WOMEN'S ROLE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

By Jessica Ear

<u>Introduction</u>

Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity. For those lacking control and access to services and resources such as education and information, disaster risks are even greater. While minority groups are disadvantaged in this manner and therefore more vulnerable to disasters risks, women are most often considered "vulnerable within the vulnerable"[1] due to their roles they undertake, generally lower socio-economic status, and societal norms that limit women's rights. In a 2007 study that examined 141 countries over the period of 1981-2002, disasters on average kill more women than men and significantly reduce women's life expectancy.[2] This paper will explore why women in Asia-Pacific countries are often more susceptible to disasters impacts, examine cases where women are making strides to reduce disaster risk, and suggest effective measures for women's inclusion in disaster management with some

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[1] "Sex, Gender and Gender Relations in Disasters," Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu, pg 5-17, <u>Women, Gender and Disaster, Global issues and Initiatives</u>, edited by Elaine Enarson and P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti, Sage Publication, 2012.
[2] "The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy," Neumayer and Plumper, 1981–2002.
http://www.lse.ac.uk/geographyAndEnvironment/whosWho/profiles/neumayer/pdf/Article%20in%20Annals%20(natural%20disasters).pdf

conclusions for greater national security practices to promote advancements of Women, Peace and Security initiatives.

Gender roles leave women susceptible to disasters

In examining causes of deaths associated with natural disasters, gender as defined by socially constructed roles, statuses and norms, can greatly determine susceptibility to disaster exposure and impacts. For women in most Asia-Pacific countries, their roles as caretakers, lesser social status, and cultural norms that prohibit or limit their capabilities often leave women more exposed and vulnerable to disaster risks. While disaster management studies still lack reliable disaggregated data to firmly evidence disasters' impact on women, statistics from some disasters track higher female fatalities. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that killed more than 220,000 people in 12 countries, a data set collected by Oxfam International in Indonesia revealed that male survivors outnumbered female survivors by a ratio of almost 3:1 or 72 percent in the 4 villages located in Aceh Besar district. Similarly, in four other villages in North Aceh district, 77 percent of total fatalities were women. In the worst hit village of Kuala Cangkoy, the ratio of female to male deaths were 4:1, 80 percent of deaths were female.[3] In Sri Lanka and some parts of India witnessed a similar pattern, 72 percent of the tsunami-associated deaths in Cuddalore were women. Other data sets exist among other disasters such as the 1991 cyclone in

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[3] "The Tsunami's Impact on Women," Oxfam Briefing Note. March 2005

Bangladesh that killed 140,000, 90 percent of the fatalities were women. Cyclone

Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, 61percent of the fatalities were women.[4]

As documented in Oxfam's Briefing Note in 2005, "some of the causes of these

patterns were similar across the region: many women died because they stayed behind

to look for their children and other relatives; men more often than women can swim;

men more often than women can climb trees." However, differences in the roles women

play relative to the cultural norm of that location is also important. The tsunami struck in

Sri Lanka when women took their baths in the sea. In India, women on the shore died

because they were waiting for fisherman to bring in their catch to process.[5] These cases

document varying vulnerabilities of men and women based on differing social roles.

Disaster management decision makers in Asia-Pacific countries need to better

understand how societal roles increases disaster vulnerabilities among men, and more

importantly, among women populations in their country to further reduce national

disaster mortalities. While gender-based disaster vulnerabilities awareness is

increasing, countries in the Asia-Pacific are slow to integrate gender perspectives in

disaster risk management programs and policies. Without adequate women

representation at the local and national levels to advocate for gender mainstreaming

and policy advancement, women will remain more adversely affect by disaster impacts.

