

## GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM RUDRAPRAYAG DISTRICT, UTTARAKHAND

*Priyanka Tyagi<sup>1</sup> & Ravindra K. Pande<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India*

<sup>2</sup>*Professor & Head of the Department, Department of Geography, Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India*

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**Received: 07 May 2018**

**Accepted: 14 Jun 2018**

**Published: 25 Jun 2018**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this paper, the author has focused on accounting the status of women in households of Ukhimath block in Rudraprayag District of Uttarakhand through a household survey. Villages selected for the survey are worse affected in 2013 Uttarakhand tragedy. It is seen that there is a need to focus on group-specific approach to disaster management and a neutral approach will not fulfil the motive of disaster management. To eliminate the gender gap from disaster management there is a great need to focus upon the pre-disaster activities and bearing in mind the effective pre-disaster activities, there will be an effective post-disaster response which will lessen the gender gap in disaster management.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Gender, Subordinate, Natural Disasters, Vulnerability, Disaster Management, Household, Survey, Ukhimath Block, Rudraprayag District, Uttarakhand, Gender Gap*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gender relations are not fixed, they are learned or inherited behaviours that depend on location, culture, class, ethnicity, and religion of a particular society which is subject to change over the time. Women occupy a subordinate status in the family as well as in the society to her male counterpart which is supported by recent gender-based data: 82.14% male literacy rate and 65.46% for women (census of India, 2011); a Gender Gap Index ranking of India is 87 out of 144 countries (The World Economic Forum Report, 2016); and a Gender Inequality Index (GII) 125 out of 187 countries (Human Development Reports, UNDP, 2016). Through the statistics, it is seen that they are denied the opportunities, access to resources and their rights as an individual, and all these results in keeping a situation of inequality among society which makes them vulnerable in the social structure.

Natural disasters affect a different group of people differently, and in spite of the natural factor, there are social, cultural and economic factors which impact the vulnerability of particular group. The role of women in assuring household food security and their dependency on natural resources worsen the impact of disasters on them. Besides Uttarakhand is the first state to adopt an Integrated Health and Population Policy in 2002, women in mountains attain poor health because of the barefoot hiking to fetch fodder, foliage, and fuel wood, unavailability of clean fuel increases respiratory problems and stress during disaster works as a catalyst to worsen the condition of women. From the previous experiences of disaster management activities, it is seen that women's particular needs, concerns, and their potential have not been given importance which enhances their vulnerability.

The incident of 2013 flash flood triggered due to severe rain on 16 and 17 June 2013, flooded the Mandakini River valley of Rudraprayag District causing severe damage to physical, economic, the social structure of the district. In terms of disaster management when women of affected communities were interviewed, they listed their suffering which cannot be filled with any relief assistance but suggests and asks for the effective disaster management activities which focus on every group of community.

## OBJECTIVE

- To assess gender discrimination from previously disaster-affected communities,
- Suggesting possible ways to reduce the level of gender discrimination in disaster management activities.

## METHODOLOGY

- Collection of primary data through observation & conducting interviews for ground reality.
- Site selection with purposive sampling and data collection with stratification sampling method.
- Map generated with Arc GIS 10.1 software.
- Collection of secondary data for analyzing, explaining, and combining the information from the primary source with additional information.

