



Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction, and  
Climate Change Adaptation: A Learning Companion  
Oxfam Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change  
Adaptation Resources

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## Learning objectives

After reading this Companion, you should

- have a theoretical overview of how poverty and inequality shape the experiences of women and men during disasters, and as a result of climate change;
- understand Oxfam's approach to strengthening gender equality and women's rights through gender mainstreaming, and how this is applied to adaptation and risk reduction work in practice;
- understand what gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment mean in terms of changes in the lives of women and men who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and at risk of disaster; and
- know where to go to learn more.

## 1 About this Learning Companion

This Learning Companion aims to provide Oxfam programme staff with the basis for incorporating gender analysis and women's rights into Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) programming. Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction are priorities for Oxfam GB, as are strengthening women's rights and gender equality.

This Companion is one of a series that covers key topics for programme staff. You should read the Learning Companions 'An Introduction to Disaster Risk Reduction' and 'An Introduction to Climate Change Adaptation' first for definitions of DRR and CCA and other key terminology, as well as Oxfam's 'Disaster Risk Reduction Programme Policy' and 'Climate Change Adaptation Programme Policy Guidelines'. This Companion assumes that you already have an understanding of Adaptation and Risk Reduction and of Oxfam's approach to project cycle management, and that you understand the basic concepts of gender and poverty analysis. For more information, please see the 'further reading' section at the end of this document. Oxfam staff can contact the Programme Help Desk ([phd@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:phd@oxfam.org.uk)).

## 2 Why is gender important to Oxfam's adaptation and risk reduction work?

The poverty experienced by millions of women and men is shaped by inequalities that discriminate against and marginalize certain social groups by denying them their right of access to resources, opportunities, and power. The most pervasive of these inequalities, and the one which affects all communities, is gender inequality. Oxfam believes that gender inequality is a fundamental abuse of women's human rights, as well as a major barrier to sustainable development. Across the world, women tend to hold less power and to have control over fewer resources than men, at every institutional level. Women's disadvantage – their unequal access to resources, legal protection, decision making and power, their reproductive burden,<sup>1</sup> and their vulnerability to violence – consistently render them more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change and disasters. Understanding how gender relations shape women's and men's lives is therefore critical to effective Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

*'The river has taken everything – my animals, house, land, even my family.'* Rosa Juarez, 93, Vicus, Peru. Like many places in the area, Vicus is vulnerable to flooding and landslides. Oxfam and its partner Centro Ideas have supported the local civil defence committee to be better prepared to help people like Rosa when disaster strikes.

*Photo: Gilvan Barreto/Oxfam, 2008.*



### Key gender terms

**Gender** refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle. These gender differences are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. 'Gender', along with other aspects of social identity such as class and race, determines the roles, power, and access to resources for females and males in any culture.

**Gender equality**, or equality between women and men, refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources, and rewards; an equal say in the development process; and the same level of dignity and respect. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same, but that they have the same power to make choices, and the same opportunities to act on those choices.

**Gender mainstreaming** is a globally recognized strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres. This is to ensure that women and men benefit equally from processes of development, and that inequality is not perpetuated.

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** is a term used to describe physical, mental, or social abuse, committed on the basis of the victim's gender and against her will. This includes acts of violence, attempted or threatened, committed with force, manipulation, or coercion. Examples of GBV include sexual violence, domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), harm to men's genitals, forced early marriage, and widow killings. Gender-based violence is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men. Most acts of GBV are committed by men or boys against women and girls: this is known as 'violence against women' (VAW). But men and boys may also be the target of GBV, and women can also be perpetrators of GBV; for example, male violence against gay men, or women's involvement in property grabbing.



Anna cooks food on a raft in front of her flooded kitchen in Bogra, Bangladesh. The region was heavily affected by floods in 2007. Photo: EPA/Abir Abdullah

The impacts of climate change and disasters magnify existing inequalities between men and women. Women tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and are affected in their multiple roles as food producers and providers, as guardians of health, as care-givers, and as economic actors.<sup>2</sup> Drought, saline intrusion into water sources, and erratic rainfall all cause women to work harder to secure resources such as food, water, and fuel. They mean that women have less time to earn an income, to access education or training, or to participate in decision-making processes. This, in addition to the fact that women make up the majority of the world's poor, means that climate change and disaster are likely to have disproportionately negative effects on them, potentially increasing their poverty and unequal status.

