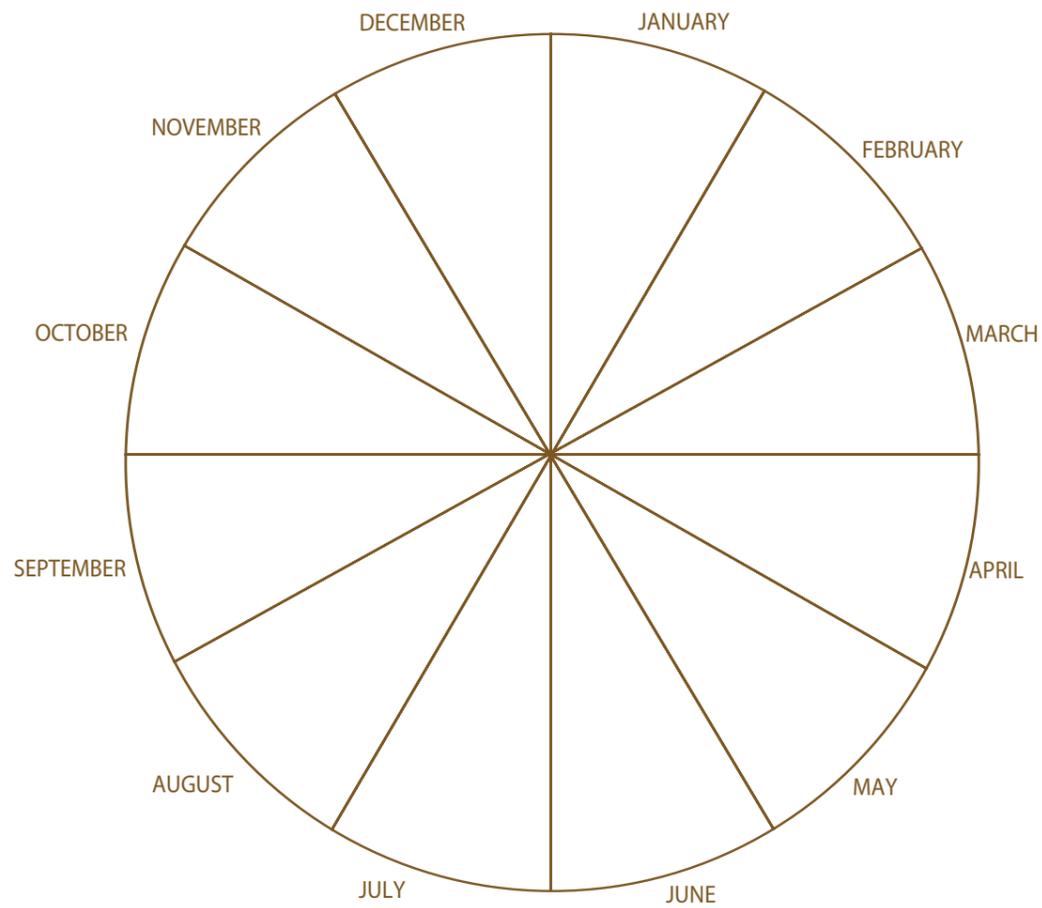
### **WHO DOES WHAT AND WHEN?**

1. Assemble separate focus groups of women and men (a maximum of 20 in each group).
2. Members of focus groups should come from similar backgrounds, with proximity being the rule for selection. Allowing groups to self-select is another option, but ensure that the final composition of the group is homogenous with respect to general backgrounds.
3. Facilitate the activity separately for men's and women's groups.
4. Have them draw a circle or any shape of their choice with locally available material and divide it into 24 sections.
5. Explain that midnight is at the 12 o'clock position. They can use a coding system with locally available materials (seeds, leaves, stones, color powder etc.) or they can draw on paper and place each paper representation of different tasks within the corresponding time slot.
6. Ask them to indicate the multiple task and its nature (whether it involves decision making power?) within a given time slot.
7. For tasks involving decision making acts, ask them to use material other than the one they use for tasks of reproductive nature (for example: stones for reproductive tasks and leaves for decision making tasks).
8. They may go through several repetitions, but the final diagram must represent consensus.
9. Probe if certain important aspects of everyday lives have not been talked about due to social and cultural taboos. For instance performance and decision making in sexual relations in a 24-hour activity cycle.
10. Document the process and the final outcome.



You can use this tool to have a comparative profile of pre- and post-disaster “*who does what and when*” to guide your interventions. It can be an effective tool to sensitize both women and men on the importance of bringing about balance in work burden.

## Yearly Activity Clock



This tool follows the preceding one because a day is easier to recall than a year. The orientation from the preceding tool makes this process easier to perform. Here, we are looking for patterns of activities over a span of one year. Where are the men and women and what are they doing during the year? They can break the months in half if they wish, and concentric circles are also allowed to represent overlapping responsibilities for a given period of time.

## THE SEASONALITY OF EXISTENCE

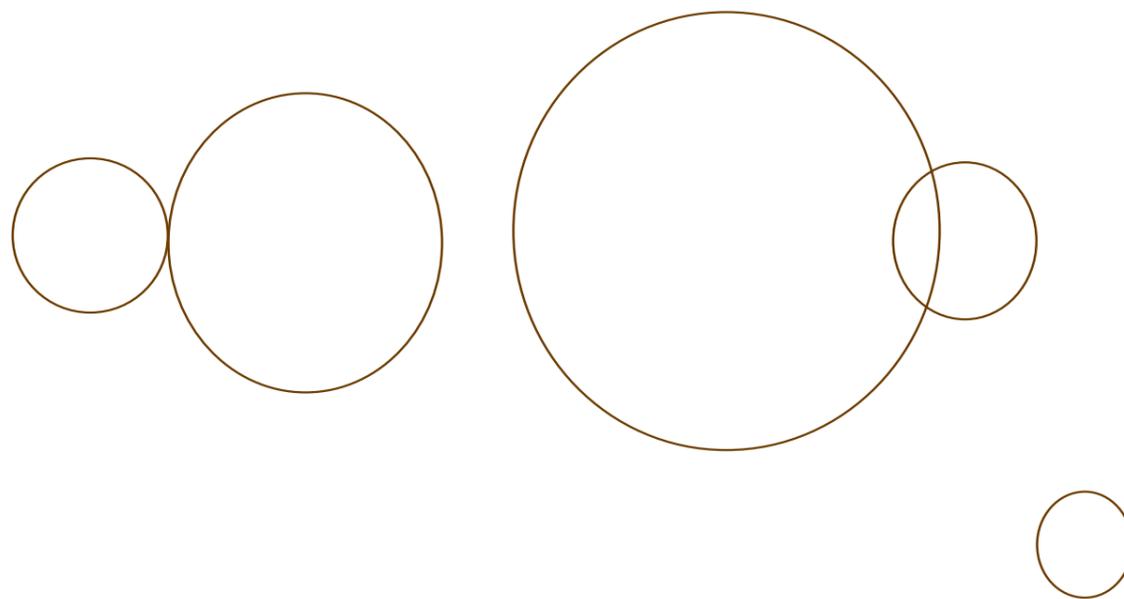
1. Assemble men and women focus groups (a maximum of 20).
2. Keep the groups separate.
3. Let the participants draw a circle or any shape of their choice with locally available material.
4. Let them divide it into 12 slices.
5. Begin with the question “When the season starts”?
6. Explain that the year starts at the 12 o’clock position.
7. They can use a coding system with different locally available items or they can draw on pieces of papers and place each paper representation within the corresponding time slot.
8. They may go through multiple repetitions, but the final diagram must be collectively agreed upon.
9. Facilitate interaction in the group so that they interpret each symbol and document their comments carefully.

Here, look for patterns of busy and lean seasons, migration and employment, frequency of fevers and epidemics and indicate disaster-prone months. This tool is very effective in letting you know “*who is where*” in the community at a given point of time, and the respective challenges they may be facing. Look out for who does how much physical work, the type of physical duty (labor intensive, entertainment etc.), and how many overlapping/multiple tasks in a given slot. Also look into how much rest and leisure time men and women and boys and girls have.



This tool can help in assessing a situation so that at the planning stage these dimensions are given due weightage in planning appropriate interventions. Again, the tool can help not only in planning interventions, but also in fostering discussions within the community.

## Relational Venn Diagram



This tool can be used to understand cultural, social, psychological, and economic distances of individuals or groups through a gender lens. The image above is a cursory representation of a Venn diagram. The labels are intentionally omitted to prevent any display of bias in the authors. Essentially, this tool is quite simple to implement, but is difficult to evaluate.

