



EnGenDER

Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery,
Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean



Policy Brief

Gendered Impacts of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in Antigua and Barbuda

November 2021



BACKGROUND

The Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) Project is funded by Global Affairs Canada and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which is led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and jointly implemented by UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). The aim of the project is to identify and address any gaps to ensure equal access to disaster risk resilience, climate change and environment solutions for women, men, boys and girls in nine beneficiary Caribbean countries, including Antigua and Barbuda (ANU). The **three** priority sectors selected by the National Decision-Making Mechanism for ANU under the EnGenDER Project are **protected areas, finance** and **infrastructure**.

In December 2020, the UN Women Multi-Country Office (MCO) Caribbean completed the Gender Inequality of Climate and Disaster Risk and Cost of Inaction (GICDR) Study. The study focused on the gender-responsiveness of climate change policies and strategies, and incorporated a mapping of the coping adaptive capacities for key vulnerable groups through stakeholder consultation.

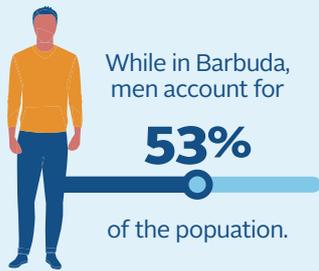
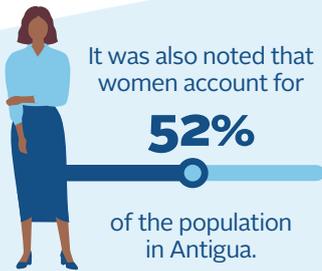
The MCO, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), also completed a gender-responsive, resilience-building Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviours (KAPB) Study in July 2021. This study provided a better understanding of any institutional gender biases that are not captured in policy documents, which can influence the ways in which gender is mainstreamed in the key priority sectors at the national level.

Results from both studies confirm that natural hazards and climate change impact men and women differently for a host of factors, which include their different roles and individual and family responsibilities, and policy development and service delivery by mandating bodies.



VULNERABILITY: A GENDER LENS

According to the Gender Inequality of Climate and Disaster Risk and Cost of Inaction (GICDR) Study, vulnerable groups in ANU are defined as those who are most susceptible to poverty and unemployment, which include youth, adolescent mothers, working-class men, the homeless, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the elderly (including Caribbean Community non-nationals).



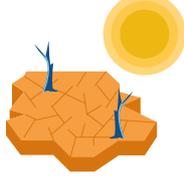
The main hazard risks for ANU are:

- 1. Hurricane and Storms**


- 2. Flooding**


- 3. Earthquakes**


- 4. Drought**



GENDER INEQUALITY ISSUES – CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK

The GICDR Study revealed that in ANU:

	There are no gender inequality indicators.
	The Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) does not have a gender policy.
	There is no gender policy on disaster risks.
	Climate change is mentioned in finance sector policies, but not gender.

Key observations:

	There is a significant impact on women when the protected areas, finance and infrastructure sectors are compromised due to climate change or disasters.
	Traditional social and cultural beliefs, in which the male is traditionally the head of household presents challenges.
	There are significant numbers of female-headed households, which must be taken into consideration when developing climate and disaster risk policies for the country.



THE PROTECTED AREAS SECTOR

Although the protected areas sector has no gender policy, the three mandated departments **are all managed and led by women**. However, in the downstream sub-sectors, there is evidence that more women than men operate as small craft vendors. In contrast, there are more men than women taxi drivers.

Gendered climate and disaster impacts in four sub-sectors:

1. Fisheries

The fisheries sector is dominated by middle-aged and older men, and the security of their boats is of high priority. Should the fishers lose their boats, their losses become exponential, because they are then unable to go fishing and provide financially for themselves and their families.



2. Tourism

The tourism sector is a critical livelihood for female-headed households. This places a significant number of women at risk of financial instability when there is a disaster. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has proven how devastating this scenario can be.



3. Men and Women's Health

Men and women's health, particularly maternal health, are at risk during hazards or disaster impacts:



Men's risks:

- Men are less likely to be concerned about their health in preparation for, during, and after a disaster as they seek to secure the health and lives of their families.
- Men are less likely to seek mental health assistance from post-traumatic stress.