## STUDY SITE

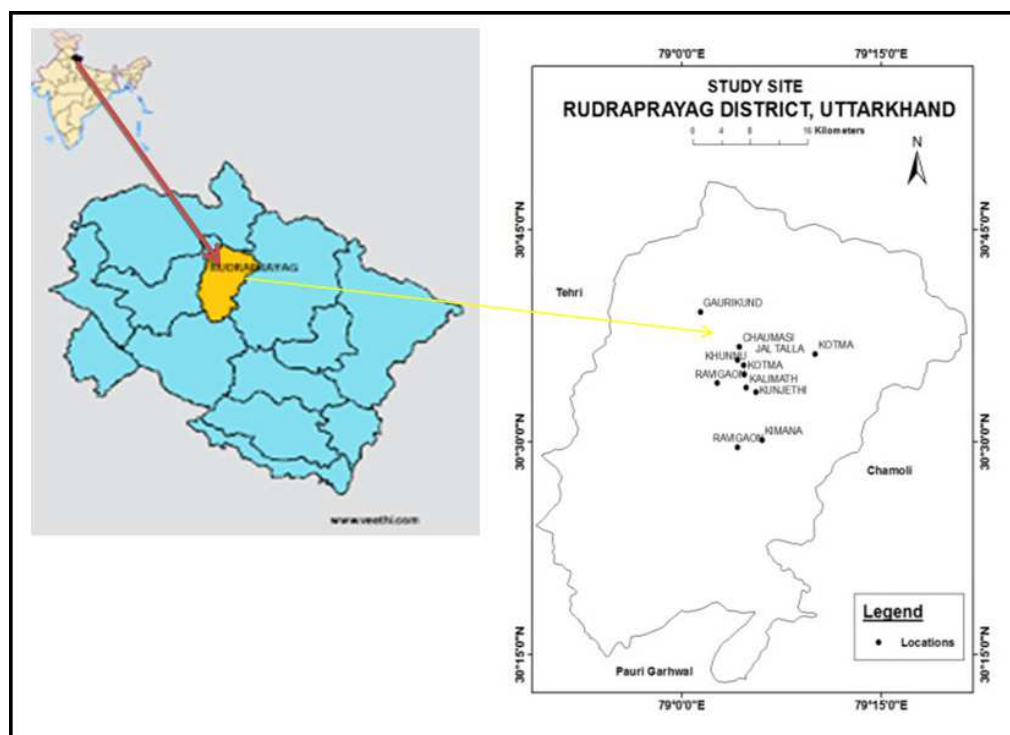


Figure 1: Study Villages Selected For Household Survey

- Multi-hazard villages have been selected from the Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand which was worst affected in 2013 flash flood.

- To maintain the heterogeneity of the sample, villages for study have been selected from all the valleys i.e. Kalimath, Madmaheshwar, Guptkashi-Kedarnath of the district.

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Gender discrimination has become the very important concern in disaster management activities. It is seen in all the phases of disaster management. In pre-disaster phase, an involvement of women in experience sharing has seen very less. Involvement of women from village level to the broad platform has been neglected so far. When disaster strikes, it has been seen that people, who are large in number, their opinion is given preference. Relief kit distributed during 2013 disaster, specific needs of women i.e. sanitary napkins, needs of lactating women, needs of anemic women were not included. There was no backup plans for the pregnant women of safe and clean delivery. There was no assessment and analysis done for the Age-gender wise needs. During disaster management i.e. response & relief; psychology of people works in following steps i.e.: **Astonishment** (people are in situation of shock); It follows the **Realization** (people); then **Estimation** (what did they lose?); then **Accusation** (the blaming for not fulfilling their needs, plans of government and their ways of dealing the situation) and then **Culmination** (finally seeks the outcomes and dissatisfaction and satisfaction to the disaster response). All these responses of the community have been studied on men whole women and their reactions have not been studied or accounted. Women go under many psychological stresses but their unsaid voices and needs are not given importance. For instance, during relief and response of Bam earthquake, 2003 UN agencies asked men about the need of the type of utensils for the kitchen, not the women who is the “Master” of the arena. Post-disaster, phase is very important as it provides us an opportunity to “build back better”, the phrase is not just in term of physical infrastructure; it has a broad meaning inside to build better and safer place in terms of all social (a society which understands each one’s specific need and get ready to fulfil them if something alike happens as the previous situation), economic(livelihood diversification, so that people have more than one employment opportunity or more than one sources to rely on, for their lives) and an atmosphere filled with equality and togetherness. The paper covers some aspects of the study area through which we analyzed gender discrimination for women in disaster management activities.

