

Gender and Vulnerable Groups in Early Warning Systems (EWS) – Training and Consultation for the Regional EWS Strategy

Sunset Shores Beach Hotel & Restaurant, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Concept Note and Agenda – 10 and 11 September

Organizers: National Emergency Management Organization; Gender Affairs Division; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

Background:

Disasters affect women, girls, boys and men differently as these groups face different exposure, participation, power and vulnerability conditions that influence risk. Gender inequality and social marginalization of vulnerable groups increases vulnerability to disasters, heightens exposure to risk and restrains capacity, often resulting also in a gendered post-disaster downward spiral of poverty. As a consequence, when sex and age disaggregated data is collected, the research shows that certain groups may be disproportionately affected by disasters, are more likely to die in disasters, and have different and uneven levels of resilience and capacity to recover (see figure 1 as an example from Asia/Pacific). This trend can apply differently to any groups of society and is interconnected to the socio-cultural and economic aspects of the society.

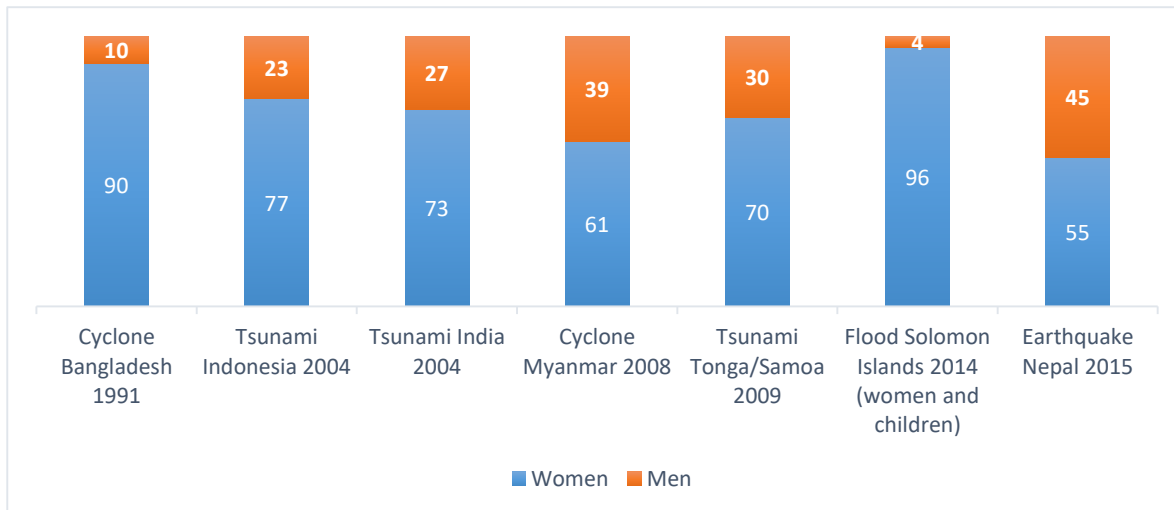


Figure 1: Female versus male mortality in percentage in those disasters in Asia/Pacific where sex & age disaggregated data was available (source: UN Women). While the countries in Latin American and Caribbean regions are now monitoring national advances in disaster risk reduction, sex and age disaggregated data is still largely not available.

As such, considerations of gender and vulnerable groups in disaster risk management (DRM) often goes beyond rights-based approach, as it has a significant impact on the results of DRM. However, instead of understanding and diminishing these differences, the current global actions and methodologies of disaster management may in some cases, in fact, increase the disparity.

The vulnerable groups can include, but are not limited to: children, unemployed youth, elderly, disabled persons, indigenous groups and gender minorities. Women and children are not always nor uniformly vulnerable. In addition, other groups, particularly young unattached men without employment, face difficulty to recover from the effect of disasters, and men tend to place themselves at higher risk in emergency response. It is important to understand these differences in order to target actions. All these

factors are culturally sensitive and depend of the socio-political conditions – every context needs to be assessed separately to improve the understanding of gender- and age-differentiated vulnerabilities and the effect of disasters.

The early warning systems (EWS) that do not explicitly consider gender and diversity issues are likely to increase marginalisation and the poverty traps that already exist in the society. Gender and inclusion serve to make the EWS more effective and will lead to reduced loss of life and injury. The practical aspect of this can be considered in the four main pillars of EWS in the following ways:

1. **Disaster risk knowledge:** Who is most at risk? How do gender-differentiated roles, vulnerabilities and social norms determine behaviour and vulnerability?
2. **Monitoring and warning service:** Who has access to the information needed to generate early warnings? Do women, men and children interact with their world differently – can this influence their access to different types of information that serves monitoring and warning services?
3. **Dissemination of meaningful warnings to those at risk:** How and to which population groups early warnings are issued? Do women, men and children access, process, interpret and respond to information in different ways? Are different socio-cultural groups connected to different social networks and do they have different communication strategies?
4. **Preparedness and response capability:** How can different groups contribute most effectively in the response and recovery from disasters? Is the whole population presented when collecting information during needs assessments, or only the heads of households? How does this influence on whose needs are being responded to?

The CREWS Project and the Caribbean EWS Regional Strategy

The CREWS Caribbean – Strengthening hydro-meteorological early warning services in the Caribbean – is a 3-year Project, financed by the CREWS Global Initiative. It is implemented by the World Bank (WB), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UNDRR, with CDEMA, CMO, CIMH and national representation guiding the implementation through the Project Steering Committee.

The first component of the Project is to develop a regional strategy to strengthen and streamline early warning and hydro-meteorological services. This component will include the integration of gender aspects and other vulnerable groups into the regional strategy for EWS. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been selected as one of the pilot countries for gender and vulnerable groups training and national consultation, to identify the current situation and practical needs. This essential step is expected to contribute to the improvement of EWS results in the Caribbean.

Objectives of the workshop:

1. To enable dialogue among different actors working with either gender or EWS, and to increase the knowledge of gender and EWS at the national level;
2. To fill in the gender and vulnerable group gaps in EWS (EWS checklist as a starting point);
3. To further define how does gender, age and vulnerable groups status affect the 4 pillars of the EWS in the Caribbean;
4. To identify what is needed in order to fill in these gaps at the national and regional levels.

Proposed participants:

- Governmental institutions, IGOs and NGOs working with early warning systems;
- Governmental institutions, IGOs and NGOs working with gender matters;
- Women’s organizations; Academic and training institutions working with related themes.