



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

A gender-responsive approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning in the agriculture sector

Guidance for supporting rural women and men to build resilience in the face of disasters



Introduction

In the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) community, there is broad understanding that **gender equality – when women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life** – is a fundamental part of increased resilience to disasters.¹ Evidence suggests that gender-based inequalities shape who is impacted by disasters; for example, after the food price crisis of 2007–08, female-headed households were 1.6 times more likely than male-headed households to be food insecure.² However, data has also shown that addressing these inequalities has positive outcomes; when women and men receive DRR trainings, they share leadership roles, and their differential knowledge on the impacts of natural hazards is integrated into disaster risk reduction, community resilience is enhanced.³ Interventions that promote more equitable gender relations through transforming gender roles, improving women’s position and challenging power imbalances between men and women are key to building resilience. Despite this knowledge, the challenge to turn this understanding into concrete actions in the agriculture sector continues.

Agriculturally-based livelihoods can face enormous impacts from disasters; for example, 82 percent of crop and livestock production losses are due to drought and floods. The agricultural sector absorbs 22 percent of total damage and losses caused by disasters. This note provides an overview of how to apply a gender-responsive approach to DRR planning in the agriculture sector and describes five key actions that can be put into place. The primary audience consists of policy-makers and planners working in government offices at local and national levels, and practitioners supporting DRR planning and programming in international and national organizations.

Why Gender Matters in Disasters and Agriculture

Men and women have different roles, responsibilities, limitations and capacities in agriculturally-based work and are therefore impacted upon differently in the event of a disaster. Although women make up about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, due to gender-based discrimination, they generally have less access than men to productive resources, services and employment opportunities creating a gap between men and women’s productivity. This gender gap in agriculture not only hinders the productivity of women’s farms, it also places them at greater risk to hazards with the result that disasters can exacerbate or entrench existing inequalities between men and women.

Moreover, barriers to women’s access to information can also impair their resilience. The work burden for women and girls increases during and after disasters, as they are typically responsible for securing fuelwood, water and fodder, and caring for the sick and injured. These gender inequalities contribute to the fact that rural women and girls in developing countries are often the most affected by hazards and disasters.

1 A recent example of international consensus on the importance of gender equality in DRR comes from the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which states among its guiding principles that DRR requires “a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices” (UNISDR, 2015a).

2 FAO, 2014.

3 UNISDR, 2015b.

While women's vulnerability is frequently highlighted, their contribution to building disaster resilience has often been overlooked, and they have been largely marginalized in the development of DRR policies and decision-making processes. This affects the extent to which gender differences are taken into account in planning, and ultimately the way communities recover after disasters. Interventions that overlook women's political and economic roles may have detrimental impacts on their livelihoods, as well as their position and status in society.

FAO provides practical guidance to strengthen international and national capacities in improving DRR in the agricultural sector, and is thus in a good position to promote gender-responsive approaches to increase the impacts of the interventions and thus the resilience of both men and women and their livelihoods.

What is a gender-responsive approach to DRR planning?

Men and women are impacted by disasters in different ways and often have distinct coping strategies. A gender-responsive approach to DRR planning means that gender-based differences and issues are considered in the design of the policy, strategy, plan or programme, and gender equality is promoted in its implementation. In concrete terms, this means that the baseline study of disaster risks includes analysis of how gender norms, roles and inequalities shape vulnerability and resilience of both men and women. Gender analysis helps develop a better understanding of what men and women do, what assets they own or have access to, what their needs and priorities are, and the existing power differences. The results of the gender analysis will inform the design, implementation and monitoring of actions so that the gender issues relevant to agriculturally-based livelihoods are adequately addressed in the related plans, policy documents and programmes. Box 1.1 provides some examples of gender-responsive DRR activities.

Box 1.1 Examples of Gender-Responsive DRR Activities

- The design of an animal disease surveillance network is developed upon the knowledge of men and women livestock managers.
- A Community Risk Analysis carried out with the active participation of both men and women, reflecting their different roles and priorities in ensuring household food security.
- A National DRR Plan that incorporates gender analysis collecting sex-disaggregated data to identify the needs of different groups such as female heads of farming households, and actions to address them.
- A novel approach to managing livestock/crops that increases resilience and reduces men's and women's workload.

Why take this approach?

Addressing the differential needs and priorities of men and women, boys and girls in developing DRR policies, plans and programmes is the appropriate approach from a human-rights perspective, and is also warranted from an economic standpoint, as it results in more efficient and cost-effective DRR interventions.⁴

By reducing gender inequalities and empowering women, gender-responsive DRR interventions ensure that the needs of men and women are met. Beyond this, a gender-responsive approach provides an opportunity to improve upon the pre-disaster situation, by increasing women's and men's capacities to reduce and mitigate risk and promoting more equitable social relations. This approach will contribute to agriculture and broader economic and social development goals.

How to implement a gender-responsive approach?

The most important step in implementing a gender-responsive approach is to identify the needs of men and women, boys and girls from rural communities, and assess their capacities and perceptions of risks by engaging them as active participants in the local planning processes. As women may be a harder group to reach, this may entail a strategy to ensure that their voices are heard and adequately taken into consideration in the design of DRR interventions.

In the following, five key actions are presented to ensure a gender-responsive approach throughout the planning process.