## RESULTS

### HEAD OF FAMILY

#### HEAD OF FAMILY

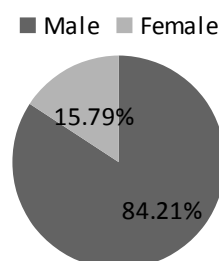


Figure 2: Shows the Percentage of Male and Female Households

In the study, area bases have been on the front of disaster manager’s front, as men are considered as the prime

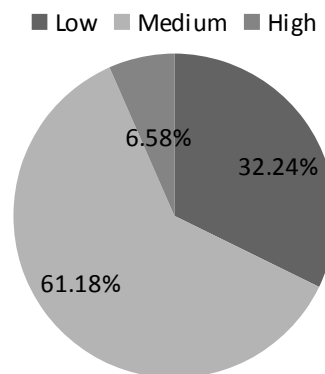
breadwinner while women are considered as auxiliary which provided men the front seat for all the relief i.e. compensation to losses, economic assistance, jobs, and training. Sex of the head of household helps in understanding the gender differences in access to resources in following ways (Gender Matters: Manjari Mehta):

- Women who lack resources in their own right may risk losing indirect access to resources if they are abandoned or if the husband dies.
- Female heads of household, who are often amongst the most vulnerable segments of the disaster-affected population, and their dependents, often fail to receive adequate supplies.
- Food and other resources distributed to men on the assumption that what benefits they will also benefit their families may fail to reach household members and be sold on the market instead.

In Study area after 2013 disasters, households having a female head, generally have the scenario of being a widow. Female-headed households have lower status as compare to male-headed households in the study area. When female-headed households were interviewed, very negative feedback was given about the distribution of relief material during 2013, flash flood disaster. It was found that needs and voice of female were not considered appropriate.

### PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME CONTRIBUTION BY WOMEN

#### ION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME CONTRIBUTION I



**Figure 3: Percentage Proportion of Households Income Contribution by Women**

As discussed above women are considered as the supplementary earner and their income is not considered as family income which makes women more vulnerable. According to the survey, women of villages are indulged in agricultural activities which are subsistence and this is not considered an economic activity as they do not get direct money from it. Hence their contribution in household income is considered low and a number of women engaged in these activities is high. Few women work in government departments and government workers at village levels i.e. ASHA and ANM workers. A number of women take care of business i.e. grocery shops and sell herbs in the village market. Women are more likely to be over-represented in the agricultural and informal sectors which tend to be badly hit by natural disasters. As their income is not considered primary and women do not get proper compensation and there is very less livelihood diversification activities conducted to enhance their capability and for their capacity building for future events.

### STRENGTH OF INSIDE /OUTSIDE DICHOTOMY

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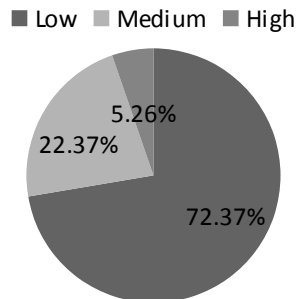


Figure 4: Shows Share of Women in Decision Making through Percentage

The strength of inside/ outside dichotomy was evaluated in the study site to assess the level of involvement of women in decision making from daily life to important matters. It is found that it is at very low level. One well-documented example comes from the Bangladesh cyclone of 1991 when many women waited for their husbands to return home to take the decision to evacuate, thereby losing precious time that might have saved their lives and those of their children (D’Cunha1997). When women will be given chance to express their experience and accountability in disaster management activities then they will have the courage to make the decision for their safety. An interesting concept of “Pradhan Pati (husband of village Pradhan who are female)” came into our focus that women are pradhan because that seat was for the female candidate but their husbands attend all the meetings and fulfil all the activities while actual pradhan remains at home and the local level authority is accepting it. What is the use of giving opportunity government is providing if they are not following up the empowerment of women through their scheme. It felt like ‘you are empowered on papers.

