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# GENDER EQUALITY IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION



**T**his Policy Brief highlights the different ways in which disasters affect men and women. Gender-specific needs and opportunities are to be found along the entire disaster cycle which needs to be understood in disaster risk management. Since the tsunami in Aceh there has been significant learning about good practices for gender responsive disaster management. This can be strengthened through gender mainstreaming in all related national and local-level policies, institutions and programs to tackle the root causes of gender-based vulnerabilities, ensure use of gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data to help target resources and give equal weight to the rights as well as capacities of both men and women.

### Current Status

**Indonesia is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries including the potential impacts of climate change**

**B**etween 1980 and 2008, 293 disasters predominantly caused by earthquakes and tsunamis were recorded, affecting approximately 18 million people and creating an estimated US\$21 billion in damage. For 2004 Indian tsunami alone, the casualties are more than 200,000 people (International Disaster Database). Assessing future risks, Indonesia is most prone to landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis (UNISDR, 2009). Comprehensive disaster risk management must encompass strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation since disasters and climate change are intimately intertwined. Climate change in part will create disasters such as floods and droughts that require immediate responses but will also bring about more subtle and potential more devastating changes that require longer term adaptation strategies.

**Gender inequalities create specific vulnerabilities of men and women to the impact of disasters, conflicts and climate change**

**T**he impact of a crisis depends to a large extent on the vulnerability of those likely to be affected. Vulnerability is the result of prevailing social, economic and political inequalities that are both contextual and change over time. While men and women experience distinct vulnerabilities, it is mainly women, especially from among the poor, elderly, ethnic or social minorities, who have more limited coping strategies and the highest risk of being affected by a natural disaster (see Box 1). This is not always the case, as in the 2010 eruptions of the volcano Merapi, where there were indications of more men than women victims, mostly due to pyroclastic heat waves, but also to a considerable extent by factors such as traffic accidents, heart attacks and suicide (BNPB 2010). In violent conflicts, it is also mostly young men who are the primary victims. Understanding vulnerabilities and challenges in any

## Box 1: Gender-based vulnerabilities in Aceh

*Far more women were victims of the 2004 tsunami because they were at home for livelihood and child caring activities while many men were at sea fishing where their boats stayed afloat. They never learnt to swim and their long skirts made it difficult to run away. Post-disaster vulnerabilities included increased workloads and pressure on women; in early emergency operations mothers with young children partly only received single-adult portions of food distributions (APWLD, 2005), increased in underage marriages after the tsunami and increased of alcoholism and violence among men. 75% of widows in IDP camps are estimated to be victims of sexual harassment. (UNIFEM, 2006)*

about disaster risks, climate change or impeding acute disasters, women's reduced resilience to impacts because of increased risks of poverty and their limited mobility and access to services and the double impact on them in losing their homes which are also their place of work.

## Women's rights in emergency responses are often neglected or disregarded without due consultation and participation

Driven by the 'tyranny of the urgent' the emergency response in Aceh and Nias largely failed to consult women effectively with poor results. Damage, loss and needs assessments were mostly conducted by male-dominated teams, who mainly relied on male heads of households for information and feedback (Enarson, 2009, Komnas Perempuan 2007a). Disaster responses to the Merapi eruptions however benefited from earlier coordination mechanisms to ensure gender sensitivity in emergency operations, such as the Gender Working Group set-up during the Yogya

given disaster situation requires a thorough assessment. Contributing factors may include social expectations of men to protect their families that may encourage risk taking behaviours that indirectly affect women and children; women's access to educational opportunities, information

earthquake. A well-organized civil society consulted intensively with disaster victims including women. As a result, for instance, volunteers and female police officers were strongly present in IDP posts, which could explain why there were fewer cases of gender-based violence among these IDPs unlike in other disaster situations low (Dewi, 2010).

## Women are more vulnerable to suffer in conflict situations

Women experience distinct vulnerabilities during violent conflict situations particularly with men away fighting. In 2003, an estimated 23% of women in Aceh, of whom 60% had never attended school, suddenly became household heads as their husbands had either died or fled for security reasons (UNIFEM, 2006). Women are also victims of sexual harassment and violence. During 30 years of civil war in Aceh, women were victimized because they were wives or relatives of suspected Aceh Freedom Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/ GAM) guerillas, suspected of being female GAM soldiers (*Inong Balee*) or suspected of having relationships with or supporting members of the Indonesian Armed Forces. The extent of cases is unknown as victims do not report abuse out of feeling of shame and fear of social stigma (see Box

