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Empowering Women in Disaster Management: From Vulnerability to Leadership and Sustainable Development.

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Abstract: In any natural disaster, a geophysical or biological event is clearly implicated in some way in causing it. Yet, even when such natural hazards appear to be directly linked to the loss of life and property, the social, economic and political causes of such hazards are needed to be analyzed and can't be ignored. Often an understanding of vulnerability and the development of strategies for overcoming it can be advanced through gender analysis. Traditional expectations and home-based responsibilities limit women's mobility and opportunities for political involvement, education, information, etc. Understanding their vulnerability allows an insight into strategies to deal with the causes rather than the symptoms. The present chapter will highlight the role women can play in reducing and managing the consequence of disaster through participatory development communication approach. And also to show how women can become a force to reckon with rather than a victim in the affair of disaster management and thus help in the sustainable development of society at large. In conclusion the case study has proved that in any kind of disaster women force can become role model for others.

Keywords: Disaster, Disaster Management, Participatory development communication Women Force, Role Model

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INTRODUCTION

Human vulnerability to hazards is an age-old phenomenon. Disaster, whether natural or human-made, play havoc with the lives of millions of people every year around the globe. Their aftermath is nothing but a grim picture of death, destruction and suffering. The impact of hazards is mainly time and location dependent. While vulnerability is dependent on exposure to the hazard, the magnitude of risk is directly proportional to vulnerability, duration and intensity of the hazard. The long history of disasters and their intensity has brought the question of disaster management to the forefront.

In any natural disaster, a geophysical or biological event is clearly implicated in some way in causing it. Yet, even when such natural hazards appear to be directly linked to the loss of life and property, the social, economic and political causes of such hazards are needed to be analyzed and can't be ignored. It has often been seen that people's vulnerability is generated by social, economic and political processes that influence how hazards affect people in varying ways and differing intensities. For instance due to rapid population growth and development of human settlement in disaster-prone areas can cause more and more people and their assets vulnerable to natural hazards. Construction of big dams along the main boundary fault of northern India, erection of dams and embankments by constructing the natural flow of the rivers, extension of settlement along the cyclone path zone or within flood plain zone are the root causes of vulnerability.

Thus, citing established theories and a case study the objective of this chapter is to understand the role women can play in reducing and managing the consequence of disaster through participatory development communication approach. As such the objective is to show how women can become a force to reckon with rather than a victim in the affair of disaster management and thus help the sustainable development of society in the long run.

General Explanations on Disaster

Tropical cyclones are one of the most powerful atmospheric phenomena. A fully developed hurricane releases the energy equivalent to many Hiroshima sized atom bombs. These storms arise during the summer over various oceans in a belt north and south of the Equator. In addition to the wind damage and flooding caused by cyclones, there is a wide variety of possible physical effects involving a web of social and natural linkages. Wind and wave action have immediate impacts, but erosion and salt-water incursion can handicap the economy for months or even years. Damage to roads, telecommunications and power facilities can have short- and long-term effects and complicate other problems.

People have lived along the coasts since antiquity. The most recent phase of colonial expansion and the establishment of a world market have greatly increased the numbers of urban settlements, plantations, ports and naval base, and other centers of population in coastal areas. More recently, tourism and the global expansion of export-oriented industries have added to the attraction of coastal locations. Of the world's major cities 66% of those with over 10 million inhabitants, and 53%

of cities of those with between 5 and 10 million were situated on the coast. Several of the fastest growing cities, all projected to have 20-30 million inhabitants by the year 2025, have long histories of exposure to severe tropical coastal storms. These include Karachi (Pakistan), Jakarta (Indonesia), Kolkata (India), and Dhaka (Bangladesh) (Davis 1986: 279).

