



Why is inclusion of gender equality important for disaster preparedness and response activities?

Natural disasters impact women, girls, boys, and men of all ages differently. Due to pre-existing gender inequalities women, children, persons with disabilities and gender diverse people represent the excluded and vulnerable groups that are often the most adversely affected by disasters.

Existing social norms constrain women and girls' and excluded and vulnerable groups' ability of to prepare to disasters, as well as to respond to, and mitigate their disproportionate impacts. The lack of information, agency and choice exclude them from decision-making processes and often prevent their access to relief support.

It is crucial to take into consideration multiple forms of discrimination that individuals may be subjected to, in order to recognize their different and specific needs, capacities and priorities. This understanding should be integrated throughout the preparedness cycle.

The active representation and leadership of women and girls and other excluded and vulnerable groups in humanitarian processes should be facilitated; this would promote transformative changes at individual and societal level.

To be most effective, disaster plans must be developed with, agreed to, and understood by everyone they propose to protect.

The recent disasters that impacted Bangladesh in the past three years uncovered a series of gendered impacts.

Women face an important reduction of their income pursuant to hazards and disasters (70% loss for married women, and 54% for marginalized ones).¹ At the same time, their responsibilities for unpaid care work are almost doubling during disasters as they mostly bare the challenging responsibility of fetching water or of maintaining sanitation.² In these circumstances, there is a high risk that women and girls will adopt negative coping strategies (taking loans; resorting to child marriage; decreasing meals; selling their household assets) putting their health and safety at risk and exposing them to the potential loss of all of their economic resources.^{3,4} Additionally, in many cases, lack of income also triggers violence against women and girls.⁵

In the regions of Bangladesh most vulnerable to floods and cyclones, women and girls generally have less mobility than men and have limited access to accurate, official information as well as to public service announcements, due to limited access to public spaces, group gatherings and outreach activities. This, combined with the damages caused on roads post-disaster and the scarcity of means of transportations

¹ Gender analysis of Covid 19 and recent disasters in Bangladesh, UN Women, 2022

² *Bis*



³ Rapid gender analysis of flood situation in north and north-eastern Bangladesh, GiHA Working group Bangladesh, June 2022

⁴ Preliminary key findings of Rapid food security, livelihood and market assessment, HCTT Food Security Cluster, July 2022

⁵ HCTT's Flash Flood 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan, United Nations Bangladesh

make it further complicated for women to have access to relief and support services, as well as to early warning prevention messages transmitted through mobile phones and community radios.

To support the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) and humanitarian practitioners in integrating gender equality in their disaster preparedness efforts for the monsoon and cyclone season in Bangladesh the following checklist should be considered:

Cluster	Recommended actions to be taken
<p style="text-align: center;">All</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct active consultations with women, men, girls and boys across age groups and backgrounds, especially hard-to-reach and marginalized groups to plan for effective actions for preparedness and assistance. ▪ Ensure that the collection and allocation of relief resources is carried out in ways that increase the humanitarian support targeting women and excluded and vulnerable groups in preparedness, response, recovery, and disaster risk reduction activities.
<p style="text-align: center;">Food security</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure women, including from excluded and vulnerable groups, are represented in food security-related decision-making and consultation forums, as well as in leadership positions. ▪ Incorporate special food items in food relief packages for pregnant and lactating mothers, infants, children and elderly people giving priority to the use of local food items. ▪ Recommend that families collect assistance together according to each member's physical capacity.
<p style="text-align: center;">Nutrition</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure women, including from excluded and vulnerable groups are represented in nutrition-related decision-making and consultation forums and in leadership positions. ▪ Consider that different groups are more vulnerable to disease and malnutrition, such as young children, pregnant and lactating women, elderly people, and people with chronic illnesses, and plan for food and nutritional support accordingly. ▪ Bear in mind that elderly people and women may forego eating in order to prioritise providing food for their children, placing them at risk of malnutrition. Therefore, special attention needs to be given and strategies have to be devised to ensure that elderly and women get adequate nutritional support. ▪ Provide special and additional food as well as drinking water allocation for pregnant and lactating women. ▪ Where applicable, multisector mobile teams should include nutrition actors to address needs of the elderly and women.
<p style="text-align: center;">Water, Sanitation & Hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure women, including from excluded and vulnerable groups, are represented in water, sanitation and hygiene-related decision-making and consultation forums and in leadership positions. ▪ Design and construct accessible water supply and sanitation facilities with raised platforms, especially for tube wells. ▪ Prepare separate toilets as well as bathing and changing facilities for women, with adequate privacy, locks, lights, and dustbins.



- Prepare hygiene and wash kits, including water purification tablets to ensure access to safe drinking water, and prioritize distribution to women and girls and other excluded, vulnerable groups.
- Prepare dignity kits for women, girls and gender minorities; please note that dignity kits may be also required for transgender persons. These should notably include reusable sanitary pads with instructions on proper disposal in local language.

Health



- Ensure women, adolescent girls and sexual and gender minorities are represented in health-related decision-making and consultation forums, as well as in leadership positions.
- Recognize and address the specific health needs of women, adolescent girls, and transgender people, e.g. reproductive and sexual health needs.
- Engage women's groups and organisations representing excluded and vulnerable groups to ensure that medicines and medical supplies reach those most affected groups from the most affected areas.
- Where possible provide first aid training to community women and men from hard-to-reach areas to ensure primary health care to those areas.
- Ensure the availability of clinical services for GBV survivors and the availability of post-rape treatments (including PEP kits) in health posts, hospitals, and public health offices.

