

# Special Topics

## 6 - Marginalized and Minority Groups Consideration in NDRA

*Key words: marginalized groups, cross-sectionality, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, children, women, migrants, people with disabilities, older people*

This chapter will cover the necessary stages of designing, implementing and monitoring National Risk Assessment (NRA) that is inclusive of all within society. Ensuring inclusivity within each NRA will have different challenges and will focus on different marginalized groups in each region / country. These differences will need to be considered by the policy-makers, officials and risk specialists developing the NRA.

### Marginalized groups

The impacts of a natural or technological hazard aren't equal and can have different short or long-term impacts on various groups within society<sup>1</sup>. A higher risk of death or injury, longer recovery times or greater risk of mental or physical trauma can all be increased based on a person's gender, age, physical abilities, ethnicity and sexuality<sup>1</sup>, amongst other factors. Equally, different groups may bring unique skills, resources and knowledge to reduce risk and overcome the aftermath of a disaster. Recognition of both the strengths and challenges of each group is required at an early stage. Just as important is to recognize that any analysis requires a situation analysis to better understand the context. The groupings below have been identified by the Sendai Framework:

- **Women (or gender more broadly):** Women and girls may often face greater risks in the aftermath of a disaster when compared to men and boys. This is often due to societal constructs which can mean they are less socially mobile, economically independent and less educated<sup>2</sup>. The risks can also come from non-direct outcomes of a disaster such as gender based violence (GBV) which has always been shown to increase after a disaster<sup>3</sup>. Women contribute on a number of levels in the aftermath of a disaster. Women's high level of risk awareness, extensive knowledge of their own communities and experience in managing natural environmental resources all mean that they constitute a powerful resource in dealing with disaster<sup>4</sup>.

Those same societal constructs can also result in increased risks for men and boys. As assumed leaders of their community, men and boys will often be tasked with roles that increase risk of injury or death. These types of gendered roles have been shown to lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues<sup>5</sup>.

- **Children and Youth:** Children and young adults may experience the impact of a hazard differently depending on their age. Children have developmental

(physical and psychological) differences than adults and this needs to be recognized<sup>6</sup>. Children and youth are often recognized as agents of change and can bring innovative thinking to an emergency situation. This should be done within the proper legal and institutional framework and in no way that will exploit young people.

- **Older people:** Older people will often experience a higher number of deaths or injuries than the rest of the community. Additionally, more complex medical requirements, lack of mobility and exclusion from mainstream society are all factors that can contribute to increased risks<sup>7</sup>. Older people also have a huge amount of life experience and knowledge of previous disasters and can provide that experience to disaster risk reduction.
- **People with disabilities:** People with disabilities (including physical disability, intellectual impairment or mental health conditions) (PWD) can be at a greater risk from disasters<sup>8</sup>. Less mobility, speed and reduced sensory input can mean more risk of injury or death. Nonetheless, PWD are not deprived of capacities as in the case of blind people whose sensorial skills may provide them with a unique ability to evacuate an earthquake-stricken building in the dark. Specialist planning and attention is required to respond to the needs and requirements of this group during a disaster, a 2014 UNISDR report highlighted that only 15% of PWD had actually been consulted in their own community resilience plans.<sup>9</sup> Programs around the world have shown how providing education and training to PWD allow greater levels of independence and result in lower levels of injuries and death.
- **Migrants:** Because of poverty, language barriers and/or discrimination, migrants often struggle to access resources and means of protection that are available to locals before, during and after disasters. Illegal migrants cannot even claim such access to protection<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, migrants may bring valuable knowledge of different hazards and send remittances to their home communities that often prove essential for the latter to reduce risk and overcome disasters. Disasters may also lead to the relocation of those affected, whose needs and values need to be carefully considered.
- **Ethnic minorities and indigenous people:** Minority ethnic groups & indigenous people often face difficulties accessing their share of resources and assistance in dealing with disasters. Marginalization of these groups may also become exacerbated in the aftermath of disaster<sup>11</sup>. Traditional knowledge held by indigenous groups can provide alternative ideas for disaster risk reduction.<sup>12</sup> Integrating traditional knowledge within the administrative frameworks of a city or region must be done with a full understanding of how each will enhance or detract from the other.<sup>13</sup>

The categories detailed above are often those focused on, particularly by large International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in the aftermath of a disaster. However, care should be taken to recognise any other groups, within the

local, national or regional context, that require a separate consideration or have experienced marginalization. For example:

- **Sexual minorities:** People identified as sexual minorities within a community (largely associated with the Global North definition of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or intersex persons) will often find increased hostility from others in the community<sup>14</sup>. This can be compounded by specific medical needs of some within such communities (HIV medication, hormone replacement therapy for transgendered people)**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

It is also imperative that the issue of cross-sectionality (also known as intersectionality) is recognized during the design and implementation of an inclusive risk assessment process. Cross-sectionality is the recognition that social identities will often overlap and increase or decrease a person's vulnerability accordingly<sup>15</sup>. An older woman who belongs to an ethnic minority group within her society and has a form of physical disability would find recovering from a disaster much harder than a younger woman who is part of the majority ethnic group and has no physical disabilities. Recognition that people can face more than one type of discrimination is vital.