Women's risks:

- Pregnant and elderly women, including PWDs are at higher risk during disasters as roads become impassable and coastal protected areas become prone to flooding.
- Vector-borne and water-related diseases become a problem for pregnant women after disasters because they are more susceptible to diseases such as malaria and dengue.

4. Communication

The early warning system in ANU for impending natural hazards and disasters is reliable. However, there are gaps that have been exposed through a gender lens. Although the system for notification is equally available to men and women, female-headed households in lower economic brackets are at a disadvantage at times because they do not own Smartphones with accessibility features, which are currently utilized by the disaster management service agencies.



THE FINANCE SECTOR

Gendered climate and disaster impacts in two sub-components:

1. Livelihoods

An illustration of a family consisting of a man, a woman, and two children. A large blue dollar sign (\$) is positioned to the left of the family, enclosed within a circular blue line.

Women generally head larger households than men and are more at risk of unemployment. For example, there were loopholes in the court system, which were exposed by the impact of COVID-19: for the maintenance of children who live in single female-headed households, there were no provisions made for mothers to receive support payments. Particularly in cases where mothers were not working, it became problematic to financially support the nutrition and other needs of the children.

Increase Unpaid Care Work

It was observed that there is an immediate impact on the finances of female-headed households when school closes during disasters. These closures lead to women's absence from work, because they must stay home to care for their children.



2. Health

An illustration of a pregnant woman in a yellow shirt with her hands raised in a questioning gesture. To her left is a blue circle containing a question mark and a dollar sign. To her right is another blue circle containing medical icons: a syringe, a stethoscope, and a pill bottle.

Pregnant mothers are less likely to have private health insurance coverage, which therefore puts additional pressure on their households when disasters cause damage that is financially stressful.

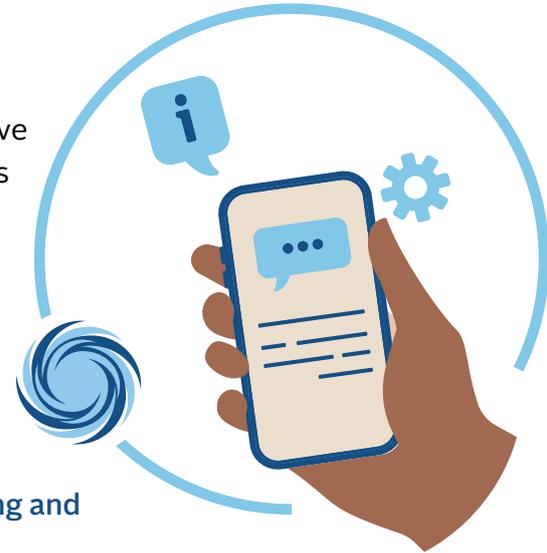
THE INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR

Gendered climate and disaster impacts in five sub-sectors:

1. Communication

The GICDR Study revealed that most households in ANU have at least one working cell phone during times of disasters. This normally ensures that all persons can access information on approaching disasters including hurricanes and storms, or receive updates through text messages or alerts from the national mandated offices. However, there are issues such as:

- A high possibility of loss/lack of communication
- The need for education on knowing whom to contact during and after a disaster;
- The need for enhanced accountability in terms of gender and disaggregated data collection.



2. Transportation

Women, particularly female heads of households, experience challenges to reach St John's City from rural areas due to transportation shortages. They do not have their own vehicles, and access to public transportation is a challenge since the unemployed cannot find the funds to pay the required fares to get to the city. This places women at an additional disadvantage because many of the social services are only available in the city centre.



The Royal Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force (Coast Guard) delivering food hampers to persons in Barbuda whose livelihoods were impacted by COVID-19. This initiative was done in collaboration with BeFoundation in Barbuda, through an Agreement with DoGA and UN Women MCO.

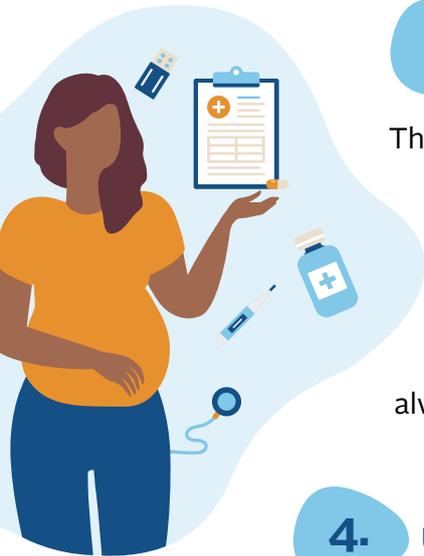
Source: DoGA, January 2021.

