



Combating women vulnerabilities - issues in disaster management

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Abstract

This paper explores possibilities for building resilience among gender vulnerable community. It is always seen that women are worst hit during disasters. It is observed that absolute involvement and contribution of women in decision making process is needed to minimize the risks of disaster. Involving women as representatives of decision making organizations and group will assist in building resilience. This involvement also assists in promotion of women empowerment and leadership initiatives. Women are vulnerable to disasters more than males. Hence, creation of awareness through women self help groups and women community groups is needed to build resilience among gender vulnerable community. at the same time, there is a need to increase research in understanding the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable sections.

Keywords: disaster management, gender vulnerability, building resilience,

Introduction

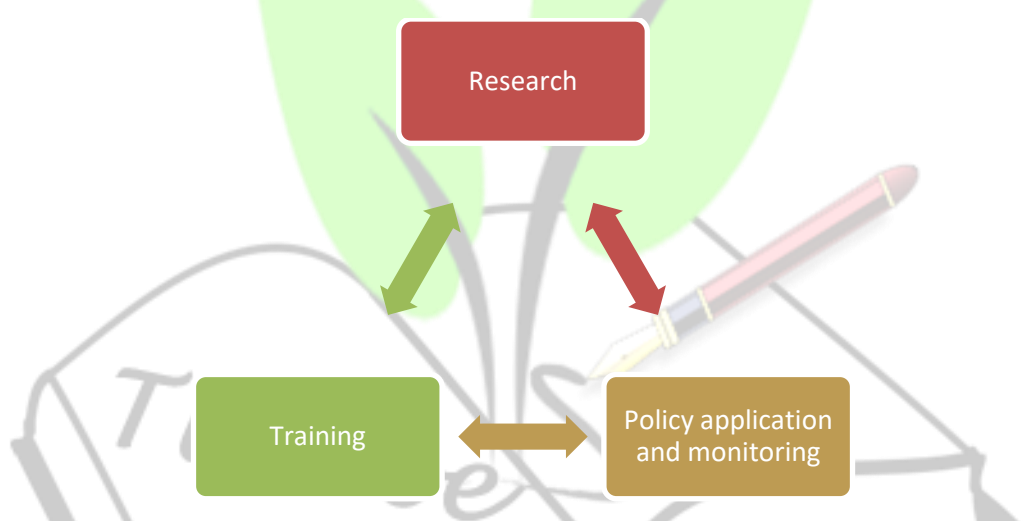
With overwhelming activities of disregard against nature, natural disasters are recurring. The seasonal cycle has been transformed and each season brings havoc and perennial loss to human life. The over exploitation of natural resources has led to disastrous impact on human life and women are considered as most vulnerable. During disasters women face horrifying experiences some times reported but majority of the times unreported.

1. Women and children account for 75% of the refugees at risk from war famine persecution and Natural disasters.
2. Women of reproductive age comprise a quarter of at risk population
3. Nearly half of such population re pregnant women.
4. Majority of the women are forced to flee in searching protection and food.
5. Vulnerability is increasing because occurrence of natural disasters has increased 80% .
6. Natural disasters leave women single and defenceless as they lose their husbands fathers or brothers or any such male members.
7. Nearly 48% of the women lose supportive help from their family due to natural disasters.
8. United Nations report of 2018 states that nearly 70% of the women face gender based violence during and after natural disasters

Avoiding Women vulnerabilities - Indian society is divided by caste, class and race inequities. Indian women enjoy very less political and administrative powers. Their inclusion in decision making is also very poor.

1.	Increasing Gender Analysis Strategy	The need to increase political commitments to gender analysis through enhanced cooperation and collaboration between various ministries has to be prioritised.
2.	Gender Mainstreaming	Women issues have to be highlighted in framing any policy on climate , poverty reduction , gender issues,
3.	Reviewing the National Policies	Making a periodical review of national policies concerning women inclusive of strategies , legislations , budgetary allocations, planning and programming.
4.	Developing New Policies	Women have to be considered in developing any new policy for women and child development , creation of sustainable opportunities for women , social rights and nutrition related policies
5.	Collecting Gender Specific Data	Collecting statistics in impact of disasters carrying out gender sensitive vulnerability risk and capacity assessments and developing women issue indicators to monitor and measure impact of natural disasters is also very important
6.	Increasing Awareness	Women need awareness about their issues through public debate and deliberations. Community needs to know intricacies of the gender issues.