As seen throughout the region, women are also vulnerable due to their

inaccessibility to information and warnings. In Cambodia's flood zone, early warning

systems tend to not reach women because their houses were too far from the loud

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[4] Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/WEDO_Gender_CC_Human_Security.pdf
[5] Gender Matters: Talking Points on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction, E. Enarson, 2004.

speakers that broadcast the public announcement or they were too busy with domestic work in the house or out in the field to hear over the radios, whereas men generally had more time and the inclination to listen more intently and more routinely to radios.[6] Likewise, in Bangladesh, some families do not own radios and TVs and women who spend most of their times at home will not have access to information and news.[7] Information or disaster warning is often issued in male-dominated public places under the assumption that they will share the information with their wives and family. Tragically, this did not always happen.[8]

Socially constructed status, roles and norms are gendered, and intersect with age and/or ethnicity to create unequal levels of marginalization between men and women. Furthermore, social or cultural restrictions on women's ability to access, secure and sustain livelihoods, which are crucial for coping with and recovering from disasters put women at higher disaster risk. While some disaster researchers have coined this as the "vulnerability calculus," where "vulnerability is characterized as multidimensional and defined as the absence of physical and ecological features, natural and human resources, and social, economic, political, and technological capacities that offer protection from the shocks of natural disaster,"[9] others describe vulnerability to natural disasters as a "composite of numerous social and biophysical variables, and it is established long before disasters strike."[10] Disasters of the same magnitude striking

[6] Care International. 2002, Gender Matters: Talking Points on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction, E. Enarson, 2004.
[7] Posting by Fainula Rodriquez in Enarson 2001c, Id.
[8] Jean D'Cunha. 1997. Engendering Disaster Preparedness and Management. Asian Disaster Management News 3(3): 2-5.
[9] "Women, Gender Norms, and Natural Disasters in Bangladesh," Luke Juran and Jennifer Trivedi, Geographical Review 105(4):601-611, American Geographical Society of New York, October 2015.
[10] Id.

similar geographies may produce drastically different impacts due to varying degrees of vulnerability. Gendered aspects of social vulnerability can be linked to various factors to demonstrate how women generally face greater risks from natural disasters than men.

In South Asia, some of these factors include "purdah," the gender-based segregation that delineates women's spheres as private and men's as public and restricts women's mobility. Purdah, as practiced in some parts of Bangladesh prevents women from evacuating their homestead for cyclone shelters. Furthermore, the korta or "master" system, in which each household has a male master in charge of making decisions for women, perceived as the lesser societal value and economic worth, also position women as more vulnerable. Women's lesser-perceived value influences the allocation and consumption of scarce resources before disasters which results in greater malnutrition, leaving them more susceptible to illnesses following disaster's impacts.[11] In Bangladesh, the biological variable of being female (sex) fails to fully account for gaps in mortality, rather, socially constructed variables (gender) are responsible for such disparities demonstrating that preexisting inequalities expose women to disproportionate disaster risks and impacts.[12] Therefore, it is crucial for Bangladesh to adopt practices that decrease natural disaster vulnerability, specifically from a gender perspective. Similar lessons as seen in Bangladesh have been documented in countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and even Nicaragua, where women's social limitations place them at risk and vulnerable to disasters impacts.[13]

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[11] Id.

[12] Id.

[13] "Women's Potential in Dealing with Natural Disasters: A Case Study from Sri Lanka," Jayarathne, Saranga Subhashini, Asian Journal of Women's Studies. 20(1) 125-136 (2014); "Women's Empowerment for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response in Nepal," Dhungel, Rajesh, and Ram Nath Ojha, Gender and Development

While highlighting gender-differentiated vulnerabilities is necessary, it should not lead to an assumption that women are mere victims because doing so will discount women's capacities and overlook the need for their inclusion in decision making. Giving equal consideration to differences between men and women shifts disaster management focuses from women to gender. Men and women's distinct roles and daily activities shape their susceptibility to be exposed to and suffer from hazard impacts and climate events, often to the detriment of women. These circumstances and the aftermath of natural disasters further put women at greater risk of trafficking, violence, and sexual exploitation. Addressing the social, cultural and economic factors that make both females and males vulnerable to disaster risks through gender sensitive policies and practices will reduce disaster's human toll.

