

A Review of Importance of Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction

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Abstract: - Main intention of this article is to analyse the importance of gender mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in order to reduce the gap gaps and to enhance gender equality in the fields of adaptation methods, resilience actions and reduction of disaster risk. This study has used literature review method and relevant literature have been analysed based on descriptive analysis according to the purposes of the study. The purposive sampling method was used to select relevant literature. This study has been analysed under some major parts namely definitions of Disaster and its classification, Disaster risk and Disaster Risk Reduction, Mainstreaming gender for Disaster Risk Reduction. This study shows the significance of mainstreaming gender in Disaster Risk Reduction from the level of policymaking to community implementations.

Key words: Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Disaster, Disaster Risk Reduction.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender can be simply defined as social interpretations regarding responsibilities and roles of male and female. Hence gender is a set of social construction refers to the duties and responsibilities based on their sex. Gender refers to the set of learned expectations, behaviours, and attitudes about being a man or woman from biologically determined traits – collectively termed our sex” (Rolleri, 2013). Gender is shaped by social relations, culture and social norms and values. It normally has profound effects of access and management of natural resources, decision making, behaviour and authority regarding households and community. On the other hand, nature has a universal power to decide the existence of the all living beings and it has performing precious roles related to the survival of human as well from the history of human civilization (Panampitiya, 2018). As a result of unsustainable agricultural practises, social and economic behaviours with focusing the maximum use of technology in order to accumulate and utilize natural resource into the development process and economic growth, fertility of nature is depleting rapidly. As a result of this process, disasters have become a common phenomenon and occurring frequency and intensity of natural disasters have increased in modern society. Disaster pose a serious threat to the normal life, livelihood of people, process of development, lose of human lives, property and assets and environmental losses. Impact of disasters are multidimensional, and it can affect all aspects including social, economic and environmental.

DRR is a prominent approach to identify, assets and reduce risk of disasters and ultimate goal of DRR is to reduce impact

of socio-economic vulnerabilities of disasters and hazards which can cause a disaster. As women, girls, men and boys, they often have different capacities, levels of exposure to disasters, different needs during and after disasters. when we consider comparatively between men and women, disaster situations can reinforce gender inequalities and vulnerabilities for women than men in a patriarchal society. Hence, mainstreaming gender into DRR is significant to mitigate socioeconomic vulnerabilities of disasters and ensure gender equality. It offers opportunities to enhance gender equality in socioeconomic development while increasing empowerment regarding adaptation and mitigation actions and ensuring resilience to disasters. Gender mainstreaming is vital to identify precautionary actions to mitigate disasters and to reduce risk of disasters and promoting gender equality, social equality and environmental conservation in the process of sustainable development. In this context, it is important to investigate aspects and importance of mainstreaming gender in DRR in order to achieve sustainable development while ensuring and gender equality and rights of women and men to access to socioeconomic development in modern dynamic world.

II. OBJECTIVES

Main objective of this article is to analyze the significance of utilizing gender perspectives in the fields of DRR in sociological perspective. Specific objectives have carefully formulated in order to achieve the main objective. They are to identify about the concept of disaster, Disaster Risk Reduction and Gender Mainstream, to study of reasons to be important mainstreaming gender in DRR in order to reduce risk of disasters and to promote gender equality and equity, to identify strategies to enhance gender equality to DRR in community, national levels and to study importance aspects of gender mainstreaming for DRR to ensure sustainable development while strengthen resilience against disasters in particularly for women.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on data from secondary sources; the data were collected using the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method was used to gain a better understanding of and provide reliable and descriptive analysis related to the research objectives. The literature review method was used for collecting data form relevant journal articles, research reports, textbooks and other academic

works. The data that were collected represent the fields of Disaster, DRR and Gender. The relevant literatures were used according to the purposes of the study. The data were critically analyzed according to the selected main themes namely Disaster and its classification, Disaster risk and Disaster Risk Reduction, Mainstreaming gender for Disaster Risk Reduction.

