



EnGenDER

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

Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in Coastal Communities

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Gender & Climate Change Resilience Series

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Natural hazards and climate change impact women and men differently due to differences in societal expectations of their roles and responsibilities in families and communities, and the means by which they earn their livelihoods. Women generally have lower

incomes, less access to credit and decision-making authority, and limited control over resources, which increases their vulnerabilities to many natural hazards and climate change impacts. The impacts of climate change and disasters often magnify existing gender inequalities between women and men; thus, the approach to policy development and service delivery by institutions needs to take into consideration gendered differences. In particular, climate change and disaster risk preparation and response demand initiatives that identify and address existing gendered differences to ensure that women and girls, and men and boys have equal access to disaster risk resilience and climate change and environmental solutions.



CLIMATE CHANGE

a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time period.



DISASTER

a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.



HAZARD

a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impact, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Hazards maybe natural, anthropogenic or socionatural in origin.

Through a series of comprehensive studies, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) under the Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental

Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) Project has identified gender inequality of climate change and disaster risk impacts across the employment sector.

Why a Gender Lens (Analysis)?

In most cases, coastal zone management plans and policies exist, but they are not always gender-sensitive or gender-responsive. Gender-responsive refers to outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities, and which make an effort to encourage equal participation and equal and fair distribution of benefits.

Coastal communities are highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of hurricanes, tropical storms, rising sea levels and flooding, among other climate change events and hazards. After a disaster occurs, economic activities, particularly tourism, are severely impacted and income generating opportunities are lost, which results in reductions to household income.



Climate and Disaster Risks

Across the Caribbean, an analysis of gender inequality due to the impacts of climate change, hazards and disasters on coastal communities revealed:



Persons in poor-quality housing are at very high risk to flooding and high wind impacts; thus, women, men and children who live in poor-quality housing are more likely to need access to emergency shelters during and after disasters.



Female-headed households tend to suffer the most during disasters due to their limited access to resources for hazard-proofing their properties.



Men who operate as tour guides and operators, and are involved in sport fishing are very likely to lose their livelihoods. Women also suffer from the loss of tourism, particularly women who depend on the arts and culture sectors as their main livelihood.



Men have had a higher death rate during hurricanes and tropical storms; this may be correlated with the types of protective roles men play during disasters.

Coping Mechanisms Identified

In the Caribbean, women and men who have been impacted by climate change events have adapted and coped in one or more of the following ways:



Migrate to other communities and countries due to reduced economic opportunities.



Men are more likely to travel to seek other employment opportunities in other regions or countries, leaving women to manage the household.



Female and male youth (ages 15-24) may resort to earning a livelihood in alternative and risky ways, including transactional sexual activities.

Opportunities for Gender-Responsive Disaster Resilience

What can be done to ensure that climate change policies and strategies are gender-responsive? What can be done to reduce the gendered risks for vulnerable populations?



Policymakers can:



Invest in alternative livelihood opportunities for women and men, such as eco-tourism or seaweed mariculture; this will allow women and men from coastal communities to be more resilient.



Develop and implement a comprehensive gendered risk mitigation plan.



Include NGOs and CSOs in decision-making to amplify and represent the voices and specific needs of women, persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community in policy- and decision-making processes to ensure that change adaptation measures in coastal areas are suitable.



Prioritize collection and use of standardized sex-disaggregated data and data on gender issues related to climate change, hazards and disasters, and among groups and across sectors.

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