Gender Sensitive Policies and Practices

Gender sensitive approaches to disaster management helps identify how hazards and causes that shape people's specific vulnerabilities, concerns and needs affect men, women, boys and girls differently. Gender perspectives also highlight different capacities that men and women develop when facing and recovering from disaster impacts. Women and girls likely suffer more but they also participate in, and sometimes even lead preparedness and/or recovery and undertake active position in maintaining kinship links and carrying out social requirements in the community. These strengthen social resources help people respond to a crisis. Women and girls mobilize survival skills acquired through stereotyped gender division of work such as cooking,

20.2 (2012): 309-321; "Reconstructing Roles and Relations: Women's Participation in Reconstruction in Post-Mitch Nicaragua," Bradshaw, Sarah, Gender & Development 9.3 (2001): 79-87.

caring to help better cope with the aftermath of disasters. In 2007 during the Jakarta floods, women in informal urban settlements organized an emergency kitchen to cook and distribute meals. In Vietnam, women and girls assisted with flood preparedness by helping to set up disaster risk reduction informational sessions, community-based early warning systems, and emergency response team training.[14] These types of examples gave rise to increasing recognition at the international level of natural disaster's gender dimensions and much progress has been made to mainstream gender in disaster risk reduction policies and programs.[15]

Bridging Policies to Practice

The Vietnam and Indonesian examples of women undertakings during and after disasters reflect the majority of literature surrounding women's contributions to disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. Throughout the last couple of decades, the various roles that women play as caregivers, service providers, contributors in pre and post disaster situations are numerous and varied across different global regions. While there exist many non-governmental reports and published writings documenting women's contribution to disaster management efforts at the grassroots or community

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[14] "Recognize the Strength of Women and Girls in Reducing Disaster Risk," Stories from Vietnam, Available at http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/10/recognise-the-strength-of-women-and-girls-in-reducing-disaster-risks

[15] Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: on Building Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disaster. Gender is a crosscutting principle of the Framework and call for "a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision making processes," available at http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/1037. Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) calls for gender-sensitive approaches to disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery strategies and natural disaster assistance, available at http://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/9538

levels, there is lesser-documented work in the areas of women integration into disaster risk reduction national policies and practices.

In further support of the gender-based approach to disaster risk management, many United Nations agencies and organizations have developed guidelines and manuals for practical application.[16] In the Hyogo Framework for Action mid-term review, six out of 62 countries mentioned the need to further integrate women and children into disaster processes. Progress reports from 2009 and 2011 showed only 20 percent of countries reported significant achievements integrating gender into disaster risk management.[17] Moreover, "only 30 percent of countries reported relying on gender integration as a driver of progress." Despite international tools available to assist and "the increasing articulation of the importance of gender mainstreaming at the policy level, it is far from becoming a practice in disaster risk reduction and response interventions".[18] At the national legislation and policy-making levels, gender-sensitive approaches were lacking. With some country exceptions such as India where there have been legislation for the participation of women in disaster planning and decision-making at various levels, [19] most countries have yet to incorporate the efforts of

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[16] "Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive," available at
http://www.unisdr.org/files/9922_MakingDisasterRiskReductionGenderSe.pdf
[17] UNISDR, 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, Revealing Risk: Redefining Development, Summary and Main Findings, p.10, available at
http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/5198f8ce8fe5bExecutive_Summary_Revealing_Risk,_Redefining_Development._Global_Assessment_Report_on_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_2011.pdf
[18] Women, girls and Disasters , A review for DFID by Sarah Bradshaw and Maureen Fordham, 2013; "Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction, A contribution by the United Nations to the consultation leading to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction," Version 2. Available at:
http://www.preventionweb.net/files/40425_gender.pdf
[19] Government of India, National Disaster Management Authority, National Disaster Management Guidelines: Preparation of State Disaster Management Plans, July 2007, Sec. 7.1 and 8.2,
www.adrc.asia/documents/dm_information/india_plan02.pdf, Government of India, National Policy on Disaster Management, 2009, Sec.1.2.2; Sec. 3.4.5; Sec. 5.3.2, Sec. 9.5.1,
www.preventionweb.net/files/12733_NationaDisasterManagementPolicy2009.pdf

women's disaster management contributions at the grassroots level into national

policies. [20] Despite women's grassroots disaster management contributions, the HFA's

mid-term review noted that overall there has not been enough progress in gender

perspectives, cultural diversity or community participation integration as cross-cutting

issues in disaster risk reduction.[21] Moreover, where countries have adopted disaster

management laws, frameworks or policies that are inclusive and gender sensitive, the

implementation is lacking. The disconnect from policy to practice is pronounced

because most countries fail to establish mechanisms to enable communities and

grassroots organizations to systematically incorporate successful gender sensitive

approaches and practices into realistic policy formulation.