IV. DISASTER AND ITS CLASSIFICATION

Disaster is a phenomenon which can identify from the history of human civilization and it can be simply defined as an event can cause to serious damage and negative effects on human life, livelihood, social and political institutions and ecological systems etc. Oxford dictionary has mentioned that disaster is “a sudden accident or a natural catastrophe that causes great damage or loss of life” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/disaster>). Event or series of events which harm to human life, assets, infrastructure, social-economic and political structures of society can identify as disasters. According to World Health Organization (WHO), “a sudden ecological phenomenon of sufficient magnitude to require external assistance” (Sena and Woldemichael, 2006:6). Hence, it is a sudden event cause damage to social, economic, political and environmental order and organization. Because it exceeds the capacity of affected community to be resilience, external physical and financial assistance are required after occurring a disaster. These definitions have more intended to define natural disasters.

Although, there are close relationships between concepts of disaster and hazard there are some differences about two concepts. **Hazard** are defined as “phenomena that pose a threat to people, structure, environmental resources and economic assets and which may cause a disaster” (Singh, 2006: 6). Hence, hazard is a component which can cause to occur a disaster. Hazard is a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage (European Union, 2013). Broadly, disaster can be interpreted as “a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material and environmental losses which exceeds the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources” (Singh, 2006: 6). Thus, it causes severe or minor damage to human life, social and economic infrastructures, essential social services and environment. It is beyond the abilities, capacities and strength of affected community to manage it. Disaster is “an event, natural or man-made, sudden or progressive, which impacts with such severity that the affected community has to respond by taking exceptional measures” (Carter, 1991: 14). Hence, disaster is a widespread event related to disruption of social and economic behaviours of people, well-functioning of social structure and organization as well as to damage to infrastructure, political systems and ecological systems. Those damages and disruption become severe when disasters are sudden and unexpected. According to Australian

Emergency Management Glossary, disaster is a serious disruption to human society including cause to death or injury in that community or harm to property. It is beyond the normal capacity of prescribed authorities and therefore, it requires mobilization and organization of resources in order to reduce impact and to rebuild the community (Australian Emergency Management Glossary, 1998).

Disaster can be categorized mainly into two types. They are, natural disasters and man-made disasters. A natural Disaster can identify as a natural event or act of nature which have a magnitude to create catastrophic situation to human life, livelihood, because of it exceeds the capacity of community resources and assistance, victimized people need external assistance and resources such as food, shelter, clothing, medical and nursing and other essential facilities (Assar, 1971). Hence, it is an occurrence of an extreme hazardous event which have impacts on communities and because of that, affected communities are unable to function normally without external resources and assistance. Natural disaster impacts on communities causing damage, disruption and casualties, and leaving the affected communities unable to function normally without outside assistance (Twigg, 2007). It can cause widespread physical damages, loss of human lives, disruption of social, political and social systems. The root causes of most of natural disasters that occur on earth related to imbalance in the environment. Thus, natural disasters are naturally occurring events and it can directly or indirectly cause serious damage and treats to human life, health and quality and well-being of social, economic and political institutions. Movements of the Earth (Tectonic Movements), soil erosion, imbalanced created in our environment such as air pollution, water pollution and noise pollution, extreme meteorological conditions, high winds are produced by water that has evaporated from an ocean surface in a low-pressure area, low level of rainfall, heavy rains and imbalance of humidity and other related causes can directly affect to occurrence of different kinds of natural disasters such as Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruption, Tsunamis, Hurricane, Droughts and Floods.

Man-made disasters are the consequences of human activities such as war, violence, crimes, accidents and ethnic crises etc. These kinds of disasters are results from a range of human activities, policies and state actions. Man-made disasters result from some human activities such as chemical hazards, radioactive materials, explosions, fires, crashes, collapse etc (Sena and Woldemichael, 2006). Human made disasters can occur based on causes such as Poverty, unregulated population growth, rapid urbanization, unregulated migration, conflicts of views and policies. Man -made disasters provoke severe disruption to national and international economy, education, food and nutrition, health care and livelihood and employment of people.

V. DISASTER RISK AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Generally, **risk** can identify as the combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2009). Risk is an objective hazard that exists and can be measured independently of social and cultural process. Hence, risk has always connected with uncertainty and it is an integral part of life. As well as, it usually associated with lack of capacity with a particular situation (United States Agency for International Development, 2011). When consider about the concept of risk, it can be identified that risk and vulnerability have close relationship each other. **Vulnerability** can be identified as “the extreme to which a community structure, service or geographic area is likely to be damaged or disrupted by the impact of particular hazard, on account of their nature, construction and proximity to hazardous terrain or disaster-prone area” (Singh, 2006:8). It implies the characteristics and circumstances of a community or institutions or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2009). It can be categorized basically into two types. They are physical vulnerability and socio-economic vulnerability. Physical vulnerability is likely to be damage or disrupt to physical conditions of people and elements such as infrastructures. Socio-economic vulnerability is likely to be damage to individual, communities and institutions such as instability of livelihood of people, disruption of community activities and organizations. It reduces the ability to withstand adverse effects to hazard due to negative characteristics related to social interactions, cultural values and economic status.