2). Anecdotal evidence from Aceh, Poso and West Timor reveals that displacement and loss resulting from conflict, social unrest and disasters leads to high levels of stress or depression among

## Box 2: Violence against women in Aceh

*Of 103 cases of violence against women from before 1999 until after the signing of the MoU in 2007, more than half were sexual violence such as rape and sexual torture. (Komnas Perempuan, 2007b). The Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence Kontras recorded 128 rape cases during the Military Civil Emergency Era alone. (Kontras, 2006). Meanwhile, the Aceh NGO Forum estimates that around 15,000 women died in the course of the conflict in Aceh and caused psychological trauma to around 7000 women (Kamis, Mahdi, 2006).*

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men. Their reluctance to seek help because of socio-cultural barriers and scarce availability of psychosocial support potentially exposes women to sexual and non-sexual violence within and outside their family (Komnas Perempuan, 2007a).

### Post-disaster recovery can provide 'windows of opportunities' to address systemic gender inequalities and advance women's human rights

In searching for stability in times of crisis, traditional patriarchic norms may surge up on the basis that 'all have suffered'. Women were not represented during the negotiations that ended the conflict and women combatants were initially excluded from the design of reintegration efforts. Most notably, women were largely absent from consultative processes and meetings including for the Master Plan for Recovery in Aceh. Donors initially accepted this on the grounds of local culture. In addition, the application of Sharia law became distinctly stricter post-tsunami, restricting women's mobility and behavior and incurring human rights violations against women by the Sharia police (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Disasters also provide 'windows of opportunity' to address gender inequalities and advance women's rights (see Box 3). Civil society organizations can seize opportunities presented by post disaster situations to advocate for women's rights,

as in the case of the second All-Acehnese Women's Congress in June 2005 attended by more than 400 women from 21 organizations. This led to the Aceh Charter

on Women's Rights outlining the personal, legal, political, social, economic and cultural rights of women in the specific Acehese context of Sharia Law which was endorsed by a broad coalition in politics and society including notable religious leaders. *Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam dan Nias* (BRR) with strong support of international organizations acknowledged gender equality as a cornerstone of the recovery process (Enarson, 2010) with women's rights in land titling as one of its flagship programs. In contrast to traditional practice in post-tsunami Aceh, in an estimated 30% of cases women were registered as land-owners (Harper, 2007) following a policy allowing joint land titling of husbands and wives adopted in September 2006.

### Box 3: Securing women's right in post-tsunami Aceh.

*In 2009, almost 30% of the legislative candidates running for office were women. Due to advocacy of women's organizations in the course of the recovery process, the Women's Empowerment Bureau in Aceh was upgraded in status to an Agency (Badan) giving it a wider mandate and increased funding. Several qanuns have been passed referring to some of the principles as outlined in the Women's Charter: e.g. qanuns on Population Administration, Education and Women's Empowerment and Protection*

### Gender-based roles render women more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

Global climate change is expected to create extreme weather events in Indonesia including extreme rainfall and rising sea temperatures and

levels. This will affect people's lives in complex ways, encompassing areas as varied as agriculture and food security, forest and water resources, energy, health, natural hazards, migration and conflict. Indonesia is the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases and research and policy discourse has so far almost exclusively been dominated by natural scientists' perspectives on natural resources degradation. Limited involvement of social scientists has led to a lack of empirical data on gender-related vulnerabilities in climate change, however international research from places like Bangladesh and India supports the notion that vulnerability to climate change is strongly shaped by gender relations, Women's roles in small-scale farming communities as primary producers of food crops and fetching water and fire wood puts them at high risk of being critically affected. Other risks include water scarcity and increased water- and vector-borne diseases increasing women's workloads in caring for sick and elderly, inadequate food supplies reducing food intake for women and girls and dwindling household incomes resulting in girls being pulled out of school first (UNDP/AusAID, 2009).

**Gender inclusion in reconstruction and rehabilitation can reinforce gender equality and further empower women.**

Livelihood programs in recovery often focus on the heads of households who are typically men, disregarding women's role in family livelihood strategies and neglecting single or widowed women. For example, economic rehabilitation in Aceh strongly focused on the fishery sector replacing boats, nets and other facilities and gear, largely ignoring women's role in processing and trading of fish (Cosgrave, 2008). Conversely programs for women often reinforced traditional female livelihoods such as cake baking and sewing, reinforcing gender disparities in terms of

economic roles in the family and in recovery (Gender Working Group Aceh, 2007). Efforts to train women in non-traditional livelihood skills, such as painting and brick-making, had mixed outcomes because contractors in part refused to employ women (Nowak, Caulfield, 2008). Legal rights, specifically the ownership of land and assets or guardianship of children during post-disaster recovery are particularly sensitive issues that require specific attention and interventions in order to protect women's rights. Successful efforts to safeguard land rights of women in Aceh helped to increase the security of women headed households and ensure their access to productive resources and credit.