Here, we are looking at classes, groups resources within a community and the mutuality of their relations with one another. The bigger the circle, the larger the group, class or resource. Placement from left to right indicates the hierarchical positions of a group class or resource with reference to others. The distance between circles represents the “overlap” or otherwise in roles, power, or influence. In a venn diagram distance is a description of the relationship. It helps identify the isolates.

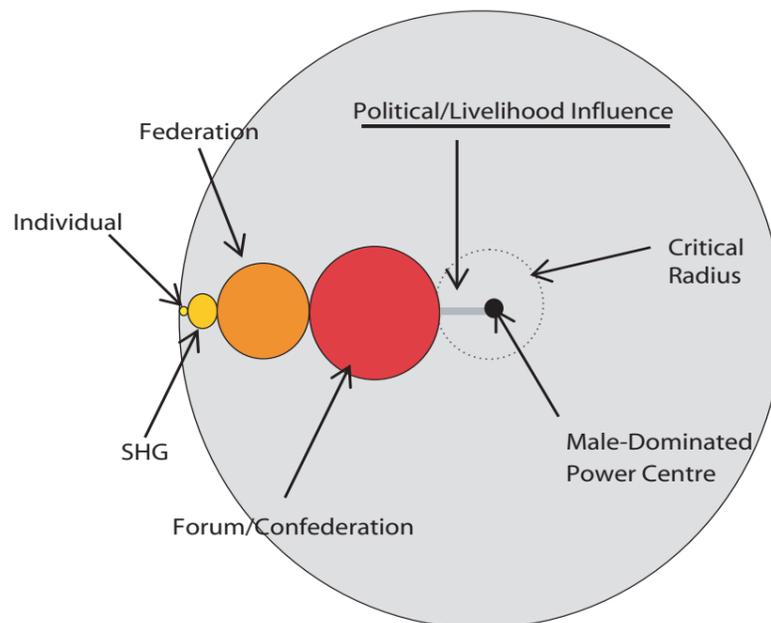
## RELATING TO RELATIONSHIPS

1. Assemble focus groups of women and men (a maximum of 20).
2. Keep the groups separate.
3. Draw a square with available material to represent the “community”.
4. Give the group a stick/ruler and explain the task.
5. They may go through multiple iterations, but the final diagram must be consensual.
6. Encourage them to explain each circle, its placement, size, and relative distance to other circles.
7. Carefully document.
8. Draw other circles that can represent the institutions (cyclone shelters, infrastructures, access to information, early warning systems, resources like drinking water, fuel wood, and social discrimination).
9. Separate diagrams may be made for separate themes.
10. They may go through multiple iterations, but the final diagram must be collectively agreed upon.
11. Carefully document.



These exercises reveal who in the community are closer to safety structures and who is at risk. It helps in the creation of necessary database for bringing the at-distance-groups/individuals closer to the safe zones by building their individual and collective capacities and initiating programs which break the barriers caused by caste, class, ethnicity, and gender. It can be a useful tool for mapping the gender-based vulnerabilities among and between men and women.

## Mapping influence of constructed groups



Understanding the role of constructed groups of women, such as SHGs, is an important undertaking. These groups not only help women to share their experiences within other group members, but also help provide financial and alternative political options, training in business development and create critical awareness in social and political dynamics. These functions of SHGs may challenge the gendered norms of the community and have direct impact on strategic gender needs (SGNs).

As these groups co-ordinate to form larger groups, they begin to present themselves as an element of society, rather than simply a “group of women”. When they are so perceived, they command a critical level of influence. Through the use of the aforementioned tools, it is possible to ascertain whether the SHG is exerting itself, and if so, how. Document these findings carefully and look especially for the causal links that precipitated the current state you have identified.

### **SPECIAL NOTE ON 'CONSTRUCTED' GROUPS**

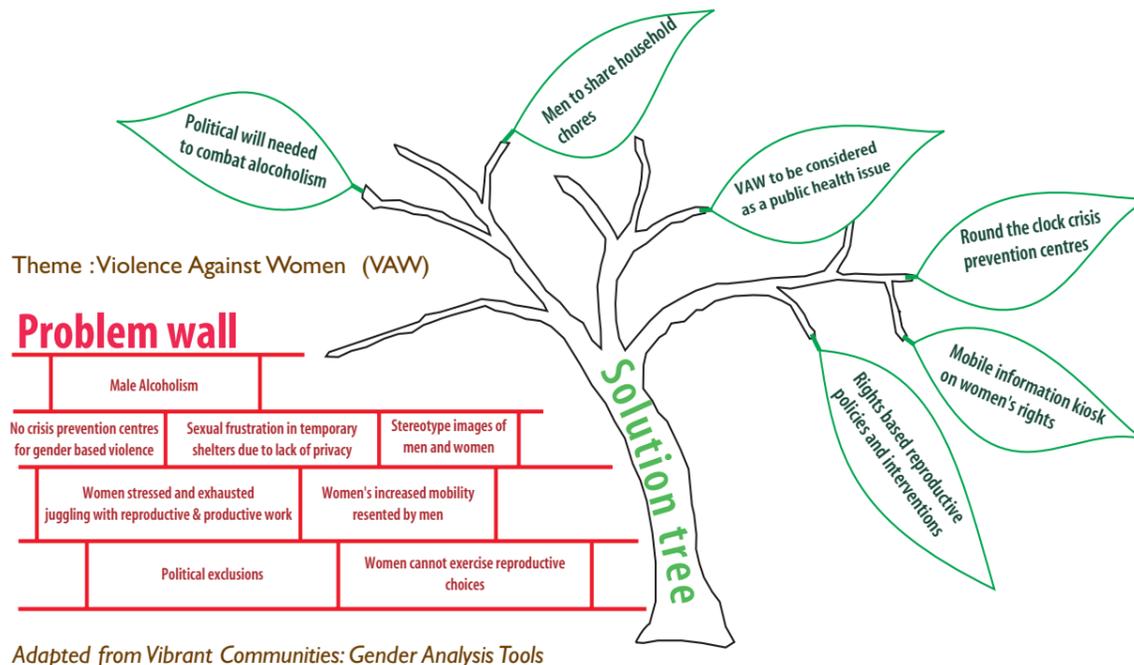
To gauge the influence the constructed groups have on the conventional power structures, examine whether

1. the groups have enough opportunity to interact.
2. the groups have a special agenda.
3. they have the economic strength to take up something.
4. they have social status.
5. they have external support.
6. the size of the groups and their interlinkages influence their interaction with the conventional power structure.



Once existing power structures have been charted, it must be realized that unless there is a deliberate and conscious plan to negotiate them, disaster response and risk reduction strategies will perpetuate pre-disaster biases and reinforce rather than reduce socially induced gender vulnerabilities.

## Problem Wall and Solution Tree



Adapted from Vibrant Communities: Gender Analysis Tools

This participatory tool can be used with an emphasis on gender-based issues to obtain more precise information for designing gender-sensitive intervention strategies.

The following 'Problem wall and Solution Tree' is made by the Tsunami affected people, with a focus on identifying issues and seeking solutions. The theme here was gender-based violence. Establishing initial rapport is particularly essential for facilitating this exercise on such a sensitive issue. This may involve some amount of self disclosure so that the problems are perceived as being common to all women, though the nature and extent may differ. Such a sincere attempt puts the participants immediately at ease. The participants should be assured that there are no right/wrong or good/bad answers and that all responses and reactions would be treated with respect. They should also be assured that according to their wishes confidentiality would be maintained.

**Participants:** Grassroots women in Gender Training, Thiruvankadu, Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu State, India, organized by Village Community Development Society.

**Facilitator:** Usha.

### **Problem Wall and Solution Tree**

1. Assemble a group of women.
2. Explain purpose of the exercise to the participants.
3. Give them paper bricks and leafs (keep them in your field kit).
4. Ask each of them to write a problem related to the major theme on the paper brick and a solution on the leaf.
5. You may also follow the same procedure for eliciting different problems pertaining to different areas.
6. If they are illiterate, you may write the problem and solution reported by them.
7. Maintain anonymity of the participants.
8. One participant can write more than one problem and solution on separate bricks and leaf.
9. Ask them to drop them in a box.
10. Open the box.
11. Ask the participants to sort out the bricks and leaves.
12. Encourage the participants to create a visual display of problems and solutions.



This tool can be used both before and after intervention. When used before an intervention, the tool will yield a map of problems and solutions generated at the grassroots. These constitute a powerful resource to guide the policy makers and program designers. The problems and solutions may also indicate easy entry points (practical gender needs;) and not so easy yet necessary interventions (strategic gender needs). While used after intervention, it can serve as a very effective monitoring and evaluation tool. The two visuals can be juxtaposed to track the progress made and the extent of mitigation that may have occurred.

