

GENDER INCLUSION IN POST-DISASTER HOUSING IN INDIA

Helping women and girls build resilience

AT A GLANCE

Country India

Risks Disproportionate impact of natural disasters on women

Area of Engagement Promoting resilient infrastructure

The government of India and the government of the Indian state of Uttarakhand have integrated gender into their disaster response and recovery efforts through the Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project.

WOMEN DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY NATURAL DISASTERS

Endowed with vast natural resources, the state of Uttarakhand is one of the most frequented tourist and Hindu pilgrimage destinations in India. In large part due to its fragile terrain, however, the state is also one of the most disaster-prone in the country. Located close to the seismically active Himalayan mountain ranges, Uttarakhand faces the specter of landslides and floods during monsoon season, a challenge which has been exacerbated by climate change. In June 2013, the state experienced unprecedented monsoon rains that triggered India's worst natural disaster since the 2004 tsunami. The 2013 flash floods and landslides affected more than 4,200 villages, damaged 2,500 houses, and claimed the lives of 4,000 people.

Due to the unequal distribution of roles, resources, and power, evidence shows that women and girls disproportionately suffer the impacts of disasters, including in Uttarakhand. As male members of the household in the state usually migrate to towns to earn a living for their families, a large percentage of women single handedly manage family assets including homes, crops and livestock. Yet even though women in villages effectively become heads of the household, they have little legal rights over the land.

Landslide hazard levels in Uttarakhand, by district



Source: Think Hazard

ENSURING GENDER INCLUSION IN DISASTER RECOVERY

Recognizing the need to prioritize women and girls in disaster recovery, the government of India and the government of Uttarakhand, with the support of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the World Bank, have placed a strong emphasis on gender inclusion in implementing the Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project (UDRP). Key components of the project, which aims to advance the state's post-disaster recovery as well as strengthen its capacity for disaster risk management, are explicitly designed to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls. These include:

- ▶ The housing reconstruction component strives to adhere to an Owner Driven Construction of Houses (ODCH) methodology whereby beneficiaries, including women, rebuild their houses on their own with technical and

social support from a local NGO, using guidelines issued by the project for disaster-resilient housing. By linking beneficiaries with the local NGO, the project also increased women beneficiaries' awareness of their rights and entitlements. In order to strengthen the local economy, the project encouraged the use of local materials during the reconstruction.

- ▶ Households were given US\$7,800 to finance the reconstruction of their homes. This was distributed in four installments after a quality check. In an effort to empower women beneficiaries, the project actively encouraged joint titling of land and bank accounts. Over 50% of the beneficiaries received their installments in joint bank accounts.
- ▶ In order to curb open defecation as well as provide women and girls with privacy and safety, the project ensured that toilets were constructed in every reconstructed house.

Already, the ODCH experience has proven successful in helping Uttarakhand state build back better, and has also been instrumental toward the design of a post-2015 earthquake housing reconstruction program in Nepal. As the program in Uttarakhand approaches completion in 2019, efforts are underway to provide public utilities like drinking water and electricity for all of the newly constructed houses.

LESSONS LEARNED

Giving women a voice in climate and disaster risk management boosts resilience.

Consultation with both men and women at all stages ensured that all beneficiaries' needs were addressed. ODCH generated a sense of accomplishment and ownership — especially among women never before encouraged to own land or other fixed assets. A novel aspect was women's adaptation to construction technicalities.

Improved data on gender is an important step towards building inclusive resilience.

Gender-disaggregated data analysis at the outset would strengthen the design and implementation of post-disaster interventions targeting the most vulnerable. Complementary to the Damage and Needs Assessment, sector- and theme-based gender analysis can inform early recovery and reconstruction, improve coordination between interventions, and support the transition from recovery to development.



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NEARLY 2,400 HOUSES RECONSTRUCTED TO BE DISASTER- RESILIENT

Out of the 2,500 houses damaged by the 2013 flash floods and landslides, nearly 2,400 have been reconstructed following guidelines for disaster-resilient housing. The project plans to rebuild all the damaged homes by 2019. Among the total beneficiaries, more than 10% are widows, and another 10% are female-headed households.

NEW HOUSING RECONSTRUCTION POLICY IN PLACE

A new Housing Reconstruction Policy was created, outlining beneficiary eligibility, selection criteria, design, construction parameters, stipulations for implementation, insurance and more. The policy was created with gender-inclusive measures in mind, and provides special attention to widows and women-headed households in the selection criteria.

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN

The project contributed to the financial empowerment of women by encouraging the co-ownership of bank accounts. Over 50% of the beneficiaries received their installments in joint bank accounts that enabled women to have an equitable say in financing home reconstruction.