Transportation for the elderly and PWDs is also a challenge, who are faced with difficult and hazardous circumstances. Moreover, in the face of a pending threat or disaster, such as a hurricane, the ability to relocate PWDs and the elderly efficiently to safety was hampered by the lack of specialized equipment.

3. Health

The health and safety of pregnant women can be an issue during disasters and flash floods.

The supplies of clinics and health services systems may not be adequately stocked or may become depleted during and after disasters. Also, there may be many unplanned pregnancies since most vulnerable groups are not always in a financial position to afford the contraception needed.



4. Utilities

Over the years, the cost of disaster-resilient infrastructures has increased due to the cost of repairs following disasters and to the cost of climate change adaptation measures.

Challenge - Households are the main users of electricity and water, for example, for child-care, cooking and cleaning. Particularly in single parent-headed households, women can be severely impacted by the increased cost of electricity and water.



5. Livelihoods

Women are out of work for longer periods, which impacts their ability to financially meet their needs. They may also become more susceptible to domestic violence from partners who do not live in the house.

Men typically dominate the construction and fisheries sectors, and are better able to access jobs in the rebuilding phase after a storm or major hurricane.

Children become more susceptible to abuse and sexual violence.



ADAPTIVE COPING MECHANISMS

The GICDR Study was also flexible and participatory to ensure that the findings would reflect the gendered impacts identified. Using a mapping exercise, the focus group discussions (FGDs) found several issues that needed to be addressed in order to reduce the risks related to disasters and to strengthen resilience:

1. There are no facilities in place to address the specific needs of PWDs during and after natural hazards.
2. There is need to improve the engagement of non-state actors including disaster coordinators in preparing for disasters.

Table 1 below highlights the findings from the FGDs.

Table 1:
Coping mechanisms identified

Sector	Coping mechanisms cited during the focus group discussions				
	<p>Pre-disaster preparation:</p>  <p>Women are more likely to spend more money by stocking essentials prior to a hurricane or storm when notification of the disaster is provided. This may, however, make them more financially vulnerable should it take longer than anticipated for activities to return to some normalcy. This is particularly critical if the resumption of work is delayed for a long period of time.</p>				
<p>Protected Areas</p> 	<p>During COVID-19:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="470 1467 678 1691">  <p>Engaging in backyard farming</p> </div> <div data-bbox="742 1467 869 1691"> <p>Relying on family remittances</p>  </div> <div data-bbox="989 1467 1173 1691">  <p>Engaging in microfinancing schemes</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1244 1467 1396 1691"> <p>Swapping labour</p>  </div> </div>				
	<p>After hurricanes or storms:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="470 1803 630 2072">  <p>Re-establishing or establishing nature-based enterprises</p> </div> <div data-bbox="686 1803 829 2072"> <p>Relying on family remittances</p>  </div> <div data-bbox="885 1803 1029 2072">  <p>Swapping labour</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1085 1803 1220 2072"> <p>Setting up vegetable gardens</p>  </div> <div data-bbox="1276 1803 1412 2072">  <p>Migrating</p> </div> </div>				

Sector **Coping mechanisms cited during the focus group discussions**

Protected Areas



After flash flooding:



Dependence on assistance from family members though remittances

Engaging in rainwater harvesting practices to help ensure household water is available for use



Collecting from insurance where possible for the damage sustained

During droughts:



Changing farming and fishing techniques



Rainwater harvesting

During COVID-19:



Women assuming two jobs to meet the financial requirements

Resorting to "sou sou" schemes (illegal pyramid schemes)



Finance



Relying on microfinancing systems

Receiving government assistance through the reduction of taxes and postponements in the collection of debts