### Resource Use and Control

#### Resource Use

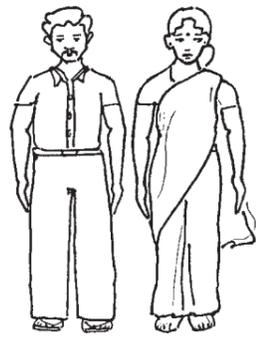


## Resource Use and Control

This tool is very effective in generating a lot of discussion, as people try to decide where to place a resource picture, whether under the image of women, men or both.

1. Have two sets of Resources Picture Cards, small stones to hold them in place if the exercise is carried out outdoors, or masking tape if used on a wall.
2. This tool quickly generates a lot of discussion as people try to decide where to place a resource picture, whether under the drawing for women, men, or both.
3. Specify that only the resources used or controlled 50%–50% by women and men are put under the drawing of both.
4. In case of lesser than 50%–50%, they should put the pictures under either the woman or the man to indicate who has majority use or control.
5. In their discussions, the participants will reach consensus about what each picture card stands for. For example, they may decide that the picture of baskets represents baskets for sale or baskets of stored grain.
6. Pictures of resources that are not relevant should be tossed out.
7. The blank cards should be used to add relevant resources not already shown.
8. Anticipate some variation among the different socio-economic groups, and these should be documented.

## Resource Control



## Resource Use and Control

Some questions to ask while facilitating:

1. Which resources do men/women/both use?
2. Is it women, men, or both who use the resources of high-value such as land, livestock and technology, boats and nets, etc.
3. Which resources do men/women/both have control over?
4. Is it men/women/both who make the decisions about the resources of high-value?
5. Among the women and men of different socio-economic groups, who are the resource-rich? Who are the resource-poor?
6. What are the links between women's labor and their use and control of resources?
7. What are the links between men's labor and their use and control of resources?

Adapted from Field Level Handbook by SEAGA



There may be differences in the use and control profile between different categories of women and men (women living with their spouses, widows living with sons, unmarried women, women heading the households, women belonging to women's collectives, women belonging to different age groups etc.

### **Desegregation means that**

- the term “community” is not all-inclusive. It is always better to disaggregate communities in terms of sex, age, marital status, disabilities, ethnicity, caste, class, etc.
- you should further disaggregate homogeneous categories of women and men. The data would then profile the elderly, teenagers but married women, pregnant women, widows, unmarried women in the family; and among men: single men with children, young married boys, etc.
- design your database carefully so that you are able to generate reports about households headed by women and those headed by children; households factually supported by women and children, people with disability, and the elderly.
- you create gender maps (where are the widows, power centers, women in violent situations, prostitutes) and enterprise maps (concentration of resources and assets, relative distribution of the same, types of occupations, locations of occupations, ways of marketing, etc.).



*Courtesy: AVVAI, SNEHA, FPAI and BLESS*

## The Disaggregated Dataset

This is the most difficult and time consuming tool. The outcome is a set of data, when combined with the other tools will make startlingly visible the gendered perceptions and stereotypes of the community.

The information will also allow for proper mapping of available resources and capacities, proving vital in the event of a disaster.

### Base questions you must ask

- Address
- Who is head of household
- ◆ income
- ◆ contribution to the sustenance of the household

#### For each member represented

- ◆ relationship to head of household
- ◆ age
- ◆ sex
- ◆ marital status
- ◆ “last” completed year of education
- ◆ dependents
- ◆ occupation/location of occupation
- ◆ any special skills
- ◆ any specific needs (disabilities, etc.)
- ◆ any special priorities/aspirations
- ◆ member of group(s)

#### Apart from focusing on each house, also make a database on

- Permanent pavement settlers
- Abandoned women and men
- Single men with children



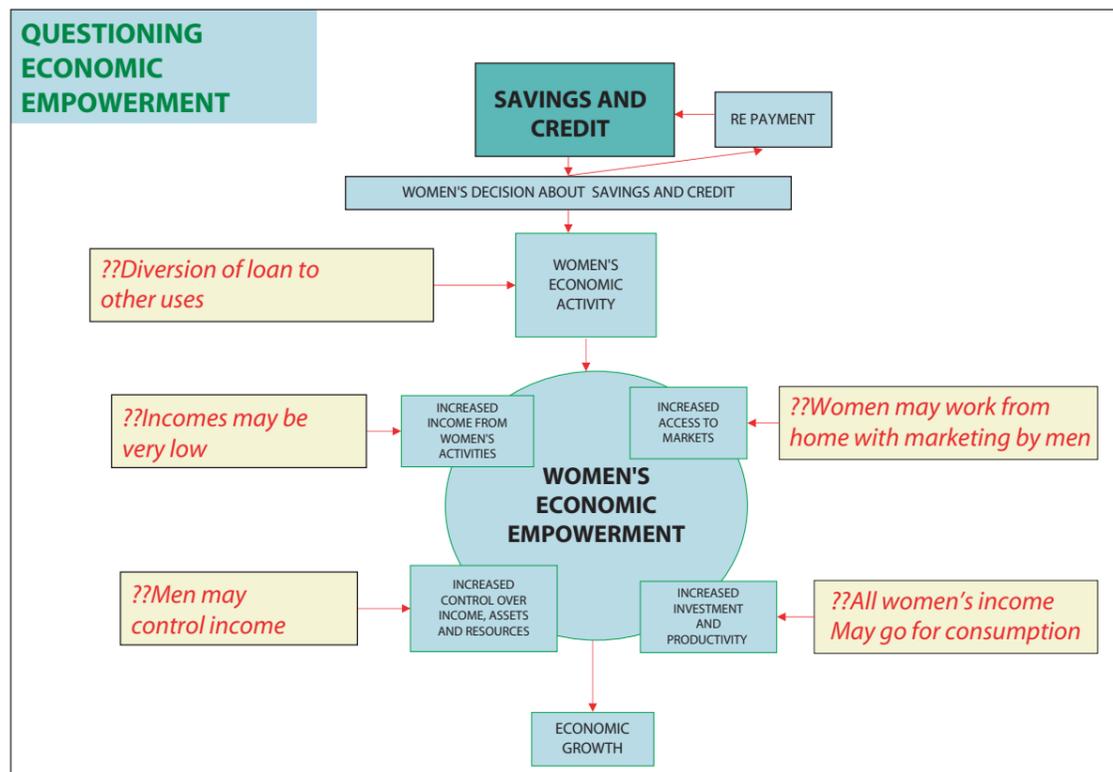
## Gender Workshops

The workshop on gender and disaster had integrated the concerns of transgender persons and interpreted them in the framework of PGNs and SGNs. The participants had performed a role-play on transgender persons, based on the field evidence of how they were excluded in the relief and rehabilitation process.

At the end of the training, during the feedback session, 15 out of 25 participants said they were leaving the workshop as changed human beings. Most of them were field workers and program coordinators and federation leaders. They resolved to work for the protection of the rights of the transgender persons in their areas and never treat them with contempt and neglect hereafter.

One of them said he would never again use the non-human term, i.e., 'it' for addressing them.





Courtesy: Resource Material, Agakhan Foundation

### Power of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) : An example

In many rehabilitation programs, women's livelihood issues are addressed through micro finance provided to women's SHGs. The access to micro credit is now widely acknowledged as a sure way to women's empowerment. Focus Group Discussions have revealed that any gender-sensitive intervention targeted at enhancing women's economic agency, need not lead to women's empowerment. Below is an analytical diagram in which information from discussions with women's SHGs in the Tsunami-affected areas is plotted against the assumptions guiding the policies and programs for livelihood recovery for women. Surprisingly, the results were almost similar to the ones portrayed in economic empowerment paradigm of Linda Mayoux.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) if guided by gender perspective can bring in wealth of information on gender issues which otherwise may not emerge. In the disaster management process, the first-hand information from grassroots has the power to transform the interventions to bring about structural changes in the gender power relations, a necessary condition for gender mainstreaming.

While facilitating FGD with men, women, and transgender persons, it is important that the facilitator possesses a conceptual clarity on gender issues. It is also important to be cautioned against accepting dominant assumptions at face value; the facilitator needs to probe deeper. It helps to encourage the participants to look into their life situations and reflect on the “whys” of it. Sometimes the participants’ response may reflect the adaptive values, brought about by the socialization process of a particular culture. Not all values and practices protect and promote women’s human rights; this is also true of the transgender persons.