Even in countries such as Bangladesh where the government has made great

strides in legal, regulatory and structural changes, there still exist disconnects from

national to local level practices to include more women and utilize gender-sensitive

approaches. The flood-prone country of Bangladesh instituted significant disaster risk

reduction changes nationally to reduce the mass causalities observed in devastating

cyclones over the past four decades, from Cyclone Bopha that killed close to half a

million people in 1970 to Cyclone Sidr that claimed only 2,000 lives in 2007.

Bangladesh adopted laws that emphasized disaster risk reduction, restructured its

governance systems and incorporated community-based disaster risk management into

their national to local levels. These changes promoted a "whole of community'

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[20] "The Year of Recurring Disasters: A Review of Natural Disasters in 2012, Chapter 4: DRM: A Gender-Sensitive Approach is a Smart Approach," Elizabeth Ferris, Chareen Stark, Daniel Petz, Brookings Institute, 2013.
[21] Hyogo Framework for Action Mid-Term Review Report, available at
http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/18197

approach and relied on community and religious leaders to consider and accommodate gender sensitive disaster concerns.

Although Bangladesh succeeded to greatly reduce annual natural disaster deaths in Bangladesh, the gender concerns specific to women remain under-addressed by the mainly male dominated community leaders. Women, particularly in the 'Char' or river basin areas of Bangladesh, often must negotiate access to employment and marital-related issues such as polygamy, desertion and divorce with their male community and religious leaders for resolution. In the poor socio-economic Char areas of Bangladesh, the national efforts to promote the whole of community approach is not enough, where a more 'targeted group approach' to develop women's leadership and greater policy approach to "link other social sectors, such as health, other key development agendas, and local legal system reform for increased understanding of root causes of disaster vulnerabilities" are in order.[22] "Comprehensive disaster management can lead to more women's empowerment, widening social and institutional facilities, and yield more capacity and benefits from NGOs."[23] Bangladesh's national-level policies approached disaster and gender issues uniformly with universal concepts and procedures but in local practice such as the river basin areas, these policies are often modified and adapted to existing cultural norms, the outcomes of which often oppress or disadvantage women. Despite thorough gender concerns addressed in national policy documentation and training for local leaders, there is still as need for women's power, influences and leadership in local levels especially in the poor and rural

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[22] "How Women's Concerns are Shaped in Community-Based Disaster Risk Management in Bangladesh," Contemporary South Asia, Keiko Ikeda, Vol. 17, No.1, March 2009, p. 65-78.
[23] "Women in Natural Disasters: A Case Study from Southern Coastal Region of Bangladesh," International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, Khurshed Alam, Md. Habibur Rahman, 2014, p. 68-82

areas, to be further developed.[24] The gap from national policies to local implementation and outcomes is still wide-ranging. How can countries like Bangladesh ensure alignment of national policy to local practice implementation?

<u>Women's Disaster Management Contributions</u>

Incorporating gender perspectives and the existing work of women at the grassroots level into national legislation and policy was achieved in Japan through the tremendous efforts of women and their networks. After the 2011 triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear fallout, the former governor of Chiba Prefecture, Akiko Domoto, traveled to the evacuation sites with a group of women specializing in gender issues. They observed that the lack of privacy and other gender specifics needs were neglected and unaccommodated at various evacuation sites. With her governance experience, Domoto anticipated the gap in gender issue awareness since at that time in Japan women were largely absent in disaster response planning and recovery. Domoto and her group of women specialist formed the Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction three weeks after the disaster. The group gathered support form a wide range of women's organizations throughout Japan and they embarked on a campaign to systematically change local and national policies to more accurately reflect gender equality in disaster prevention and response. Through their efforts, a "Symposium on Disaster, Reconstruction and Gender Equality" was held three months after the earthquake. At the Symposium, they drafted "a demand to the national government to

