communities and their extensive and well-developed social networks and knowledge of the people and their needs (Enarson et al. 2002b).

In destroying the fabric of everyday life and creating conditions in which women are compelled to play a more active part in economic and public life, disasters also open up spaces within which social change can occur. It remains to be seen whether changes in gender and economics persist over the long term. Although the literature on disasters records that there is often a tendency in the immediacy of the event for women and men to cooperate more in daily activities, and for men to give greater respect to their wives for their involvement in activities hitherto considered 'masculine,' most of the literature also records the diminishment over time of these aspects (Bradshaw 2004b; Delaney and Shrader 2000; United Nations 2004). What these examples suggest is that there is a post-disaster 'window of opportunity' which can provide a valuable space within which the disaster preparedness and management community, along with other agencies, could begin to lay the groundwork for social change that promotes gender equality and is firmly rooted in sustainable development and hazard prevention (Enarson 2001b; 2002b).

It takes time to build capacities. The lessons learned from the literature suggest that people's ability to cope with crises and to recover from them is multi-faceted and includes material, physical and social resources, beliefs, and attitudes (Graham 2001). While there are no quick fixes, there is nevertheless abundant evidence that collective mobilisation and economic security play a powerful role in developing women's sense of self-esteem, socially empowering them, and, as a result, enlarging their sense of the possible. This should not be underestimated.

From knowledge to action: some gender guidelines

Gender analysis in DP/M

There are already many excellent gender guidelines available in the field of disaster preparedness and management (ActionAid International 2005; FAO n.d. ; Graham 2001; Schwoebel and Menon 2004; Twigg 2004; Enarson 2005; WHO 2005). This section presents a synthesis of some of this material.

Gender analysis is a useful tool for analysing how a community works by exploring the experiences of different categories of people within it. Specifically, it identifies the varied roles that structure women's and men's relationships and activities in their everyday lives; the unequal power relationship that often characterises their social, economic, and political engagements; and the consequences such inequalities may have over their health and life opportunities. It does this by framing questions pertinent to who does *what*, *when*, and *why*; who has access to *what* and *who doesn't*; and who has control over *what* and *who doesn't*. Together with these insights into roles, responsibilities, and rights of access and control, it also highlights how culturally-structured understandings of what it means to be a woman or a man in a particular

context help to shape people's behaviour in ways that often prevent them from looking after themselves optimally in disaster situations (Graham 2001).

While checklists are an essential component of the gender mainstreaming process, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind that there is no single blueprint, nor can there be one, for integrating gender analysis into DP/M work. This is especially true in a region as varied as South Asia where the sheer cultural and socioeconomic variations within and across communities ensure that what works in one area may not be applicable in another. In this respect, even the most inclusive of checklists and practice guidelines will at best provide only a 'road map' for the type of questions to ask and the issues to examine. Vital accompaniments to checklists and guidelines include (i) an appreciation by all staff of what gender analysis is, why it is important, and how it is done; (ii) a solid understanding of the local context; and (iii) linkages with organisations and individuals who can provide the necessary background, tools, resources, and connections to the community with which one is working.

What does gender-sensitive outreach look like?

Gender-sensitive outreach begins by asking the right questions. These include the following.
- **Who does what, when and where?**
    - What do men and women, children and elders do, and where and when do these activities take place?
    - Ideally this should also include an understanding of how divisions of labour are organised across different castes and ethnicities.
    - What amount of time is spent performing different unpaid and paid activities?
    - What is the relative social value given to activities in both the informal and formal economies?

Box 6: **Points to keep in mind when engaging in gender analysis**
- Gender is about women and men in relation to one another: the fact of being female or male plays a critical role in shaping vulnerabilities, first responses, information and sharing capacities, and access to decision-making.
- Communities and households are not made up of individuals with equal entitlements and access to resources (e.g., food, money, decision-making): understanding the structures of both is an essential component of gender analysis.
- Assumptions about what women and men do, their roles and responsibilities, should be examined rather than taken for granted: for instance, much of what women do is not considered 'work' because no remuneration is received for it.
- Class (social position, wealth), caste, age, and education also influence gender roles, responsibilities, access to resources, and power: a poor woman's or man's needs and priorities are likely to be different from those of better-off men and women.
- Participatory approaches may not necessarily ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account: notions of well-being need to be based on a range of definitions given by local people.

Box 7: **Identifying gender needs and concerns** (Adapted from Morris 2003)

- **Working through lines of household authority** – How can response programmes work with/through lines of household authority to reach women and other vulnerable individuals in households?