In seeking the causes of vulnerability to cyclones, typhoons and hurricanes it has been observed that cyclonic storms do not affect all coasts equally. Where such storms are frequent, not all people suffer equally. Where all people suffer not all people are able to reconstruct their lives rapidly or equally well. Patterns of death and damage due to these storms and the ability of people to reconstruct their livelihoods show differences according to the national wealth, history and socio-political organization. Recovery following hurricanes in the Caribbean in 1989 showed such contrasts. Nicaragua mobilized a nationwide effort to help victims of hurricane Joan on that country's Atlantic coast. By contrast, Relief efforts in Jamaica following the 1988 hurricane Gilbert were rife with partisan politics and corruptions. (Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon Ian Davis and Ben Wisner , *At Risk, Natural Hazards People's Vulnerability and Disasters*, Routledge, London and New York pp 149-157) b

In both wealthy countries such as Australia and the USA and the poorest countries such as Bangladesh, Mozambique and Jamaica, there are large towns and cities on the hurricane-prone coasts and are thus vulnerable to such storms. Potential economic losses are a function of this pattern of urbanization. In countries with high rural population densities and considerable inequalities in income and access to land, rural concentration of people in the high-risks coastal zones can be very great, for example, the Philippines, parts of Indonesia, the Sunderbans and Islands such as Sandwip in Bangladesh and India. In these cases local or even distant pressure on land forces the poor to remove protective vegetation, destroying buffer zones and increasing their vulnerability to storms. For example if we take the area of my case study i.e., the Contain Sub-Division of East-Midnapore district of West Bengal:

Situated in the south eastern part of the state facing the Bay of Bengal the Contai Sub-Division is prone to tropical cyclone and tidal floods. Almost every year cyclonic storm is a very common phenomenon in these areas. With increasing population and uncontrolled tourism centering Digha, a seaside resort town at the northern end of the Bay of Bengal, is making the place more vulnerable to this kind of disaster.

Digha's old beach isn't as wide as it used to be due to heavy soil erosion. Big stones and concrete steps are use to hold together the beach. Another problem is the record number of tidal waves that have caused many of the unplanned shacks and smaller hotels to succumb

to the sea. Since it is one of very few popular beaches in West Bengal, that's why uncontrolled tourist influx is a major problem in this area. And also the unplanned mushrooming of hotels and holiday homes are further endangering the situation.

Now during the peak seasons Digha gets overcrowded for which people are moving on towards new tourist destinations such as Shankarpur, Mandarmoni, Tajpur, Junput, along the coastal line of the Contai Sub-Division. These new places actually don't have any proper tourism infrastructure as well as administrative control. As a result coastal vegetation (like the 'Keya' plant and flowery creepers which have deep roots that hold the soil thus preventing soil erosion) is destroyed for illegal construction of hotels and amusement centers.

Especially Tajpur and Shankarpur used to have virgin seashore inhabited by thousands and thousands of red crab but increasing influx of tourist in these places are causing severe hamper to the coastal ecological balance. The red crabs creates hole to build their homes in the entire seashore area thus reducing the latent force of the waves thus saving the beach from soil erosion. But illegal beach driving by the tourists in these areas is killing these red crabs and thus exposing the area to soil erosion. Cutting of mangroves are not only exposing and increasing the vulnerability of the area to cyclonic storms but are also causing erosion of the sand dunes of the entire area.

Preventive Measures Relating to Disaster Management

Disasters like the Gujrat Earthquake or the Tsunami or the Orissa Cyclone or Aila or the recent earthquake along with tsunami in Japan, the number of disasters is increasing with the passing of each year. Since disasters can be both natural and man-made we can at best prevent the responsibility of human agency in bringing disaster but as far as natural disasters are concerned, we cannot do much against. Therefore, what we can do is to take preventive measures for reducing the impact of natural hazards. For this it is necessary to formulate a realistic planning before implementing any preventive measures

In order to further institutionalize the new approach, the Government of India has decided to enunciate a National Policy on Disaster Management. The broad features of the national policy on disaster management are enunciated below: -

1. A holistic and pro-active approach for prevention, mitigation and preparedness will be adopted for disaster management.
2. Each Ministry/Department of the Central/State Government will set apart an appropriate quantum of funds under the plan for specific schemes/projects addressing vulnerability reduction and preparedness.

