

IN BRIEF

THE ONLY WAY IS UP:

ENCOURAGING AND MONITORING DIVERSE SOGIESC INCLUSION IN THE HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION SYSTEMS

Photo: UN Women/ Allison Joyce

What's the Issue?

People with diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC, aka LGBTQ+ people) often experience discrimination, violence and exclusion before, during and after disasters, conflict and complex emergencies. These experiences undermine opportunities to develop dignified and resilient lives, to survive crises, and to recover from shocks. However there is little sign that either the humanitarian or disaster risk reduction (DRR) sector are mobilizing to address these issues in systematic ways.

People with diverse SOGIESC experience violence, discrimination and exclusion in families, local communities, faith communities, schools, workplaces, health centres, when accessing other public services or the justice system, and when walking down the street. This pre-emergency marginalization means that people with diverse SOGIESC may have specific needs in crises, and that their voices are not heard in disaster planning processes. The same experiences may extend into the crisis, in the form of violence and harassment that limit access to services, and that lead many people with diverse SOGIESC to avoid official aid delivery. Recovery may also be compromised, due to lack of support during periods of acute need, or through compromised access to training, housing and other support.

In 2011 the UN Human Rights Council resolved that discrimination and violence against people with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity constitutes human rights violations. In 2020 thirty-four governments signed a statement at the Council urging action to end discrimination and violence against people with diverse sex characteristics. However key global development and humanitarian

frameworks, standards, and guidance documents fail to recognize diversity of SOGIESC as a criteria for inclusion initiatives, or make mention in passing only. This is also reflected in program activities, where people with diverse SOGIESC are rarely included in assessments, designs, implementation or evaluations, and diverse SOGIESC civil society organizations (CSOs) are poorly supported and poorly integrated into sector architecture. Humanitarian and DRR organizations are sometimes reticent to address diverse SOGIESC issues for reasons including the level of societal stigma, and many of these organizations lack the awareness, capacity, tools, motivation or partnerships needed to effect genuine change.

Our Solutions

Drawing on complexity theory *The Only Way Is Up* offers an explanation for the limited progress on diverse SOGIESC inclusion, and proposes a coordinated, flexible and sustained set of measures to shift the system into a new and more inclusive state. Building on the 2018 Pride in the Humanitarian System consultation it also offers tools for the humanitarian and DRR sectors to analyze their current level of diverse SOGIESC inclusion and to monitor change. Adopting these tools requires sector organizations to step-up their work with diverse SOGIESC CSOs.

The 2018 Pride in the Humanitarian System consultation (PiHS) created an opportunity for diverse SOGIESC CSOs to work with humanitarian and DRR organizations to share stories, explore the barriers and enabling factors, and start a new journey toward diverse SOGIESC inclusion. In the associated *No Longer Left Behind* call-for-action CSO

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representatives at PiHS called on humanitarian and DRR organizations to fundamentally change how they engage with crisis-affected people with diverse SOGIESC. How do we know if the change they sought is actually happening?

Research and Case Studies

The Only Way Is Up report includes research into the gaps between community needs and humanitarian and DRR sector plans in four settings: Rohingya refugees at Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), the Marawi conflict and the earthquakes in Davao del Sur (Philippines) and the Tropical Cyclone Harold response in Santo (Vanuatu). Interviews were conducted with ninety-two people with diverse SOGIESC, humanitarian assessment and planning documents were reviewed, and interviews were conducted with humanitarian and DRR staff about how and why change happens - or does not happen - in these systems. While the gaps are large and many, there are paths forward, and some cause for hope. Mapping of factors that limit diverse SOGIESC inclusion suggests focus areas or leverage points for change, and some developments in Cox's Bazar and the Philippines offer hope. *The Only Way Is Up* report offers recommendations for governments, donors, international organizations and diverse SOGIESC CSOs in areas including:

- Funding and technical support for diverse SOGIESC CSOs to work in DRR and humanitarian program contexts.
- Genuine opportunities for diverse SOGIESC CSOs to take part in the humanitarian and DRR systems and for organizations in those systems to be accountable to those CSOs and their diverse SOGIESC constituents.
- Pressure and incentives for humanitarian and DRR sector organizations to improve diverse SOGIESC inclusion.
- Greater awareness of discrimination, violence and exclusion experienced by people with diverse SOGIESC.
- Increased humanitarian and DRR organisational capacity to support diverse SOGIESC inclusive assessment, design, implementation and evaluations.

Achieving diverse SOGIESC inclusion will require sustained attention from many parts of the humanitarian and DRR systems. Even then, rates of progress will vary as diverse SOGIESC inclusion in these sectors is also tied to broader societal change. While this work will be challenging, the status quo is untenable, and the only way is up.

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Photo: UN Women / Pairach Homtong

In June 2018 more than 100 representatives of diverse SOGIESC CSOs and humanitarian and DRR organizations met in Bangkok to start building a diverse SOGIESC inclusive system.

BOX 1

Tools Available to Encourage and Monitor Diverse SOGIESC Inclusion

Diverse SOGIESC Snapshot Tool

This tool provides a quick and simple means for humanitarian and DRR organizations to establish a baseline and monitor increases in diverse SOGIESC inclusion at the five leverage points. The tool is currently survey based, but could be adapted for use with interviews, document reviews and other data.

Diverse SOGIESC Rapid Assessment Tool

This tool supports more detailed program/project level assessment of diverse SOGIESC inclusion. It mirrors the process within the UN Women Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Rapid Assessment Tool and integrates a diverse SOGIESC CSO into the assessment process.

IASC Gender with Age Marker Tipsheets

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender with Age Marker (GAM) provides for coding diverse SOGIESC inclusion alongside gender and age. A Diverse SOGIESC Tipsheet and Shelter Tipsheet is available to support GAM users to enter diverse SOGIESC inclusion data.