

Bangladesh is a disaster prone country. Though disaster is a natural event but its impact depends on social and political context and on the social composition of the population affected. There is a danger that women become invisible in relief operations, with men receiving most resources and participating in the planning and implementation of programs. This can lead to increased gender inequality and may also hamper the effectiveness of relief programs, with women's capacities remaining underutilized and their needs not being met. Relief effort to assist the community will not assist women and men equally, or address the needs of its weaker or less vocal members, unless they are specifically designed to do so. Household headship is another basic element. As a general rule, female headed households are considered to be vulnerable on account of their poverty and lack of access to other economic and social resources. In addition, female headed households are believed to be less resilient in the wake of disaster than a male headed one.

Lessons learned reveal that interventions and life saving strategies are made more efficient and timely when gender differences and inter-dependencies have been properly understood and addressed. A gender approach can assist in the understanding and profiling of vulnerable groups, in channeling resources to those most in need, and in the mobilization of the capacities of significant proportion of the population that is often under-estimated. So a change in the approach towards disaster management is required. Such a changed approach would provide the space and opportunity for women and men to take part in the risk management process more constructively and improve their risk management skills expand their potential, so that they will in turn change from helpless victims to a useful resource.

Policy is the basic guideline for any country. The disaster management policy needs to be gender sensitive to address the needs of the vulnerable groups. And the policy must have some options to address the women's need as they are the most vulnerable during the disaster period. Bangladesh is a developing country and government plays the central role in any emergency situation. And government plays the key role as institutional actors in the policy formulation process. So government needs to take some steps for the formulation of a gender sensitive policy. A gender sensitive reform of the existing disaster management policy or formulation of a new disaster management policy with gender focus will make the existing disaster management system more efficient and will better address the women's needs.