Some examples of this are:

- Women are more likely than men to be killed or injured as a direct result of climate-related disasters (see box opposite).
- Women depend most directly on natural resources to provide for their families. They are usually the main collectors of water and fuel, and most women farmers depend on rain-fed agriculture.
- Female-headed households are often among the poorest and the most vulnerable to disaster and climate change, as they may have little choice other than to live in precarious locations such as flood-prone lands, or on steep slopes.
- Women tend to have fewer assets to rely on than men. In economic terms, they are less likely to own their own land, or have access to credit, agricultural extension services, and transportation.
- Violence against women, both from intimate partners and unknown men, is known to rise after disasters. The risk of this may be increased by a lack of privacy and safety in camps or shelters; coercion to provide sex for goods or services; and a backlash against women who have taken on new leadership roles.

### Gender-differentiated mortality rates in disasters caused by natural hazards

Several studies have shown that disaster mortality rates are higher for women than for men, and that this is caused by differences in the vulnerability of women and men that are the result of socially constructed gender roles. Following the 2004 Asian tsunami, Oxfam found that in many villages in Aceh, Indonesia, and in parts of India, females accounted for over 70 per cent of the dead.<sup>3</sup> In the 1991 cyclone disaster that killed 140,000 in Bangladesh, 90 per cent of victims were women and girls.<sup>4</sup> A study of 141 countries found that more women than men are killed during disasters; and at an earlier age, particularly in poor communities, because of the discrimination they suffer due to their gender.<sup>5</sup>

Women are not just victims of climate change and disasters, however. They demonstrate extraordinary powers of resilience during disasters and they can also be powerful agents of change. Women have repeatedly led initiatives to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and their knowledge and responsibilities related to natural resource management have proven critical to community survival.<sup>6</sup> They have shown themselves essential in mobilizing communities to prepare for and to respond to disaster. The skills, experiences, and capacities of women need to be harnessed alongside those of men by those implementing Adaptation and Risk Reduction programmes. Understanding how gender relations shape a community's response to disaster and climate change is therefore critical to ensuring effective programme planning, as well as to ensure that women are empowered by the process, rather than further disadvantaged.

### 3 Oxfam's approach to gender mainstreaming in adaptation and risk reduction

Oxfam's work on gender is driven by the belief that achieving gender equality is both a question of **justice** and of **basic rights**, and a means of **addressing poverty and suffering more effectively**. Oxfam aims to 'put women's rights at the heart of all its work' through gender mainstreaming.

Oxfam understands **gender mainstreaming** as a process of ensuring that all of its work, and the way it is carried out, contributes to gender equality by transforming the balance of power between women and men. The aim is to ensure that programmes benefit women and men equally, do not harm or exclude women, and help to redress existing gender imbalances. Gender mainstreaming addresses the concerns of both men and women and the relations between them. However, since women bear the greater burden of poverty and suffering across the world due to systematic discrimination against them at all institutional levels, gender mainstreaming is largely about supporting women's empowerment. Critical to the success of this work is actively engaging with men to acknowledge the role they play in either reinforcing or alleviating women's subordination, and securing their support to ensure that adaptation and risk reduction initiatives uphold women's rights and strengthen gender equality.

In its Adaption and Risk Reduction (ARR) work, Oxfam is committed to taking action to meet women's specific practical needs, such as those relating to their perceived responsibilities in the home, as well as addressing their longer-term strategic needs, i.e. redressing the balance of power between women and men. Oxfam's **aims in terms of gender equality** are to support women in their efforts to challenge stereotyped gender roles, to reduce their reproductive burden, and to achieve the following:

- greater access to and control over resources;
- stronger participation and leadership in decision-making processes;
- protection from gender-based violence; and
- an increasing sense of empowerment.