Disaster Risk refers to “the potential disaster losses, in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services which could occur to the particular community or a society over some specific future time period” (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2009). Hence, it is the product of the possible harm or damage to individuals or community caused by a hazard due to the vulnerability related to the environmental, socio-economic, cultural or political factors within the society. Disaster risk reflects the idea that disaster is a product of continuously prevailing conditions of risk. Disaster risk can be measured, assessed and mapped through knowledge of present hazards and patterns of socio-economic factors. There are three important aspects to determine disaster risk. They are, hazard, vulnerability to the hazard and some form of coping capacity (United States Agency for International Development, 2011). Hazard is a phenomenon, condition or human activity which can cause to damage to lives of people, livelihood, health condition, property and services or environmental degradation or losses. Coping capacity has related to the ability of individuals, structures or institutions to utilize available physical, human and financial resources to manage adverse conditions crisis or disasters.

According to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, “**DRR** is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systemic efforts to analyse and reduce the causal factors of disasters. Reducing exposure to hazards, lessening vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events are all examples of disaster risk reduction” (European Commission, 2013). Hence, DRR aims to minimize impact of disaster through reduction of underlying factors related to emerge disaster conditions. It is a comprehensive approach to reduce physical, socio-economic and environmental impacts of communities and societies. It provides better understanding about potentials and capacities to mitigate disaster risk. Early warning systems enable individuals and communities to prepare and to take appropriate actions to minimize possibilities of damage and losses. It has related with some key elements such as knowledge of the risk, estimating, monitoring, analysis and predicting of the hazards. It refers to the communicating and disseminating of alerts and warnings and capabilities of responding mechanisms. It underlines the significance of steps from hazards detection to community collective actions. Preparedness is “the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions” (European Commission, 2013). It has based on professional analysis of disaster risk and dissemination of early warning and coordination of collective actions through enhance public awareness with trainings and field works. It offers improved capacities and potentials to carry out efficient management actions in emergencies and disaster situations. DRR strategies includes community actions, Government/Private or Non-Governmental organizational capacities and operational abilities. Detection of hazards, assessment of socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities, effective early warning systems, preparedness and collective actions for adverse effects of disasters are key elements of DRR process. Hence, DRR can be identified as systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) adverse impact of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2004). DRR strategies have provided new global thinking in the management of disasters and disaster risk (Niekerk, 2006). Legislative and policy approaches support to strengthen basic infrastructures and to respond to needs of people effectively. Overall, according to UNISDR, there are four major objectives of DRR process. They are increase public awareness to understand risk and vulnerabilities, improve scientific knowledge about disaster reduction (DR), obtain the attention from public authorities to create and implement DRR policies and actions and foster interdisciplinary and

intersectional partnerships related to DRR (Ginige, Amaratunga, and Haigh, 2009).

VI. MAINSTREAMING GENDER FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Gender can be simply defined as a socially constructed roles and responsibilities related to men and women. Those roles and responsibilities have associated with being male or female. The concept of gender also consists expectations associated with characteristics, attitudes, behaviours related to femininity and masculinity (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, it is not an ascribed status or role by birth, and it is a social learning through socialization process. Gender is shaped by society, culture and social relations and interactions. Hence, it is a social and cultural construct, which distinguishes differences in the attributes of men and women, girls and boys, and accordingly refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women (UNICEF, 2007). Gender roles are different from culture, society and historical periods. Therefore, these roles can change over time to time with the dynamics of social norms and values. “**Mainstreaming** is a process rather than a goal that consists in bringing what can be seen as marginal into the core business and main decision-making process of an organization” (UNESCO, 2003:05). Gender roles of women and men consists different responsibilities, power, authority, decision making and knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand, the effects and magnitude of a hazard and a disaster can affect men and women differently. In this context **gender mainstreaming in DRR** is significant to enhance resilience, gender equity and equality. Gender equality does not ensure only through men targeted or women targeted programmes. Hence, it is important to improve collective efforts and conditions and a profound transformation of the structure and organization which embodied root-causes of gender inequality and subordination. In this context, it is significant to identify latent characteristics and limitation related to abilities and capacities of men and women to enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Because, women and girls still represent 2/3 of the world illiterates; fewer girls than boys finish primary school; women represent less than 15 % of national elected officials; rural women are responsible for half of the world’s food production and yet, globally, women own less than 1 % of land. In some cases, the so-called ‘gender gaps’ are at the detriment of boys. This is particularly the case in some regions where the educational performance and participation of boys in relation to girls is a source of serious concern (UNESCO, 2002). Therefore, it is vital to take account gender equality considerations in programmes, policy, administrative levels and organizational and financial activities (UNDP, 2011). It is a good strategy to accelerate progress of the rights and equality of women and girls in relation to men and boys. This process provides opportunities to all regardless their gender to plan, design, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and programmes to improve quality of living conditions and equal opportunities.