Opting for moratoriums on loans and mortgages by the banking sector

Relying on family remittances



Changing fishing and farming techniques

Sector	Coping mechanisms cited during the focus group discussions
<p>Finance</p> 	<p>After Hurricanes and floods:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Swapping labour</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Migrating</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Relying on family remittances</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Relying on insurance schemes</p> </div> </div> <hr/> <p>During Droughts:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Rainwater harvesting</p> </div>
<p>Infrastructure</p> 	<p>After hurricanes and storms:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Migrating</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Establishing vegetable gardens</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Swapping labour</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Claiming from insurance schemes</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Carrying out microfinancing activities include box hands and loans</p> </div> </div> <hr/> <p>After flooding or flash flooding:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Claiming from insurance schemes</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Rainwater harvesting</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Depending on family remittances and/or family support to cope with the resulting situation and aid with recovery</p> </div> </div> <hr/> <p>During drought:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Rainwater harvesting</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Changing farming and fishing techniques</p> </div> </div>

THE COST OF INACTION

According to the GICDR Study, in order to reduce the cost of inaction in ANU, there must be improved gender-responsive preparation for the impacts that disasters can have, especially on the vulnerable population in the country. If these sectors are better prepared for the eventualities of disasters, there is likely to be lower economic cost from the disasters or at least, a quicker recovery and thus an overall lower cost for recovery.

Taking into consideration the cost of recovery without previous mitigation measures, ANU has spent millions of US dollars over the years. Therefore, the systems outlined in the National Disaster Management

Plan need to focus on the strengths of the men and women currently involved in the programmes, with an emphasis on their respective differences. It is only then that the likely the cost of inaction, which is the cost of recovery without action, will be reduced.

THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOUR STUDY

There is an assumption that individual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours can influence institutional practices (and vice versa), while policies create the environment in which individual and institutions operate.

In addition to a policy institutional mapping, which identified the priority sectors' key policies and institutions related to gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction, a survey including stakeholder consultation was carried out for ANU. Findings revealed that, while women and men have equal rights in the workplace, there were a few areas for strengthening gender resilience.

Respondents to the survey indicated the following:



Directorate of
Gender Affairs

SARC
Support and Referral Centre



Staff from the Directorate of Gender Affairs (DoGA) receive 500 cloth masks produced by Ms. Sheralyn Black, a local woman tailor. These masks aimed to boost capacity of the government-assisted shelters in response to COVID-19.

Source: DoGA, March 2021.

At the Individual Level:

	Although individuals perceive themselves as 'gender champions', there are knowledge gaps with respect to understanding gender and its concepts.
	Women are more vulnerable than men to climate change and disasters; therefore, opportunities for strengthening resilience must take the varying risks into consideration.
	There are aspects of bias in gender attitudes. For example, some respondents believed that women should prioritize their family, regardless of the impact on their career. Survey respondents also believed that women are better at planning and multi-tasking than men.

At the Institutional Level:

	There is evidence of limited awareness of the importance of gender considerations in institutions. Gender strategies and action plans are rarely in place.
	The lack of disaggregated data remains the main barrier to gender being incorporated at the institutional level.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Four key lessons learned were highlighted:

1.

The back-to-back impacts from disasters such as the 2017, 2019 and 2020, hurricane seasons and then the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 indicate that women have economic challenges, resulting in very limited resources such as disposable income. From March to December 2020, for example, women depleted most of their savings as many female heads of households were without jobs. 'Job swaps' allowed some of them to acquire employment for a shorter period in various areas, while others created entrepreneurial ventures. Hence, programmes to support these ventures need to be put in place by the Government to help these women rebuild their resource base.

2.

Training is needed on gender mainstreaming and women's leadership with respect to power and authority in creating the envisioned change in people's lives. Although the sectors may have many women leaders, this does not necessarily translate into gender equality that has a positive impact on the lives of those who are most vulnerable.

3.

Some traditionally held stereotypical roles for men and women in the home as well as cultural and religious practices are still problematic for society. This relates to, for example, the role of childcare being left to women who stay at home while the men go out looking for work after disasters. In addition, religious norms with regard to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community are seen as challenging for these groups.

4.

The impact that disasters have on PWDs and the elderly are not being adequately considered.

Recommendations for reducing gendered impacts in ANU

- Long-term and cumulative impacts of disasters need to be taken into consideration.
- Gender needs to be fully integrated into climate change work.
- Improved recording and reporting of sex- and gender-disaggregated data are needed.
- The National Disaster Management Plan needs to be completed and operationalized.
- Community groups should be more involved in helping prepare and recover from disasters.
- Continued work with agencies such as the Environment Division is key to build resilience in the various sectors to adapt to climate change.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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