In practice, this means ensuring that the different concerns and priorities of both women and men **fundamentally shape the whole programme management cycle**, and that the following steps are taken in the design and implementation of all programmes:

- Ensure that risk assessments are informed by a gender analysis (gender analysis should be included in the terms of reference for all assessments and research);
- Build objectives on gender equality and women's empowerment into the plans and budgets of programme, policy, and campaign work;
- Assess the different implications of planned programme interventions for women and men;
- Proactively seek out and engage with appropriate women's rights organizations and female community leaders when selecting partners;
- Ensure that women participate equally and actively alongside men and are enabled to take up leadership positions throughout the programme management cycle;
- Monitor and evaluate changes in gender relations using gender-sensitive indicators; and
- Ensure that the institutional arrangements of implementing organizations (Oxfam and partners) support gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is as important to **advocacy work** on ARR as it is for programme work. Institutional frameworks, policies, and legislation at local, national, and global levels need to uphold women's rights and to contribute to gender equality. The organizations, institutions, and governments responsible for ARR work need to demonstrate accountability to women; and specific funds need to be allocated to support these processes. As an example, increasing the active participation of women in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) bodies and annual climate change meetings is essential if climate change policies are to promote rather than hamper gender equality. In supporting such processes, Oxfam needs to engage with global women's rights alliances working on gender and climate change.

It is also important that gender is mainstreamed into the work of agencies at national level that are responsible for implementing the commitments of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015). This sets out concrete measures to make communities and nations more resilient to disasters and includes an agreement between the 168 signing nations that: 'a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training.'



A women's village meeting in a camp in Darfur. Oxfam consulted extensively with women and other vulnerable groups to discuss their concerns and to make sure that projects met villagers' precise needs. Photo: Adrian McIntyre/Oxfam, 2006.

## 4 Project cycle management: adaptation and risk reduction from a gender perspective

### 4.1 Programme identification: gender analysis

The first step in the process of mainstreaming gender throughout the project cycle is to carry out a gender analysis. This is an exploration of power relationships between women and men in a particular programme context. It allows us to understand how poverty affects men, women, boys, and girls differently, and to identify their specific different needs, concerns and priorities. It leads to the identification of programme objectives and strategies which aim to promote gender equality.

A gender analysis should identify the following issues:

- differences in the lives of poor women and men in the target community;
- the status of women and their ability to exercise their human rights;
- the different skills, capacities, and aspirations of women and men;
- the division of labour between women and men;
- the different access to and control over resources enjoyed by women and men;
- the different levels of participation and leadership enjoyed by women and men;
- indications of the number of women experiencing gender-based violence; and
- the barriers that unequal gender relations present to women's development in this particular community.

#### Questions to ask in a gender analysis

- Which men and which women hold the power in this community?
- Who owns and controls resources?
- Who takes the decisions?
- Who sets the agenda?
- Who gains and who loses from processes of development?

One tool that can be used for analysing risk and for planning interventions is Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Analysis (PCVA). This is a participatory learning and action planning process which facilitates an understanding of the hazards faced by a population and the factors which make them vulnerable to these hazards, as well as identifying the capacities they have to respond to disasters. For more information on this, see Oxfam's resources on PCVA listed in the 'further reading' section; and UNISDR *Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender Sensitive: Policy and Practice Guidelines* (2009).

For further tools and resources on gender analysis see Oxfam's *Rough Guide to Gender Analysis* (2005).



Martina Longom (foreground) and other women from Caicaoan village, Uganda, collecting water from the traditional water hole. Now members of the local women's group have successfully campaigned for and helped to build a borehole close to the village. Photo: Geoff Sayer/Oxfam, 2008.

## 4.2 Planning and design

### Programme and policy objectives

The outcomes of any gender analysis carried out during risk, vulnerability, and capacity analysis must be built into the identification of community programming and policy objectives. This should be approached in two ways:

- Ensure that all objectives acknowledge and address gender differences. For example, rather than 'improve people's access to early warning information', a gender-sensitive objective would be 'to ensure that *women and men* have better and more equal access to early warning information, and that the communications system is *tailored to the different behaviour patterns of men and women*'.
- Identify specific objectives to strengthen women's empowerment and gender equality, for example reducing their household workload.

