BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR ALL: INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES FOR REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO NATURAL HAZARDS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SUMMARY NOTE

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Image: ILO/ Pradip Shakya

Introduction

This summary note draws on insights from the ODI report *Building resilience for all: intersectional approaches for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards in Nepal and Kenya*,[1] which highlights challenges and opportunities for understanding intersecting inequalities and delivering effective intersectional approaches that help build resilience to natural hazards and climate change.

People's experiences of natural hazards, climate change and climate variability are dependent on the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental context in which they live. Marginalised and disadvantaged groups tend to be particularly vulnerable to natural hazards, and often live in areas that are more exposed to environmental shocks and stresses. There is a need to understand how different factors intersect to create exclusion, inequalities and vulnerabilities in multi-hazard contexts, to ensure that policies and programmes that aim to build resilience respond to the local context and support those most in need.

Over 60 million people were affected by natural hazard-related disasters across the world in 2018.[2] To achieve the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and deliver on Target E – 'Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020' – governments and practitioners have a vital role in promoting inclusive resilience-building policies and programmes that 'leave no one behind'.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a way of understanding the interaction between categories of social difference and how these affect individuals, social practices, cultures, institutions and power relationships. It provides insights into the ways in which different factors or identities interact, such as gender, age, disability and ethnicity, thereby providing a better understanding of people's needs, interests, capacities and experiences. Intersectional approaches take historical, social and political contexts into account, recognising that vulnerable and marginalised groups are neither homogenous nor static, and different factors will influence their ability to prepare for, cope with and respond to natural hazards, climate change and climate variability.

1 Lovell, E., Twigg, J., and Lungahi, E. (2019) *Building resilience for all: intersectional approaches for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards in Nepal and Kenya.* London: ODI.

2 www.preventionweb.net/files/63266_supplementarydocument2019readyforre.pdf

There is growing interest in intersectionality as a concept among policy-makers and operational agencies, but its application is new and challenging. There is an acknowledged need to find effective and practical ways of analysing intersectionality, and how intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building can be developed and integrated into policies and programmes.

Case studies – Intersectional approaches for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards in Nepal and Kenya

GOAL

To understand the different factors that influence people's vulnerability and resilience to natural hazards and climate change, through a gender and intersectional lens; and the approaches policy-makers and practitioners have taken to understand intersecting inequalities and to build inclusive resilience-building policies and programming.

APPROACH

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach through:

- Quantitative research using a household survey to understand people's resilience to natural hazards and climate change based on four components of resilience: economic, social, infrastructure and institutional (see Box 1).

- Qualitative research through national and local key informant interviews with policy-makers, practitioners and local leaders, and focus group discussions at the local level.

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

The research aimed to understand the different experiences of:

- **Nepal** – women and men from different ethnicities/castes in relation to flooding in Bardiya district.

- **Kenya** – women and men with and without political representation, in the context of drought in Wajir county.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Differences between women and men emerge strongly from the studies, but other factors or identities are often less apparent, which could indicate the complexity of intersecting factors in vulnerability and inequality.

- Disaster management institutions in both countries need to be made more sensitive and responsive to local needs and priorities, recognising that these are not static and may shift and change depending on the socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental context people are living in.

- Better coordination between ministries and agencies is needed to enable an intersectional approach to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building, but this also requires strengthening institutional capacity – and therefore funding and technical assistance.

Box 1: Four components to assess different aspects of people's resilience at the local level

ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	INFRASTRUCTURE	INSTITUTIONAL
Access and control of economic resources makes it easier for people to prepare for and respond to disasters. This category considers the overall economic strength of households, the availability of personal finance and opportunities to access financial instruments. Key indicators in this category also measure people's access to, and control over, natural resources and livestock to support their livelihood options, as well as their engagement in small and medium-sized business enterprises.	Human resources (e.g. people's health status and educational attainment) and social resources (e.g. being able to rely on support from household members or neighbours and belonging to community or religious groups) are critical to the resilience of people in terms of being able to prepare for, cope with and respond to disasters. Key indicators in this category also assess how people's resilience is influenced by migration patterns, the prevalence of gender-based violence and the level of personal disaster preparedness.	Reliable infrastructure ensures communities can reduce the initial effects of a disaster, minimise structural damage and allow for evacuation. Thereafter, good infrastructure enables faster recovery. Key indicators in this category measure the extensiveness and reliability of infrastructure for people to access basic services (i.e. safe locations, housing, clean water and sanitation, transport, power and communications technology); and whether there is a functioning early warning system (EWS).	This category examines the extent to which people are participating in and leading decision-making processes and whether their perspectives are accounted for by public institutions. Key indicators in this category also measure how effective the government is in the implementation of disaster management plans and activities, and whether people trust local government and the media to reflect and respond to their needs.

