



Gender and Disasters: A Gender Analysis of Earthquake Reconstruction Policies

July 07, 2010





Objectives of the Study

- To get a synopsis of traditional gender roles and relations in the earthquake hit areas and their shift after the disaster
- To critically analyze the government policies on livelihood, shelter and education, taking social protection as a cross-cutting theme, from a gender equity perspective
- To document lessons learnt and give policy recommendations for the future



Sample Selection Criteria

- Districts: Muzaffarabad (AJK) and Mansehra (NWFP)
- 2 UCs in each District (an urban and a rural one)
- 2 villages in each UC (near the road and far from the road)



Sample

- Muzaffarabad:
 - Charakpura Union Council: Villages – Kumar Bandi and Mehlum
 - Muzaffarabad Union Council: Villages – Dabban and Phagal Bandi
- Mansehra:
 - Balakot Union Council: Villages – Balyani and Puri
 - Ghanol Union Council: Villages – Salethi and Dumdar



Tools Used

- Focus group discussions
- Key Informant interviews
- Observations
- Transect Walk
- Visual Record
- Bilateral meetings with stakeholders at UC, Tehsil, District, Provincial, Federal levels
- Collection of secondary sources of information from ERRRA/SERRA/PERA, Departments, NADRA, etc



Limitations

- Tight schedule; did not leave much margin for contingencies
- Researchers were not trained in participatory information collection techniques
- Harsh weather and geographical conditions (rains led to flooding and evacuation from Balakot)
- Resources



FINDINGS

Traditional Gender Roles and Their
Shift in a Post-Disaster Scenario



A Synopsis of Traditional Gender Roles

- Subsistence level farming on small landholdings
- Clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities:
 - Women – reproductive, productive (unpaid) and community support roles
 - Men – income generating and supporting the family work
- Work considered in the realm of “household” nor necessarily within the house



Synopsis Cont...

- Women's mobility restricted: hence access to social services and basic facilities limited
- Asset ownership in the name of the male member of household
- No control of women over decision of sale of assets (e.g gold and other valuables)



“Of course we own jewelry and can decide to sell it whenever we want! We only have to take permission from our husbands before selling it”
Women comment innocently during a focus group in Charakpura UC, Muzaffarabad.



Synopsis Cont...

- Power dynamics change with age and position within the household
- Social values have tuned women to believe their right over valuable assets are limited
- Fear social exclusion
- Stark gender disparities in a patriarchal society– question of access to basic human rights



*"Life over shade over your head is
impossible to live"*



Post-Earthquake Scenario

- Livelihoods destroyed; concept of “home” as a safe haven disrupted
- Anxiety over not being able to respond to new roles of men and women
- Men stay home for protection and to be present for survey teams
- Dependency syndrome; fragmentation of coping mechanisms
- Additional mouths to feed; additional work – in absence of state support
- Increase in disabilities – lack of access to support
- Disabilities in women lead to confinement inside four walls



Practical Gender Needs

- Women feel unprotected and exposed
- Economic dependence heightened insecurity
- Increase in workload due to makeshift living conditions
- Increase in insecurity due to temporary housing and influx of aid workers
- Additional responsibilities of taking care of other family members
- Put women in the forefront without equipping them
- Women post-disaster find themselves in bread-earning and decision making roles
- Fragmentation of social fabric
- Low literacy levels (specially amongst women) adds to misery when lengthy paperwork is involved
- Workload of men and women exponentially increased



Strategic Gender Needs

- Lack of awareness of basic rights
- Male dominance in all spheres
- Limited mobility, and social restrictions further marginalize (access to aid) – further dependence
- Lack of awareness of reconstruction policies
- Raise in stress level with no psycho-social support
- Individualization further fragments social fabric



Shift in Gender Roles

- Responsibilities of women extended beyond their skills and capacities
- Men with disabilities lost their livelihoods
- Women with disabilities limited to four walls
- New roles of young girls



