The Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group’s reflections about the integration of Gender Equality in the humanitarian response to the Nepal earthquakes - 2015

Co-chaired by UN OCHA and UN Women, the inter-cluster Gender Working Group (GWG) comprises of 11 gender focal points nominated by the clusters/sub-clusters, and is technically supported by a senior GenCap Adviser from the Inter-Agency Steering Committee - co-hosted by UN Women and UN OCHA.

Since its establishment on 30 April 2015, 5 days after the earthquake the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group continues to offer significant support within the Humanitarian Country Team to ensure compliance with IASC gender policy commitments and to follow up on the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) adopted Key Advocacy Messages on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the Humanitarian Response in Nepal. As a member in the HCT and the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), the GWG offers strategic advice to the HCT and targeted guidance to clusters on gender equality issues.

There are several important lessons learnt and significant good practices of the Inter-cluster Gender Working Group (GWG), which can contribute as reference and guidance to strengthen gender equality commitments during future disaster preparedness and response efforts.

The following are some key reflections from the members of the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group on good practices, lessons learned and suggestions for future disaster responses and preparedness efforts to promote the integration of gender equality in the humanitarian response, including ensuring the rights and needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls who remain to be at the centre.

IN THE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

WHAT WORKED WELL?

• Gender equality was mainstreamed throughout the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and a separate chapter on gender equality and social inclusion was included in the final report, among other things stressing the need to engage earthquake affected women equally in reconstruction and recovery efforts to build resilience in the long run and to apply gender-responsive budgeting principles in all reconstruction efforts. Gender equality commitments were successfully articulated in the Flash Appeal and 9 gender equality indicators were included in the flash appeal monitoring framework to ensure the gender-responsiveness of the earthquake response. Regular updates and information on gender equality featured in key public communication materials, including in situation reports, humanitarian bulletins and key sectoral messages, in order to promote the voice of women, girls and other vulnerable groups affected by the earthquake.

Participants of the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group meeting in UN Women complex.

Photo Credit: UN Women

All available on https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nepal/gender-task-force
• Development of Nepal Gender Profile, 10 days after the earthquake, to guide the integration of gender equality in the response, as well as regular monthly Gender Equality Updates consolidating key information related to gender equality in the response. Good engagement and lobbying with relevant ministries and departments as well as civil society organisations from the very outset to ensure gender equality and gender mainstreaming were not neglected in the earthquake response. This includes the development of the ‘Common Charter of Women’s Demands for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the Humanitarian Response in Nepal’.

• The GWG provision of technical advice to ensure the integration of gender analysis and sex and age disaggregated data in different clusters’ assessment, joint assessments, monitoring and reporting tools, as well as ensuring gender-responsive programming in design and implementation.

• GWG partnership with the Inter-Agency Communicating with Communities Group to ensure gender-responsiveness and capturing of women’s voices in their community feedback surveys.


**SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT?**

• Presence of dedicated gender focal points at the district level to foster effective coordination on gender equality at the field level, including through the collection of reported gender equality issues, dissemination of key gender products and technical advice for gender-responsive programming.

• Adequate access to information for women, girls and other vulnerable groups, by providing appropriate communications mechanisms and adequate radio outreach/IEC material in key locations such as community spaces, education institutions, health posts, government offices etc. to inform the affected populations what relief was coming and when to expect it.

• Collection and reporting of sex, age, disability (and other social diversities) disaggregated data (SADDD) by the clusters to strengthen accountability and effectiveness of the response. This can be enabled including through integrating SADDD as mandatory in the response monitoring framework, capacity strengthening and orientations of Cluster partners and IMOs and by making available practical guidelines for cluster coordinators to facilitate gender analysis in response planning.

• Provision of targeted trainings on gender equality for all staff, including programme and operations colleagues, and not only for gender focal points.

• Address key protection-related issues, including lack of privacy partitions in shelters, unequal targeting for distribution of humanitarian assistance to the disadvantage of women and other vulnerable groups (senior citizens, people living with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities), lack of sex segregated toilet facilities and insufficient lighting in camps, lack of engagement of women in local level decision making bodies, etc.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS?**

Ensure that district level actors have easy access to gender packages, tools/services and support to influence and inform recovery and reconstruction programming.

All 75 districts to have a district disaster preparedness plan that has identified vulnerable populations by area/sex/age/caste/ethnicity.

Develop cluster specific gender guidance/checklist and capacity strengthening which includes all key gender concerns, and work with the government to make it mandatory.

Ensure meaningful representation of both men and women in decision-making structures, formal and informal, at the district level. Also, while consulting communities, both women and men need to be engaged as well as other vulnerable groups.

