



## **4. Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction**

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The late British PM Margaret Thatcher, used to claim that there is no such thing a society, as we are all individuals. That view is neither shared in this handbook, nor by the United Nations.

The Sendai Framework for DRR 2015 – 2030 calls for an ‘all-of-society approach’ that is people-centred and inclusive. It enjoins governments, among others, to engage with all relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards.

It means ensuring that DRR policies and practices not only include them, but are also sufficiently attuned to their special needs and conditions. In the EDUCEN project, gender and disability were highlighted as priority areas in this regard, but also other groups were discussed in the EDUCEN workshops and exercises.

You may note that we make scant reference to ‘community’ as in ‘community-based DRR’ or ‘community resilience’. In the below, Robert Coates explains why a ‘community focus’, while laudable, may obscure important differences.

You may also note, that we focus on ‘diversity’ rather than on ‘vulnerable groups’. While, for example, clearly more elderly people are likely to need special help in disaster than young adults, labelling specific groups as vulnerable is to neglect their agency and self-perception. Very few social groups identify themselves as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘marginalised’ and while less-resilient in one respect, they may have crucial knowledge, capacities and networks in other respects.

That is not to say that special attention is not in order. We zoom in on religion, gender and disability as aspects that are found at all ages and

### **All-of-Society Guideline of the Sendai Framework**

DRR requires an All-of-Society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and culture perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. In this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organized voluntary work of citizens (United Nations (2015) Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030, p. 19)

walks of life in cities, and thus also in urban disaster. We pay special attention to AKUT's encouraging results in working with and for people with disabilities in the Istanbul megacity.

## 4.1. What is community?

*Author: Robert Coates*

Community-based approaches are now a fundamental pillar of DRR and response. This was made explicit in the Hyogo Framework (2005-15), which directed global policies and initiatives with the by-line: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. Vulnerability and resilience work is now increasingly measured and perceived according to more or less-cohesive communities and social support networks.

Yet it is not so clear what a 'community' really means. Are communities the close, cohesive units they are imagined to be, and does this even matter for disaster professionals? Rather than to assume that the community in question presents the same characteristics and motivations across its members, the cities section of this handbook advised us to unpack 'the social mechanisms that actually create resilience in a community'. This is a key point in what follows.

- The first half of this chapter briefly looks at the idea of community,
- The second half considers what community aware behaviour can add to DRR work. Above all, here we think through what an improved understanding of community does to deliver better risk reduction and response.

### 4.1.1. Questioning community

Like 'culture' itself, the word community is slippery – it means different things to different people in different places. Communities are indeed often perceived from outside rather than from within: migrant communities in European cities can easily be thought of as individual units, with common languages, identities, or customs. This may contain a grain of truth but it may also be an easy generalisation that papers over numerous cracks. The differences among each groups' members may in fact be much more pronounced, with ethnic, political, linguistic, religious, socio-economic or gendered differences pulling people

in different directions, and making their communication and behaviour in disaster settings harder to predict.

But many of these 'intra-community' differences can of course also apply to any group of city residents. While ethnic, linguistic, religious, or class ties might very often be strong indicators of community in European cities, the extent to which members of these groups agree amongst themselves on the best approach to preparedness, rescue, rebuilding, and future resilience is an open question.

Communities very often differ in their access to power holders in politics or business – and in many cases government actions on risk reduction are not spread evenly according to, for example, risk of flood or earthquake damage in each location. Rather, timely delivery of services and infrastructure can depend as much on a group's ability to lobby for its own interests as it can the actual cost of project implementation.

Authors have often used the term social capital to explain the bonds that community members have in common. Following research in both Italy and the United States, Putnam (2000) viewed the quality of community as lying within social networks. 'Weak ties'—as opposed to the blood ties of family—described the practices of trust and understanding that were built around the social networks of church, work, and neighbourhood activity. The stronger these 'weak' ties were, the more community members relied on each other for support, planning, and organisation in difficult situations such as crises and disaster.