Five actions for developing a gender-responsive DRR plan or policy

1. **Ensure that a gender-responsive process is followed by**
 - Recognizing that risk and vulnerability have a fundamental social dimension: men's and women's livelihoods and perspectives differ in relation to specific natural hazards and this should guide all work related to DRR planning.
 - Organizing consultations and setting up mechanisms for collecting feedback with a wide range of stakeholders, including women's and farmers' organizations in the planning/steering committee.
 - Allocating funds in the planning budget to hire gender experts and to collect, analyze and use sex-disaggregated data.
 - Strengthening the capacity of DRR staff and policy makers to address gender equality through training and coaching.
2. **Carry out gender analysis as part of the Risk Profile by**
 - Documenting the different roles that women and men play in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and natural resource management.
 - Assessing the social and gender dimensions of the risks addressed in the DRR plan. How are rural women and men's livelihoods affected by a specific hazard? How could gender-based differences in decision-making power and ownership of/access to assets lead to different abilities to

⁴ UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN, 2009.

respond to hazards? What kinds of information do women have and need to better prepare for hazards? What does this imply in terms of differences in vulnerability and coping capacity?

3. **Include gender equality among the Guiding Principles of the DRR plan or policy by**

- Pledging to include women and men, particularly of marginalized socio-economic groups, in decision-making processes and in action implementation.
- Making a commitment to reduce the gender gap between women and men by detailing actions to empower women and meet the different priorities of women and men in responding to disasters.
- Including, within the vision of the plan, the achievement of equality between men and women of different ages in order to build their resilience.

4. **Address women's and men's needs within Strategic Actions by**

- Involving women in local DRM committees and in related training to increase their access to early warning messages.
- Identifying stakeholders that represent the views of rural women and minority groups in institutional mechanisms for DRR planning and implementation.
- Developing new agricultural practices in close consultation with target communities to integrate local knowledge and address the specific needs (both practical and strategic needs) of women and men to access resources, assets and knowledge to be able to successfully take on new approaches.
- Considering the time use and existing workloads of men and women to avoid creating additional work burden, particularly for women.
- Designing gender-responsive measures to ensure that hard-to-reach groups, such as women and youth heads of households, will have access to preparedness initiatives.

5. **Make sure gender-related work is part of the DRR Implementation plan by**

- Defining who will be responsible to ensure that gender issues are integrated into DRR activities, for example include gender specialists in the teams or committees who liaise with communities or develop the DRR plans.
- Monitoring the plan, by including gender-sensitive indicators, to track how different interventions impact the lives of different socio-economic groups and assess whether progress is made towards gender equality and if corrective measures are needed (i.e. numbers of men and women and their forms of participation, such as whether they hold decision-making positions, who takes up the resilience-enhancing practice and their perceptions of the success of the practice).
- Including separate budget lines for gender-related actions, for example to conduct awareness-raising on the importance of including both women and men as part of DRR decision-making bodies.
- Identifying gender-responsive communication methods to reach men and women (i.e. train women extension officers, collaborate with local women's organizations or incorporate messages on gender equality into awareness raising on DRR in agriculture).
- Conducting case studies to document who benefits from the proposed activities and identifying some good practices in view of future up-scaling.

Case study 1

Gender-responsive flood impact assessment in Myanmar⁵

In October 2015, the Food Security Sector in Myanmar co-led by FAO and the World Food Programme released an Agriculture and Livelihood Flood Impact Assessment Report. The assessment was jointly led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation; the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development; FAO and WFP with the partnership of UN Women and several NGOs. By following a gender-responsive process, the assessment was able to reveal how female-headed households suffered most from the impact of floods on their livelihoods with large losses of small livestock and fishing equipment, deprivation of income by lack of casual labour demands, and limited access to land and productive assets for recovery. Twice as many women as men reported reduced food intake. The assessment allowed planners to address these gender-specific needs in its response and recovery interventions, and to incorporate gender analysis for promoting resilient livelihood recovery.

Case study 2

Gender perspectives as part of DRR trainings in the Philippines

The Philippines is highly prone to natural disasters, and reducing disaster impact is high on the list of national priorities. As part of the project “Emergency Response to restore the livelihoods of conflict affected communities in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and in Region XII”, a Training of Trainers on DRR for agriculture and inland fisheries was conducted for staff of the relevant line ministries at regional, provincial and municipal levels, as well as NGO partners. Approximately half of the selected participants were women. Gender issues were integrated as part of the training program. Through the identification of gender issues and gaps in disaster preparedness and response, the participants were able to support the inclusion of activities that address the specific needs of women and men in the municipal disaster risk reduction plans.

This brief is based on the detailed *Gender-Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction in the Agriculture Sector: Guidance for policy-makers and practitioners* (FAO, 2016).

⁵ (FAO, unpublished).

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Cover photo: 05 September 2012, Chamwino, Tanzania – Input trade fair hosted by the Chamwino District council and facilitated by FAO. A series of droughts in central Tanzania has challenged the food security of rural farmers and reduced the availability of quality seeds and crop varieties, increasing the level of poverty in the region. In response, FAO launched the Disaster Response and Preparedness to Drought project, funded by DFID, which aimed to provide emergency seed support to farming families in 34 districts affected by drought in order to avert food insecurity. For the first time 400 farmers from 5 villages were granted trade vouchers by FAO, which enabled them to purchase quality seeds and farm equipment from the agro dealers at the trade fair.

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