3. Where there is a shelf of projects, projects addressing mitigation will be given priority. Mitigation measures shall be built into the on-going schemes/programmes.
4. Each project in a hazard prone area will have mitigation as an essential term of reference. The project report will include a statement as to how the project addresses vulnerability reduction.
5. Community involvement and awareness generation, particularly that of the vulnerable segments of population and women has been emphasized as necessary for sustainable disaster risk reduction. This is a critical component of the policy since communities are the first responders to disasters and, therefore, unless they are empowered and made capable of managing disasters, any amount of external support cannot lead to optimal results.
6. There will be close interaction with the corporate sector, nongovernmental organizations and the media in the national efforts for disaster prevention/vulnerability reduction.
7. Institutional structures/appropriate chain of command will be built up and appropriate training imparted to disaster managers at various levels to ensure coordinated and quick response at all levels; and development of inter-State arrangements for sharing of resources during emergencies.
8. A culture of planning and preparedness is to be inculcated at all levels for capacity building measures.
9. Standard opening procedures and disaster management plans at state and district levels as well as by relevant central government departments for handling specific disasters will be laid down.
10. Construction designs must correspond to the requirements as laid down in relevant Indian Standards.

With the above-mentioned institutional mechanism and policy framework in position and the actions taken to implement the policy guidelines, it is expected that the task of moving towards vulnerability reduction will be greatly facilitated.

Thus, time has come to focus on understanding the relationships between disasters and development. This has been motivated by an increased number of disasters world-wide and a reduction in overall aid budgets in many donor countries, with an accompanying shift from development programs and towards disaster response. Both development and relief workers are seeking ways to use available relief funds to meet the emergency needs of disaster victims and support change towards long-term development. One way which can contribute significantly to addressing root causes and which can support effective, efficient and equitable long-term development is gender analysis. The first step in understanding and preparing to deal with root causes is to analyze why some people are vulnerable to disasters and others not.

Women and Disaster

Often an understanding of vulnerability and the development of strategies for overcoming it can be advanced through gender analysis. Women tend to be more vulnerable than men, as they have limited access to resources and are poorly paid. Traditional expectations and home-based responsibilities limit women's mobility and opportunities for political involvement, education, information, etc. Understanding their vulnerability allows an insight into strategies to deal with the causes rather than the symptoms. It also helps to identify the ways in which men are vulnerable. The failure to identify gendered roles, and to plan programs with them in mind, has resulted in the inequitable delivery of disaster relief assistance and inadequate attention to the potential long-term outcomes of short-term interventions.

Root Causes of Women's Vulnerability to Disasters

In general, around the world, women are poorer than men.... Women are disproportionately employed in unpaid, underpaid and non-formal sectors of economies. Inheritance laws and traditions, marriage arrangements, banking systems and social patterns that reinforce women's dependence on fathers, husbands and sons all contribute both to their unfavorable access to resources and their lack of power to change things. The health dangers that result from multiple births can contribute to interrupted work and low productivity. Traditional expectations and home-based responsibilities that limit women's mobility also limit their opportunities for political involvement, education, and access to information, markets, and a myriad of other resources, the lack of which reinforces the cycle of their vulnerability.

Excerpted from Mary Anderson, 1994, "Understanding the disaster-development continuum", in *Focus on Gender*, 2/1.

WHY ROLE OF WOMEN

It is true that when disaster strikes, it affects men & women in equal proportion. But it has been observed that in any disaster women & children are the majority of victims. During the post disaster periods all the rehabilitation and relief work are mostly carried out by men. In most of the cases the aid workers arriving in the affected areas are greeted first by groups of men. Women from the affected community usually stands some distance away and hesitate to voice their grievances and needs to the male aid workers.