Yet these community ties should not be seen as straightforward, or as things that outside initiatives can build and produce automatically. While community is certainly about shared interests and values, it is also about place – that is, the experience of living together in a proximate area. Looking specifically at marginalised, working class districts, renowned social theorist Pierre Bourdieu called this the 'site effect': people might have origins in very different cultural or ethnic backgrounds but come together as a community by nature of dealing with the same local issues and sharing the same local memories. Be it their employment and housing situations, political or social campaigns, or a trauma, tragedy or disaster, people were brought together. Social and cultural capital could act as constraining forces for community development as much as enabling ones. 'Essentialising' a particular community (say, Roma people, slum dwellers) as 'problematic', needy or wanting therefore causes problems as it fails to deal with the issues that pulled the community together in the first place.

In a more recent essay, Noortje Marres (2005) declared that issues spark a public into being: communities are not 'pre-given' things but are formed, develop, and then change according to the issues (in this case, disasters) that unite them in a common goal.

### **4.1.2. Community and disaster interventions**

The above discussion helps us when considering the role of external professionals in disaster situations. We should not be romantic about the pre-existing ties that bind a disaster-affected community together, but maintain an awareness that social cohesion and mutual acceptance of other community members helps people to recover from disaster impacts. With this in mind, we must work to encourage and strengthen community bonds – not only for the mutual help that each member provides, but for the purpose of strengthening the community's collective ability to access political, planning, and economic decision makers in a unified approach into the future.

In a wide-ranging survey of flood victims in the UK, Butler et al. (2016) found that negative impacts on individual well-being were at their most critical point one year after flood events. A large part of the health problems experienced were due to people feeling a sense of isolation from those making decisions about their future needs – whether in terms of social-organisational needs or local infrastructure. People felt like they were coping alone and that they were powerless to take actions to better their situation.

Critical to this were people's attachments to the places in which they lived. Where adapting to future flood risk required significant change—both to infrastructure design and social organisation—people were more resistant to change and wanted to preserve traditional practices and landscape characteristics. People demonstrated little power in getting across the priorities they felt themselves in order to preserve place attachment. This directs us towards sensing a balance between 'hard' infrastructural resilience work and rebuilding communities' attachments to the places in which they live in order to maximise risk reduction outcomes. Doing the correct survey and conversational work across community members, and thus including their voice in disaster management decision-making was one of the projects' key findings – as was the need to take seriously local peoples' descriptions of the places in which they lived, across both landscape, social and political factors.

Key ideas can therefore be considered for engaging with communities in the disaster risk context:

- Studies on social vulnerability and resilience point to the important place of community workers in giving support, disseminating information, and connecting communities with governance institutions. In emergency situations, and throughout the post-disaster period, use of these workers should be comprehensively evaluated and supported in order to increase wide ranging benefits across communities.
- The writing of flood plans, emergency evacuation procedures, or timelines for disaster recovery should be written together with local communities, both to gain their perspectives and to inspire the communities' own conversations about future planning and community connectivity.
- Social mapping can be undertaken to gain insight into how community members perceive their own situation and their relationships with other key stakeholders. This can produce surprising diversity of bodies to draw on in both disaster preparedness and response, and more critically still, reveal the relative importance local actors give to state, private sector, NGO, political or foreign bodies.
- Assistance can be given to communities in how to influence decision makers and draw attention to their situations. Uses of the media, and social media, may be critical. Gough (2000–2002), writing on New Zealand, reported that government agencies undertook risk perception studies, where residents explored how to create communication channels to increase dialogue between themselves and government bodies responsible for disaster situations.
- There is a tendency for community leaders, often men, to speak for everyone, but less involved parts of communities, including women and young people, quite often bear the greatest brunt of disaster impacts. Activities undertaken with youth in the past have included drama role-plays of disaster evacuation plans, or flood or earthquake preparedness strategies.

