



GENDER AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: NEPAL

Early warning systems (EWS) that do not explicitly consider gender are likely to increase the marginalization or vulnerability of marginalized gender groups. Research in Nepal explores the interaction between gender and flood early warning systems, extracting key findings, and distilling a checklist for gender-aware, -sensitive, and -transformative early warning systems.

KEY FACTS

- Research focused on five aspects of an EWS where gender is most influential: vulnerability, participation, dissemination, response, and power and decision making.
- We interviewed 92 women and 35 men in west, central and East Nepal and held a further 11 focus groups were held, and another 28 vulnerable or marginalised women were also interviewed.
- 94 per cent of respondents think that women are more impacted by flooding than men.
- 74 per cent of respondents said that male economic migration has affected how their family receives risk and EWS information.
- 23 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men reported having a disability which affects how they can respond to early warnings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Training on the EWS, preparedness, and response needs to be made more accessible to women and marginalised gender groups and accommodate the barriers that prevent their participation.

EWS should not rely on only one form of communication such as SMS messages, but should ensure that warnings are shared in easily accessible and understood ways for all sections of the community.

All marginalised gender groups need to be trained comprehensively in response and evacuation procedures












so that they know what to do when they receive a warning, and so that this knowledge does not leave the community when men migrate for work.

All marginalised gender groups need to be empowered as decision makers in the home and in Community Disaster Management Committees so that they are not dependent on men to undertake preparedness activities or to evacuate, and so that their needs for more time and prompt evacuation are recognised and fully accommodated.

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CHECKLIST FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EWS

	Gender aware: Explicitly acknowledge, assess, and document the ways in which disasters and EWS impact different gender groups in different ways.
	Acknowledge: Explicitly acknowledge gendered impacts
	Assess: Undertake gender analysis
	Examine: Examine gendered assumptions (including stereotypes and cisnormativity)
	Listen: Make proactive efforts to hear from marginalized gender groups
	Intersectionality: Understand how intersectional vulnerabilities exacerbate gendered vulnerabilities
	Vulnerability: Understand how gender impacts on vulnerability
	Participation: Understand how gender impacts on participation
	Dissemination: Understand how gender impacts on dissemination
	Response: Understand how gender impacts on response
	Power and Decision-making: Understand how gender impacts on decision making
	Gender sensitive: Adapt project actions (across all areas of the EWS, with proactive consideration of participation, power and decision-making) to improve the effectiveness of EWS for marginalized and vulnerable gender groups.
	Gender transformative: Design policies, approaches and actions to ensure the EWS works effectively for people of all genders. Consider how all aspects of the EWS (including participation power and decision making) can support the reduction of gender-based inequalities.

CASE STUDY: DURGA SHAH*

Durga Shah is a married mother of three young children with responsibility for an elderly mother-in-law. She lives in eastern Nepal.

Durga was asleep when a commotion outside woke her. It had been raining heavily all night and she could hear the river roaring. She woke her husband and they moved their children and elderly mother-in-law to the highest bed in the house.

Her husband then left to investigate. Durga started packing clothes, food, and important documents. She quickly freed the livestock before joining her family on the bed and waiting, but he did not return even after the water had

started entering their house. When the water was already knee high, the government-deployed rescue team arrived and helped them to safety.

'My husband goes to meetings, he has more time, is worldlier and more educated. I am mostly too busy with housework and the children. If it was specifically said that women need to be there, we might have been forced to rethink. If I was told attending meetings would help me keep my children safer, I definitely would have gone.'

Durga and her husband were later reunited when he tracked them down at the school where they were taking shelter. He had been trapped when the

flood reached him before he could return.

'When I told my husband I could not swim to get help because of the clothes I was wearing, he seemed surprised. He had never considered it. Also, generally we aren't encouraged to swim, so we never get a chance to become strong swimmers. I don't know how to explain this to a man, even to my own husband.'

Note: * indicates that names have been changed

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References and Further Reading

Practical Action (2016) Flood Early Warning System in Practice: Experiences of Nepal, Rugby: Practical Action.

Practical Action/Flood Resilience Alliance (2019a) Gender Transformative Early Warning Systems: Lessons from Nepal and Peru, Rugby: Practical Action.

Practical Action/Flood Resilience Alliance (2019b) Missing Voices: Experience of Marginalized Gender Groups in Disaster in Nepal and Peru, Rugby: Practical Action.

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