Access to and Control over Resources

- Ownership of land remains in the custody of men
- Those who are physically fit and resourceful have access
- Women have no access to construction material or transportation
- No evidence of facilitation of marginalized groups



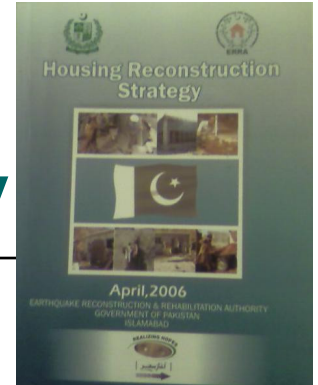
Role in Decision Making

- Traditional limited role persists
- Role may change with change in status
- Dependence of women-headed households on larger community for key decisions



Gender Analysis of the Policies and Ground Realities

Housing Reconstruction Policy



Key Principles of the Policy

- Owner-driven
- Package in four installments
- Structural guidelines and designs to ensure seismic safety
- Training of a cadre of local craftsmen



Critical Gender Issues at the Grassroots Level

- Reconstruction process is very slow; exposure to subsequent winters
- Women feel insecure and threatened in temporary shelter
- Disturbed routines and increase in workload of women
- Almost no access of women to construction material
- Ownership of land mostly in name of men
- Women-headed households do not have access to labour due to severe shortage; men of extended community involved in reconstruction of their own houses
- Lack of special facilities to help in access to compensation facilities (offices, banks, etc)
- Information on details of reconstruction designs trickled down to women through men, therefore, low awareness amongst women
- Use of compensation money to meet other urgent needs, especially in cases where there is no bread-earner



Critical Gender Issues at the Institutional Level

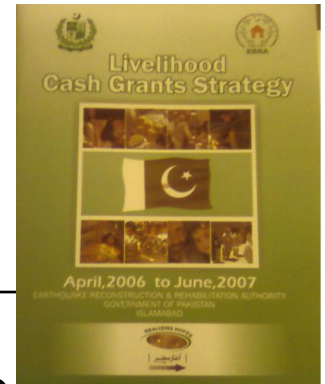
- Institutions involved in process are not gender-sensitive
- “Gender” not on the list of priorities of most government institutions
- Lack of female and/or gender sensitive staff in institutions (e.g. DRUs, ERRA field units, banks, NADRA offices)
- NGOs working in areas prior to the earthquake have not facilitated women in their areas in fulfilling requirements and accessing information and/or construction material
- Negative role of “patwari” (revenue officer) going unchecked by government and civil society
- Processes long and cumbersome; additional workload on women
- Processes not built keeping in view limited skills and capacities of local communities especially women
- Access to material hubs and other markets only possible for those who are financially and physically strong



Critical Gender Issues at the Policy Level

- Women excluded from reconstruction process by focusing capacity building only on men (training craftsmen)
- No evidence of community involvement, women in particular, in policy making
- Prices of construction material do not take into account transportation costs or even availability of transport
- Gender disaggregated data not available
- Need for combined (government and civil society) monitoring of implementation of policy on ground
- Policy has people dependent on compensation and is holding back communities from getting back on their own feet by binding them to reconstruction guidelines that are not practical to follow

Livelihoods Cash Grant Strategy



- US \$ 85 million project (out of a US\$ 400 million World Bank Loan)
- Rs 4,000 cash support to vulnerable households for six months
- After initial six months only “most vulnerable” would be eligible for a further six months
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Comprising five or more children < 18 years
OR
 - Families with no adult male member



Critical Gender Issues at the Grassroots Level

- Low level of education and knowledge restricts women from understanding the process and benefiting from it
- Livelihood Grants Office only at District level; multiple trips from far flung areas in addition household responsibilities have put tremendous pressure on women
- Increased dependency of women on men of community for seeking assistance in accessing grant
- Women feel humiliated and exposed upon being forced to leave their home and visit various
- NGOs and other organisations working in areas have not taken steps to facilitate women in fulfilling requirements and reaching out to concerned offices
- Women exposed to areas that are outside the realm of their homes without being prepared for such exposure