## 4.2. Engaging with beliefs and religious groups in disaster

*Author: Mona Regad*

Beliefs, in particular religious beliefs, have numerous attributes and functions. They are heterogeneous and dynamic, as they change and develop through time and space under the influence of the societies they take root in. Beliefs mediate the relationship between human beings and their environment, are used to make sense of the world and of experiences, and thus shape how communities perceive and react to disastrous events. It is thus important to consider these beliefs throughout the disaster cycle.

Faiths and convictions are sensitive topics which are usually not addressed upfront, especially in emergency situations. They challenge 'rational' assumptions and because they are intangible, they can be difficult to understand and to recognise. Yet as they form a major part of culture, beliefs influence all aspects throughout the disaster cycle:

- how communities look at risks and disasters;
- how they respond to it;
- how they recover from it;
- their capacity and eagerness to implement DRR strategies.

Religion has an active role in bringing people together. Religion can act as a resource for people by giving access to networks of support and by providing ways of coping with disasters. Beliefs provide a framework for understanding, interpreting, preparing and responding to disasters. Natural hazards-induced disasters are sometimes interpreted across cultures and cults as divine expressions of God's punishment, anger, or retribution for human sins.

Research in Italy, Hungary and Turkey has shown that groups understanding disasters such as earthquakes as caused by fate or God were not well prepared for disasters, because they did not believe having any control over the event. This behaviour is referred to in psychology as external locus of control, where people place outcomes outside of their reach and thus the feeling of having no responsibility in it deters them from taking preparedness actions. Religious beliefs can also work in the opposite way, by fostering internal locus of control, where each individual is in ownership of his own fate or karma. Regarding climate change mitigation for example, Buddhist notions of interconnectedness and mindfulness can be operationalised to foster better practices towards sustainability (Daniels 2010; Oral et al. 2015)

This influences the capacity of people to respond. On one hand, fatalistic understandings can support passive attitudes and can deter people from evacuating a risky area or implementing preparedness measures. On the other hand, faith-based interpretations can also help people being more aware of their vulnerability and provide grounds for mitigation practices. Indeed, certain communities can value being proactive and engaging in preparedness activities as a way of negotiating with the divine and influence the risk.

### 4.2.1. Working with beliefs and religious groups

People's understandings of disasters within religious or spiritual frameworks are more widespread than is commonly assumed, not only in preindustrial societies but also in secularising Europe (Chester, Duncan and Dibben 2008).

Faith-based community groups have their own modes of organisation, practices and communication means. Accessing religious groups for disaster preparedness and DRR is therefore crucial for disseminating information.

As a starting point, it is important to consider religious groups both as targets and resources for disaster management.

Some tips to consider when working with religious communities:

- Involving groups representatives in discussions and planning about DRR
- Connecting with faith leaders to build trustful relationships and facilitate the implementation of a DRR framework with inputs from both civic and religious actors
- Adapting language and material: speaking the same language than partners and affected populations helps in securing good communication
- Developing tools for training faith leaders and for securing outreach and continuity within communities (ex: disaster preparedness as part of school curriculum)
- Developing a form of religious literacy by being aware of appropriate customs and behaviours (ex: clothing, behaviour towards women, food prohibition and dietary laws regarding food provision...)



Faith leaders are valuable resource persons as they can act as brokers between aid organisations and communities. They benefit from the community's trust and thus it can be profitable to be introduced by them to the people and to learn from them about the group's culture before starting to work. Evacuation instructions, for example, may be better accepted and followed when enacted by a priest, an imam or a rabbi than by a state representative or an aid worker.

In the same way, religious buildings are strategic locations as they are home to important practices and eventually social activities by religious communities. Churches, temples, mosques and synagogues are perceived by their attendees as safe places, where they may seek refuge or advice. Therefore, contingency plans could eventually consider them as places to accommodate displaced people, or distribute food, while paying attention to the fact that these spaces do not have the same impact for people from different cults.