Shelter



- Ensure gender balance and diversity in the shelter management structures/committees. Ensure women, girls and members from excluded and vulnerable groups are represented in shelter-related decision-making and consultation forums, as well as in leadership positions.
- Make special provisions to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to shelters and that shelters provide for their specific needs, e.g. enabling toilet facility.
- Prepare for additional privacy and security measures in shelters for pregnant and lactating women, women with disabilities, adolescent girls, gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, as well as gender minorities.

Gender-based violence & Child Protection

- Ensure women, gender minorities and other excluded and vulnerable groups are represented in protection-related decision-making and consultation forums and in leadership positions.
- Prepare, adopt and disseminate gender-sensitive guidelines on behaviour and actions to take, as well as a code of conduct on PSEA for implementing partners as well as volunteers and staff working on disaster response.
- Create/review/revise confidential access to sexual exploitation and abuse reporting mechanisms.
- Ensure families have bags or other means to secure their documentation, including identity documents.
- Try to put a system in place engaging local government (UDMCs, Ansar/VDP, etc.) to ensure safety and security of women and girls who are unable to go to shelters, e.g. women with disability, elderly women, or women simply unwilling to leave home to go to shelters.

Gender-based violence

- Plan for psycho-social first aid and trauma counselling for survivors of violence.
- Establish safe spaces for women, children, and adolescent girls.
- Expand and strengthen existing Sexual and GBV Watch Groups and related women's organizations, community-based groups, child and youth clubs, and gender diverse groups in the area and engage them in relief, recovery, reconstruction and preparedness activities.
- Ensure preparation and dissemination of informative messages focusing on GBV prevention and response services.
- Establish information desks/centres to provide information on relief and referral services.
- Mobilize additional financial resources especially targeted to GBV response

Child protection

- Awareness materials and communication strategies should target and reach everyone equally according to their capacities.
- Teach girls and boys how to prepare for the monsoon season at the household level. Early warning messaging should be explained to them.
- Strengthen messaging on child marriage and harmful practices to families & community leaders through platforms accessible to girls and women.
- Prepare child-sensitive behaviour guidelines for volunteers and staff working on the disaster response.
- Make provisions for psychosocial counselling for young children and adolescent girls after disasters and ensure female teachers have received first aid counselling.

Education

- Secure books and educational materials for both girls and boys in watertight folders/bags.
- Ensure that steps are taken upon re-opening schools/learning facilities that have been closed due to disasters, to offer education to both boys and girls. For that, prepare for extra support to bring the girls back to school.
- Where applicable create provisions for girl brides to continue education at schools/learning facilities.
- Ensure that when learning facilities have been closed due to disasters, steps are taken upon re-opening to offer education to both boys and girls.

Logistics

- Allocate female logisticians, where available, to perform their functions in situations in which local cultural factors inhibit male staff from directly exploring and meeting women's needs.
- Consider the most appropriate time and location for distribution of relief items to ensure no beneficiaries are inhibited from attending a distribution event.
- Plan specific options to reach people that live in remote areas and in chars.
- Ensure separate lines for women and men respecting local culture, as well as priority lines for vulnerable groups or home delivery voluntary services in case of extreme vulnerability (persons with disabilities, single women, elderly, children, and women in advance stages of pregnancy).
- Prepare to follow PSEA best practices and guidance during distribution of relief material.

Early Recovery

- Address differences related to gender and age in the design of economic recovery measures such as financial services and emergency employment.
- Support local government planning to address gender-based socioeconomic inequalities that hamper equal recovery.
- Facilitate meaningful and equal say by women and men in project decisions and wider community governance structures.
- Monitor women's empowerment and self-reliance project outcomes, as well as satisfaction levels for women and men.

**Needs
Assessment
Working group**

- Conduct gender assessments of disasters.
- Collect, analyse, and use disaggregated data and analysis on sex, age, disability, and diversity.
- Use to analyze if the programming is relevant, effective and based on analysis and that the programming is at a minimum gender-and age-sensitive and responsive, transformative and intersectional.

**Communication
with
Communities
Working group**

- Early warning messaging should be tailored to the needs of women, girls, boys, and men, including from excluded and vulnerable groups, to ensure gender sensitivity and inclusion.
- Provide information in a variety of ways to ensure greater outreach, as women's access to mobile phones and/or radio is limited.
- Keep in mind that different gender groups trust different sources of information; and therefore, plan to engage with a broad range of relevant stakeholders to provide information. Where multiple modes of communication are impossible, work with different gender groups in advance to ensure they all understand the trustworthiness and value of the particular mode of communication to be used.
- If possible, distribute radios to women and youth groups to disseminate information widely.
- Widely disseminate prevention and response messages to protect women and other vulnerable groups. The messages should focus to dispel and undo harmful gender stereotypes that negatively impact women and girls.
- Create inclusive gender-balanced volunteer groups to provide for messaging on emergency issues.

**Cash
Working Group**

- Ensure the development of feedback mechanisms for women, girls, men, and boys of diverse groups as part of Cash- based intervention (CBI) programmes.
- Develop CBIs to contribute to gender equality and social inclusion focusing on increased participation of women and persons from excluded and vulnerable groups. Include them as transfer recipients and decision makers.
- Develop CBI programmes to prevent and respond to GBV.