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[24] "How Women's Concerns are Shaped in Community-Based Disaster Risk Management in Bangladesh," Contemporary South Asia, Keiko Ikeda, Vol. 17, No.1, March 2009, p. 65-78.

include gender perspective as a fundamental aspect of disaster and recovery policy and to allow women from disaster areas to participate in the policy-making process."[25]

The Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction's struggle to get women process inclusion was not easy as women groups across Japan took up lobbying efforts at multiple levels of government. The Women's Network urgently worked to gain political traction since reconstruction efforts in Japan were underway without adequate representation of women. Of the fifteen members named to the Reconstruction Design Council in charge of overseeing recovery, only one of the members was a woman. More importantly, the "Seven Principles for the Reconstruction Framework" identified were mainly focused on infrastructure and the economy recovery without much emphasis on social concerns or gender-equal perspectives. The Women Network upheld that the seven principles were not consistent with the goals outlined in the Hyogo Framework for Action for disaster risk reduction. To be consistent with the Hyogo Framework, the principles needed to address issues such as public health, education, culture and other social concerns, which require gender equitable representation.

The Women's Network conducted outreaches to parliamentarians, first targeting female legislators and expanded outward to gain the support of others to sign the "Demand for the enforcement of gender equality in response to the 3/11 disaster." The Demand called for increased women, elderly and disabled person representation in the Reconstruction Design Council and participation in the recovery plans. After 15 petitions, negotiations with the Japanese Diet, the Recovery Office and other

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[25] "How We Wrote Gender Perspective into Japan's Disaster Legislation," Akiko Domoto, Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction.

government bodies involved in the recovery process, the Reconstruction Design Council publically recognized not only the need to align recovery with the Hyogo Framework principles but that "it is important to aim for a true planned society, an active society and gender equal society, by having women, elderly, disabled, and various people participate in the consensus development process." Subsequently, the "Basic Act on Reconstruction" was passed on June 20, almost three months after the disaster that recognized the opinions of "a wide range of people including women, children and the disabled persons."[26]

The Act was a small victory, but the Women's Network needed to move from abstract legislative concepts to concrete gender equity policies and practices in reconstruction. In this respect, three significant proposed actions emerged from their 6/11 Symposium on Disaster, Reconstruction and Gender Equality; the first was the placement of women in decision-making bodies, the second was to increase the number of members on the Reconstruction Design Council and the third was that the people directly affected by disasters such as women, elderly and disabled, must be at the center of recovery planning.[27] Akiko Domoto noted that beyond these proposals, the implementable actions needed to specifically appoint women in key decision making bodies and institutionally establish a position at the Reconstruction Headquarters to ensure a gender equality perspective. The Women's Network, citing lack of structure to implement gender perspective actions after the 1995 Kobe earthquake, pushed beyond just addressing women's needs and perspectives after the 3/11 disaster to recognize

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[26] Id.

[27] "Women as a Force for Change," Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction, 4 Years of Activism, From Japan's 3/11 Disaster to the third UN World Conference on DRR, Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, p.6.

that "this is not simply about women being able to participate in discussions and share their perspectives; we must take up the challenge of overcoming our fundamental social problem of gender inequality during normal (non-disaster) times." [28] Domoto and the Women's network leveraged the tragic impact of the 3/11 disaster as "an opportunity to correct the structural distortions in Japan's socioeconomic structure is the essence of our challenge to reduce risk."[29] Their lobbying and efforts were able to achieve to incorporate substantial portion of their request in the published "Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction." While they did not achieve the full thirty percent appointments to the disaster management councils and committee, they were successful in changing the construct of appointments from solely male dominated occupations to more expansive inclusions of academics, social welfare and other fields with disaster prevention expertise for more women representation across communities in Japan.

The Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction's is a prime example of how women can be positive change agents to turn the disproportionate impact of disasters on women into significant achievements for more gender sensitive response needs to the betterment of women's roles, representation and status in Japanese society. The struggle and momentum for these changes were hard fought from hundreds of women's groups at multiple government levels with the common goal of mitigating disaster's impacts on those most often affected, women, elderly, disabled and other susceptible people. Their efforts stressed inclusion of perspectives in not only legislative but also institutional and structural implementation to ensure gender

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[28] "How We Wrote Gender Perspective into Japan's Disaster Legislation," Akiko Domoto, Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, p.8.
[29] Id.

equitable perspectives to prepare, response, and recover in times of disasters and in times of stability. The 3/11 disaster highlighted the inherent risk of inequitable gender roles where being a woman with limited access to information, resources or decision making puts women at greater risk, whether that risk is natural or man-made. In the case of Japan, improvements to women's gender roles, social status and expected norms translates to the advancement of women's rights and abilities. The experience learned from the Japanese inclusive process was share at the "International Roundtable on Gender Equality and Diversity in DRR" that resulted in the Sendai Call to Action on Gender and DRR which aimed to get gender perspectives included in the next 15 year successor to the HFA, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, discussed at the "World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction" in Sendai, Japan in March 2015.[30]

In South Asia, another disaster challenged region, addressing the gendered impact of disasters also yielded similar effects for the betterment of women. In Nepal, a country classified by the World Bank as one of the global "hot spots" for natural disasters, a Red Cross survey identified women as vulnerable to disaster situations, "exacerbated by illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, lack of leadership capacity, etc." In an effort to mitigate women's disaster vulnerabilities the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam, established Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) to address and promote community resiliency and risk reduction in development. During formation of the CDMC, the focus on women's leadership to address female vulnerabilities lacked participation due to the poor

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[30] "Women as a Force for Change," Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction, 4 Years of Activism, From Japan's 3/11 Disaster to the third UN World Conference on DRR, Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction, p.10.

educational status of women. The Red Cross found that in order to address women's risk and disaster impacts, they needed to focus on the greater limitations of women and children in the communities. "The lack of equal opportunity for education, no rights to property, early and forced marriages, the dowry system, restriction of women and girls from participation in and sharing their views in training and meetings, restricted communication with senior males and females not being seen as family care providers."[31]

In attempts to empower women for leadership skills in DRR and climate change adaptation, Women Empowerment Centers (WECs) were established with an aim to increase women's participation in local institutions and enhance WEC members' ability to seek external service support for community issues and develop their capacities through training and women's group advocacy. The WEC members sought to improve their economic status through livelihood options such as farming, marketing and other skills-based training in addition to informal adult education. Furthermore, the Red Cross helped to develop action plans for inclusive participation to address issues pertinent to each community.[32] The Nepal's Red Cross' grass root efforts established a sustainable mechanism for disaster susceptible communities and particularly women to mitigate disaster risks. In addition to addressing development, sanitation, conservation, and coordination needs of the community through the CDMC, the WEC were also able to promote women's rights, empowerment through institutional development and livelihood

[31] "Women's Empowerment in Building Disaster Resilient Communities," Aryal, Kalpana, Asian Journal on Women Studies, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2014, pp.164-174; "Women's Empowerment for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response in Nepal," Rajesh Dhungel and Ram Nath Ojha (2012), Gender and Development, 20:2,309-321.
[32] "Women's Empowerment in Building disaster Resilient Communities," Kalpana Aryal, Asian Center for Women's Studies, AJWS, Vol. 20 No.1, 2014, p 164-174. Available at http://acws.ewha.ac.kr

facilitation. While getting sufficient funds to address women's issues remains a

challenge and it is recognized that a long road to change norms, beliefs and values that

restrict women's rights still exist, the Nepal Red Cross Women's Empowerment

Centers' work are making gradual progress.[33] To date 37 WECs s have been

established via the Red Cross and Oxfam to lead disaster risk reduction and emergency

response work in their local communities with subsequent longer term improvement of

women's participation and the betterment of women's roles, status and societal

acceptable norms in Nepal.[34]