Religious communities are organised at various levels and potentially have their own understanding of risk. Christianity, as any faith group, is divided between multiple organisations levels that will be mobilised in times of emergency. Schools, hospitals, cemeteries, social services, and aid providers may belong to the same faith and operate within the same networks. Tapping into these networks is necessary to reach populations who might not be on the same map than aid agencies or authorities.

### **Religion and volcanic risk in Southern Italy (Etna and Vesuvius)**

Religious terms of reference have been and remain vital elements in the perceptions held by a significant proportion of the population in Southern Italy when confronted by volcanic eruptions, particularly those that have occurred on the Vesuvius and Etna. Many of Mount Etna's eruptions have been associated by Roman Catholic communities living in the vicinity with religious interpretations and rites. Among the general public living in the vicinity of Mount Etna, there is the belief that disasters may be averted through religious faith and practice through the role of saints. Some people believed the patron saint of the town could have stopped the lava, so some people decided to put the statue of the saint in front of the oncoming lava. They positioned it 50 meters away, hoping it would perform a miracle but it was no good. Yet, in Southern Italy, there is neither negative evidence of fatalism, nor that action by the government has been resisted on purely religious grounds. For example, the evacuations carried out during the 1906 and 1944 eruptions of Vesuvius had the general support of the population affected, and on Etna no central or local government initiatives have been resisted because of religious considerations (for more information see Chester, Duncan and Dibben 2008).

A US-based tool to involve religious and cultural communities is the LEADER process: Learn, Educate, Assess, Determine, Engage, Review. It is used in emergency situations, but is also useful for preparedness:

- Learn about the disaster’s impact (hazards maps, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, risk maps produced by communities and government agencies...)
- Educate yourself on local faith communities
- Assess your religious literacy and competency : what is your current state of knowledge? With which communities are you the most comfortable working with? Where to source training or information to increase your team’s religious literacy and competency? Which biases do you have that might alter your perception of certain religious groups?
- Determine an Engagement plan: who/what/when/where/why/how? This is the point where connecting with brokers, key actors who will positively affect your reach and intervention, is necessary, as well as considering existing capacities.
- Engage religious leaders and communities by building respectful and trustful relationships
- Review and keep improving your plan.

For more information, see the US Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) training in Religious and Cultural Literacy and Competency.

### 4.3. Diversity and people with disabilities

*Author: Çağlar Akgüngör*

Disasters highlight the human diversity in a very dramatic way: A person’s or group’s characteristics translate into different levels of vulnerability to disaster risks, which in turn lead to an “unequal distribution” of the disaster impact. Rapid onset and large scale events such as major earthquakes, floods or hurricanes cause the biggest harm and loss on the “less-privileged”. The latter’s exposition level to risks is also usually higher and their capacity to mitigate those risks is lower due to several factors. A low level of income is often mentioned as the prevalent factor since it may limit seriously people’s ability to access to risk information and to take the necessary measures to reduce their exposure. Poverty not only signifies a limited access to disaster-resistant infrastructure and services like education (more access to in-

formation) that would increase the protection level, but also a diminished capacity to recover after the disaster. On the other hand, the economic situation is often intertwined with other human conditions or characteristics in shaping vulnerabilities: Combined with socioeconomic conditions, gender, age, disability, health condition, ethnicity and other particularities generate a class of “most vulnerable” which is disproportionately affected by catastrophes.

“One size fits all” plans and actions may exclude the most disadvantaged groups, who are also the least equipped for influencing policy-making processes. A positive development at the international level in this respect is the rising trend of “inclusiveness”, in part as a consequence of recent major disasters that have made the problem more visible, but also as a result of decades-long efforts by advocacy groups.

### 4.3.1. Disaster policies and frameworks

The Sendai Framework for Risk Reduction, drafted in March 2015, is the most recent, comprehensive framework that clearly emphasizes the need for inclusion in the DRR. Adopted by 187 UN member States, it brings the concept of inclusion as a fundamental element for reducing disaster losses: “DRR requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted.” (article 19d) The Sendai Framework also stresses that inclusiveness cannot be reached by a top-down approach, and it requires active presence of the possible disadvantaged groups who would be given the opportunity to express themselves and to mobilize their resources (intellect, knowledge and skills) in order to contribute to the design and implementation of the DRR plans and actions, article 36).