The facilitator needs to be aware that certain terms, and assumptions stemming from them, which are generally unquestioned may hinder the process of mainstreaming gender. One such example is the often used term “culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions”. While remaining sensitive to the culture, a gender-aware facilitator would be alert and identify those cultural practices that create gender discrimination and violate rights of women. A gender-aware facilitator, while according due respect to the culture, would create an environment during focus groups that the participants with a sense of dignity, share their insights into how they look at the problems they face. Asking suggestions from them helps, or just informal talk on certain issues yields rich information for gender

analysis. FGD should attempt to actively seek responses to the most important questions which are fundamental to each tool described here.

### **Remember**

- ✓ This set of tools is not exhaustive.
- ✓ These tools, collectively, will help you plan for and mitigate the impact of a natural hazard.
- ✓ The tools assembled here have been selected and presented to elucidate as much gender relevant information as possible.
- ✓ These tools require minimum effort, time, and resources.
- ✓ The database is the biggest task, but the most powerful as it identifies individuals, rather than groups, within the community.
- ✓ The database, when collectively analyzed with the other tools, will provide you a powerful gender lens into the community of interest. It will then be your task to work with the community to identify PGNs and SGNs and build programs around them.
- ✓ For making effective use of the tools, match your findings with other tools like FGDs, semi-structured interviews, informal interactions, and case studies. For similar information from different tools, compare the results to either support or challenge the findings.

## Applying Gender Lens to Policies & Programs

Through the use of different tools, we have mapped the distribution of vulnerabilities, capacities, opportunities, and resources.

These maps can on one hand be used to evaluate existing Politics and Programs (P&Ps) on gender sensitivities and on the other can inform policy makers and program planning processes on the directions that would transform vulnerabilities into capacities.

The tools can be used again and again to assess if any course corrections are needed in a policy and program as well for trend analysis. For example the tools can be used to see whether the butterfly is being transformed into a web, or relationships circles are getting closer or constructed groups are exerting enough pressure on the power center or whether there are more similarities in the 24-hour clock between gender lines.

The situation may not change if policies are gender blind or gender neutral.

**Gender blind P&P** do not talk about men and women and are thus blind to gender differences in the allocation of roles and resources.



The Government Order (G.O.) that stipulates a relief package with one saree and one dhoti and does not include other clothing items without which women cannot wear a saree or the absence of sanitary napkin/towel in the package is a gender blind order.

**Gender neutral P&Ps** are aware of PGNs and SGNs but do not do anything about it.



Women are included in the task force of disaster management. However, typically they are members of childcare and first aid task force with almost no representation in task force for rescue and co-ordination.

The situation may improve to an extent if there is a gender specific policy in place.

**Gender specific P&Ps** are those that are aware of gender differences, but take them into account only to address the PGNs of women and men, and not strategic gender interests of women.



The G.O. that mandates relief cash goes into the hands of women. This role took into account women's reproductive role: they are responsible for caring and cooking, and hence they need resources to perform these acts.

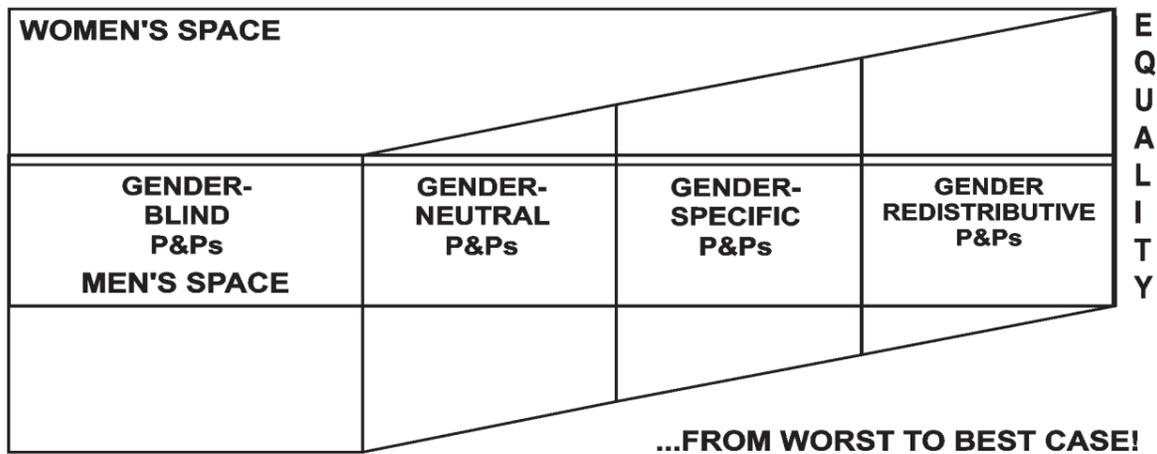
There will be a remarkable change when power and resources are redistributed to empower the subordinate gender to bring about transformation in power relationships.

**Gender Redistributive P&Ps** try to change the roles, resources, and allocation of power and responsibilities between men and women in society to promote gender equity for achieving the outcomes of gender equality.



1. The G.O. that mandates joint housing rights of the spouses.
2. The G.O. that mandates the use of ex-gratia for orphan adolescent girls and orphan unmarried women only for the purpose of higher study and enhancing the vocational skills for self-employment.

**THE RELATIVE IMAGE OF THE P&P PARADIGM...**



*Gender sensitive P&Ps reduce vulnerabilities and enhance capacities through processes that are participatory and grounded in the life experiences of women, men, and the other gender.*

**Some key questions for P&P analysis:**

- ✓ Whose needs or potentials are being addressed through the proposed policy? Who identified and prioritized them, and who was consulted in designing implementation strategies?
- ✓ Who is being targeted by the proposed policy? Which women/girls, which men/ boys? Are there groups who are totally excluded?
- ✓ Who is likely to lose from the intervention (which men and which women?)
- ✓ What benefits and gains flow from the intervention? Who is likely to gain from them?
- ✓ What assumptions are being made by the policy about gender division of labor, resources, and responsibilities? Who is likely to have access to them, who manages and who controls them?

Let us look at the field evidences given below through a gender lens and plot the changes on the tools above:



From the project area of Sreema Mahila Samiti, Nadia District, West Bengal



Sreema Mahila Samiti, an NGO in Nadia district, West Bengal, in its disaster preparedness programs has trained women SHGs in the skills of survival and rescuing. Women and girl children now swim fearlessly. Women can now put together temporary shelters, raise tube-wells, assemble emergency boats, and can row them to save themselves and others from the floods. These newly learnt skills and the encouragement to use them have made women less dependent on male members for their rescue. The program also concentrates on training children in survival skills. In some cases, women have been inducted into the rescue teams and men in the task force for childcare and first aid, generally considered to be a woman's work. This has helped in bringing women into the public domain and political processes of the community, challenging the stereotypical images of women and their capacities.

BLESS, an NGO in Tamil Nadu, works to help women venture into non-traditional income generating activities. For example, a women's SHG in Old Town, Cuddalore, established a courier service pre-Tsunami with assistance from an NGO. Embarking on such a non-traditional enterprise required extraordinary leadership qualities, resourcefulness, organized group efforts, a good business plan, the development of new skills such as riding cycles and bikes, as well as support from men.

The women in the SHG built up an enabling business environment by obtaining a certificate of recognition from the District Collector, by establishing links with institutions such as banks and government offices, and by mobilizing favorable public opinion.

Men (including the husbands of group members) also supported the initiative by teaching the group to cycle/ride bikes. Men also accepted the enhanced mobility of women and their need to sometimes come home late in the evening. The group of women backed by an NGO of long-standing relationship, known and respected in the community reduced the resistance of men. The support from collector's office for this initiative also motivated some young, educated men to support their wives in the initiative. Group members report that the relationship between husbands and wives improved in terms of mutual respect and recognition of each other's worth. The 20 women in this SHG have been travelling throughout Cuddalore district, making their mark in the public space.

BLESS has also trained women in repair and maintenance of hand pumps. Women were inconvenienced due to the need for frequent repairs and their dependency on male mechanics. Now, women no longer depend on men for repairs and do not have to spend money to hire a mechanic. Additionally, the training skills have enhanced their self esteem. Handling tools has helped to challenge occupational stereotypes along gender lines and has changed the perception of men, women, and children in the community concerning what women can and cannot do.