Natural disasters - particularly erosion and other forms of soil degradation, pollution of freshwaters, shore-line erosion, flooding, and loss of wetlands, drought and desertification - impact directly on women in their roles as providers of food, water and fuel. Climate change can also impact on women's productive roles since the physical impacts of global warming - rising sea levels, flooding in low-lying delta areas and increased salt-water intrusion - can jeopardize sustainable

livelihood strategies. Food security and family well-being are threatened when the resource base on which women rely to carry out their critical roles and obtain supplementary incomes is undermined.

Effective risk assessment and management require the active involvement of local communities and civil society groups to ensure decreased occurrence of disasters and reduced losses and costs when they do occur. Therefore, the knowledge, contributions and potentials of both women and men need to be identified and utilized.

Women and girls are also reportedly more exposed to sexual and domestic violence in disaster contexts. Yet safe shelters for abused women, where they exist, are subject to damage and closure, as are informal networks of support. Women seeking shelter during cyclones have been exposed to sexual harassment and assault. Concerns were raised that children misidentified as cyclone 'orphans' were trafficked into sex work

following the Orissa cyclone, Gujarat earthquake, as well as the cyclone 'Aila' that hit west Bengal coast in May 2009. In Kafi's ethnographic study of girls and women impoverished by South Asian cyclones and floods, lack of protection from male relatives for widows and other sole women was cited as one of the factors increasing the rate and fear of sexual assault. Girls in families forced by the losses in drought or cyclone may well be enforced into early marriage and as a result child labor increases.

Re-habilitation in the post disaster should not be restricted to physical reconstruction. Far more importance should be given to reconstructions of lives by supporting women & community participation and consolidating the social processes. The women should not be treated as victims but as partners who can equally participate in the reconstruction process. Strategically involving women in relief phase could reduce corruption, ensure information flow to affected citizen and hold agencies and Panchayats accountable.

THE ROLE WOMEN CAN PLAY

When the German Red Cross and the Bangladesh Red Crescent committed to responding to the 1991 cyclone in gender-sensitive ways, the entire community benefited. Gender-balanced village disaster preparedness committees were formed to provide direct training to women. With men often out of town or engaged in field work, women were those who needed training about saving food and belongings and what to take to the shelter. The relief committee also sought to increase awareness among women and men about the need for gender equality, and clearly afforded women increased opportunities for exchanging ideas with other women.

Rohima Begum lives on Sandwip Island in the Yamuna-Ganges delta in Bangladesh. At the time of the catastrophic 1991 cyclone, which killed thousands of people, Rohima Begum, a widow, was living with her 2 children and her mother. She had no regular income and the family was hardly surviving. Like many other people on Sandwip Island, she lost the little she possessed in the cyclone. After the cyclone, with 11 other women, Rohima Begum went on a training course in food processing. The course was run by Nari Pragati, a local non-governmental organization focusing on women and development. The course was a great success. For the first time, Rohima's family has a regular supply of food and enough money to send her elder son to school. Now, they are better equipped to withstand the cyclone. With some savings put aside, they can afford a better-balanced diet and they have reinforced their home against future next disasters.

Source: IDNDR Fact Sheet Series, No. 1, 1995, "Prevention pays: success stories featuring women and children."

Women can be powerful advocates for safety when they are viewed as experts and expert communicators. This the case in India when the government of Norway and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) proposed to fund a radio programme produced and broadcasted by women's groups to "ensure access to information at all levels, which [is] essential to the community-led and controlled process of recovery and reconstruction being envisioned.

A Case Study

The Super Cyclone that hit the West Bengal Coast on May 2009 had left a massive trail of destruction in different parts of the State. The Scale of destruction and the suffering of the effected people were unprecedented. As per official reports 137 were killed and nearly 2 lakhs were homeless. In the Sundarban delta zone the Cyclone has destroyed around 400 kilometers

on the embankment, several villagers were flooded and farm land including crops was severely damaged.

Apart from human tragedy the Cyclone and the subsequent flood had badly affected the mangrove forest of Sundarban and caused sizable damage to its animal life.