Although the Sendai Declaration’s focus is mainly on the reduction and mitigation of the risks and building resilience, its recommendations on inclusiveness can (and should) be extended to any phase or activity of the disaster cycle. Notably, post-Sendai declarations follow this trend. For instance, the Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Risk Management drafted in December 2015 has urged governments around the world to “implement the Principles of the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and other human rights treaties to ensure the participation, inclusion and leadership of persons with disabilities within all disaster management programs" (article 1) (Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Risk Management 2015) The Dhaka Declaration to ensure the participation, inclusion and leadership of persons with disabilities within all disaster risk management programmes." (Article 1, Ensuring people centric approach)

The recognition of diversity and the need for inclusiveness has also been considered as a "key finding" by the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, which shows that inclusive approaches will become part of the humanitarian policies and actions as well (World Humanitarian Summit Commitments to Action 2016).

The UN Convention on The Rights of Persons With Disabilities (2006) stresses that: "State Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters." (Article 11, Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies)

The well-known proverb "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" is very much true with respect to vulnerability to disasters. It is clear that "a community can only be safe when all of its members are able to cope better to avert disasters" (INCRISD 2014). Inclusion should therefore not be seen as "optional"; inclusion is about equality of rights and opportunities for all those exposed to the same risks. To this end, it is necessary to create the mechanisms that will ensure participation in DRR effort; to empower the disadvantaged both from the point of knowledge and skills so they could participate and contribute. The last step is to develop tailored approaches that will encompass all the stakeholders. In other words, it is about replacing "one size fits all" developing approaches to DRR and disaster management by "universal" ones.

### 4.3.2. Disability

Most people associate the term "disability" with some form of physical impairment and a quasi-permanent state of incapacity, which is why the wheelchair icon became the omnipresent symbol of disability.

Yet this term points to a wide spectrum of physical or mental conditions that may coexist and cause very complex situations. The medical perspective alone is hardly sufficient for understanding disability. From a societal point of view, disability also comes to signify a particular life style, a different way of thinking, experiences and culture as well. In other words, it is a human condition rather than a pathological state.

The “social model of disability”, which claims that the disability results from the reaction a society gives to difference, is increasingly replacing the medical model, which focuses on the difference itself. According to the social model, individuals become disabled when the society fails to recognize human diversity and to lift the barriers that restrict their options and action margin in life. While the term “barrier” is often associated with physical obstacles such as the lack of adapted infrastructure or accessibility solutions, adverse socioeconomic conditions and lack of support may also be considered as barriers, even if “intangible” or not directly measurable: prejudice, beliefs, perceptions, negative attitudes, stereotyping or discrimination continues to prevent people with disabilities from enjoying a “full life”.

The social reality described above affects the life of a significant part of the world’s population: According to the World Health Survey 15.6 % of the World’s adult population; 2.2 % having significant difficulties in functioning. Still people with disabilities have difficulties in enjoying their fundamental rights, including consultation, and in benefiting from the same services and opportunities offered to the rest of the population. While Disaster Risk Management (DRM) emphasizes the vitality of improving people’s capacity to cope with disasters and building social resilience, in order to minimize the potential effects of disaster risks. These goals, however, cannot be reached through “generic” DRM frameworks designed for the “average citizens” without significant health issues, who are supposed to possess adequate resources and a sufficient literacy level to access information.

