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

FINDINGS FROM KENYA

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Image: Petterik Wiggers

INTRODUCTION

This note provides 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. It presents findings from the Kenya study. A companion paper analyses findings from Nepal.

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.

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 that different factors will influence their ability to prepare for, cope with and respond to natural hazards, climate change and climate variability.

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.

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

CASE STUDY: KENYA

The research in Kenya focused on the experiences of women and men with and without political representation, from majority and minority clans (and hence differing status in terms of development and resource allocation from government and other development actors). The research was conducted in Wajir county, which suffers from recurrent dry spells and prolonged drought, erratic rainfall, heat stress, shifts in seasons, moisture stress and occasional floods. The research was carried out by ODI in partnership with the PROGRESS project (in collaboration with Mercy Corps and ENDA). A mixed-methods approach was used:

- 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, infrastructural and institutional (see Box 1).
- Qualitative research through national and local key informant interviews (KIIs) with policy-makers, practitioners and local leaders, and focus group discussions (FGDs).

Key findings

The quantitative survey findings are puzzling. Resilience scores (overall and across the four resilience components) do not demonstrate statistically significant differences in average scores between women and men and between the social groups. This unexpected finding is difficult to explain, especially as a significant proportion of people who participated in the KIIs and FGDs felt strongly that social inequality (such as clan affiliation, gender and power relations, literacy levels, disability, age, and social ties) was a key factor in adapting to natural hazards and climate change. Men have a slightly higher score regarding social resilience and food security, as well as in terms of access to information through newspapers.

The qualitative component shows that gender inequalities are a major constraint facing women in Wajir. They have less access to and control over natural resources; less opportunity to earn an income; less access to education or training; participate less in decision-making processes; they do not enjoy equal rights to inheritance of assets; and their domestic burdens restrict development of other livelihood opportunities. Gender-based violence was identified as an important issue, and migration for work was highlighted as a common response to poverty. Minority groups find it difficult to access assets and representation, particularly in Wajir. There is strong competition for natural resources, leading to disputes and conflict between communities.

Kenya has recently decentralised government and strengthened disaster risk management structures, and is beginning to shift emphasis from response to preparedness and risk reduction, as well as mainstreaming disaster

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

ECONOMIC

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 livehood options, as well as their engagement in small and medium-sized business enterprises.

SOCIAL

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.

INFRASTRUCTURE

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.

INSTITUTIONAL

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

Image: Oxfam East Africa

risk reduction with development. However, disaster risk management remains largely focused on reactive, short-term relief responses, and there are challenges relating to capacity, coordination and lack of resources for policies and programmes that aim to build resilience. Current policy action related to climate change adaptation and disaster risk management is still mainly at the national level.

Summary of survey results by components of resilience

Economic resilience

- 59% of respondents in the survey felt that economic factors were an important consideration in their resilience, and reported experiencing increased risk as a result of poor natural resource management.
- KIIs and FGDs linked low adaptive capacity to access to and control of resources. Factors like gender inequalities, lack of diversification of livelihood options, limited political representation, over-reliance on natural resources and lack of financial 'muscle' influence access to and control of resources.

Social resilience

- Women from the group without political representation reported having problems with food security. Only 18% of women (compared to 24% of men) from this group thought their diet was sufficiently balanced, and only 28% of women (compared to 38% of men) from this group said it had improved in the previous five years.
- Nonetheless, the difference between women and men in average social resilience is not statistically significant.

Infrastructural resilience

- There is no difference in average infrastructure resilience between women and men.[2]

2 Differences in hard infrastructure are driven mostly by gaps between different villages, and therefore those politically represented or not, as opposed to between women and men.

- There are some differences between social groups. For example, 14%–18% of respondents (variation depending on sex) from the group without political representation, compared to 24%–43% of respondents from the other social group, reported having access to good quality roads.
- Similar differences were found in access to electricity (10%–17% from the group without political representation; 47%–55% from the other social group), environmentally friendly inputs and technologies (10%–17% from the group without political representation; 19%–50% from the other social group) and safe toilets (27%–48% from the group without political representation; 60%–74% from the other social group).

Institutional resilience

- The overall level of institutional resilience is 47% for women and 49% for men. This gap is small and not statistically significant, suggesting that both women and men are participating in decision-making and public institution processes.
- On average, 73% of respondents reported taking part in community decisions.

Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience

- **Institutional structures to support intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience.** Constitutional and legislative changes in Kenya are advancing the disaster risk management agenda, although the implications for gender equality and social inclusion are not clear and challenges remain in terms of funding and capacity development to ensure the inclusion of intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building during implementation. Involvement and empowerment of marginalised groups has been encouraged for several years, and there is growing representation in parliament, government and local administrations. Key informants highlighted concerns about how gender equality, social inclusion and social protection issues during periods of drought were being taken into account – for instance challenges were raised around economic and livelihood pressures on poor and marginalised people, preventing their participation in disaster risk management; coordination between different government departments and development actors; lack of proper resourcing

Image: Oxfam East Africa

Image: Oxfam East Africa

(budget allocation) to support institutional capacities and implementation at different levels; and limited resources to provide relief to disaster-affected people. There was recognition of the need to incorporate gender equality and social inclusion at all levels, including in communities, in designing programmes and disaster response mechanisms. Key informants noted that marginalisation and exclusion arose from political, economic, educational, social and cultural constraints on women's empowerment.

- **Data collection/information.** Human and financial capacity to collect data across the wide range of potential indicators appears to be limited. Key informants revealed that current available data collected by various institutions including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international NGOs are not up to date, and there is a lack of disaggregated data and baseline assessment/information on who is most vulnerable to drought and where they are located. Institutions tend to work in silos with their 'own' data, and these databases have not been merged, analysed and used for decision-making, especially on disaster risk management. KIIs also revealed a general lack of joint planning by government departments on approaches to disaster risk management and gender equality and social inclusion. Better disaggregated data and analysis is needed to implement effective intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building.
- **Local capacity-building and approaches to build the resilience of households.** Although various institutions/organisations have identified a variety of categories as vulnerable, it is not clear to what extent different intersectional approaches have been taken into account in the distribution of resources to support communities to cope with natural hazards, climate change and climate variability. Wajir has relied on humanitarian aid for many years, and various organisations have conducted numerous training and awareness programmes on livelihood diversification; group savings; preparation for and response to drought; and interpretation and use of early warning systems, among others. These programmes have helped some community members cope during drought, but such models are not sustainable. Key informants at national level raised the issue of strengthening household capacities to come up with their own initiatives for survival, to promote ownership and responsibility rather than fully depending on external actors for assistance. Key informants also recognised that investments in capacity-building had not reached remote communities, and that local institutions/county governments require capacity-building to incorporate gender equality and social inclusion into disaster risk management policy and programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS

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 rarely 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 building resilience to natural hazards, climate change and climate variability

There are challenges relating to capacity, coordination and lack of resources for designing and implementing policies and programming that 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 which still target their programmes at supporting particular social groups, for example, women, children and people with disabilities. There is also 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 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. 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.
- Strengthen early warning systems through investing in sub-national meteorological systems to provide greater access to real-time data collection and transmission, as well as addressing human resource constraints. There is also a need to strengthen understanding of projected changes in climatic conditions, integrate science with indigenous knowledge, simplify advice and use multiple channels to reach various groups.

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, reducing the likelihood of meaningful or transformative change. 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 budgets.

Image: Oxfam International

Recommendations

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

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

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