The devastating cyclone Aila

Damage Details in West Bengal as of 1 June 2009:

SN	District	No. Of Blocks affected	No. Of villages affected	Population affected	No. Of human lives lost	No. Of cattle/live stock lost	Cropped area affected (in ha)	Estimated damage of crops (in Rs Lakh)
1	Cooch Behar	15	1,453	295,356	1		26,786	
2	Jalpaiguri		133	16,500			75	
3	Darjeeling	8	425	950,000	26	40		
4	Uttar Dinajpur		1,430	321,120			43,370	
5	Dakshin Dinajpur	8	305	21,702				
6	Malda		3,501	270,000	2			
7	Murshidabad	4	130	18,675	3			
8	Nadia	17		308,250	4		21,667	
9	North 24 Parganas	20	1,967	1,255,074	27	2,196	121,501	2,127
10	South 24 Parganas	14	1,737	1,190,321	34	1,443	4,371	2,457
11	Kolkata				5			
12	Howrah	14		80,820	9			
13	Hooghly	18	810	600,028	5		9,206	
14	Bardhaman	10		200,000	4			
15	Birbhum	10		200,000	2			
16	Bankura	14	5,187	97,500	1	1	410	150
17	Paschim Medinipur	29	6,310	628,545		6		
18	Purba Medinipur	25	2,964	1,058,534	3	27	9,223	3,301
	TOTAL	206	26,352	6,657,515	126	6,713	236,609	27,125

SOURCE: (Government of West Bengal Report)

The Role of the Administration and the Women Workers

At the district level the District Disaster Management Office (DDMO) is responsible for all the pre and post disaster preparedness and management. Especially it implements different policies and schemes made by the government time to time. It also organizes seminars and workshops along with the Block Relief Office (BRO) for different groups and workers. At the Panchayat Samiti or block level there are different standing committees that are engaged with disaster management. They are: Fisheries and Live Stock Development, Public Health and Environment and Public Works & Transport Development. These three departments work together under the Block Relief Officer in managing any such disaster. The sub-divisional information & cultural office is also involved in disaster management.

“We were able to warn the villagers about the cyclone Aila after getting the news from the Central Control Room. With the help of the Block Relief Section and members of the Kalindi Gram Panchayat the Village was evacuated. We used mikes to alert the villagers,” said Mr. Krishnapada Halder the Block Development Officer of the Ramnagar II block. He further said that now a day lots of villagers are coming up specially the women. They are eager to work not only to support their families but for the Society at large. Several women Groups like the Self Help Group (SHG), The Fisherwomen Group, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) workers, the Rural Health Workers (ASHA) under National Rural Health Mission are trained by these Departments from time to time to fight disaster.

While interviewing the sub-divisional information and cultural officer, Contai sub-division of West Bengal, Mr. Santu Biswas, it was clear that the Govt. was fast recognizing the women power and their role in any kind of disaster management. According to Mr. Biswas, the Govt. of West Bengal has a separate department of disaster Management at the block level. The block development office along with the department of Forest, the department of Fisheries & Aqua Culture, the department of Information & Cultural Affairs, organizes various campaign & Seminars on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigation. To confront any such disaster the various indigenous methods that are used and taught to these workers are as follows:

1. To prepare stretchers, with blankets and sticks, to carry ailing villagers and pregnant women during or after disaster.
2. To prepare ORS solution with boiled water, sugar and salt.
3. To prepare a resource map in the village where the safer places of the village like the places to take shelter are identified. Other sources like drinking water, health centre etc are also identified in the map.
4. To keep an emergency or asset kit always ready. The kit should contain voter I card, BPL card, ration card, life saving drugs, dry food etc.
5. How to deal with pregnant women and lactating mothers during emergencies. The Dhaimas of the village are trained and given a Dhai-kit.
6. They also learn to grow vegetables on mud sacks kept on raised platforms made of bamboo stick.