### **4.3.3. Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Management (DiDRM)**

Disaster risk management (DRM) involves risk mitigation, preparedness to disasters and disaster management. It is “a way of thinking and acting around risk” which goes beyond infrastructure-based solutions and focuses on society, emphasizing the vitality of improving people’s capacity to cope with disasters and building social resilience, in order to minimize the potential effects of disaster risks. These goals, howe-

ver, cannot be reached through “generic” DRM frameworks designed for the “average citizens” without significant health issues, who are supposed to possess adequate resources and a sufficient literacy level to access information. Inclusiveness, therefore, becomes necessary to bring under the same protection umbrella the ones excluded by the “one size fits all” attitude. In this sense, Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Management (DiDRM) aims to compensate the lack of adapted strategies for individuals with disabilities.

It is important to retain that DiDRM is a rights-based approach and based on the principle that people with disabilities should enjoy the same level of information, support, service and they should be given the same range of options offered to the rest of the population facing risks and disasters. On the other hand, it is equally important to retain that DiDRM is not only about receiving services, or benefiting from various forms of protection. It also involves active participation to the design and to the implementation of DRM actions by people with disabilities, who know best their needs but also capabilities and strengths.

DiDRM’s key principles can be summarized as follows:

- **Participation:** People with disabilities should participate to planning, implementation and monitoring of the DRM activity. This suggests that the barriers to their participation should be lifted and the opportunity for dialogue be created (they should be empowered first if necessary, for example in terms of knowledge).
- **Non-discrimination:** The exclusion factors preventing people with disabilities’ from being part of the DRM activities and services have to be eliminated.

The UN Convention on The Rights of Persons With Disabilities (2006) stresses that: “State Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.” (Article 11, Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies)

The Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Management (2015) urge governments to “Implement the Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), other human rights treaties to ensure the participation, inclusion and leadership of persons with disabilities within all disaster risk management programmes.” (Article 1, Ensuring people centric approach)

- **Accessibility:** Disaster risk information, participatory DRM activities and all DRM-related services should meet the accessibility needs of various disability groups.
- **Tailored solutions:** People with disabilities should not be considered in broad categories and the complexity of disability phenomenon should be taken into account in the DRM processes. Specific solutions should be developed for the widest range of possible cases.

#### **4.3.4. In Practice: Lessons Learned on DiDRM in Istanbul**

Although states are the leading actors of DRM, recognition of diversity and inclusion cannot be achieved through public sector action only. The adoption of an inclusive attitude towards people with disabilities is also a must for all stakeholders, including NGOs and other types of civil initiatives working in the domain of disasters and mass emergencies. The difficulty is that the road to inclusiveness is not without pitfalls, despite the apparent simplicity of the DiDRM principles as summarized above. In this sense, we believe some lessons we have learned during EDUCEN Project Istanbul Case Study may help other organisations in their DiDRM efforts.

AKUT Search and Rescue Association has aimed at developing a disability inclusive public disaster preparedness program. From AKUT case study team's perspective, the main objective was to make the disaster preparedness materials accessible for people with sight and/or hearing impairments while incorporating disability-specific information into the content for 3 selected groups; persons with sight impairments, persons with hearing impairments and those with reduced mobility. Consequently, the action has debuted as a feedback collection and formal adaptation work. A series of extended focus group meetings have been organized in order to review AKUT's existing program and content, in collaboration with disability organisations.

Interaction and dialogue with people with disabilities has altered AKUT volunteers' perceptions of disability, the EDUCEN Istanbul case study's focus shifted to inclusiveness, repositioning accessibility as merely one of its pillars. The case study team also made the following observations:

- Conveying information to people with disabilities, even in accessible formats, do not make a training program inclusive per se. Genuine inclusiveness happens when people with disabilities can take part in

any section and/or any phase of the program by their own choice and assume any role offered to other volunteers. In other words, the host organisation itself has to become inclusive. For an NGO like AKUT, this would require a significant effort at different levels, starting by the improvement of physical accessibility to the association's premises, to the modification of the recruitment and orientation process (use of online learning tools for people with reduced mobility or sign-language translation for people with hearing impairments).