When consider about gender aspects in DRR, it can identify that men and women are affected by disasters in different ways. They have different needs during and after disasters. The gender differences can increase magnitude and impact to the level of vulnerabilities of people to expose to hazards and disasters. Women face different levels of risk and have different coping vulnerabilities and capacities, originated by a series of gender-based political, cultural, and socioeconomic inequalities and differences (The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). On the other hand, there is an inadequate representation of women in decision making process and lack of active participation due to social and cultural norms and attitudes on them. Disasters happen in a social system based on gender and existing socio-cultural and economic conditions of female can lead to negative impact and outcomes rather than men in a disaster situation. Elaine Enarson (2000), have mentioned reasons for women are more vulnerable during and after disaster situations. They are, women suffer from gendered division of labour, women are less access to natural, financial and other resources, most of women have limited to stereotype domestic duties and inadequate liberty to engage disaster mitigation actions, Due to lack of economic resources of women and subordinate position in the household, it has limited their bargaining position and power in the community (Ginige, Amaratunga, and Haigh, 2009). While deprivation of resources, power and authority of women in the social structure affects to impact negatively for women in a disaster situation, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) also can increase during and after disaster crisis. Those gender-based gaps and issues are important to consider in all the steps from planning to evaluation of policies and programmes. As well as, concern different needs and priorities of men and women in projects, policies, strategies and programmes related DRR helps to increase skills and latent potentials of male and female and to enhance access to interventions to avoid disasters from pre-disaster situations to reduce risk and disaster mitigation actions post disaster situations.

Gender mainstream in DRR refers to ensure equal partnership and engagement of both women and men in the all steps of following aspects. They are, design of policies and programmes, access to resources, power and authority to decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In this context, it is important to integrate knowledge, skills and capacities of both women and men in each steps pre and post disaster situations. As women are in an inadequate position in the existing social system, it is vital to empower latent potential and strength of women in order to decrease their vulnerabilities in disasters. As well as, it provides access to ensure opportunities to women in leadership, decision making and management positions in the community. It infers the idea that women are not merely the critical victims of disasters, but they can act as change agent and mobilizers in disaster risk reduction process. In the context of gender mainstreaming in to DRR, there are several objectives to fulfil. They are, to provide awareness of gender concerns and

needs in DRR, to develop government and institutional capacities to address gender issues in DRR, to encourage government to act into integration of gender perspectives into policies, programmes, legislations related to DRR (UNDP, 2010).

The platform on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction at the world conference in 2005 have paid their attention into five main areas of gender mainstreaming in DRR. They are, mainstreaming gender perspectives into all disaster management initiatives, building and developing capacity in women's group and community-based organizations, ensuring gender mainstreaming into communications, trainings and education, ensuring opportunities for women in science and technology, ensuring gender mainstreaming in programme, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (United Nations, 2009). Hence, in this process, educating and mobilizing both men and women related to DRR, share information, knowledge and experiences related to gender issues in disaster situations, increase opportunities and to empower women to raise their voices regarding their needs and priorities and increase visibility of roles of women to contribute to DRR are significant factors to promote gender equality in DRR. Thus, both men and women can perform multi-functional roles such as participant, decision maker, and community leaders in the fields of DRR. Develop policy guidelines on gender and DRR and composing guidelines and providing practises for gender sensitive policies and programmes in relation to DRR help to reduce legislative barriers in a state and to enhance active community participation in DRR process for both women and men. Thus, mainstreaming gender in DRR policies support to identify possible ways increase active participation of people regardless their gender in the DRR programmes in communities. It fosters gender equity and equality and to include gender analysis in DRR to reduce socio-economic, environmental and cultural vulnerabilities.