#### Development of an inclusive process – the basics

Developing a national risk assessment that is inclusive and helps all within a community relies on the appropriate recognition, appreciation and understanding of marginalized communities<sup>16</sup>. This recognition will enable discussion and thought to be applied to steps that may have otherwise excluded or ignored at-risk people and groups. Development of an inclusive NRA will also require work to build dialogue and trust between authorities and sections of the community that have been marginalized or overlooked.

A basic level of recognition must first be achieved that marginalized groups should be included in risk assessment and DRR policy and practice. This inclusion must be made without tokenism and for the benefit of all within the community<sup>17</sup>.

Agreement should then be reached on which elements of society are most at risk, or most excluded, before, during and after a disaster within the country and to agree a clear and shared understanding of what it is the NRA aims to achieve<sup>18</sup>. This could be in the form of achieving greater inclusion for specific marginalized groups or to better understand the risks associated with specific situations within a disaster outcome (reducing violence against women and girls or increasing resilience and capacity of indigenous people).

Once these clear components have been established and the aim of the action has been decided, key stakeholders will need to be identified<sup>18</sup>. These organizations or individuals will reflect the views and needs of all sectors of society, including the most marginalized and vulnerable, and provide the knowledge and background required to successfully incorporate the aims agreed into the NRA. Civil society organizations, academic institutions, local and national government agencies and non-government organizations are a few examples of key stakeholders. It is essential to foster a dialogue between all these stakeholders throughout the whole NRA

process so that everyone recognizes the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of the marginalized groups.

Using the aims, components and stakeholders identified, the assembled team will then need to decide on the best data collection methodologies and analysis process required to produce a comprehensive and inclusive risk assessment. It is important to include representatives of marginalized groups within this process. They will assist in ensuring aspects not normally considered by people outside of marginalized groups are heard and factored in. This stage also requires careful thought on intersectionality and conflict avoidance or reduction to ensure that the identification and reduction of risks does not inadvertently lead to a transfer of risk to another marginalized group<sup>19</sup>.

Given the complexities of ensuring each of these groups is included in a process to be used nationally, the incorporation of such marginalized groups should begin at the very initial stages of NRA development. Ensuring an effective and appropriate communication strategy to reach all sections of society from the outset is vital to understanding and considering how each of these groups may be impacted by a disaster and allows for planning, design and risk reduction policy to be developed within the strategy.

#### **BOX 1** - Key components of an inclusive process

**Recognition & engagement - Understand** which communities might suffer greater risks. Go into the community, engage with those communities, investigate & examine existing data, speak with external sources (INGOs, grassroots organizations).

**Data** - Developing the inclusive NRA will be based around reliable data. Data helps planners ensure all groups are considered.

**Implementation** - Identify key stakeholders who can help implement actions to increase inclusivity and reduce conflict on the ground.

**Communication** - Ensure effective communication with stakeholders & target groups within a broader communications strategy.

**Monitoring and evaluation** - Monitoring the success of the NRA will help identify future vulnerabilities.

## BOX 2 - A case study

**Nepal** - In the Terai plain of Nepal, untouchable castes or *dalit* constitute one of the marginalized groups that deserve attention in dealing with disasters. *Dalit* are vulnerable because they are often deprived of access to resources and means of protection in facing hazards, e.g. land and education that are available to other more powerful castes. Nonetheless, they also display a unique set of capacities that prove invaluable in dealing with disasters, e.g. a fine knowledge of their immediate environment.

Since no one better than the *dalit* themselves know their needs and resources, fostering their participation in disaster risk reduction is of utmost importance. *Dalit* should be participating in identifying hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities to capture their own views, needs, and strengths. They should similarly contribute to planning for reducing the risk of disaster. Risk assessment and action planning should be done by the *dalit* as a specific group and in the presence of other castes so that the latter recognize the unique vulnerabilities and capacities of the former. Such dialogue is essential to avoid siloing of the *dalit*, or any other marginalized groups, in exclusive, rather than inclusive, activities.

In a project conducted in the Saptari district in 2012, an older *dalit* man was excluded from the risk assessment process for his ward by the (nonetheless well minded) members of more powerful castes. On a map of their common village, the latter removed the markers plotted by the old *dalit* man representing a vulnerable electricity line that brings the much valued electricity to the *dalit*'s ward. However, the members of the more powerful castes, who had located a similarly valuable electric line in their own ward, quickly realized that they could not plot the electric line for the *dalit* ward by themselves and had to call the older *dalit* man back. Ultimately, both the needs and knowledge of the whole *dalit* group of the village were recognized by all castes and included in disaster risk reduction planning<sup>20</sup>.

This example emphasizes the importance of fostering dialogue between marginalized groups and those with more power so that disaster risk reduction can be inclusive of the most vulnerable or excluded groups in society.

## Resources for further information

[High level multi-stakeholder partnership dialogue - Inclusive Disaster Risk Management – Governments, Communities and Groups Acting Together](#)

[For information on building a gender-responsive DRR system](#)

[Good example of an Inclusive Framework and Toolkit for Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction](#)

[E-learning action, research, capacity building and policy advocacy project - Inclusive Community Resilience for Sustainable Disaster Risk Management \(INCRISD\)](#)



Peer reviewed



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