- The tendency to see inclusion as an “empathetic process” is quite common. Nevertheless, inclusion is not about empathy, which can be described as the drive and the effort to understand another. This capacity is certainly relevant in the context of inclusiveness yet inclusion is based on the principle of equality between human beings and the associated human rights.
- People with disabilities as end-users are the best guides on which tool to use. It is critical to take their suggestions into account. Members of the Istanbul case study team, for example, have realized that most of their ideas about accessibility tools and options were based on false assumptions. Accessibility has several dimensions and forms depending on the context and the type of disability. There is no single “generic” accessibility solution. Making a printed booklet accessible for people with total hearing impairments and making a training hall accessible for people with reduced mobility require different approaches, techniques and instruments.
- DiDRM also requires commitment from people with disabilities, in the sense that their systematic presence in the DiDRM programs incite the non-disabled individuals to change their perspective on disability. People with disabilities are not necessarily dependent on others during disasters, and many are perfectly capable of assuming various roles in the DRM actions. Yet, there is need for demonstration of this capacity, which requires continuous, active participation by people with disabilities.
- DiDRM is about mutual learning as well. No matter how efficient an organisation is in the disaster preparedness and response, it needs the knowledge (and support) of people with disabilities to become inclusive. This is only possible through integration and dialogue.



## 4.4. Gender and special needs

*Author: Georg Frerks*

### 4.4.1. The concept of gender

Gender is defined as “the socially defined or constructed sex roles, attitudes and values which communities and societies ascribe as appropriate for one sex or the other. Gender does not describe the biological sexual characteristics by which females and males are identified” (The Sphere Project 2000). Bouta, Frerks and Bannon say that: “Gender roles vary according to socio-economic, political and cultural contexts, and are affected by other factors, including age, class and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned and negotiated, or contested. They are therefore changeable. Besides differences in roles between women and men, roles among women and men differ as well, while both women and men may also combine different roles individually over time or even simultaneously” (2005: 3).

It should, however, be underlined that making gender synonymous with the positions and roles of women and men constitutes an extremely limiting and reductionist gender view. According to Dubravka Zarkov gender is better seen as an organizing principle of social life that affects different levels of social reality, not only individual people. Gender is part of everyday social relations of power that reproduce or challenge gender and gendered relations (Zarkov in Bouta et al 2005).

Over the last two decades, gender issues have increasingly become an explicit part of disaster analysis and management and there is a growing awareness of the different relations between gender and disaster. The call for gender-sensitive disaster management is motivated by the question of how to intervene in disaster situations without losing track of their gender dimensions, not rarely with the explicit aim to prevent that women are overlooked or marginalized in disaster response. This is also needed to ensure that disaster responses are tuned to the gender-specific needs and problems that women and men face.

- The effects and impacts of disasters differ for men and women due to biological, sexual and socio-cultural factors
- Gender dynamics often translate into particular gender-specific patterns of vulnerability as well as resilience and also affect patterns of coping, how disaster experiences are built up, and risks perceived.
- Stereotypical images of women as passive and incapacitated victims

overshadow the fact that they possess valuable knowledge, skills and experiences that as a consequence remain unnoticed in many disaster policies and responses.

“A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training” (The General Assembly and the Hyogo Framework for Action quoted in Valdés 2009: 19).

#### **4.4.2. The link between gender and disaster**

The effects and impacts of disasters differ for men and women. This is due to biological, sexual and socio-cultural factors including gender relations in a community. Different reproductive functions, menstruation, pregnancy, child bearing and lactating require culturally adapted support and protection for women and girls. These biological and gender dynamics often translate in particular gender-specific patterns of vulnerability as well as resilience. They also affect patterns of coping, how disaster experiences are built up and risks perceived, how risk awareness is distributed and attitudes forged. In many instances the distribution of knowledge, assets, income, livelihood possibilities, decision-making power, and access to services is also highly gendered.

In addition, women and girls are often seen as physically and emotionally weak, inferior to men and boys, dependent, subordinate and generally as a burden. In disaster these perceptions are extended to identify them as passive and incapacitated victims. In reality, women appear to have valuable knowledge, skills and experiences, but this goes unnoticed in disaster policies and formal disaster mitigation and recovery arrangements (Ariyabandu 2009).