7. To grow nursery on banana stems and bamboo sticks.
8. To grow crops on raised dividers in the rice fields so that during flood the plants doesn't get submerged under water.
9. To uplift the seedbeds of the agricultural field near the coastal areas.
10. They also learn to plant mangroves along the coastal line to prevent soil erosion.

It was due to these various training programs that the administration was able to use common people of the areas during and after the disaster caused by the cyclone Aila. Rather it can be said that the administration depended completely on these women workers right from rescuing to relief distribution and even in extending psychological support to the affected villagers.

ROLE OF THE WOMEN

Several villages under the Ramnagar II Block of Contai Sub-Division of Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal were severely affected following the cyclone Aila. The Coastal Mouzas of the village was washed away. The trees were uprooted, roads went under knee deep water and the farm land and crops were devastated. Having the largest coastal line in the state which is about 17 kms, the area is much prone to cyclone and flood. In spite of being prone to such natural disasters this village doesn't have a single flood or cyclone shelter. Therefore, the women with the help from the local community constructed two-flood shelter in the area. During the cyclone Aila these two buildings were used as a temporary shelter for the villagers. The women along with the NGO, SHG group workers, ICDS workers, Rural Health Workers and the block administration formed the task force. The following are the description of the rescue come relief operation conducted by the task force (comprising of mostly women) in the area:

- The task force workers guided the villagers to the temporary relief shelter since the village was flooded and most of their houses were destroyed in the cyclone.
- They made stretchers and carried the disabled and pregnant women to safer places.
- They counted all the family members especially children so that nobody went missing.
- They cooked and distributed the food to the affected villagers. The block office provided the food material.
- Safe drinking water was also distributed.

This went on for 2 days and after water started retreating the reconstruction process started.

- Since the primary school of the village got damaged therefore temporary school started in the shelter.

- The villagers with the help from the administration started to rebuild their houses and to reconstruct the village road.

Thus, the women played an important role in the reconstruction process of the village. Since Cyclone and flood are very common phenomena in these areas, therefore the villagers have learnt to grow crops on the raised dividers in the rice fields. Every house now grows vegetable plants on mud sacks kept on the high platform made of bamboos. They have also voiced to raise the platform of tube wells from ground level, for which all the tube wells in the village are now on raised platform.

The women also played an important role to reconstruct the village road, made mud dams, and planting mangroves along the sea line under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Women of the village were no more confined to their home domain. They are eager to form the SHG groups and work for greater interest. They are not only sending their children to school but they themselves are going to the night school to get educated. "This cyclone has really changed my life. I was very much inspired by the women groups that worked for us. Previously after any disaster we used to feel very helpless but this year things were different. We claimed for everything that was our right. We even voiced for a permanent flood shelter to the administration," said Minati Das aged around 25yrs and a resident of the village.

EDUCATING COMMUNITIES ABOUT WOMEN'S WORK

Most emergency programmes have failed to identify women's changing economic role as a major factor in enabling communities to survive and rebuild. Similarly, they have not taken on consideration the importance of gender balance in rebuilding communities, or the role of women's organizations in promoting this balance in the new context. Violent change and catastrophe may be traumatic in its effects, but it is a means whereby old and dysfunctional relationships can be set aside and new ones brought in, in which all members of the community are enabled to maximize their potential. Aid agencies should be able to help communities thrown into this sort of bewildering change to come to terms with it and make the necessary adjustments: indeed, it is just as important a survival task as the provision of food or shelter.

Some women have developed guidelines for disaster practice, media campaigns, and pilot projects that help reduce women's subordination as well as meet practical needs in disasters, linking gender equality to sustainable development, on the one hand, and to disaster mitigation, on the other. In a report on development, gender, and disasters, it was observed that: An understanding of the social and gender dimensions of disasters brings the interface between development and disasters into clear focus. The failures in development

can clearly [be] seen as a source of increased disaster vulnerability, and better disaster mitigation and recovery can be seen as instruments of sustainable and equitable development. Thus, incorporating women's role in economic development from this perspective becomes common ground for both effective development and effective disaster mitigation.