### Government of Tamil Nadu Initiative



Bhanumathi, aged 39, and mother of a girl, from Puddukuppam had gone to Trichy in Tamil Nadu State, for a government sponsored training for disaster preparedness, a week before the Tsunami struck the coastal areas. During the Tsunami, her contribution to the rescue operations remain etched in the memories of the entire village. She removed part of her own saree, tore it into two parts to cover two women who refused to get on to the rescue boats and hauled them onto the boats. However, she herself was swallowed by a ferocious wave minutes later in an attempt to rescue another woman, this time not because of socio-cultural norms but by sheer force of nature. The saree, which became the reason of death for many women, in this case was a means of rescuing other women from the Tsunami. Her 45-year-old husband remembers her with pride and feels that women should be encouraged to attend such trainings.

These examples have shown some of the action points that were initiated as proactive measures by organizations and the state in collaboration with women's collectives and men's groups.

Sometimes, it is through gut feeling that interventions may be initiated; however, systematic application of the tools would be able to bring out nuances and details of the gender dynamics between and among women and men.

## Remember

Communities may not be resistant to PGNs of women such as

- ✓ Improved health services including mobile health services with a team of health workers led by a woman doctor.
- ✓ Better transport.
- ✓ Better water and sanitation facilities.
- ✓ Better schools and childcare centers.
- ✓ Support for accessing the available social securities such as pensions and other government schemes for the vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Hence, interventions can be safely directed to these areas in such a way, that it furthers their strategic interests.

Remain prepared for resistance when interventions directly target strategic interests of women that challenge prevailing gender norms.

- For mobile legal awareness facilities.
- Patrolling for protecting women from gender-based domestic violence.
- Rights-based/gender aware counseling.
- High-value properties in the name of women, especially single women.

## Building Systems

For sustainability of the proactive interventions, systems need to be built. Some of the ways to engender disaster preparedness which would be reflected in disaster response and after is to

- Promote women's groups who can work alone as well as with the groups of adolescent girls and boys.
- Leverage already established groups: SHGs, Federations, Confederations, etc.
- Include representation from the excluded, women with disabilities, the elderly, and the socially marginalized women if they do not have any.

Invest in women and other marginalized groups to prepare them for new roles for building and enhancing capacities for

- Handling camp management and logistics.
- Collecting sex- and gender- disaggregated data, including groups of people who often fall outside of existing social security nets.
- Early warnings, rescue, and evacuation among other roles such as first aid and childcare.
- Patrolling for security and protection of women, adolescent girls, and children. This would also include protection against domestic violence. Young women and men after sustained awareness trainings on gender issues could work with these groups.

Also facilitate by

- Building teams of health workers, the experience of the elderly women and men in indigenous medicines can be leveraged here.
- Training a team in how to get access to information related to relief and rehabilitation entitlements and how to prepare immediate write-ups on issues that need urgent attention, how to dialogue with aid agencies, government officials, and NGOs.
- Training the groups in analyzing their own situations, both in development and disaster contexts. A gender researcher with good experience in the field can facilitate the capacity building. The ultimate aim is that they themselves can analyse their problems.
- Developing capacities for needs' analysis for both women and men, remembering the fact that women are more aware of the needs of men, because of their care taking roles whereas men are not clear about women's needs (workshop with men on women's needs in a disaster situation and women on men's needs in the similar situation).
- Ensuring substantial representation of women in different disaster management committees.
- Managing village knowledge center with their male counterparts. These village knowledge centres can function as one-stop outlets for information on government orders, schemes, as well as support to access them.
- Sensitizing these groups and government officials on various policy declarations on what is meant by women empowerment by national and international policies.
- Strengthening PRIs and women's meaningful participation in it.



When women are aware and involved, hitherto unvoiced needs are articulated. These are often overlooked or not even perceived due to internalized values equating womanhood with sacrifice, suffering and tolerance.

**Do not forget to**

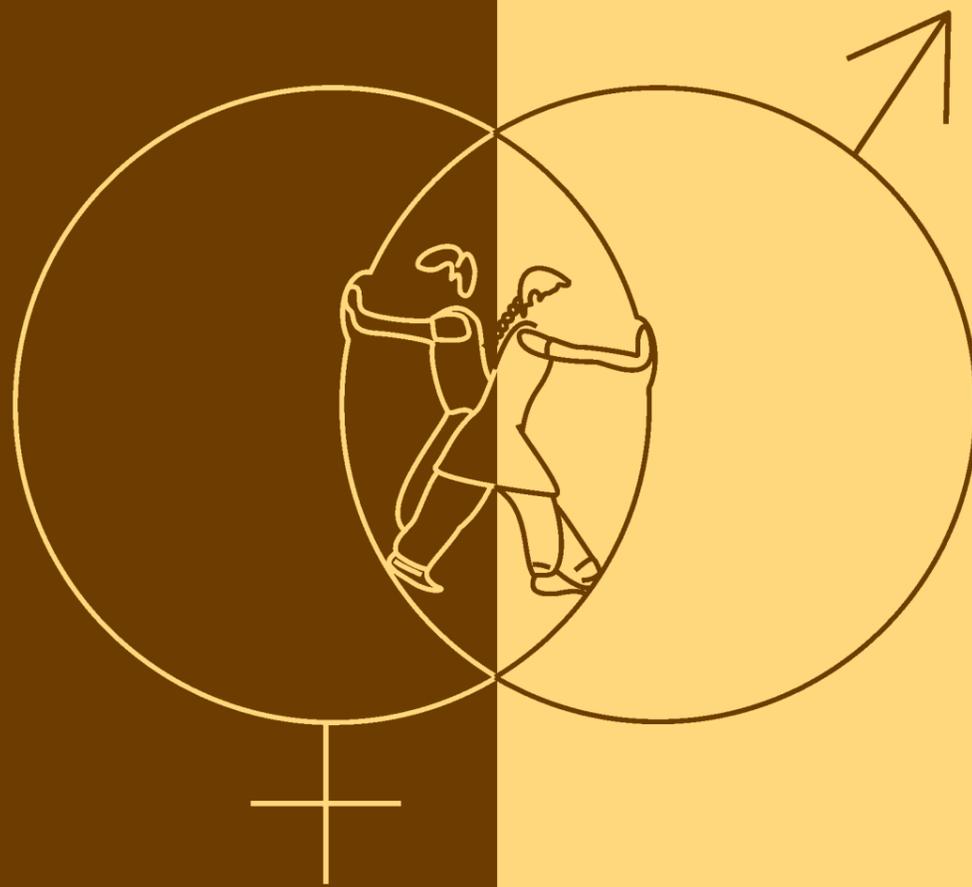
- give equal importance to forming and sensitizing men's groups in sharing household responsibilities and childcare with women. Residential workshops for INGO/NGO and grassroots for men and women with investment of minimum 5 days separately and in mixed groups is seen to be triggering thoughts and reflections among them (feedback from gender workshops).
- include men in childcare and first aid teams to let them practice these skills in an external environment: They are more likely to get transferred in the homes.

Men, who were members of childcare team in the community-based disaster preparedness program in West Bengal revealed that they now do not mind washing soiled nappies of their children and taking care of them when their wives are cooking. They also know how to prepare oral rehydration solution (ORS) and tend to their sick children. They find themselves more responsible and caring.

- Facilitate collective forums for transgender persons. Sensitize women and men of the community on their claims over entitlements, which constitute a decent and dignified life.



While addressing the practical needs of women, men, and transgender persons, keep focusing on strategic needs of women and transgender persons: enhancing political participation, building non-traditional skills, legal awareness, building collectives as well as a critical awareness of their situation and needs.



*RESPONDING TO DISASTER*

In the foregoing sections we have learned about gendered issues and tools that help in gender mapping and integration of gender concerns in disaster preparedness and mitigation.

In this chapter we turn our attention to gender issues in disaster response and recovery. In the first section we discuss good practices in gender mainstreaming, demonstrated by selected NGOs in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. In the second section we look at a number of cases where gender mainstreaming efforts have fallen short.

### **Remember the often-voiced concern**

#### **Is it possible to think about gender in emergency operations?**

The following examples gathered during the course of our field research in the Tsunami affected areas in Tamil Nadu show, , **“Yes, it is possible”**. While most of these interventions were consciously thought-out strategies, some were the results of a momentum that gathered within the grassroots women when NGOs underlined gender concerns in the relief and rehabilitation process.

The examples also unequivocally demonstrate how disaster response and recovery process provides an opportunity to challenge and effect transformational changes in individuals and institutions alike.