### Programme design

The following list should guide the design of gender-sensitive programming:

- Actively promote women's dignity and empowerment;
- Support women to carry out their responsibilities in their traditional areas of authority, such as providing food and water for the family and managing the family's health. But also support and encourage women and men to take on non-traditional gender roles so that women are able to take on more strategic and empowering roles, while men take on a share of reproductive work (reducing women's overall workload).
- Support women's right to ownership and control of

strategic assets such as housing and land. Where appropriate, create 'collective asset bases' for women (e.g. a shared boat or land), as these are more sustainable than other assets, and it is easier for women to retain control over them;

- Protect women and girls from the likelihood of increased violence during and following disasters;
- Challenge attitudes and beliefs that discriminate against women;
- Work with men to secure their support for programme activities that uphold women's rights and empowerment;
- Be aware of the vulnerabilities and concerns of different groups of women, such as widows, girl children, and women with disabilities;
- Ensure accountability by establishing mechanisms that enable both female and male beneficiaries to give feedback on programmes. It is important that this includes feedback on programme activities that particularly relate to gender issues.
- Influence local and national-level policy making on ARR to ensure that gender equality and women's rights issues are addressed, and that women actively participate and lead in decision-making processes alongside men.



*Local residents of Trinidad, Bolivia, cross a bridge between elevated seedbeds, or camellones. Flooding is increasingly unpredictable in this area of the Amazon Basin, and Oxfam supports a flood mitigation and food security programme. The programme supports women's leadership in food production, and aims to reduce vulnerability to floods, and strengthen post-flood recovery. As Yenny Noza, a member of the group working on the camellones, pointed out, 'If we have another flood this year, we won't lose all our plants and seeds'. Photo: Jane Beesley/Oxfam, 2007.*

### 4.3 Implementation and management: gender mainstreaming in practice

This section contains examples of activities to increase gender equality and empower women in Adaptation and Risk Reduction programmes.

#### Gender-sensitive Climate Change Adaptation

Change	Impact	Gendered programme activity examples
Temperature increase on land and water	Heat stress on crops	Ensure that women farmers as well as men have access to heat-tolerant crops and varieties, and that their cultivation and/or processing does not place an additional burden on women
	Increased water demand for crops	As above, for drought-tolerant and fast-maturing crops and varieties
		Include women in training sessions on how to increase soil's organic content
		Include women in training sessions on water-conserving crop-management practices and ensure that the practices promoted do not place an extra physical burden on women
	Promote water capture and storage, ensuring that women are consulted on appropriate systems	
Heat stress on livestock	Tree planting (for shade and fodder) done in consultation with women and men so that it is done in appropriate areas, and women are included and treated equally in planting activities	
Sea-level rise	Saline intrusion	Provision of water for households and productive use, ensuring that women are involved in designing systems that meet their requirements
Changed seasonality	Farmers uncertain about when to cultivate, sow and harvest	Ensure that both men and women farmers have access to appropriate, accessible and reliable weather forecasts and know how to use this information
		Promote crop diversification and crop mixing, ensuring that their cultivation and/or processing does not place an additional burden on women
	Crops damaged by dry spells within growing season	Ensure that both men and women farmers have access to appropriate, accessible and reliable weather forecasts and know how to use this information
		Promote crop diversification and crop mixing, ensuring that their cultivation and/or processing does not place an additional burden on women
		Water capture and storage; access to fast maturing/drought tolerant varieties; soil and crop management to conserve water
	Crops damaged by unseasonal heavy downpours	Ensure that both men and women farmers have access to appropriate, accessible and reliable weather forecasts and know how to use this information
		Ensure that women farmers as well as men have access to flood-tolerant crops and varieties, and that their cultivation and/or processing does not place an additional burden on women
Promote crop diversification and crop mixing, ensuring that their cultivation and/or processing does not place an additional burden on women		

## Gender-sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction

### *Make DRR a priority at all levels, with a strong institutional basis for implementation*

- Ensure that the priorities of grassroots women's organisations are represented in co-ordination mechanisms for DRR, such as national platforms;
- Ensure that analysis and planning for DRR capacity development is prioritised equitably for men and women;
- Ensure that budget allocation for DRR implementation in all sectors and levels is prioritized for action that benefits women;
- Promote the involvement of women in participatory community planning processes for DRR through the adoption of specific policies; in the creation of networks; and when determining roles and responsibilities, authority over, and management of available resources.

