



**EnGenDER**

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

# Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Fisheries Sector

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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 fisheries Sector. The fisheries sector has been recognized as a powerful income

and employment generator as it stimulates growth of a number of subsidiary industries and is a source of cheap and nutritious food. The fisheries sector includes any industry or activity concerned with taking, culturing, processing, preserving, storing, transporting, marketing or selling fish or fish products. In many countries, the fisheries sector is an instrument of livelihood for a large section of economically vulnerable populations.

## Why a Gender Lens (Analysis)?

The fisheries sector can be divided into two subsectors - marine fisheries and aquaculture. Small-scale, artisanal fishing<sup>1</sup>, also known as traditional/subsistence fishing, is a significant part of the economic development of many coastal communities. Women have traditionally played a role in the agriculture sector, but their role is less visible in the fisheries sector, as data collection in this sector fails to capture women's contributions. Women's presence in the fisheries sector is typically limited to work as fish processors and vendors. Women often work in these roles for low or no wages.

Women are also not major local decision-makers in the fisheries sector; thus, they are unable to contribute to resource allocation in the fisheries sectors. Given the importance of the fisheries sector to the social and cultural fabric of rural, coastal and island communities, and the role that the fisheries sector plays in local food security stabilization, climate change implications are a significant risk to this sector.



<sup>1</sup> Artisanal fishing consists of various small-scale, low-technology, low-capital fishing practices undertaken by individual fishing households, as opposed to commercial companies. Many of these household are of coastal or island ethnic groups.

# Climate Change and Disaster Risks

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



When there is a decrease in the supply of fish, small fishers often have to travel further out to sea to catch fish, which increases their risks as they have to navigate rough seas; this can result in increased health risks and even death for fishers.



Unregistered fishers face instability in hazard-proofing equipment.



Older fishers are at-risk of not being able to respond to hazards due to a lack of resources and capabilities to hazard-proof equipment.



Women and men's sole reliance on fisheries increases income and livelihood vulnerability when their fishing vessels and equipment are damaged, and there is poor recovery and a lack of asset safeguarding due to a lack of insurance for artisanal fishers and women's businesses; this risk is higher for women-owned versus men-owned businesses.



Infrastructural damage to fishing ports and harbours may result in adverse effects on labour and working conditions for fishers and fish and produce vendors.



There is an increased demand for ice and cold storage for fish and produce.



Loss of access and declining quality of services can have cascading consequences at household and community levels, particularly when women in households are involved in fisheries.

## 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:



Most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and youth, practice self-reliance.



Fishers generally rely on savings and loans.



Women have often taken temporary or part-time jobs and moved towards processing.



Men have utilized government grants and climate-resilient technologies.



Fishers have diversified income, changed techniques and participated in training and learning.



Membership in cooperative and social organizations is a relatively common coping strategy for fishers, except for youth fishers.



Fishers have often utilized relief and distress funds.

# 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:



Develop social protection instruments for women entrepreneurs operating in the informal economy, particularly microentrepreneurs operating in the fishery sector.



Advocate for insurance schemes to be supported and marketed through sectoral cooperatives and networks.



Prioritize the collection and use of standardized sex-disaggregated data and data on gender issues related to the fisheries sector, and across groups and sectors.

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