#### **Meeting strategic interests of women through relief distribution**

SNEHA, an NGO in Nagapattinam, was firm that relief should be channeled through women’s Federations and extended its support

when self-help groups (SHGs) were negotiating resistance from traditional Panchayats. This also became a strategic opportunity for institutionalizing women's groups in disaster preparedness. The Federation had conducted a snap survey and prepared a gender-disaggregated data base. This proved to be an invaluable tool in the verification of the list prepared by traditional Panchayat. Members of the Federations were quickly able to spot the excluded women and men. The gender-disaggregated survey made it possible to procure age- and gender-appropriate clothing and other sanitary items for each household in the community. The entire relief operation was carried out in several stages and was both quick and well coordinated. Distribution was according to the family size. This operation by SNEHA is a fine example of how it is possible to respond to an emergency in a manner that is equitable and gender sensitive.

### **Steps in relief distribution**

- Conducted a comprehensive needs analysis through Women's Federations.
- A beneficiary list was prepared by the Federations.
- The federations obtained quotations for the supplies from several vendors.
- Quotations were compared for pricing and quality.
- Purchases were made on a bulk basis.
- Supplies were packed by the Federation members who were paid daily wages.
- Each village prepared a comprehensive list of families.

- The Federations resisted the demands of the Traditional Panchayat for the right to distribute.
- Skillful negotiations lead to Traditional Panchayat agreeing to distribution by Federations.
- Federations organized load vehicles For transporting the supplies.
- Tokens were issued to rights-holders.
- Traditional Panchayat leaders invited by Federation to be present at the distribution phase.
- Relief supplies were distributed.
- The federations rechecked to make sure nobody was excluded.



The efficient logistics, handled by women themselves, also went beyond the extension of women's domestic role to the community services such as cleaning the surroundings or distributing relief to women alone.

SNEHA extended the Balwadi (childcare center) timing from 12 a.m. to 6 p.m. in view of the time women normally return home from work. The NGO, in fact, had made effective use of the 24-hour activity clock.

### **Focus on single woman's girl children**

EKTA provided educational support to girls of widowed women. This helped reduce the economic burden on the women, brought one of the most vulnerable groups – girls of single mothers – into a safety zone by keeping them at school and simultaneously challenged the convention of preferential treatment for boys. The

process asserted the right to childhood for girls. The process was not simple. It involved:



- ☞ resisting pressures from the community to give aid to all in an equitable manner. It was made clear to the community, especially the traditional all male village councils (panchayats) that it would be an either/or strategy. Either the aid would go to the girls of single women or it would be withheld completely. Along with taking a stand on the issues, the organization also held meetings to sensitize women and men on the issue.
- ☞ Using the opportunity to strategically advance rights of young girls.
- ☞ Focusing the spotlight on single women and their issues.
- ☞ Combining concerns of single women and their young daughters.

A long-term intervention to focus on the girl children of single women through distribution of educational accessories did more than keeping the most vulnerable girl children at school. It challenged the stereotypes of male preference; it underpinned the dignity of single women and the girl children. It asserted the right to childhood for girl children.

#### INSIGHTS

Underpinning the program is a philosophy of holistic development of the girl children. Reproductive health being a critical area of concern in a woman's life, the strategy was to make the provision of educational accessories conditional on regular health check ups and follow ups by a woman doctor.

It was also the policy of the NGO that mothers had to accompany the children for their health check ups. Exceptions were made for extremely difficult situations when mothers said they were not able to. These visits to the doctor have familiarized the mothers with the health status of their young daughters and have resulted in them becoming more serious about their young daughters' reproductive health.

#### INSIGHTS

Many single women admitted that but for this gender-focused intervention they could not have afforded the school expenses of the girls. As it was quite common for girls to drop out of school because of poverty and/or increased work burden of household chores, the NGO recruited women staff directly from the dalit and fishing communities of the target areas and trained them in gender, reproductive health, legal rights, etc. Their brief was to maintain continuous communication with mothers and motivate them to encourage their children to go to school regularly.

#### Non-traditional roles for women and men

Alternative livelihood options for women, in non-traditional skills such as masonry, mobile phone servicing, and hand-pump repairing, were enabled by HOPE, CARE Trust, and BLESS. In the process collaborative spaces (where women and men and girls and boys learned and worked together) were created and strengthened.

HOPE in Tranquebar has trained 60 women from fishing as well as non-fishing communities to become masons. About 75 percent of them are currently engaged as masons in construction work, some for the housing project of an NGO which hires women



masons trained by HOPE. Women who were previously head loading at the construction sites are now working as masons with daily wages doubled, i.e., Rs.150 per day, than what they used to receive as head loaders. Although there is a difference between the wages of women and men masons by Rs. 50, the gains are undeniable. The rationale forwarded by men in defense of this gender gap in daily wages is that women are not experienced or can not lay the roofs. However what must not be overlooked is that the process of rolling out women masons in itself is significant. In the course of training to be masons, women are becoming functionally literate and learning the basic calculations necessary for masonry. Women are proud that they are now measuring walls, laying bricks and plastering. A mason's tool is now a symbol of empowerment for these women.

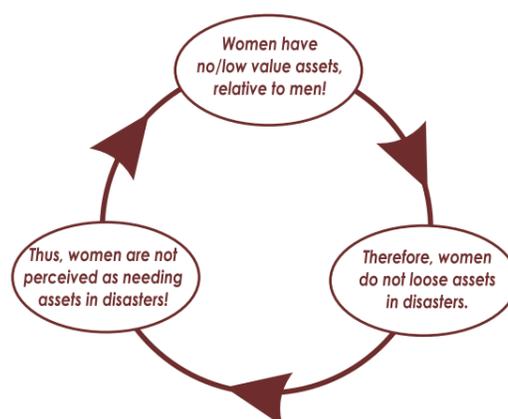
BLESS supported women's groups' efforts to put pressure on men to share the community work, and challenge gender role stereotypes.

### INSIGHTS

Men who customarily would not take up brooms and sweep the houses or by extension the streets, have been motivated post-Tsunami by the health committee, comprising women's SHGs representatives, to sweep the streets clean. In Sivanarpuram, Cuddalore district, the sight of jobless men idly loitering away their time made women see the anomaly of the situation. The SHGs, already known for their heightened awareness resulting from their training in the close links between health and sanitation, have earned respect within the community. Using this opportunity to break the gender stereotypes in community work, women from the SHGs assertively persuaded men to share the work of cleaning the streets and segregating the garbage into bio- and non-biodegradable piles. Men have now started to clean up the streets and water points and into segregating the waste once in a week. This is a considerable gain for the community where men had seldom swept either in private or in public spaces.

### Challenging vicious circle

Following are instances where SNEHA and PEDDA challenged the vicious circle of women's ownership and access to low-value assets.



SNEHA along with the grant money Rs.3000 for individual fisher woman in their work areas in Nagapattinam district, also provided an auto carrier for the Fisher women's Federations for relieving the burden of carrying headloads and increasing their mobility.

SNEHA's seed money of Rs.3000 enabled the women to resume their livelihoods though they continue to face the challenge of generating enough income through fish-vending in a scenario of dwindling catch. The seed money provided the initial impetus when they needed it most, as they possessed nothing to resume their livelihoods with. While men had received boats and the Government Orders were issued promptly for rehabilitating their livelihoods, women across occupations had remained deprived. With their pre-Tsunami loan burdens, women needed the initial seed capital in the form of a grant. While some women used the grant money to start selling fish; others bought assets or replaced the tools of their trade, which they had lost in the Tsunami.

This is an example of how asset ownership by Federations strengthens their institutional capacities. The Federation is now ready to buy another auto in view of increased demand for it as well as the sustainability of income it ensures. The organization has also invested in a stock of vessels and rents them out to all the taluk-level fisher women Federations. The rental value has proved to be a good source of income for the organization. Already there has been an increase in the inventory of vessels, as the Federation has re-invested the profit in buying more vessels due to increased demand.

The strategy PEDDA adopted was to facilitate collective ownership of boats by women's SHGs. To promote the ownership of highly valued productive assets, PEDDA successfully implemented its strategy of

handing over 20 boats to 6 women's SHGs. Although the boats are jointly owned by a group of 4 women each, they are rented out to the husbands' or sons' of the group members. Widowed women who did not want the ownership of boats were given Rs.20,000 cash instead. Around 8 widows are now owners of the boats, and this has enhanced their position within homes as well as in the community.