### PARTICIPATION LEVEL IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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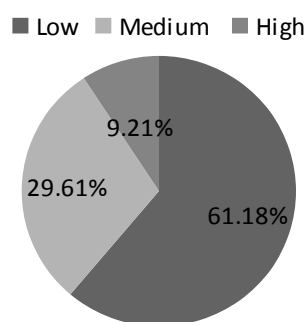
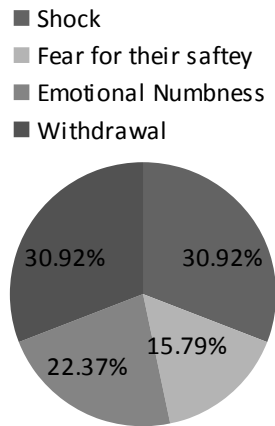


Figure 5: Level of Participation in Disaster Management Activities through Percentage

Gender discrimination in disaster management activities can be accessed through the participation of women in disaster management activities. Here, disaster management activities include village and local level meetings and level of participation of women in these meetings is low to medium. At village level meetings number of women from the village is good but outside village usually men go and attend the meetings.

## EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF WOMEN TO THE DISASTER, 2013

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF WOMEN



**Figure 6: Responses of Women During Disasters**

A number of women who lost their husbands suffered from the shock. It felt to them that they do not have anyone to rely on and there is nothing left for them. They were full of questions for their survival and future. We consider our counter partner; someone who will stand for us when needed, there are many victims has fear of safety for their children and themselves. The event has increased their dependency not emotionally but economically, socially. Women who were economically depended were left with the feeling of numbness. There are victims who lost all the male members of the family who were the earners of the family, these the families who suffered from the feeling of withdrawal, for them the day to day life became a torment.

### CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis made at several levels to understand women's status in the affected villages, it is seen that women are underestimated than their capacity as an important resource in dealing with the situation of disasters. Their special needs were not taken into consideration effectively. Women in the mountain are the one who works in the field and manage their homes also but when disaster strikes the head of household who is generally a male is asked for the needs of the family and in that situation the specific needs of women becomes negligible.

An effective approach to managing the disaster is to prepare group specific need assessment so that a particular group of society does not feel the status of discrimination. Apart from women's lower status in the societal hierarchy, she is not the helpless victim, they are the resources who go under so much mental trauma and still manage to work for the families left behind them. Women have an important role to play in disaster mitigation and management and disaster needs should be developed based on their vulnerabilities and requirements. There are many successful examples of involvement of women to reduce the risk and manage the situation of disaster well( examples taken from, Gender Matter: Manjari Mehta):

- Women's community-based organizations in St. Lucia and the Dominican Republic have participated in a risk mapping exercise in their communities. They later compiled community vulnerability profiles that were shared with community leaders and local emergency managers. This module has subsequently been tested in El Salvador and Dominica (Enarson 2002b).
- Poor rural women living in the garlands (sandbars created by erosion and accretion in rivers prone to flooding and sand carpeting that render large tracts of cultivable lands non-arable and destroy standing crops) of Bangladesh have developed a number of technological innovations to reduce risk in the ecologically fragile areas: increasing food security through kitchen gardening, use of fast-growing seedlings, food processing and storage, seed preservation, composting, and rainwater harvesting. They prepare for the floods by gathering sufficient fodder for livestock and planting trees around homesteads and, because the frequency of storms and river erosion forces families to move frequently, prefer to use non-durable materials such as grasses to construct their homes. They ensure access to potable water by digging holes in moist sandy spots near the river: the water is filtered through the sand particles and settles to the bottom of the pit, after which it is scooped out with coconut shells and stored in a clean pan (Chowdhury 2001).
- During and after the 2001 earthquake in the Kutch region of Gujarat (India), grassroots women's organizations working with community-based groups, mitigation agencies, and government recovery programmes played a leading role in providing rural women with income-generating work and training in earthquake-resistant masonry techniques (Enarson 2001a).
- After the 1993 earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra (India), women's groups and rural organizations developed a system of 'community consultants' to serve as an interface between the communities affected and the government for long-term development. Local women were trained in earthquake resilient methods of construction, were involved in monitoring the housing reconstruction process, and were consulted about dwelling designs suitable for women. Subsequently, this body of experience and knowledge was shared with women's groups in Turkey after the 1999 earthquake (SEEDS 2005).