### *Identify and monitor risks, and enhance early warning*

- Involve both women and men equally in the development of risk and hazard maps and data, and identify gender-specific aspects of risk and vulnerability;
- Support research, analysis, and reporting on long-term and emerging issues that might increase the risks faced by women;
- Encourage the participation of women where possible in early-warning systems and ensure they are appropriate and accessible to both women and men. This means that communication alerts, media, and technology need to be tailored to the preferences and behaviour patterns of women and men.

### *Build understanding and a culture of safety and resilience at all levels*

- Ensure that women's as well as men's knowledge is promoted to build a culture of safety;
- Ensure that activities and events to build understanding of risk target women as key change agents, and that the means of communication are appropriate for women;
- Promote the targeting of children, especially girls, with risk knowledge through formal and informal channels;
- Ensure equal access to DRR training and educational opportunities for women.

## *Reduce underlying risk factors*

- Ensure that critical safety facilities and infrastructure (e.g. evacuation shelters and emergency housing, water, sanitation, and health systems) are resilient to hazards, accessible to both women and men, and that women have adequate privacy and security;
- Promote the importance of support to women and groups involved in sustainable ecosystems and natural resource management, including planning land-use to reduce risk;
- Promote diverse livelihoods options for women to reduce their vulnerability to hazards, and ensure that risks faced by women are not increased by inappropriate development policy and practice;
- Ensure that the development of financial risk-sharing mechanisms prioritises the involvement of women, and that they are accessible and appropriate to the needs of women at risk of disaster;
- Raise awareness among both women and men about a woman's right to live free from violence at home and in the public domain.

## *Strengthen preparedness to respond effectively at all levels*

- Disaster preparedness and response plans should take into account gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities, be disseminated to both women and men in languages both can understand, and prioritise actions to reduce the risks faced;
- The importance of women as key change agents should be promoted and women fully involved in community disaster management committees, disaster response drills, etc.



A woman demonstrates a raised tube well in the village of Harhi, India, installed as part of a flood rehabilitation programme. Photo: Gail Williams/Oxfam, 2005.

## Policy and advocacy

Oxfam aspires to use advocacy on women's rights and gender equality in the following ways in its ARR work.

**Internally:** Oxfam should ensure that its own strategies for ARR promote gender equality and women's rights.

**Locally:** Oxfam can help to ensure that gender analysis is incorporated into data collection on the impacts of climate change and local adaptation responses, and can influence policy at the local level by raising awareness of best practice on gender in ARR responses.

**Nationally:** Oxfam should aspire to lead advocacy on specific aspects of gender equality and the protection of women's rights in processes such as national coordination and advocacy forums, e.g. the national platforms responsible for taking forward the commitments of the Hyogo Framework, or coalitions working on national climate change adaptation policy. Oxfam should also hold governments to account for the development and funding of adaptation policies for vulnerable communities,

and advocate on issues of specific identified risk, such as environmental protection. The focus should be on ensuring: that ARR interventions respond to the needs of both women and men; that specific measures are taken to protect women's rights and support their empowerment; and that it is accepted that women's active participation and leadership in the relevant decision-making processes is essential, in order to achieve such policy change.

**Internationally:** Oxfam advocates a major transfer of international funds towards ARR, including the demand that such work is implemented in an equitable, pro-poor, and gender-sensitive manner. It should also advocate increasing the active participation of women in international bodies such as the UNFCCC, as well as other relevant institutions and mechanisms, and in annual climate change meetings.

**At all levels:** Oxfam needs to form alliances with women's rights networks which are working to ensure that climate change and DRR policy making are gender-responsive.



Members of a women's group register community members as they arrive at a designated safety area during a flood simulation exercise in Tajikistan. Photo: Jane Beesley/Oxfam, 2009.

### **Disaster preparedness and early-warning systems for floods, landslides, and earthquakes in Tajikistan**

In Tajikistan, Oxfam runs a disaster preparedness programme in an area vulnerable to floods, landslides, and earthquakes. In the rural areas where Oxfam works, cultural norms dictate that women's access to education and paid work is low, and their community participation and mobility are very limited. Many households are run by women and are often very vulnerable, given the significant male out-migration to Russia. A core element of this programme is encouraging women to be actively involved in preparing the community for future hazards, and in planning rescue responses. Female trainers and community mobilizers run women-only groups to build women's confidence, encourage them to voice their concerns, and deliver training in specific skills such as first aid and disaster management. These women then go on to train other women in their homes.