The strategy needed some tough posturing both from PEDDA

#### INSIGHTS

Although the sharing system is skewed in men's favor, it still constitutes a monumental gain for the women. It has enhanced their esteem both in the eyes of the communities as well as the traditional Panchayat. Women have reported that they are now more often included in the decision making at household levels.

and women's SHGs. PEDDA made it explicitly clear that the boats would be made available on condition that they would be under the joint-ownership of women. The traditional panchayat of Pudupettai, Nagapattinam district, was initially reluctant as this move would set a precedent contrary to the customary practices of the fishing communities. The dominant neighboring Tharangambadi traditional Panchayat tried to intimidate its counterpart in Pudupettai. There were fears of gender-based violence as women often went to Tharangambadi for shopping and accessing the health care facilities. But women stood their ground and said that if the joint ownership proposals of SHGs was not acceptable, they would return the boats to the donor. In its turn, the Panchayat after some reflection yielded.

## INSIGHTS

Women now go to the male-dominated net mending shed, and have made their presence felt in the public domain. Women now prepare the nets for fishing and men at times help them. Although their workload has increased, so has their satisfaction. They look forward to their own income that is placed in their accounts. Reportedly, the traditional Panchayat, has started taking these groups seriously.

### Challenging stereotyped image of men

Alcoholism among men and recourse to alcohol as a coping strategy is generally socially condoned. However, there are few interventions that have addressed this issue:

PRAXIS adopts a two pronged strategy to tackle this issue. On the one hand, it supports women in organizing campaigns at the community level, and on the other it works with men's sangams (groups, which focus equally on economic, social, and political rights of women and men) which were formed post-Tsunami.

PRAXIS makes de-addiction and eschewing violence against women mandatory among the norms that men's sangams are encouraged to evolve. Access to benefits such as micro credit, housing, or boats has been made conditional on dedication, which is to be verified by the wives. The group takes disciplinary steps against any member who fails to abide by these group norms.

Men's sensitization to these issues is a crucial component in PURA'S work along with empowering women through leadership training and enhancing awareness through SHGs. Participating in periodic meetings and abstaining from drinking through out the day instilled confidence in men that they can survive without drinking.

Some have been able to go for three days in a week without drinking. A group member in Vathakkavillai, Kanyakumari district, has completely given up alcohol and feels he is much healthier and

#### INSIGHTS

Out of 20 members of a men's sangam, in Aaruthnganvilai, KK district, 12 have reduced alcohol consumption drastically or given it up altogether. Alcohol reduction, they admitted, has reduced their aggression towards their children and wives. They also feel healthier and are able to work without getting tired. The money they save is used for household purposes. Indebtedness has decreased, which motivates them to give up alcohol completely (focus group discussion with members of men's *sangam*).

happier now. There is a marked decrease in verbal and physical abuse of his wife at home. His respect in the community and home has increased; this is a monumental change in the household.

#### INSIGHTS

PURA's engagement with women and men through its social advocacy program, post-Tsunami, has kept men busy in various activities in their free time, (time they would have otherwise spent drinking) such as cleaning the pond, preparing time tables for the bus services, and rearing chicks which can be distributed to the group members.

## Housing rights for women

Joint ownership of housing mandated by Government Order on Tsunami has challenged the male-only ownership of the houses, thus addressing the strategic gender needs of women.

SNEHA's strategy of rebuilding in situ houses through community participation had a very positive impact on both women and men. Cash was transferred in the name of women on installment basis accompanied by close monitoring to ensure that money is strictly spent on house construction. It emerged from FGD with women and men that men have reduced drinking to channel money into building their homes. This is the first time that women have their own bank accounts. The housing design and construction was carried out entirely by the community excepting masonry work as presently there are no trained men and women masons in the community.



**Do not forget to look beyond!**

Sometimes interventions may bring in unintended positive impacts on gender roles and relations.

- The unintended positive impact of the above mentioned intervention strategy is that there is an emerging need for masonry training in the community. Both women and men have realized the importance of having skilled masons for greater cost effectiveness and better employment opportunity with higher wages available in construction work.
- Though Health Food, a PRAXIS supported project, does not have market linkages yet, the non-monetary benefits are being

experienced in the households of a few group members. The preparation for health food involves cleaning and roasting large quantities of grains. Husbands of a few members help in cleaning and roasting the grains as well as running errands for their wives.

- When grains need to be cleaned and roasted, instead of spending their evenings gambling or chatting and drinking with their friends the men get busy helping their wives in roasting. There is increased co-operation in other areas too, such as taking care of children when the wives are out at meetings, and sometimes even cooking. All this has strengthened the family unit.



The gains made through disaster response and recovery initiatives need to be sustained by integrating them into Risk Reduction Strategies. The insights gained by using a gender can be integrated in risk reduction measures at both policy and program levels for mitigating gender-based vulnerabilities.

### **Learning from what went wrong and why?**

Learning from what went wrong and why is as important as learning from what went well and why.

The following section does not cover entire gamut of issues but gives indicative examples of what happens in the absence of proper gender analysis.

- While several NGOs have made an attempt to collect sex and gender-specific data in broad categories, they still missed out on some categories such as unmarried women, scattered poor women and men, widows without children, women with only girl children, abandoned women and men.

- Segregation of women and men while forming SHGs, without prior gender analysis of existing socio-cultural practices may introduce new elements that can weaken the harmonious nature of their existence.

#### **INSIGHTS**

One NGO (name withheld) for example, distributed cell phones to men's SHGs and not to women SHGs in the Irula community. Aligning technology with men and not with women in a community is one example of bringing mainstream biases into a community free of such biases. This is a glaring example of an absence in gender perspective in program staff.

- Implementing gender-targeted programs without an appropriate gender analysis may result in unanticipated, negative impact:
- While it is a positive development that women's role in production

#### **INSIGHTS**

A women's SHG had bought a freezer of large capacity, with the interest-free credit they got from one of the NGOs, to make up for the reduced availability of fish locally as well as to reduce heavy head loading. Women started going to Kanyakumari harbor, an hour's journey from their place, late in the evening to buy fish in large quantity and came back home only at around 2 a.m. the next day. After returning, they would clean the fish and stock them in the freezer. By the time they were ready to go to bed, it was time, for their husbands to go to the sea. While some women reported that they woke up late, others suffered from inadequate sleep. In some instances, old women experienced an increase in their work load as they had to do household chores in the morning. On the whole, women reported being extremely tired and suffered severe body and leg pain. The hours women worked increased substantially.

and their family's resources have expanded through access to credit, they have often been burdened with the responsibility of repayment. This is particularly true in cases where women who were not working outside home before the Tsunami have taken up economic activities, in households with male alcoholism, and in instances when activities have been introduced without attention to marketing, and necessary facilitating conditions.

- At times, interventions targeted at one group of men/women

#### INSIGHTS

- Kuttiamma bought a large stock of fuel wood and stocked it in the open. Predictably it rained and the stock became wet and useless. A depressed Kuttiamma feared she would again be trapped in the debt and repayment cycle. This situation could have been completely averted by a thatched warehouse that could have kept the firewood safe.
- Nirmala who invested in coconut sales business cannot head load a large amount and has limited sales per day. She says, "If the loan had been combined with some assets like a tricycle, a lot more could have been sold. "In the tricycle, we can keep our food and water too and do not have to walk long distances. We can also combine our ware with other items like garlic and tamarind for door-to-door selling."
- A health food joint venture initiated by a SHG with financial technical support from an NGO could not market its products. Besides the absence of market linkages, the shelf-life of the health food was too short due to lack of airtight packing. No packing machine was provided despite continuous reminders from the SHG.

have been successful for one group but detrimental to the other group.

### INSIGHTS

In one community a majority of men who were engaged in transporting fish from the shore to the lorries, loading and unloading, and workers, mostly dalits, in the ice plants are now without any work as interventions from a non-participating NGO is directly accessing the catch from the fishermen and sending the load to markets in Kerala. This action by the NGO was intended to benefit the fishermen by getting them better returns on their catch. Instead this has led to the womenfolk working for low wages or to their borrowing from the local moneylender. Womenfolk of the displaced men are especially bearing a disproportionate burden of worries and juggling multiple tasks. They also fear that as their circumstances worsen, they will not be able to borrow money from the moneylender; this is a vicious cycle as it is through borrowing money that most women are retaining their membership in SHGs which provides internal loans in times of crisis. An ironic situation indeed!

### Government response through gender lens: Sample cases

- Delivery mechanism of ex-gratia caused many elderly women who did not benefit from the scheme to work despite their age and failing health not only for their own survival but also for their dependents. There are many cases of elderly women supporting their grandchildren either because the father remarried or abandoned his parenting responsibilities due to excessive drinking after his wife's death in the Tsunami.

