

# Key Recommendations for Gender Equality Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Humanitarian Response: Lessons from the earthquakes in Nepal



By Inter Cluster Gender Working Group (as of 30/10/2015)

The earthquakes in Nepal between April and May 2015 led to significant loss of life, injuries, and damage of buildings and infrastructure. The impact of the disaster further exacerbated pre-earthquake inequalities based on gender, age, caste, ethnicity and marital status. To ensure mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in the humanitarian response, the Humanitarian Country Team committed itself to seven key advocacy messages. The Flash Appeal for the Nepal Earthquake emphasized these commitments. This advocacy brief is derived primarily from the reflections of gender equality mainstreaming efforts during the earthquake response. In doing so, it builds upon existing development strategies implemented through coordinated response mechanisms in compliance with commitments to normative frameworks by the Government of Nepal. As the country marks six months after the April earthquake, the purpose of the four key recommendations made here targeting the Government of Nepal, UN, I/NGOs and the donor community, is to identify concrete, critical and feasible actions that serve to integrate gender equality within reconstruction priorities, as well as support gender responsive disaster risk reduction.

Photo Credit: UN Women/ Sama Shrestha



*“If given the skills and training, we young girls can do any kind of recovery and rebuilding”*

## 1 Establish a common Information Management (IM) framework for the collection of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD), and develop gender indicators to inform policy making:

The Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group developed a set of nine gender equality indicators capturing aspects of representation; sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) collection; safe and fair access to aid; and coordination for monitoring gender mainstreaming in the Flash Appeal. Despite a shared recognition of the importance of SADD across the government and the UN/(I)NGOs community, consistent with the national commitments within the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion policy of the Government of Nepal, and the IASC guidelines, only three of the nine clusters included SADD in their reporting. Access to disaggregated data is key to ensuring a response that enables appropriate prioritisation and identification of specific vulnerabilities. **National authorities in collaboration with the international community and national civil society actors should establish a common Information Management (IM) framework for the collection of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD), and develop gender indicators to inform policy making in relation to reconstruction and DRR.** To promote compliance with gender responsive IM tools across the programme cycle, the international community should offer targeted support to emerging coordination structures, including the District Support Lead Agency focal points. The disaggregated data collected is used to identify priorities and allocate resources to where they are most needed in disaster reconstruction and recovery.

## 2 Incorporate gender equitable, multi-sector approaches in “build back better” strategies and within Disaster Risk Reduction preparedness, recovery and reconstruction programming:

Like any disaster, the earthquakes challenged traditional gender roles with women, particularly widows and single women, increasingly taking up decision making, and having to engage in public spaces, traditionally seen as the responsibility and domain

of men. Recently widowed men emerged as another population group identified as in need of targeted support to deal with the challenges of their new role as a single parent. This gender swapping demonstrates an opportunity to address discriminatory, inter-generational social patterns of behavior, and establish more equal gender roles. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 highlights that transformative initiatives addressing existing gender inequalities must be at the centre of the dialogue on DRR. Thus “build back better” strategies and approaches should promote more equal power relations and attitudes that do not discriminate based on age, sex, ability and other diversities and do not discriminatorily render members of the community more vulnerable to the shock of disaster. Towards achieving this, **the National Authority for Reconstruction or relevant agency should establish and resource a gender unit and incorporate commitments to substantive equality across the range of strategic policy and programming interventions for reconstruction and long-term development.**

### **3** Prioritise collaboration with women’s groups and frontline actors such as the Nepal Scouts, Nepal Army and the Nepal Red Cross to promote meaningful inclusion of women’s voices in local decision making:

Across the earthquake affected districts, there has been inconsistency in the levels of women’s meaningful participation and leadership. Frequently, the sole female representation in the District Disaster Response Committee was through the Women and Child Office. Women Civil Society Groups in Nepal developed a Common Charter of Demands for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Post-Disaster Humanitarian Response. The Charter continues to be used for strategic and targeted advocacy, demanding that women’s leadership and participation be central to the earthquake response at all levels. Yet the linkage between the civil society agencies - working with disabilities, women’s rights and children - and women’s groups has been extremely weak. Not investing adequately and appropriately in women and girls is expensive in both the short and the long term. To ensure women’s and girls’ voices and agency, from different groups/backgrounds, are central to mid- and long-term planning, **the international community should establish a more equal and inclusive partnership with local actors which recognizes their knowledge, capacity and potential to contribute to and lead sustainable development.** At the Government level, this requires the Nepal Authority for Reconstruction or relevant agency to meaningfully collaborate with key civil society organisations, including women’s groups/networks, people with disabilities and other social interest groups. In the districts, this should be demonstrated by promoting collaboration between women’s groups and the Early Recovery Network Secretariat and the District Support Lead Agency.

### **4** Ensure continuity of financial support across the humanitarian-development continuum:

The focus on protection strategies, including Gender Based Violence prevention and protection, during the earthquake response has contributed to improved awareness about pre-earthquake inequalities. The child friendly spaces, female friendly spaces and multipurpose women centers offered a safe community-based environment which facilitated emotional and physical support to women, girls and boys. In some areas, these safe spaces ensured security for young girls from sexual abuse inside the camps. Even though these are temporary establishments, in some instances they are the only safe places for women to shelter from a violent and unstable environment. The awareness campaigns have also contributed to an increase in reporting of domestic violence. Moreover, these safe spaces are providing essential information and services for affected populations to rebuild their lives and to engage in paid recovery efforts, in line with the humanitarian-development continuum approach. However, the shifting focus of the earthquake response has meant constrained funding options to continue these support services. The closure of existing services needs to be ethically managed to ensure handover to more sustainable ownership and systems. **A re-thinking of financial mechanisms should be undertaken by development partners towards bridging the gap between humanitarian action and mid- and long-term development in Nepal.** With strengthened linkages between humanitarian and development financing, the likelihood of affected populations being at continued risk can be minimised.

This advocacy brief was prepared based on inputs from members of the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group (GWG). The GWG is an inter-cluster coordination mechanism to raise gender equality issues and identify opportunities for cross-learning of good practices across clusters to ensure gender responsive programming within the cluster system throughout the humanitarian action phase (assessment, design, implementation and monitoring). The Gender Working Group is co-chaired by UN OCHA and UN Women Nepal with technical support from the GenCap Adviser.

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