Ensure Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) package and multi-hazard approach is incorporated in the Emergency Response Plan (ERP).
The IASC Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) mission visited Nepal (Nov 30-Dec 8), with the mandate to review response preparedness, and identify lessons learnt to inform ongoing approaches to collective preparedness. The mission facilitated the HCT After Action Review (AAR Dec 1, 2015), and met bilaterally with the GWG (Dec 3, 2015). STAIT shared their initial observations with the HCT for validation (December 8, 2015).

The HCT AAR and the STAIT observations identified the establishing of a gender coordination architecture, through the GWG, to mainstream gender in earthquake response in Nepal as one of the good practices that stepped outside the limits of a cluster based approach in humanitarian action. It has been specifically articulated that “a key achievement of the GWG group has been the incorporation of the gender equality commitments in the Flash Appeal, which may be a global first, and developing a set of 9 cross-cutting gender indicators included in the Flash Appeal Monitoring Framework.” The common positions of the HCT through targeted advocacy briefs, including on gender equality, was another practical contribution seen to be a good practice in the HCT-AAR. These observations advocated for continuing the gender architecture for coordination in the emerging preparedness mechanisms. STAIT advocated for strong linkages between development and humanitarian partners, and presence of local actors in establishing collaborative coordination mechanisms, including implementing of relevant working groups in developing Emergency Response Preparedness plans for Nepal. Another key highlight mentioned was the importance to have SADD and gender analysis in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment PDNA.

It is imperative to ensure that gender equality and women empowerment issues highlighted by the earthquake response are included in the emerging reconstruction environment. The

## Gender Equality in Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP):

Gender Working Group is working towards a transition towards a sustainable and technically equipped gender architecture that has national ownership and leadership and can offer technical guidance to the UNCT and the HCT. This will include establishing lateral linkages with the National Disaster Management and Reconstruction Authority and the United Nations Country Team’s Gender Theme Group thereby strengthening the synergies across the humanitarian development continuum.

UN Women and UN OCHA are committed to continuing the support to the UNCT/HCT through their joint country specific work plan (2015-2016). Key priorities identified going forward are:

1. Include a gender equality package into the development of the IASC Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP) for 2016;
2. Ensure integration and meaningful participation of women and women groups, formal /informal in identifying risks and capacities developing contingency plans in the ERP;
3. Develop context specific tools and guidance on gender equality for inclusion into the ERP;
4. Establish joint accountability framework on GEWE through implementation of the IASC Gender Marker and strengthen capacity of humanitarian actors/clusters, government counterparts on the Gender Marker.

Women in Sindhupalchowk join hands to clear debris as part of UNDP’s cash-for-work programme launched in the aftermath of the April 25 earthquake.

Photo Credit: UNDP Nepal
The Emergency Response Preparedness (ERP):

It is a systemic approach developed by the IASC to emergency preparedness. The package aims at:

a) Developing common understanding of risks & ways to monitor them;

b) Establishing minimum levels of multi hazard preparedness; and

c) Developing contingency planning for particular risks that can be used to inform collective HCT response strategy.

The ERP-1, aimed at floods was developed in Nepal in early 2015. The ERP-2, will focus on earthquake preparedness and will be informed by the lessons learnt and good practices witnessed during response, and articulated by the HCT –After Action Review (Dec 1, 2015) and the IASC Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) Preparedness Learning Review Mission (Nov 30-Dec 8, 2015). OCHA –Regional Office for the Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) will facilitate the processes and support the RC/HC office, and the HCT to finalise the ERP, tentatively by March 2016).

In light of the good practices of the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group (GWG), highlighted by the HCT After Action Review and the Senior Tranformative Agenda Implementation Team mission, a Gender Equality Package has been developed through collective efforts of the GWG and is included as one of the elements in the ERP. Informed by guidance and tools developed during the response period, the package will serve as a 'ready to use/adapt' response package to strengthen gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) commitments across the preparedness -response -recovery and reconstruction phase. Key contents of the gender equality package are:

- Gender architecture: TORs & guidance to promote collaboration with women groups/netsworks in coordination & response structures
- Capacity Strengthening in GiHA: Tip sheets/ guidance note that might include use-able slides (e.g. Shelter IEC on Inclusion)
- Advocacy Messages: HCT GEWE commitment, Gender recommendations for DRR, Women’s charter of Demands
- IM/Communication & Evaluation: Gender Profile, Gender Equality updates, Key sectoral messages, Gender Equality indicators
- Include Minimum Actions for HCT, Clusters and Coordination architecture

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This update was prepared based on inputs from members of the multi-stakeholder forum of the Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group (GWG). The forum enables information exchange, coordinating efforts towards shared priorities, and raising attention to key issues in the field of gender equality during the Nepal earthquake humanitarian response. The Gender Working Group is co-chaired by UN OCHA and UN Women Nepal.