



EnGenDER

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

Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Health Sector

March 2022

Gender & Climate Change Resilience Series

9 of 18



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 health sector. The health sector

includes the hospitals, sanatoriums, nursing and care homes, medical and dental practices, ambulance transportation, complementary medicine, and other health activities, such as medical laboratories and scientific and research services, across a range of organizations with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Why a Gender Lens (Analysis)?

Access to healthcare is influenced by gender, as some health issues are gender-specific. In particular, women need access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Due to women's reproductive roles, they are primarily responsible for unpaid childcare work in the home and family. The burdens of unpaid care work increases when family members fall ill or there are elderly and/or disabled in the home and family.

The health sector is directly and indirectly susceptible to natural hazards, such as storms, floods, drought, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, as well as biological hazards, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Disaster impacts can exacerbate people's pre-existing health problems and contribute to the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Disasters can also dramatically affect food supply and distribution, and can destroy existing food rations, agriculture crops and livestock, and lead to severe food shortages. This, in turn, can cause challenges for nutritional access, which in turn affects the health and well-being of women and girls, and men and boys. Thus, it is important that climate change plans and policies incorporate gender-responsive actions that cover access to healthcare services should a disaster occur.



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 health sector revealed:



Women and girls are at increased risk of experiencing sexual and gender-based violence during disasters, and are at increased risk of unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancies and teenage pregnancies.



Persons with disabilities risk being left behind in disasters and may have limited access to warnings and information to prepare.



Psychosocial health issues, stress and physical trauma increase and can have adverse effects on people's ability to recover from a disaster impact. Youth, particularly young men, may resort to unsustainable or risky behaviours.



Women and men are at increased risk of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation.



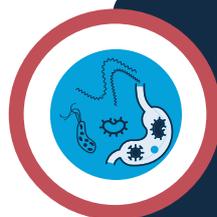
The risk of substance use and abuse increases.



People are at increased risk of contracting water- and vector-borne diseases, and the risk is particularly great for pregnant women and newborns, which can result in low birth weights.



Youth and the elderly may experience increased risk for respiratory diseases and heart- and stress-related illnesses, that can lead to death or morbidity.



There is an increase in water-borne diseases, such as giardiasis, dysentery, typhoid and cholera.



Reduced access to healthcare and safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, which can have a greater impact on women and children.



Women experience increased unpaid domestic and care responsibilities and workloads.



Lack of access to food, particularly nutritional foods, can be detrimental for children, pregnant women and persons with disabilities.



Physical risks from long-term shelter stays, such as increased of sexual and gender-based violence in shelter settings.

Coping Mechanisms Identified

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



Access social welfare services or seek other assistance from governmental and/or nongovernmental organizations.



Discuss health issues with family members.



Visit private healthcare professionals.



Postpone medical attention, or do not seek it at all.



Plant home gardens to improve nutrition.



Convert a local nurse's or teacher's home into a clinic or shelter.



Utilize modern and traditional medicine in makeshift healthcare centers.



Use of traditional knowledge for healthcare methods.



Members of the LGBTQ+ community avoid being trapped as they may not receive support from communities.

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:



Prioritize new investments in gender data collection and research, and use intersectional and gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) approaches, which are analytical processes to assess how different women, men and gender diverse people may experience policies, programmes and initiatives.



Address the need for psychosocial support after disasters, including for farmers who are women, single heads of households and households with a large number of children or dependents.



Expand social support services, especially services that help people to cope with mental stress and that target women and single-parent households.



Pay attention to improving water supply systems and ensure that potable water is available to the most vulnerable, including children, pregnant women, elderly and persons with disabilities, and reduce the need to source water given the risks to women and girls.



Promote local environmental and natural resource management to reduce risk and enhance resiliency.



Introduce practices that can ensure adequate and functional drainage, which can reduce the risk of flooding and water- and vector-borne diseases.



Conduct gender-differentiated analyses of the impacts of disaster and climate change impacts, and include an analysis of the impact on members of the LGBTQ+ community.

This *Gender & Climate Change Resilience Series* is a UN Women publication under the EnGenDER Project. The EnGenDER Project is funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UKFCDO). Led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the EnGenDER Project is also jointly implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). Nine Caribbean countries are beneficiaries of the EnGenDER Project – Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.