Critical Gender Issues at the Institutional Level

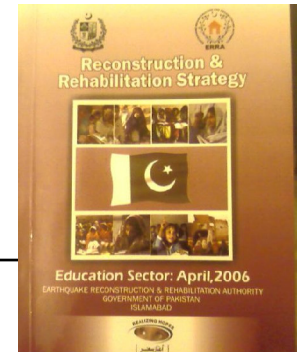
- Data collection method excluded women and others with limited mobility
- Information dissemination not done in a way so as to reach out to marginalised groups and those with limited mobility
- Staff in concerned institutions not gender sensitive
- Facilities to help women and other marginalised groups not available at institutions involved in the process
- Lack of transport facilities for men as well as women to reach offices in main cities of District



Critical Gender Issues at the Policy Level

- Change in criteria half way along the project have left many in the dark
- Lack of understanding of gender issues at the policy making level
- Cost-benefit of the project questionable and should be carried out by policy makers
- Centralised decision making makes the grant process even more cumbersome
- Grant amount redressed to main project account from individual's account if not money not withdrawn within 15-20 days
- Policy making does not involve gender specialists

Education Strategy



- *Build Back Better*
- Objective of strategy to restore equitable access to quality education, teacher development, and capacity development of the education offices



Critical Gender Issues at the Grassroots Level

- Security and protection of girls and female teachers is the most glaring issues
- Limited access to educational institutions due to absence of schools in local vicinity or long distances to schools
- A pre-earthquake existing disparity in girls' and boys' enrolment continues
- Children suffering from trauma
- Financial restriction in supporting education, as a result education of boys is given precedence over girls' education in a household
- Fear instilled in children after the earthquake whereas schools and teachers are not equipped to deal with post-disaster trauma and fear



Critical Gender Issues at the Institutional Level

- Local education departments not involved in developing the education strategy
- Lack of safe spaces and closed compounds to ensure security for little children, especially girls
- Lack of facilities like furniture, teaching materials, boundary walls, toilets, water, etc
- Education departments amongst the affectees of the earthquake and have not recovered from the impact
- Schools for girls sparsely scattered and at long distances



Critical Gender Issues at the Policy Level

- Top-down policy
- Education strategy not developed with input of a gender specialist
- Lack of gender disaggregated in policy making process
- Budget not disaggregated by gender
- Policy does not recognise or address the already existing gender gaps in education
- Strategy focuses in reconstructing schools that were damaged and does not look at disparity in numbers of girls and boys schools
- Policy does not pay attention to issue of education facilities for children with disabilities



Conclusions

- Gender perspective often considered irrelevant to emergency situations
- Life saving strategies and interventions made more efficient if understanding of men and women's needs, interests, vulnerabilities, capacities and coping strategies developed
- Recognition of imbalance of power and access to resources can help address inequalities



Conclusions Cont...

- The failure to recognize the shift in vulnerabilities and the increase in burden of productive and reproductive labour in the post earthquake scenario means that their visibility remains low and policies and strategies, restore lives of the affectees, fail to positively impact half the population



Conclusions Cont...

- Narrow view of the consequence of disasters leads to a focus on purely physical needs
- Essential for organizations responding to be gender sensitive
- Refocus of civil society's role vital: community mobilization, awareness raising and advocacy
- Key issue: recognition of basic human rights
- Policies need to be catered to the local context; "imported" ideas and concepts take away focus from important issues



Recommendations – Grassroots Level

- Detailed gender analysis prior to developing programmes
- Document and institutionalize lessons learnt



Recommendations – Institutional Level

- Need to collate gender disaggregated data
- Interventions should be context specific
- Sensitization of institutions, involved in rehabilitation and reconstruction, to community participation and gender concerns
- Existing resources to be tapped in on



Recommendations – Policy Level

- Use of consultative for a to develop policies
- Highlight role of research in policy making
- Linking ground realities to policy makers: role of media