



**EnGenDER**

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

# Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Infrastructure 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 aegis of 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 infrastructure sector. The infrastructure sector involves the use of labor-intensive methods in the construction and maintenance of public sector funded infrastructure projects.

## Why a Gender Lens (Analysis)?

Across the Caribbean, poorly designed and aging infrastructure, such as water systems and road networks, exist within interior and coastal communities. This places communities and vulnerable groups, such as women and children, at high-risk to flooding and sea level rise, as well as other climate-related events. Therefore, it is important that climate change plans and policies incorporate gender-responsive actions that cover access to services should a disaster occur.

In many Caribbean countries, women are recognized in two ways – as a distinct vulnerable group and as beneficiaries who can and should contribute to and benefit directly from policy interventions. Other vulnerable groups include youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community.



# Climate Change and Disaster Risks

In the Caribbean, an analysis of gender inequality due to the impacts of climate change and natural hazards on the infrastructure sector revealed that:



Loss of electricity and water mostly impacts women and children as it affects women's childcare, cooking and cleaning duties within the home, and sometimes forces women to commute long distances to source water for their families.



Possible loss of communication capabilities via internet access and phone services results in families not being able to effectively communicate with each other and/or people unable to access emergency and social services post-disaster.



Limited job opportunities exist for women post-disaster, as men tend to dominate the construction sector.



Pregnant women face challenges accessing health and pre-natal care services due to damaged infrastructure.



Women may be required to work longer hours to meet their financial needs and those of their families.



Women and children can become more susceptible to sexual and gender-based violence where infrastructure is crippled. For instance, if telecommunication services are down, their access to emergency responder services and gender-based violence hotlines will be limited, and they may be trapped in their homes and cannot easily leave to go to a gender-based violence shelter or to another safe place to seek refuge from the violence.

## Coping Mechanisms Identified

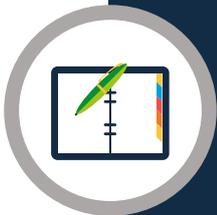
In the Caribbean, women and men who have been impacted by climate change events and hazards have typically adapted and coped in one or more of the following ways:



Engaged in entrepreneurship as an alternative livelihood.



Planted home and vegetable gardens, and harvested rainwater.



Subscribed to insurance policies before impact.



Accessed microfinancing solutions.



Relied on family and friends for financial support and/or remittances.

# 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:

 <p>Promote entrepreneurial programmes and social protection instruments that can help women rebuild their resource base.</p>	 <p>Ensure that post-disaster infrastructure work employs people from communities where the work is taking place.</p>
 <p>Advocate for gender mainstreaming and women in leadership positions. Women's voices can raise awareness about the specific needs of women and their families, and women can identify possible solutions.</p>	 <p>Consider the distinctive, but equally important needs of women and girls, and men and boys when designing climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and plans, including responding to gender-based violence, which is known to increase in emergency situations.</p>
 <p>Prioritize collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and data on gender issues in the infrastructure sector.</p>	 <p>Address psychosocial support post-disaster.</p>

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