

# Gender Equality and Social Inclusion(GESI) in Decision Making in DRRM Policies in Nepal

Helen Upadhyay <sup>a</sup>, Sangeeta Singh <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Civil Engineering, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

<sup>b</sup> Department of Architecture, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

✉ <sup>a</sup> upadhyayhelen@gmail.com, <sup>b</sup> sangeeta@ioe.edu.np

## Abstract

Disasters do not differentiate but the impact of disasters are. The impact of disaster does not only depend upon its nature but also on the economic, social and cultural factors. Not every member of the society is affected the same way. Women, person with disabilities, gender minorities, LGBTIQ community and other excluded groups are considered vulnerable by the Constitution of Nepal, 2015. Vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by disasters. But their role in decision making is crucial. Government of Nepal has formed various acts, policies and strategies for Disaster Risk Management. GESI provisions in decision making are identified on some of them.

## Keywords

gender, disaster, decision-making

## 1. Introduction

Characteristics of men, women, girls and boys that are socially constructed is referred to as gender by World Health Organization. It is social construct rather than biological. It is a concept that describes how societies determines sex categories. USAID defines gender as an array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and values. It is learned, varies by culture and changes over time.

Disaster is the serious disruption in the functioning of a society or a community causing widespread human, physical, social, economical and environmental damage and exceeds the capacity of a society to cope using its own resources.

The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) defines a disaster as “a situation or event, which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to national or international level for external assistance; an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction and human suffering.

## 2. Disaster Vulnerability

Everyone is vulnerable to disaster but excluded and marginalized are most vulnerable (IFRC 2020). Vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by disasters [1].

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has identified women, Dalits, indigenous communities, Madhesis, Tharus, Muslims, marginalized groups, minorities, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, citizens in remote areas and economically deprived Khas Aryas as economically, socially, politically and administratively backward groups. A Common Framework for GESI [2] has listed women, Dalits, Muslims, non-Hindus, LGBTIQ community, person with disabilities and people living in remote areas as excluded group.

## 3. Differential impact of disaster

Disasters do not differentiate but people do. The impact of disaster is not felt same by all the members of the society. Nature of disaster is not the only factor that causes variation in its impact. It is equally dependent on economic, cultural and social relations [3]. Areas where gender inequality is high, the influence of disaster on women and sexual minorities

is unreasonably high [4]. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die or be subjected to extreme violence in situations of disaster [1].

During Gorkha Earthquake, 2015 AD, fifty-five percentage of casualty was female casualty. Highest number of death was faced was Sindhupalchowk district where male casualty was 1, 507 and female casualty was 2, 063. In most of the districts female casualty is higher than male casualty (see fig.1 and 2). Children represent about forty percentage of nearly 9, 000 deaths and 23, 000 injuries caused by the 2015 earthquake [5].

The mortality ratio of women was significantly higher than men in Cyclone Gorky (1991), the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004), and Typhoon Haiyan (2013). Following the 2010 floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh, a study found that flood-related displacement was highly gendered, with women and children making up eighty-five percentage of the displaced population. A study on GBV in disasters in Bangladesh indicated that a large number (nearly seventy-two percentage) of women respondents were subjected to violence during disasters. During the tsunami in Japan in 2011, the mortality rate among the disabled registered with the government was double that of the rest of the population [6].

### 4. Discussion

Disaster Risk Management(DRM) is mentioned for the first time in the Constitution of Nepal, 2015. Roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial and local government for Disaster Risk Management is allocated in Schedule 7, 8 and 9 of the constitution. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion(GESI) is also addressed in the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 in its preambles and articles. Similarly, various commissions like Women Commission, Tharu Commission and so on have also been formed. Both DRM and social inclusion are cross-cutting sectors in 15th periodic plan by National Planning Commission(NPC). Local Self Governance Act, 2017 is one of the major acts for localizing DRM at local level has various priority areas. One of them is disaster management. It has twelve functions and duties for disaster management in local level. Similarly, rural municipality and municipality also have the priority for elderly citizen, people with disabilities and physically challenged management.

Nepal is signatory of Sendai Framework for Disaster

Risk Reduction(SFDRR)(2015-2030). It has four priority areas and its second priority is to 'Strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk' by making decision making inclusive and risk informed and also through the involvement of all parts of the society.

Similarly, Nepal has also agreed to Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs). It has seventeen goals. Its 5th goal is achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring full participation in leadership and decision-making. Its 10th goal is to reduce inequality within and among countries by promoting universal social, economic and political inclusion. Its 16th goal is to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making. Women and children and other vulnerable groups are not just passive recipient of relief materials but also actors of change (MoHA 2019). Their engagement in disaster management not only saves lives but also empower women as change makers(United Nations 2015).