While many studies highlight gender-based reasons for women's vulnerabilities,

other writings shed insights into women's "adaptive capacity." In Indonesia the

Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006 and Merapi volcanic eruption in 2010 highlighted the

capacity of women in disaster risk reduction and response. Women proved themselves

invaluable as they responded to provide assistance in the evacuation shelters, food

providers, and with post trauma rehabilitation. In the phases of reconstruction and

recovery, the Indonesian women were instrumental in offering ideas for more

earthquake resistant housing construction and conducted risk assessment mappings to

identify livelihood vulnerabilities. Formally, women represented about 30 percent of the

Community Based Housing Reconstruction Project committee members and continued

to assist with the program implementation. Through Indonesia's disasters, women

demonstrated their effectiveness as "agents of change," and "pioneers or initiator in

their environment" where among their many contributions, served as government policy

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[33] Id.

[34] "Women's Empowerment for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response in Nepal," Gender & Development, Rajesh Dhungel & Ram Nath Ojha, 2012, 20:2, p 309-321. Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2012.687220

makers, facilitator/teacher in non-formal education community program, medical volunteers and many other roles.

Furthering this thinking, a study in Bantul and Sleman Indonesia concluded that women's adaptive capacity goes beyond disaster risk reduction to improve resiliency factors such as economic and livelihood activities, social capital, dissemination of information and communication and enhancing community well-being. The research found that women are "significant economic actors who have businesses that contributed to mitigating the shock of the disaster on incomes of their families. In fact, women generated income that contributed most to livelihoods of their families."[35] In the context of social capital, women's strong sense of community and attachment to their neighborhood is reflected in helping and working with other in logistics. Their coping ability often translated into income generation adaptability.

Lastly, in terms of information and communication, women are natural social marketers as disaster-related information and knowledge can be passed on to family, friends and neighbors. The experience of women in Indonesia has "enabled them to become more sensitive and concerned about signs of disasters," leading to mitigated and prepared actions that raise the community's disaster management competence.[36] The Indonesia case illustrated that the different needs of women and men during a disaster is not considered a disadvantage and burden but valuable perspectives and factors to consider in making disaster policies and strategies.[37]

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[35] Women's Adaptive Capacity in Post Disaster Recovery in Indonesia," Asian Social Science 11.12, Kusumasai, Bevaola, 2015, p. 281-289.
[36] Id.
[37] "Learning of Women's Roles in Each Phase of Disaster Management through Community Empowerment," A Case Study of Earthquake (2006) and Merapi Eruption (2010) in Yogyakarta, Hanindya K Artati,

Among the literature addressing women and disasters, there is consensus that more gender disaggregated data can further validate the argument for a gendered approach to disaster. There is also A UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2010 survey suggesting that those working in the DRR are not prioritizing gender. Of 1,856 DRR professionals surveyed, gender "was the lowest scoring theme for both expertise and recognition of the need to strengthen knowledge of this area, with only 13 per cent suggesting they had expertise in the area and 13 per cent suggesting it was an area that needs more expertise."[38] While case studies in various countries exist to justify a gender sensitive approach to disaster, there is an overwhelming need for gender and age specific data collection and use to further motivate and convince leaders to incorporated gender-differentiate considerations in its disaster management approaches and intended outcome. To this effect, the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN) was established in 1997 to promote more gender gap in disaster analysis and practice. Though more data and information needs to be included, the website is a good starting repository for gender and disaster studies, research, and knowledge.[39]

Implications for Women, Peace and Security Initiatives

Leveraging women's "adaptive" capacities while investing in women capacities have been key lessons from Vietnam, Nepal and Indonesia. Additionally, the success of the Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction from grass root learning, countrywide lobbying efforts and extensive networks, to national and local policy

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[38] "Engendering Development and Disasters, "Disasters, Overseas Development Institute, Sarah Bradshaw, 2014, S54-S75.
[39] Id. See also. www.GDN.com

changes then ensures realistic policy implementation. These case studies illustrate the need to create long lasting institutional changes for inclusion of gender sensitive perspectives, highlight mechanisms to bridge gender focused national policies with local implementation, and demonstrate how women's participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction can result in the betterment of women's rights and gender roles and status perceptions.