Men and women can play complementary roles in recovery from disasters: men generally carry out physical reconstruction while women contribute by extending psychosocial support and diversifying livelihoods. Women's awareness and knowledge is essential for effective risk management preparing homes, stockpiling food and maintaining social networks that disseminate information, educate children and communities. As shown by an evaluation of GTZ assistance after the Yogya earthquake, women were more responsive than men towards acknowledging the importance of earthquake safe construction practices and willing to invest into applying these principles (Holländer, 2008). Children also were acknowledged for their potential role in contributing to disaster reduction by communicating disaster risks (Haynes, 2010).



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### **Gender-sensitive disaster risk management is needed to keep MDG achievements on track.**

Sudden-onset disasters such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions or floods as well as the impacts of climate change erode achievements in human development. In post-tsunami Aceh poverty had increased from 28.4% to 32.6% while in the rest of the country poverty was decreasing (World Bank, 2008). Women from marginalized groups such as widows have greatest vulnerability in disasters which leads to further disempowerment and impoverishment. The number of early marriages increased in the aftermath of the tsunami, which is known to have long-term negative effects on all MDGs. Maternal and neo-natal health in post-tsunami Aceh was particularly at risk with higher levels of miscarriages, premature deaths and children being born under unsafe conditions (APWLD, 2005). Disaster recovery and risk management cannot be successful without taking on a gender lens in help achieve the MDGs in a sustainable way.

### **Specific attention on women and men's different roles and priorities in responses to disasters and climate change creates more sustainable results**

International research has shown that men and women prioritize different needs and approaches in emergency recovery. Livelihood issues and access to shelter, water and sanitation facilities as well as psychosocial counseling typically rank highest for women, while men give higher priority to larger-scale infrastructure (Fordham, 2000). Direct cash transfers and revolving funds programs in Aceh that targeted exclusively women often proved to be more successful than those involving both men and women.

Men and women have different roles in mitigation and adaptation to climate change due to their distinctly different roles in livelihood strategies and in the household. For effective climate change mitigation, for instance, women will be crucial to contribute to more effective patterns of energy use, waste as well as natural resources management. In subsistence farming women usually contribute to about 70% to 80% of household food production (UNDP, 2009). Adaptation to climate change will, thus, require gender-responsive approaches to introduce new agricultural technologies and/or develop alternative livelihood strategies.

### **Establishment of National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) is designed to target and provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable groups.**

The Government of Indonesia through Presidential Decree No 8 year 2008 has established the National Agency for Disaster Management which reports directly to the President of Indonesia. This Agency will lead disaster related activities which include disaster risk reduction, emergency response, preparedness and recovery on behalf of Government of Indonesia. BNPB has established regulations and guidelines that ensure Indonesia's disaster system effectively addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, including women and children, in times of emergencies, and lead the coordination mechanism in the aftermath of disaster. Good practices of BNPB were captured, for instance, during the Mt. Merapi volcano response operation in 2010, where BNPB collected sex-disaggregated data; made a special arrangement for pregnant women and families with infants at main collective centers and camps; and closely liaised with NGO gender working group.

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**Indonesian policy documents on disaster risk management are bound by the principle of equality before the law and government.**

The Government of Indonesia Law number 24 year 2007 on disaster management stipulates the principle of equality before the law and government, which means that content of provisions in disaster management cannot set out matters that differentiate against amongst others religious, ethnic, race, group, gender, or social status background. This principle also applies to the provision of early warning that is identified as one of pre-disaster events in the Law number 24 Year 2007.

The importance of effective early warning system is also highlighted as one of core action programs under priority 9 – environment and management of natural disasters – in the five year medium-term development plan (RPJMN) 2010-2014, which defined an equitable and just nation as one of eight national development missions. “Just” nation means that there is no discrimination in any form, among individuals, gender, nor among regions. The development of early warning system is further entailed in the National Disaster Management Plan 2010-2014 and the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2010-2012, both of which recognize that gender inequality will have an impact on the fate of women in disaster situations, and unequal position will be exacerbated by the special needs of women in disaster situations.