All these examples are stated in the paper to show how involvement women can change the scenario in disaster management in Uttarakhand and give us the learning the ways to empower and strengthen women from a victim to be a survivor.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Disasters provide an opportunity to focus to draw the change on social front for women through focusing on their needs and priorities, finding reasons for their involvements in disaster management activities and the ways to strengthen their status. Above stated success stories of involvement of women shows that involve women as assets will lead to better disaster management. Things cannot be fixed in just a blink, building capacity takes times. To build the capacity of women following activities should be done to empower them (Gender Matter: Manjari Mehta):

- Ensuring women's participation in all disaster management activities.
- Prior need assessment in the communities and maintaining the records so that at the time of disaster the needs of

the entire group can be attained.

- Train and educate women about the ways of dealing the disaster.
- Ensure that the physical and social vulnerability of women to future risks will be decreased through involving in the decision-making process with the help of bottom-up approach.
- Mobile health services should include reproductive and family planning services.
- Older women should be targeted in public health campaigns to capture their needs as well as to draw on their knowledge in relevant areas.
- Mental health training and care must be provided to all women and men at risk of post-traumatic stress.
- Women's local knowledge and expertise are essential assets for households and communities struggling to rebuild. In order to capture their capacities, disaster responders need to work closely with them in ways that empower and develop their self-determination.
- Integrate disaster mitigation initiatives into on-going community activities and concerns, if possible partnering with local women.
- Ensure that women who are knowledgeable about women's issues are proportionally represented when key decisions are made about the distribution and use of relief funds and available government funds.
- Plan for on-going and long-term consultations with local women's groups in affected areas. Identify and develop relations with women's advocacy groups. Strengthen or develop informal social networks that link these groups with disaster response agencies and offices.
- Organise reconstruction planning meetings and pay attention to women's ability to participate by providing child-care, transportation, holding the meeting at a time convenient to the women, etc.
- Monitor and respond to women's need for legal services in the areas of housing, employment, and family relations.
- Monitor relief and rehabilitation services for gender bias and inequalities (unintentional burdening of women's work, etc.).
- Monitor, as far as possible, the degree to which relief and rehabilitation assets are equally distributed within the household.
- The assessment team is balanced by sex and trained in gender analysis.
- Terms of reference for needs assessment teams give priority to gender mainstreaming.
- Informal women's networks are involved in the assessment.
- Sex-specific data are consistently collected (and not confined to a 'gender section').
- The language of assessment questions is sex-specific (e.g., 'mother/father' and not 'parent').



- Impact and project assessments include gender considerations across sectors.
- Indirect impacts (on schooling, employment, training, access to land, new employment, etc) are assessed by sex.
- Conditions of life cover different and representative groups of people affected (widows, senior women/men; young women/men, poor women/men, etc).
- Lessons from previous events relating to gender are considered in the assessment.
- Vulnerable groups in which women are disproportionately represented (those in extreme poverty, single-headed households, frail elderly, etc) are noted.
- Women's and men's inputs into decision-making (at household, village, and regional levels) are noted and integrated into project planning.
- Women's and men's responsibilities for children, the ill, orphans, the elderly and the disabled are noted.
- Diverse communication methods are used and reach women and households deemed the most vulnerable.
- Existing and potential capacities of women/women's groups, men/men's groups, and children are identified and integrated into project design.
- Both women's and men's groups are represented in community committees and consulted on a regular basis.
- Constraints on women's participation (work burden, mobility limitations, etc) are addressed.
- Women's community-building traditions, resources, and skills are integrated into post-disaster outreach.
- Mechanisms are in place to report and gather information on gender-based violence affecting women and girls (harassment, abuse, rape, sex-for-food coercion, pressure for early marriage, trafficking).
- Mechanisms are in place to document and respond to gender-based violence affecting the health and well-being of boys.
- Changing gender roles produced by the disaster and/or relief efforts are monitored for changes in the risk of violence.
- Field staff is made aware of the possible health, economic, and social effects of gender-based violence.
- Women are given central roles in registration and distribution groups and activities.
- Women are included in health and as protection workers and interpreters.
- Women and women's groups are involved in the placement of distribution centres, latrines, and housing areas.
- Likely constraints on women's access to aid are anticipated and addressed.
- Bathing, washing, and laundry facilities are sited to ensure privacy and security of girls and women.
- Women are consulted in the design of shelters, storage methods, and cooking tools and items.