The impact of this disaster preparedness work is significant. In a recent landslide where 35 households were at risk of being buried, a female community mobilizer had prepared the community so well that the risk of imminent landslide was noticed, a warning given out, the area evacuated, and no lives were lost. Forty years earlier, 134 people had died from a similar landslide in the village.

*Source: Oxfam Tajikistan case studies, 'I feel so free', 'Riding High', and 'Inclusive', internal communication briefings, 2009.*

### **Lobbying for the inclusion of gender concerns in Pakistan's National Disaster Risk Management Framework**

Following the Pakistan earthquake in 2005, Oxfam worked closely with the newly formed National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to ensure that the National Disaster Risk Management Framework reflected gender concerns. It achieved this by advocating strongly for a broad consultation with civil society organizations, and working to ensure that their perspectives influenced the framework. There was a particular focus on gender, which had not been addressed at all in the first draft of the framework. Oxfam supported the NDMA to develop the gender content of the framework, so that it acknowledged the need for risk reduction measures that are gender-sensitive. It ensured that there was a focus on the most vulnerable social groups including women, children, and the elderly. It also ensured that women should be recognized as having equally valid contributions to make in decision-making processes in preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction programmes. A draft protocol of responsibilities was drawn up for the Ministry for Women and Development. These included: raising awareness among women of disaster risks; developing the capacities of women's organizations in disaster risk management; and supporting the rehabilitation of women's livelihoods, particularly those working in the unregulated informal sector.

*Source: Oxfam GB in Pakistan and 'National Disaster Risk Management Framework Pakistan', March 2007.*



For Lokol Betty and other women in drought-affected areas of Uganda, searching for wild food and firewood away from their village can be dangerous. 'We can't just say, "Let's wait for hunger to kill us", so we collect firewood from nearby. This is depleting the wood near our village, but what else can we do?' Photo Jane Beesley/Oxfam, 2009.

### Women adapting livelihood strategies in response to unpredictable rainfall in Uganda

In Caicaoan, a village in Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda, the climate is changing in unpredictable ways. For three years the rain came late, and when it came, very little rain fell. But then 2007 saw the worst flooding in 35 years. Harvests were destroyed and grain stores stood empty. With men spending weeks away from home tending cattle, women were left caring for families and struggling to find alternative sources of income. Collecting and selling firewood was one option, but firewood became more and more scarce, and women had to travel further and further to find it, and to places that were less safe. Deforestation and lack of water are two of the many problems that the local women's group in Caicaoan decided to address. They successfully planted evergreen and mango trees to replace those cut down for fuel and charcoal, and this reduced soil erosion and helped women earn an income. They also built a borehole so that the seven-hour round trip they used to make to collect water was reduced to 30 minutes. The work of the women's group has given women an important leadership role in finding sustainable livelihoods solutions for the community.

Source: *Sisters on the Planet*, Oxfam, 2007.



Natyang Ana and her daughter planting tree seedlings, Karamoja, Uganda. Oxfam is encouraging villages to re-plant their forests, and providing saplings to women.

Photo: Caroline Gluck/Oxfam, 2009.

## 4.4 Monitoring and evaluation

There are several sources of guidance which can be used as a starting point for developing a monitoring and evaluation framework. For instance, the Companion in this series on 'Measuring the Impact of DRR' gives detailed guidance on measuring programme impact, developing indicators, collecting data to measure effectiveness, and using it to inform programme design. You can also refer to Oxfam's set of minimum standards for rapid onset emergencies, and John Twigg's 'Characteristics of a disaster-resilient community'.

In this Companion, our concern is to ensure that indicators are gender-sensitive, and that specific indicators are developed to measure changes in gender relations over time. The key questions to ask are:

- How did the project or policy work benefit women and men differently?
- To what extent were the different vulnerabilities and capacities of women and men taken into account?
- Did the project or policy work enhance gender equality and women's empowerment, or work against it? In what ways?
- Is the project having positive or negative effects on gender relations?

Gender-sensitive indicators should be identified at the start of the project, ideally through a participatory research process with women and men. Data collected at the start of the project will give a 'baseline analysis' of gender relations and the status of women. If this data is collected at several points during the life cycle of the project, it will give a picture of how gender relations are changing. We can then make judgements as to whether or not it is the influence of the project itself that is causing those changes.