Source: Lovell and le Masson, 2015

Moving intersectional approaches forward

1. Address the lack of methodologies and approaches for measuring and understanding intersecting factors.

There is currently a lack of methodologies and tools for identifying and understanding intersecting inequalities. Gender analysis is standard in resilience planning and programming but methodologies and tools are needed for identifying and understanding the intersection between different inequality factors affecting people's ability to prepare for, cope with and respond to natural hazards and climate change. Monitoring and evaluation processes often do not systematically include data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability and other socioeconomic factors. Inadequate data can make it difficult to identify vulnerable and marginalised groups. It also means that policies and systems are not informed by the local context and do not respond to the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of these groups in relation to natural hazards and climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Champion systematic data collection, disaggregated by sex, age, economic status, ethnicity, caste and disability (as a minimum), to identify marginalised groups and make their different needs and capacities more visible to decision-makers.

- Build methodologies and tools to better capture the complexities of intersecting inequalities and means to identify and measure differences between groups,

so that policy-makers and practitioners can devise locally appropriate solutions to build resilience to natural hazards and climate change.

2. Address the lack of capacity and coordination to implement policies and programmes that respond to intersecting inequalities, and take an intersectional approach to build resilience to natural hazards, climate change and climate variability.

There are challenges relating to capacity, coordination and lack of resources for the design and implementation of policies and programming which aim to build inclusive resilience to natural hazards and climate change. Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building remain a new area for most organisations, many of whom still target their progrwammes at supporting particular social groups, in particular women, children and people with disabilities. Moreover, there is a tension between approaches that subscribe to the ethos of 'inclusion for all' and the need to target particularly disadvantaged groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Enhance knowledge and capacity to manage and build the resilience of the most marginalised groups to natural hazards and climate change at the sub-national level, and put in place the technical, financial and human resources needed to support effective and inclusive policies and preparedness, response and recovery implementation.

- Ensure better coordination around policies and programmes that aim to build resilience to natural

hazards, climate change, climate variability, gender equality and social inclusion to ensure that no one is left behind. This includes building more effective vertical integration between national, sub-national and local levels of government and organisations, and horizontal lesson-sharing and coordination between different sectoral ministries/departments and organisations to scale up action on inclusive climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

3. Address the lack of longer-term inclusive programming.

Disaster risk management remains largely focused on reactive, short-term emergency or relief responses, and much research tends to focus on the short-term, direct impacts of natural hazard-related disasters on people, as opposed to considering the indirect and longer-term impacts on their wellbeing and development outcomes. Donor funding is often short-term, which reduces the possibility of creating meaningful or transformative change. Moreover, donor demands may not be aligned with what organisations identify as necessary for a resilience programme to be equitable and inclusive. This is a challenge for organisations trying to respond to multiple donor requirements, within short timelines and limited funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Agencies and organisations should work with governments and donors to promote a better understanding of how different factors intersect

Image: ILO/ Pradip Shakya

to shape vulnerability and exclusion over a person's life course, and the need for longer-term funding that builds inclusive resilience in research, policy and programming.

- Donors and governments should invest in comprehensive, long-term, integrated programmes that take into account the full disaster risk management cycle and ensure the continuity of systems and services (including education, health and employment opportunities) that promote people's wellbeing, despite environmental shocks and stresses.

Find out more on intersectional approaches in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building:

- Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building, www.odi.org/publications/11307-intersectional-approaches-vulnerability-reduction-and-resilience-building

- Building resilience for all: intersectional approaches for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards in Nepal and Kenya, www.odi.org/publications/11339-building-resilience-all-intersectional-approaches-reducing-vulnerability-natural-hazards

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