There is evidence that the mortality rates in recent disasters (esp. the Indian Ocean tsunami) have been higher for women than for men, due to a combination of cultural aspects and gendered patterns of vulnerability. But also disaster recovery is biased with less participation, access and rights for women.

A gender focus should not exclude men. Gender is always a relational topic, and also men and boys have specific needs, capabilities and vulnerabilities. It is also of the essence to deal with masculinities and

the way they inform male behaviour and attitudes. Several programmes did focus on women only, sidelining men who also had lost nearly all they had in the disaster and also had their share of grief and sorrow. But apart from that, successful interventions simply will have to include men, in an effort of 'men-streaming', as it was dubbed by Bannon and Correia (2006) as meaningful changes cannot happen without the 'other half of gender', as Bannon and Correia have titled their book on men's issues in development.

There is a lot of helpful material available on how to make disaster management gender-inclusive or gender-specific in the form of guidelines, tools and checklists. Be aware that these may need to be adjusted to your own specific situation or purpose.

### **4.4.3. Gender-specific disaster management instruments**

There is a burgeoning literature on how to make disaster management gender-aware, gender-inclusive, gender-specific, gender-fair or simply 'gendered'. It is not possible to do justice to all what has been written and we suffice a by only a few references that can further guide researchers and practitioners.

Elaine Enarson is the founder of the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN). She is one of the most influential scholarly writers on the subject. Her several publications are a rich source to review the debate. The chapters 'Representation of Women in Disasters' and 'How Gender Changes Disaster Studies' in her book are very informative and insightful (Enarson 2011). Enarson designed for the GDN "Six principles for engendered relief and reconstruction" comprising again over fifty issues warranting attention in disaster planning, analysis and implementation (reproduced in Valdés 2009).

The GDN website (<http://www.gdnonline.org/sourcebook/index.htm>) provides access to the Gender and Disaster Sourcebook. In addition, Chakrabarti and Walia offer a comprehensive toolkit for mainstreaming gender in emergency response, comprising again sixteen partial toolkits for the issues covered varying from preparedness and early warning, search and rescue, health, livelihood and Water Supply and Sanitation (2009).

Based on its experiences with the tsunami relief aid in Sri Lanka, UNIFEM has gendered the five priority areas of the Hyogo Platform for

Action (reproduced in Joshi and Bhatt 2009). In addition Joshi and Bhatt offer six specific recommendations to better engender future disaster recovery (see 2009: 318).

#### 4.4.4. Other groups with special needs

There are many other groups with special needs that require special attention in disaster response. They include children, the elderly, socially excluded communities, homeless, (illegal) migrants, chronically ill, (linguistic) minorities, tourists, HIV positive individuals, males who have sex with males (MSMs), occupational minorities. Many of those groups are socially excluded and face special risks or lack empowerment.

According to the facilitators' guidebook 'Practicing Gender & Social Inclusion In DRR', socially excluded groups experience varying degrees of alienation (distancing) in the disaster reduction or emergency response programs. This distancing is also an outcome of the wider social processes within which these groups usually receive inadequate attention and are systematically disadvantaged owing to different reasons. These groups face social exclusion on the following grounds:

- These groups are, in various ways, kept away from full participation in the wider economic, political, cultural, and social life;
- The enduring discrimination and historical social features entrapped these groups in a situation below the minimum threshold of well-being while hindering their full participating in the society.
- They are lacking in power and access to decision-making that could influence policies or create opportunities for improving their standard of living.

'Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household, and in the community' (DFID 2005). However, the degree of discrimination varies from one society to another, as do the forms that social exclusion takes. Social exclusion operates on the ground and accelerates the vulnerabilities of these groups through three different processes:

- exclusion in the community and social interaction,
- institutional or organisational exclusion and
- exclusion by the market

(Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (2009, p. 16-17)