Disaster Risk Reduction National Policy, 2075 emphasized to ensure representation and meaningful participation of women, children, senior citizen, people with disabilities and economically and socially marginalized communities in all aspects of disaster risk reduction. Similarly, inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation of all the members of society is one of the guiding principles of Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Plan of Action, 2018-2030. For strengthening disaster risk governance at federal, provincial and local level ensuring inclusiveness in disaster risk reduction is one of the key actions. Establishment and institutionalization of disaster risk concern groups and social mobilization programs make sure there is participation of women and other vulnerable group in decision making. Community based disaster risk is promoted for enhancing preparedness for effective response through participation of women, children, elderly and disabled people. National Disaster Response Framework, 2013 has failed to address the participation of all the members of community in decision making in the perspective of decision making. Post Disaster Response Framework, 2016-2020 highlighted that strengthening that capacity of people and community for recovery and reconstruction is possible through meaningful participation of women, vulnerable and marginalized group.

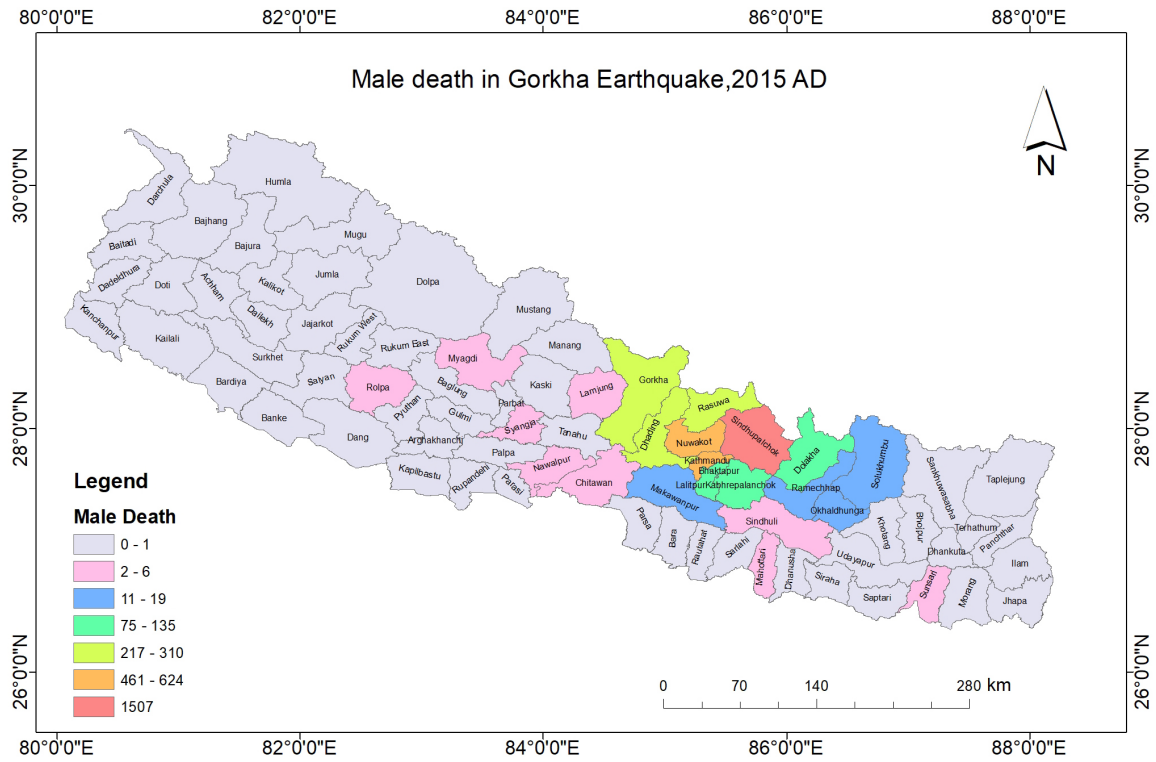


Figure 1: District wise Male Death due to Gorkha Earthquake, 2015 AD

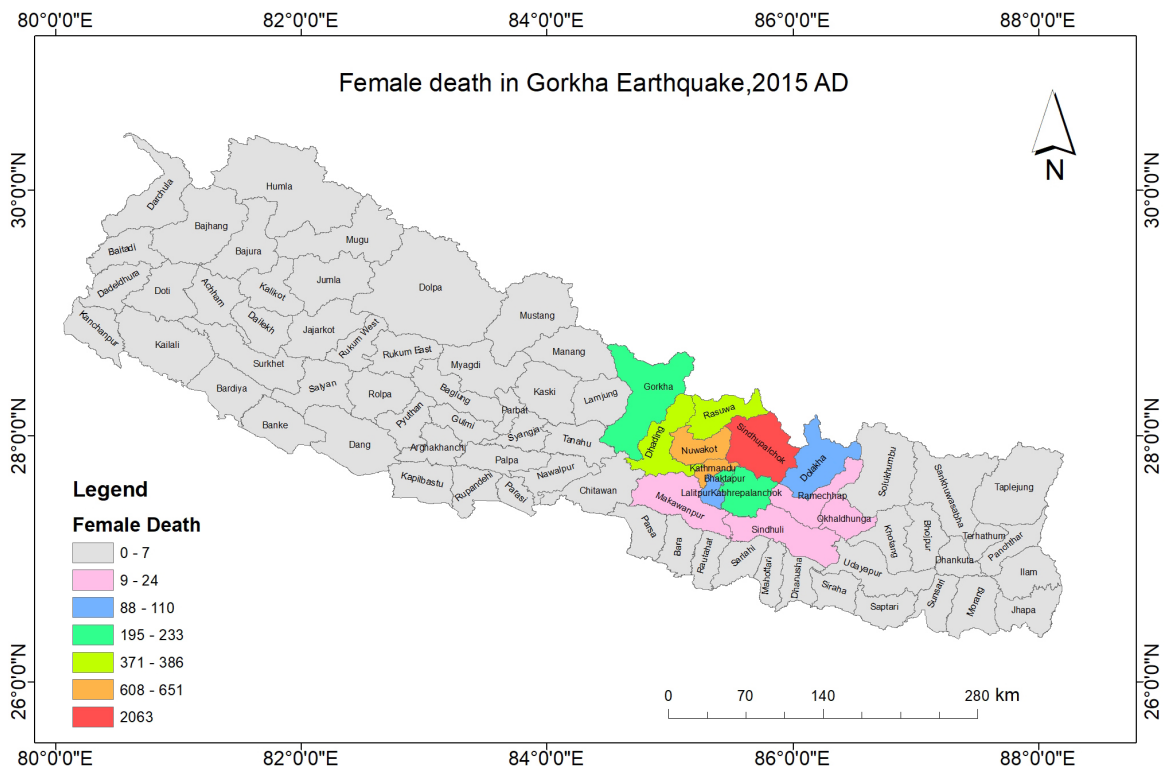


Figure 2: District wise Female Death due to Gorkha Earthquake, 2015 AD

Nepal Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Plan 2018-2030 outlines six goals/targets, four priority areas, 18 priority actions, and 271 strategic activities. The plan recognizes the participation of women in all aspects of DRR. There are five strategic actions dedicated to GESI.

The Local Governments Operations Act 2017 shifts the responsibility for disaster response and risk reduction to rural and urban municipalities, including specific GESI tasks. The Act directs that planning processes should be participatory and the plans should enhance GESI.