Participatory Development Communication

Development workers now accept that they have to listen to the people and those problems and solutions must be collectively identified (Twigg, 2004:166). Participation is held as being necessary in order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development planning and implementation. Communities should not be passive recipients of information; and development efforts must be based on faith in the people's capacity to contribute and participate actively in the task of transforming society (Servaes, 2004:61). Often, information and educational activities are added onto projects rather than being integral parts of them, the methods chosen for communicating are inappropriate, and the communities at risk have no opportunity to present their views (Twigg, 2004:165). The term 'development communication', which signified top-down, authority-driven and prescriptive models have been replaced by the idea of communication as a development-supported tool. Thus, *Development Support Communication* (DSC) was conceived to represent a participatory, people-to-people and more democratic model of communication in development.

The DSC approach does away with the development communication emphasis on the use of mass media in development communication information campaigns. Instead, it emphasizes the use of the 'little' media (traditional media, group and interpersonal communication) which give the developing community an opportunity to co-create meaning with the assistance of a facilitator (Burger, 1999:91). Development Support Communication makes use of all available structures and means of information sharing. In addition to mass media, DSC uses participatory community media and traditional folk media, such as theatre, song and dance. It also makes use of both formal groups and non-formal channels of communication, such as women's and youth associations, as well as places where people gather, such as markets, festivals, and meeting

THE "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY" FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

In many instances, the personal experience of working side by side with one's wife/husband, clearing roads or salvaging personal belongings from flooded area, is a far more powerful influence than memories of previous gender segregation. Women reported that their husbands are listening to their opinions more than they did prior to the Cyclone Aila. They attributed this change

to the "public" work that they did during the disaster. In places where they were not excluded from doing so by some NGOs and agencies, women are receiving capacity-building in a range of nontraditional activities including: masonry, carpentry, plumbing, agricultural extension, and natural resource management/forestry. It was further seen that some men are fulfilling social roles previously performed by women, including gardening, food preparation and water provision. While women often resist a return to previous, usually submissive economic and social roles, men generally favor such a process.

"The administration has heard the voice of the villagers at last. This year money has been sanctioned for the construction of two flood shelter in the Kalindi GP area," said Debabrata Mondal, a Karmadhakshya of the Purba Medinipur Zila Parisad and a residence of the Kalindi GP area. He also added that day by day villagers especially the women are becoming more aware of their rights and duties. For which the administrators are forced to do their work carefully and sincerely. Perhaps in the process of participating in these various disasters related programmes the women of the area are becoming more aware in asserting their rights and duties.

CONCLUSION

In Conclusion it can be said that Women work force of East Midnapore has indeed set an example of women empowerment. They are actually the role models whom one can follow. In any kind of disaster, preparedness is the key word. Just as the proverb goes – Prevention is better than Cure. Women especially Rural Women should be empowered by the Government so that they can become a force to reckon with rather than victims in any kind of disaster. Throughout the Case study it was felt that in this remote area of the state the position of Women in the society have really improved.

Another striking finding was that the villagers especially women and children are very much aware of women and child trafficking. It has been noticed that after such natural disaster the social structure breaks down and there is always a threat of women and children being trafficked away from the place by the traffickers. But in this area it was observed that villagers are well aware of it. Credit goes to women workers who have made the villagers aware of the trafficking business.

The women forces have created a living example by constructing 40 grain bank and 10 rice banks in the area. These banks are generally used during the emergency period. More than 100 women groups have revolving fund which they can use in any emergency period. The self-help groups and the other women groups have played an implementation role – in search and rescue, community kitchens, grain banks, providing credit, in village level, decision making, identifying livelihoods, and forming disaster task forces.

Thus, an understanding of the social and gender dimensions of disasters brings the line between development and disasters into clear focus. The failures in development can clearly be seen as a source of increased disaster vulnerability, and better disaster mitigation and recovery can be seen as instruments of sustainable and equitable development. Incorporating women's role in economic development from this perspective becomes common ground for both effective development and effective disaster mitigation.

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