**Output or process indicators** should explore issues such as:

- Was gender-disaggregated data produced in risk and vulnerability assessments and used to inform programme objectives?
- Were measures taken to ensure that women and men participated actively on an equal basis in assessments and project decision making?

**Outcome or impact indicators** which are gender-sensitive can be developed by first defining broad areas of change which lead toward more equal gender relations. These can generally be defined for most contexts as follows:

- Women and men participate in decision making in public and private domains on a more equal basis;
- Women have more equal access to, and control over, economic and natural resources and basic social services;

- Fewer women suffer gender-based violence, and women have increased control over their own bodies;
- Gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls are challenged and begin to change;
- Women are empowered, i.e. they have increased power to think and act freely, exercise choice, and fulfil their potential as full and equal members of society. This includes increased capacity to organize, and to become active agents of change.

Further examples can be found in Oxfam's training pack on 'Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation' (2010).

## 5 Summary of key learning

- Oxfam believes that strengthening women's rights and gender equality are prerequisites for addressing poverty and suffering, and are also a question of justice and basic rights.
- Poverty and inequality shape women's and men's vulnerability to disaster and the impacts of climate change, and their capacity to cope and recover in the post-disaster period.
- Since women and men are affected differently by disaster and climate change, their different vulnerabilities and capacities must be analysed, and their gender-specific concerns and priorities addressed.
- Women must be recognized for their resilience in the face of disaster, and for the roles they play as active agents of change in helping communities to recover and adapt, rather than just as victims.
- Mainstreaming gender in ARR programmes means ensuring that the different concerns and priorities of women and men fundamentally shape the whole project management cycle. The aim is that all programmes and policy work contribute to gender equality by transforming the balance of power between women and men.
- Ensuring women's equal participation, dignity, empowerment, and freedom from violence are key principles in programme design and implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation using gender-sensitive indicators is important to assess whether changes in gendered power relations are occurring as a result of programme interventions.

## 6 Further reading

### Oxfam resources

C. March, I. Smyth, and M. Mukhopadhyay (1999) *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks*, Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available from <http://developmentbookshop.com>

C, Pincha (2008) 'Gender-sensitive Disaster Management: a Toolkit for Practitioners', Oxfam America and the NANBAN Trust, Mumbai: Earthworm Books. Available to download from <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf>

Oxfam GB (2009) 'Introduction to Climate Change Adaptation: A Learning Companion', and 'Introduction to Disaster Risk Reduction: A Learning Companion', internal documents, Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Oxfam GB (2009) 'A Framework for Gender Equality Programming in Humanitarian Settings', internal document, Oxford: Oxfam GB

Oxfam GB (2010) 'Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation: a training pack for development and humanitarian programmes', Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Oxfam GB (2009) 'Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Analysis Training Pack', Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Oxfam GB (2008) 'Sisters on the Planet', DVD and booklet, see [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get\\_involved/campaign/climate\\_change/sisters/index.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get_involved/campaign/climate_change/sisters/index.html)

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## Notes

- 1 Reproductive burden or workload refers to the care and maintenance of the household and its members, such as cooking, washing, caring, bearing children, and building and maintaining the home. This work is generally unpaid, undervalued, and mostly done by women.
- 2 WEDO (2007) 'Changing the climate: Why women's perspectives matter', WEDO: New York.
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- 6 A. Araujo *et al.*, (2008) 'Gender Equality and Adaptation', IUCN, <http://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/genderequaladaptation.pdf>

**Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation** are corporate priorities for Oxfam GB. The Learning Companions are a set of articles which provide accessible and practical guidance to Oxfam staff wishing to integrate DRR and Climate Change Adaptation approaches into programming. To find out about other resources on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation and to give us your feedback on these resources, please contact the Programme Resource Centre, email [phd@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:phd@oxfam.org.uk)

Front cover: Shahia, chair of an Oxfam-supported disaster preparedness group in Bangladesh, listens out for flood alerts on the radio. When the floods of 2007 struck, villages with emergency committees were better prepared to deal with the disaster; many livestock and belongings were saved, and nobody died.

Photo: Jane Beesley/Oxfam, 2007

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