

Gender and inclusion in risk governance of the evolving risk scenarios

Introduction

Gender inequality heightens exposure to disaster risk, increases vulnerability and restrains capacity to anticipate, adapt and recover from disasters and to contribute effectively to resilience building.

COVID-19 pandemic has brought in new elements of risks and vulnerabilities. The overall situation demands revisiting disaster vulnerability and approaches to disaster risk governance.

The problem

The gender dimensions of Covid-19 and its impact are recognised worldwide. It highlighted women's work and capacities in care giving, in producing food and other goods, in maintaining wellbeing of families, both in formal and informal settings. It also showcased how gender specific barriers worsened the situation for women.

The prolonged confinement/lockdown is increasing challenges for both women and men, however due to pre-existing gender based economic, social and institutional disparities and gender identities, negative impacts fall disproportionately on women and girls across all social and age groups. Women's work as wage earners, caregivers, migrant workers, entrepreneurs; engagement in public health aspects of pandemic management; maintaining sexual and reproductive health take place in gendered cultures and economies. Many lost livelihoods and daily wages, estimated 60- 80% income reduction for informal sector workers in Asia in just the first month of the pandemic (ILO). This reduction pushed those already in precarious employment, into a worsened situation. Women remain at the bottom of the wage pyramid with little or no social protection. Staying at home made care arrangements more complex, and prevailing sexual divisions of labour put added pressure on women. Incidence of domestic/intimate partner violence, suicide, maternal mortality also reportedly increased in many countries.

Significantly, these impacts are not temporary. Ongoing and escalating effects of COVID-19 are compounded by extensive and intensive disasters resulting from natural hazards, exacerbating existing gender based inequalities in risk reduction and resilience.

The pandemic has changed the disaster risk scenarios, adding greater challenges. Health risks are a significant addition to the overall hazard risk profiles. Risk governance therefore needs to be approached from this new risk scenario.

Key priorities of action to strengthen disaster risk governance

Considering that existing risk governance approaches are severely limited in addressing gender concerns in risk reduction and resilience, the current scenario is both a challenge and an opportunity to close this gap.

APMCDRR needs to consider, debate, highlight the changes that need to be made in policies/institutional mechanisms/financing/planning/practices/capacity building approaches/SoPs for disaster risk management to include the learning from COVID-19. The deliberations from now until the conference need to deconstruct the way in which we understand risk governance with reference to all four priorities of the Sendai Framework and look at ways to incorporate the complexities that have arisen.

APMCDRR essentially provides the platform to consider the overhaul of DRM policies, legislation and practices and identify how to address the root causes of gender based disparities in disaster risk, while responding to immediate concerns, such as providing support/incentives for those who've lost their livelihoods to rebuild or pursue alternative avenues, taking measures to strengthen social safety nets and social security services.

This reflection has been prepared by the Gender Stakeholder Group of APP-DRR.

Link to Updates against Gender SHG Commitments, and related resources can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BTP3xK7e4Is79XVwpPIOBy5VL_UKjiV8/view?usp=sharing