Besides these issues, women vulnerabilities during disasters can be dealt with following mechanisms as listed below



1. There is a need to increase research in impact of natural disasters on vulnerable sections. These research outcomes will support in understanding and identifying high risk areas in disasters .
2. Higher education institutions can play a vital role in introducing courses on women's role during and after natural disasters. Improving and mainstreaming a gender perspective and equal participation between people in co-ordination of disasters preparedness humanitarian response and recovery through capacity building and training session will also help women swim out of difficult times.
3. Professional partnerships with avenues of capacity building through professional organizations NGOs and community organizations will help women to rise above natural disasters and its impact.

But it has to be borne in mind that no amount of human planning, preparedness scientific researches and technological applications can completely avert natural disasters. But preparing the vulnerable sections before any natural disasters through awareness and capacity building can be more supportive than any other measure. Preparing women to face any hurdles whether societal or ecological , will definitely depend upon right policies towards building their confidence.

Global initiatives – United Nations has adopted Disaster risk reduction strategy with gender perspective. These initiatives highlight the role of women as providers of food , family essentials and honour and plans guidelines which provides them with decent livelihood and sustainability opportunities . Women vulnerability increases because of her social cultural and political atmosphere. Hence United Nations highlighted inclusive policies. But at the same time it is to be noted that gender vulnerability is not uniform across nations. The under developed countries where social and political liberty is a misnomer, continue to combat the disasters with all complexity. Women often trail in policy framing committees and decision making councils.

Collaborative Partnerships- The natural disasters cannot be completely contained. But women can be trained to face disasters more feasibly through public private partnerships. Local women associations can be included to train women in awareness creation activities. Women have to be made known about disaster types, effects and impact through NGOs and women Self Help groups.

Government Initiatives -Government Initiatives to draw the attention of needs to start from identifying the origin of natural disasters. The Indian forest policy , The Indian industrial policy ,the Indian agricultural policy , Indian irrigation policy , Indian dry land farming policy , Indian Horticultural policy , Indian special economic Zone policy etc are causing over exploitation of natural resources , and women are worst hit because of their vulnerabilities. The male counter parts leave women and aged people in villages and migrate to urban centres in search of employment which is making the agricultural sector suffer. The seasonality of agriculture has left very few opportunities for women to amke a decent life. Along with these delicate conditions if women are made to face recurring disasters , their life would be in utter complexity.

Disaster management activities for women - Women can quickly motivate their neighbourhood towards understanding the concepts of disaster management and disaster risk reduction management. Activities as listed below will support awareness building

1.	Involving in activities of Go green and Tree planting
2.	Awareness about Green zone management
3.	Increased participation in Water saving campaigning
4.	Awareness about Rain water conservation
5.	Awareness about Waste water recycling
6.	Awareness about Solid waste management
7.	Awareness about Waste water management
8.	Awareness about Home gardening
9.	Bank loans for Nursery management
10.	Increasing subsidy for Drip irrigation units
11.	Establishment of Micro water units

Women are vulnerable to disasters because they lack supportive supplements to face disasters. Indian government has taken several steps to cope up with the i situation with rural banking , inclusive banking , gender budgeting, subsidy farming , self help groups , cooperative society etc but still the confidence of facing any hurdles need to come from within Each woman need self confidence towards meeting any challenges of life . Every woman needs good socio- cultural safeguards beginning from her childhood to her death. Indian society still considers women as secondary citizens, her societal access in full of inequity and discrimination.

All legislations which have been framed to prohibit untouchability, social exclusion, economic disparity, cultural inequity, will fail to safeguard women because women lack individual initiatives. Unless and until women raises to meet the challenges of her personality, disasters continue to haunt her. She can be made to gain self confidence through continuous awareness , learning and training herself.

Conclusion

Without the absolute involvement and contribution of women in decision making, women leadership and real community resilience to disasters cannot be achieved. Women are vulnerable to disasters and creation of awareness to women through women self help groups and women community groups. The awareness training for women and children can save lots of disaster linked catastrophes. The women involvement in disaster prevention and disaster reduction policy making is also very supportive. Not only conceptual understanding but also practical understanding of the disasters and its impact needs to be imparted to women. Women with knowledge of disasters and its influences will train the children; will naturally be an asset to the nation

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