Guidelines for Formulation of District Disaster Management Plan, 2069 BS ensures representation of vulnerable wards affected by disasters, women, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and all ethnic groups and sections of population in each phase of the plan formulation.

In Guidelines for National Platform of Disaster Risk Reduction, 2077 mandatory representation of person with disability or senior citizen and women during committee formation. The membership in Local Disaster Management Committee (LDMC) is gender blind. There is no provision for female participation nor any membership for socially excluded groups.

At ward level, Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs) there is a provision of ensuring two female member. There is no provision of mandatory representation of socially excluded groups in Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) of NEOC. Guidelines for Disaster Victim Rescue and Relief, Standard Operating Procedure for Relief Distribution for Private Housing Reconstruction and Resettlement after Fire Disaster, Standard Operating Procedure for Relief Distribution for Private Housing Reconstruction and Resettlement after Monsoon related Disasters and Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan, 2077 has failed to address

participation in decision making.

Representation of women, person with disability and senior citizen is made compulsory in each phase of DRRM or committees but their meaningful participation is not ensured. Other excluded groups like LGBTIQ community, youth, children etc are not prioritized and provisions for their representation is lacking in our policies.

Similarly, diversity among people with disability is not recognized. Existing DRRM policies do not address the cause of exclusion. Policies mention, “participation of socially excluded group in all phases of DRRM” but specific priority has not been given to ‘decision making’.

There are no provisions for reward and punishment for accountability. Similarly, disaster management in Nepal is committee based rather than institution based which makes every one responsible but no one accountable.

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