- The ex-gratia was not based on realistic considerations which a gender analysis would have revealed. Most women are identified with household sustenance and care and remain in supplementary productive activities. The opportunity cost of a man who is considered to be the main productive source is much bigger for a family than the one who did not lose a man. A family with a man dead and with the woman not earning enough to feed five mouths gets Rs. 2,00,000 but a family with only a man survivor gets Rs. 8,00,000 (Focus groups).
- A child who lost both parents got Rs 5,00,000 safe deposited, but a child who lost only his father receives Rs. 51,000, although the needs are no different, especially in the case where mothers had remained occupied only with household work and never went for work.
- Government order related to housing missed a strategic opportunity to raise the status of unmarried women in the household.

**INSIGHTS**

Strategic interests of women can be advanced through collective (as well as individual) ownership of land and assets, collective ventures, legal awareness, capacity building in needs and capability assessment, collective marketing, building management skills, training in non-traditional life and occupational skills and finally equipping them with the capacities for analyzing the impacts

**Look for sex-** and gender-specific practical needs of women. Ways can be devised that meeting such needs addresses women's strategic interests.

**Know the difference** between the two and their inter-relations.

### INSIGHTS

Sanitary napkins/towels are a sex-specific need; distribution of Burqua\* is a gender-specific need. In one of the Muslim localities in Nagapattinam, living alongside fisherfolk, women were not able to use the toilets or access medical facilities in the medical camps without *Burqua* (Focus groups with affected Muslim women).

**Look into** the linkages between the needs such as construction of temporary and permanent shelter and home-based occupation; childcare centers and their timings; and measures to sensitize men in childcare as well as other necessary skills such as cooking and managing households.

**Always Remember** the strategic interests of women in the process of disaster response and preparedness. Make use of the tools given in Chapter 3. Bring your own insights into how you use these tools and across which contexts.

**Focus on** gender-based vulnerabilities and capacities rather than sheer physical exposure to technological or environmental hazards.

\* An enveloping outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions for the purpose of cloaking the entire body. It is worn over the usual daily clothing and removed when the woman returns to the sanctuary of the household (sources : Wikipedia)

## Points to Ponder

Ensuring gender sensitive response in disaster risk reduction requires that it is linked to overall development planning. The following checklist offers key points for various stakeholders, i.e., policy makers, NGOs, INGOs, and donor agencies. These however, are not exhaustive. When stakeholders wear the gender lens, many more dimensions can emerge, which can be added to the list. Although the few recommendations below are grouped under different sections, they are cross-cutting concerns for all stakeholders.

### Policy level

- Collect and use gender-disaggregated data on marginalized and most vulnerable sections of the community to inform relief and rehabilitation and disaster mitigation policies. The database should be periodically updated.
- A review of policies related to disaster response and preparedness and other guidelines should be taken up from a gender perspective.
- Joint entitlements in land/house titles and monetary compensation should be made mandatory.
- Monetary compensation should possibly be divided into various heads, e.g., children's education, livelihood, household expenses, medical expenses, and the like rather than a lump-sum amount.
- Constitution of an inter-agency gender team with representation from grassroots women's groups to monitor the implementations of policy recommendations.

- Long-term livelihood options that are linked with the development plans of the affected area should be put in place.
- Both women and men should be included in disaster management teams at all levels. Among women and men, representation of marginalized groups should be ensured.
- No opportunity should be lost in bringing proactive legislation to protect and promote human rights of women and other marginalized groups. For example, the spate of marriages that happen can be turned into a context to introduce legislative measures to make birth and marriage registration compulsory and accessible.
- Social security cards should be issued to all men, women, children and transgender persons affected by disaster.

### **NGOs must**

- ensure that planning and implementation of development and disaster management are gender sensitive at all stages of disaster cycle.
- understand livelihoods from a gender perspective. The differential needs of men and women should be clearly recognized and addressed accordingly. When analyzing needs of women, focus should be consciously directed at their sometimes unarticulated strategic as well as practical gender needs.
- encourage programs to sensitize men as well as women on issues related to alternative gender roles and images.
- sensitize men and women to accept women's ownership and control of assets as well as women's right to live a life free of violence both in private and public domains. This may not happen

in a short span of time. What it requires is long-term synergies between policies and programs to enhance gender sensitivity through schools, informal and formal groups of women, men, and children, and practitioners.

- address issues like alcoholism, violence against women, and dowry in a focused and gender-sensitive way in response, rehabilitation, disaster preparedness, and mitigation projects. It may need examining such cultural practices that deprive women and children of their basic human rights to a life with dignity and free from violence.
- build strong supportive systems within income-generating projects until the final stage of the project.
- strengthen community awareness on their rights and entitlements in disaster situations.
- involve community women and men and the transgender population in all stages of planning of a development intervention: design/planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- understand local contexts/specificities/practices to ensure that locally appropriate but rights-based interventions are put in place.
- identify and list successful gender strategies used by the communities living in disaster-prone areas.

### **Strengthening humanitarian response**

The role of humanitarian agencies in any disaster situation is to respond quickly and effectively in an emergency and ensure that there is minimal loss of life and that fewer people suffer deprivation.

The following key points will help humanitarian agencies in ensuring

that disaster response and mitigation is linked to overall development planning and that it is gender sensitive:

- Distribution of relief should be based on headcounts, rather than on the basis of per family.
- SHGs (Self Help Groups), Federations, and CBOs (Community-based Organization) should be given formal responsibility for handling relief, cash assistance, shelter management, food procurement and supply.
- Cash for incidental expenses should be channeled to women or men who are responsible for managing the households.
- Practical needs of both men and women engaged in risky and marginalized occupations should be taken care of in the ongoing development programs.
- Immediate needs of transgender persons, like shelter, clothing, and incidentals should be consciously taken care of in the disaster contexts. The strategic interventions to improve their status should be integrated in the development planning.
- Gender-disaggregated data should be collected and made available for use in disaster and relief distribution with special attention to extremely vulnerable groups.
- No opportunity should be missed to create collective asset base for women. Collective assets are more sustainable and less prone to control by men.
- One-stop crisis and counseling/trauma centers should be established for women and children as the psychological effects of disasters on women are greater due to their particular roles, responsibilities, and gender-specific vulnerabilities.



- Trauma/counseling and de-addiction centers should be established for men especially those who have suffered loss of family members and livelihoods.
- Care centers for the elderly should be set up, especially for those who have no family support or live in conditions of neglect within the families.
- Programs to enhance women's capacities and knowledge in disaster management should be facilitated on a regular basis.
- Research on gender issues in disasters should be undertaken to inform policy and program interventions.

By always considering women as vulnerable, we are reinforcing the stereotype image of a woman as some one naturally vulnerable, as though the vulnerability is given and not socially constructed. The fact is that vulnerability is a function of lack of capacity, space, choices and opportunities. For example, a man who does not know to swim is vulnerable relative to a woman who knows it. Women face gender-based disadvantages for making choices, building capacities and claiming spaces. It will help immensely, if instead of joining the chorus of "Women are vulnerable", we concentrate on building and strengthening their capacities.

— *Ms. Bani Saraswati, Director, Sreema Mahila Samiti, West Bengal*





## About NANBAN

Based in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India, NANBAN Trust is a centre working to advance the rights of underprivileged and abandoned children living in unsafe environments and engaged in odd jobs and risky occupations. NANBAN has been working for the past two decades in developing a community based approach to protect and promote the rights of these underprivileged children and reduce the impact of social 'apartness'. It added in its fold the marginalized women needing support. NANBAN is actively engaged in research, advocacy and lobbying for policy changes for the empowerment of marginalized children and women.

Post-Tsunami NANBAN stood up to face the challenge to build the resilience amongst the individuals and communities. NANBAN is driven by a strong belief that the degree of presence or

absence of gender-peace and gender-justice is directly related with the degree of resilience and vulnerabilities of a community. Adopting a holistic approach, NANBAN works towards creating and enhancing safe spaces—social, political and economic—for children and women.

In accordance with its philosophy of protection of human rights for children and gender equity, NANBAN takes pride in hosting Oxfam America supported publication: Gender Sensitive Disaster Management: A toolkit for Practitioners. The organization believes that its participation in the publication of this work would conceptually strengthen its own gender perspectives which, in turn, would be integrated in its research, advocacy and intervention programs.

[www.nanbanindia.org](http://www.nanbanindia.org)

## About the Author

Chaman is a gender researcher and consultant and has been actively engaged, over the past decade, in promoting a deeper understanding of the gender issues. As a consultant she has substantial experience in working for local, national and international NGOs in developing and implementing training, research and resource building in the diverse field of gender concerns. A member of the Steering Group of Gender and Disaster Network, Chaman is a doctoral student in the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras. Her work centres on mainstreaming gender in the flood management.



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