- Skills and knowledge of women and men (as teachers, social and health workers, etc) are used in skills training and employment initiatives.
- Daily and seasonal work of women and men in paid/unpaid, agricultural and other formal/informal sectors is known.
- Women producers are involved in decision-making in promoting sustainable and self-reliant means of livelihood and household food security.
- Increases in women's workloads are assessed and addressed by emergency relief and post-disaster initiatives.
- Environmental impacts on resources and assets used by women to provide food and earn income are identified and mitigated.
- Micro-credit and other economic measures are designed in consultation with the women affected (and groups working with them).
- Educational services target both girls and boys.
- Training programmes are developed for both women and men to provide traditional and non-traditional opportunities.
- The gender division of labour within households before, during, and after the disaster is understood and reflected in aid measures.
- The significance of the home/homestead in women's domestic production (for consumption and sale) is reflected in reconstruction plans.
- Site planning and housing design is carried out in collaboration with women and men, with a specific emphasis on women's needs and obligations.
- Women and women's groups are involved in monitoring housing reconstruction projects.
- Maternal health care facilities are designed and operated in collaboration with the women affected and women's groups.
- Food taboos and requirements are understood and reflected in relief commodities.
- Caloric intake is known and disaggregated by sex with particular emphasis on infants, young children, and pregnant and lactating women.
- Female health workers are available where women cannot seek help from male providers.
- Gender training is provided to all field staff.
- Female experts are employed in situations where it is not culturally appropriate for male staff to directly address women's needs, and hiring practices reflect this need.
- All relief initiatives are evaluated in terms of overall impact on women's and girls' lives and gender relations.

- All project activities are evaluated for impact on post-disaster gender relations: male out-migration, increase in female-headed households, child abandonment, earlier marriages for girls, closer spacing of pregnancies and births, degraded natural resource bases, sexual violence, and suicide rates of boys and men.
- Participation (rates, types, roles) in project activities is tracked by sex.
- Women are separately consulted regarding emergency relief measures.
- Outcomes for women and men are separately assessed: Who benefits? How? For how long? In what ways?
- Good practice gender-sensitive projects and approaches are documented and shared.
- Gender-specific considerations are taken into account for staff placement and designation of responsibilities following consultation with gender experts and staff.
- Gender-sensitive counseling is made available for all staff and volunteers.
- Measures are in place for confidential reporting and discussion of psychosocial impacts on relief staff.
- Measures promoting environmental and social sustainability in disaster recovery are based on how women and men use and manage environmental resources.
- Strategies for mitigating environmental hazards that increase women's risks or future disasters are identified and integrated into post-disaster reconstruction plans.
- Impacts of degraded resource bases on girls' and women's time and labor are identified and mitigated in recovery plans and in the design and siting of temporary encampments.
- Women's resource-based work, occupations, and income-generating activities are identified and reflected in economic and environmental recovery projects.
- Civil society organizations working with women and girls in education and literacy, health, and other areas are engaged as partners.
- Repair and reconstruction of facilities for women's community groups are given priority.
- Gender-specific data, programming, and projects are shared with government authorities, research groups, and others working in the field of gender equality and disaster risk reduction.

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