**Research on gender-based vulnerabilities and collection of sex-disaggregated data related to disaster, conflicts and climate change is fundamental to designing and implementing gender-responsive policies measures**

There are currently no official guidelines on the collection of sex and age-disaggregated data of victims and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Empirical research on distinct vulnerabilities in disaster situations as experienced by women in Indonesia is limited and mostly confined to the situation in Aceh and there is no empirical data at all of the specific conditions and risks experienced by men. Estimations of the numbers of victims in the 2004 tsunami was largely based on the ratio of survivors. World Vision estimated women accounted for 60% victims while based on a ratio of 3:1 for men and women survivors while Oxfam’s figure was up to 80% (Oxfam, 2005) and Flower Aceh calculated that 75% of IDPs were men. Emergency operations in Yogya during and after the Merapi eruptions in 2010 learnt from earlier experiences and benefited from the active role of many civil society actors. IDP data collected by civil society networks included comprehensive information on pregnant and lactating women, newborn or people with disabilities which were used to target assistance to some of the most vulnerable disaster victims (Dewi, 2010).

## Policy Issues

**Gender perspectives are still to be adopted and institutionalized in disaster recovery and management legal and policy frameworks.**

The Government has put in place a national framework for disaster recovery and management which could be further strengthened. For example,

Law No. 24/2007 on Disaster Management promotes non-discrimination of all citizens in protection, participation in planning and decision making and access to assistance in compensation. This would be greatly enhanced with an explicit call for gender mainstreaming, which includes social and gender analysis and affirmative actions. As acknowledged in the 2009 National Report on the Progress of the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, gender perspectives in disaster risk management policies and frameworks so far have received little attention and no significant institutional progress has been made.

The National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2010-2012 (NAP-DRR) prepared by Bappenas with assistance from the World Bank and UNDP refers to the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Law No. 24/2007. The Plan includes one specific chapter on gender mainstreaming, but it does not promote gender mainstreaming for the entire action plan. Local governments in Yogyakarta, Central Java and Maluku have already moved ahead in preparing Local Disaster Management Action Plans, recognizing the importance of gender mainstreaming such as the Plans for the districts of Magelang and Sleman.

The National Action Plan for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change (NAP-MACC/2007) acknowledges the multi-dimensional threat climate change poses on human and national development and outlines short-, medium- and long-term plans on mitigation and adaptation.

The Presidential Instruction on Gender Mainstreaming (INPRES No. 9/2000) stipulates the need to mainstream gender dimensions in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all government policies and programs. The Norms,

Standards, Procedures and Criteria (NSPK) in form of a Guidance on the Implementation of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (Ministerial Regulation No. 2/2008) stipulates the integration of women's protection policies, programs and activities into all provincial and district planning and budget documents. While the NSPK on Gender- and Child- Data (Ministerial Regulation No. 6/2009) stipulates the collection, analysis; the use of sex and age disaggregated data in all provincial and district policies, programs and activities. However, BNPB as the lead agency at national level for disaster risk management so far has no unit or working group focusing on gender mainstreaming and there is not yet any gender mainstreaming strategy.

## Recommendations

- BNPB to recruit gender expert and set framework conditions by developing basic gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and institutional structures
- BNPB to develop guideline, format, capacities for data collection and needs assessment
- BNPB to commission research on hazard- and location-specific disaster vulnerabilities, giving attention to different impact of disaster to women and men.
- Ministry of Environment and other government and non-government key players in climate change to promote and commission more research on gender and climate change, particularly gender-specific vulnerabilities, challenges and opportunities in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Gender perspectives to be mainstreamed in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs for disaster risk reduction; response and adaptation to climate change with

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a focus on reducing gender-based vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and enhancing women's leadership.

- Cross-sectoral coordination to be carried out between the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP), BNPB and other sectoral ministries in order to promote the adoption of internally accepted principles (e.g. Sphere Standards, UNDP Eight Point Agenda), the use of key instruments such as gender assessments, discussion of relevant research findings and integration of gender equality indicators in key policy papers and programs.
- BNPB to closely cooperate with initiatives under the Office of the Vice President to accelerate poverty reduction on how to mainstream issues around gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction in priority poverty reduction policies and schemes.
- Create awareness about the importance of gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction at national and local level disaster management institutions, particularly among district and village governments. This should emphasize the importance of compiling disaggregated data and gender responsiveness of public communication strategies.
- Disaster management agencies at district and provincial level to actively seek collaboration with NGOs who are experienced in applying internationally available knowledge and best practices related to gender mainstreaming.

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