These lessons from the realm of disaster management can be extrapolated to advance women's issues and concerns in other areas of national security. The United Nations' National Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) that was adopted in 2000 stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents of peace and security. Resolution 1325 addressed for the first time the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make in this realm. One hundred sixty-eight countries signed the WPS Resolution 1325 and committed to institutionalizing gender-sensitive approaches in conflict-affect environment, women's participation in the peace processes, women's protection from violence, promote women's role in conflict prevention, and providing women's equitable access to humanitarian assistance.[40]

In order to promote the advancement of women in these key security areas, the issues of women's risks not just in disaster vulnerable situations but also in terms of susceptibility to other risks such as poverty, exploitation, abuse and oppression needs to be addressed. Advancing women in these WPS areas can be facilitated by greater

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[40] United Nations National Security Council Resolution 1325, Women, Peace and Security, Available at www.UNWomen.com

female participation in disaster management to a certain extent, but reducing the vulnerability of women has its origins in expanding women's access and control over resources via expanded gender roles and rights. This "right's based" approach has commonly been expressed through many writings that advocate that the root cause of women's vulnerability lies in their gender based roles, status and limitations imposed by societal norms. Some academics argue that placing the focus on women's rights or strategic gender needs/interests, rather than their existing responsibilities, or practical needs, will have more transformative effect on the power "relationship between men and women, with the aim of overcoming women's subordination."[41] "Strategic needs cover issues like the elimination of institutionalized forms of discriminations such as the right to land ownership, or instituting measures against intra-family violence, for example."[42] To this effect, while WPS can incorporate the practical needs of women in gender sensitive disaster policies and local practices, but to be sustainably and institutionally effective WPS initiatives should also address women's rights and development. Beyond women's participation, decision-making, education and training, efforts for women's advancement, WPS undertakings needs be driven at the policy level while institutionalizing mechanisms to ensure elimination of discrimination and oppression of women at the local to national levels.

Mechanisms such as adequate female representation, whether through initial quotas or targeted goals can be instituted to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies. Furthermore, educating and training current male and female leaders

[41] "Engendering Development and Disasters," Disasters, Overseas Development Institute, Sarah Bradshaw, 2014, S54-S75.
[42] Id.

on the need for women's inclusion with measures of accountability will help to facilitate increased participation. Once women are in positions of power however, creating unobstructed processes for promotion is also important to ensuring senior women leaders and longer-term women participation. These processes may need to assess human resource hiring and promotion rules or norms that create biases against women and challenging its validity with an aim to remove institutional barriers for female advancement in the security sector. Other ways to increase women participation include women's formalized mentorship and networks, as demonstrated in Japan as effective especially when lobbying for institutional and policy changes to deal with gender specific issues. Women-focused education and skills training such as leadership development, as illustrated in Nepal, has been effective to equip women with added capabilities to advance in the field of disaster management and other security sector areas.

Gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies and programs will make gradual progress in lessening women's vulnerabilities but it will not entirely address the factors that make women susceptible to disaster impacts. Recognizing and improving socially constructed gender inequalities will create longer-lasting national and societal disaster resilience. Similarly, the sustainable way to promote WPS advancements is through specific programs and projects that will address unequal gendered power relationships whether in times of disaster or times of peace. As highlighted by the Nepal Women's Empowerment Center case, the aim is less about challenging gender stereotype roles than by understanding and appreciating the women's adaptive capacity, potential and

contributions. [43] The Women, Peace and Security initiatives can take the various

disaster management lessons of leveraging the strengths and attributes of women to

create a more diverse and effective security environment where women's inclusion and

contributions will lead to better lives overall.

The views expressed in these articles are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of DKI APCSS, the U.S. Pacific Command, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

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[43] Id.