In the process of gender mainstreaming in DRR, it significant to address gender differences between women and men to access and to control over resources and social attitudes on women empowerment, leadership and active participation in the community. Gender sensitive and participatory DRR approaches also support to broaden ownership and sustainable initiatives to reduce disaster risk through equal participation and involvement of people as whole. It provides opportunities to people who are in disaster-prone areas to identify risks, raise their voices about their real needs and issues, planning, to make decision and monitoring and evaluation in DRR projects and programmes through ensuring inclusion of women and men, girls and boys with guidance of national and international organizations and expertized people in DRR. This infers the idea that people have equal rights to prepare for, respond and recover from disasters. On the other hand, it strengthens the link and accountability among government, national institutions gender equality and disaster reduction to establish and clarify recommendations to address gender equality in the process of DRR. To create those recommendations first, it needs a baseline study of disaster

risk. It includes systematic analysis of gender norms, roles, attitudes and inequalities which influence to shape vulnerability and resilience of men and women. These gender analysis guide to enhance a better understanding about resources, assets, capacities to access to various kinds of resources, needs, priorities and issues to mitigate disaster risk with inclusive involvement of men and women.

Gender and DRR are both interrelated and cross-cutting development issues. Because it is unable to build resilience of communities against disasters without active participation of men and women and equal access to gain and implement power and authority in the process of DRR. "Gender mainstreaming in DRR offers a win-win strategy for adapting climate change and achieving sustainable progress in gender equality and disaster resilient societies" (UNISDR, n.d.: 02). According to UNISDR Secretariat, there are several elements in order to strengthen the gender mainstreaming in DRR in the policy level. They are,

1. Allocate resources for facilitation gender mainstreaming in DRR with the support of the government, Private or Non-Governmental Organization.
2. Integrate gender mainstreaming in all areas such as planning, monitoring and reporting
3. Advocate implementation of policy and guidelines for making gender sensitive in DRR in the institutional level

There are five focus areas in the implementation of policies related to DRR. They are,

1. Specify the needs to establish gender segregated data on impact of disasters, carry out gender sensitive vulnerability risk assessments and assess the capacity for resilience
2. Develop gender-sensitive indicators to measure risk, impact and capacity of resilience
3. Increase understanding, spread of knowledge and awareness on DRR and to link them with other development sectors and partners.
4. Empower women into community development programme through ensure participation and financial support and improve awareness, capacity building with partnership of international, government and civil society organizations.
5. Facilitate women's participation in relief and recovery planning and programmes (UNISDR, n.d.).

Hence, increase of women participation in decision-making position in DRR, promote equal participation and leadership of men and women, Ensure access to information such as early warnings, education, awareness, trainings and capacity building to develop their self-resilience, create and strengthen the systems to collect sex and age disaggregated data and gender analysis to identify risk and vulnerabilities and lose assessments, and, remove barriers for active participation in

DRR for both women and men are key factors in gender mainstreaming in DRR process.

VII. CONCLUSION

After considering all information it is clear that gender mainstreaming in DRR is a process which influence to enhance resilience, gender equity and equality. It is a process which consisted the quality of inclusiveness and gender equality to reduce disasters with active and equal participation of women and men. In the process of gender mainstreaming in DRR is important to identify different needs and capacities to access to resources of men and women. In international and national policies and regulation related to mainstreaming gender to DRR help to ensure gender equality, equity and to remove hardships related to women empowerment and leadership. When considering about community level, it is significant to provide guidance and facilities to enhance skills and capabilities and to empower active participation of women and men regarding increasing access to early warning systems, developing new livelihood practices with better resilience and effective planning, implementation and monitoring the DRR programmes. Providing guidance to integrate community groups with local DRR committees, identifying the issues related to disaster risk through integrating indigenous knowledge of rural women and men, to collaborate with local community organizations to identify gender responsive communication methods, and including gender sensitive indicators to measure impact of disasters to different socio-economic groups are important steps in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes related to DRR with gender equality.

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