- **Understanding the connection between divisions of labour and vulnerability** – What implications do divisions of labour within the household have for different categories of people's ability to look after themselves, attend information meetings, and so forth?

- **Resource allocation issues** – Are there discernible patterns of gender and/or generational discrimination in terms of allocation of resources within the household that put girls and elders at risk of receiving less food, medical attention, etc?

- **Local and external support networks** – How can resource distribution capitalise on and strengthen local/external networks? How can these be strengthened and used for relief work? Are local women and groups/associations actively included in planning and implementation of disaster preparedness and management activities?

- **Seclusion practices** – Are there ways in which formal/informal constraints on women's physical mobility predispose them to have less access to aid or information? Is this expressed in who receives supplies (e.g., who isn't visible in the distribution lines and what does this imply in terms of their heightened vulnerability)?

- **Participatory measures** – Are women (and other potentially vulnerable groups) involved in decision-making and employed as aid workers at all levels?

- **Recognising that gender involves men** – Are the vulnerabilities of men and boys acknowledged? What can be done to help men deal more effectively with crises that threaten their perceived roles and identities?

- **Keeping in mind the informal/domestic economy** – What 'invisible' economic enterprises of women and men are disrupted or destroyed by disasters? How can relief/rehabilitation programmes prioritise their recovery?

- **Siting issues** – Does the location of water points/latrines/distribution centres make women feel insecure or put them at risk? Does the distance/procedure plan place an increased burden on them?

- **Sex-specific needs** – Are there adequate services addressing the needs of, and reaching women (including pregnant and nursing women) and paying special attention to women's reproductive health and sanitary needs?

- **Other marginalised groups** – Does the targeting of aid distribution have the potential to exclude certain groups or increase opportunities for their exploitation?

- **Women's care-giving roles** (to children, the elderly, the sick, etc): Is there awareness that divisions of labour and expectations may prevent women from having proper access to aid or engaging in hazard-prevention activities?

Gender Matters: Lessons for Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia

- **Who has access to what resources and who does not? Who has control over what resources and who does not?**
  - Resources are defined as anything people require to carry out activities, including tangibles such as land, animals, paid jobs, and money, as well as intangibles such as status, time, and knowledge (see Annex 2 for issues to consider for livelihoods' analysis).
- **What is the structure of local households? Who lives together? What are the lines of household authority?**

These clusters help to broadly identify gender roles and needs of relevance to relief and rehabilitation services, which can then contribute to a better understanding of the contexts that shape different categories of people's vulnerability to disaster situations.

Finally, to repeat a point already made: gender stereotypes affect both women and men, and can hamper the ability of households and communities to engage effectively in pre- and post-disaster activities. Gender analysis involves being attentive to how the following have an impact on roles people undertake.

- **The ideology of the 'male breadwinner'** makes it hard for female heads of household to get access to relief, jobs, and training, often when they have primary responsibility for their households.
- **The assumption that women are 'natural' care-givers** overburdens their already labour-intensive days.
- **The stereotype that men and boys are physically and emotionally strong** overlooks the amount and type of support they require in the aftermath of disaster.
- **Viewing men as family providers** can reinforce the commonly-held belief that seeking assistance is an admission of weakness.
- **Viewing women's household inputs as supplementary** renders their work invisible and reinforces the priority relief programmes give to the economic recovery of men only.

Providing a 'principle of good practices' is the easy part. Ensuring that they are actualised is considerably harder and requires the willingness to make political commitments to make structural changes. Some pointers include the suggestions given below (WHO 2005).

- **Involving women at *all* stages of decision-making** (Ensuring that information about the needs of the family/community are obtained from men and women, and from women from different groups as different kinds of information may emerge)
- **Collecting sex-disaggregated data** and incorporating them into programme planning and documentation for short and long-term gender effects of disasters
- **Identifying and addressing sex-specific needs** (Focusing on sanitary supplies, need for privacy, reproductive health requirements, and culturally-appropriate clothing)

- **Understanding that as care givers to the injured and sick, women require information, resources, and support**
- **Assessing the impact of all response activities on both women and men**
- **Being attentive to those who experience social exclusion** (widows, female heads of households, disabled women, and those from socially/ethnically/religiously marginalised groups)
- **Ensuring that assistance is available for women without placing them at risk of injury or abuse and showing concern for their security by including women distributors**

Annex 3 presents a set of gender-sensitive, post-disaster reconstruction guidelines for those involved in disaster relief.

Disasters are extremely complex phenomena, as are the social and institutional contexts upon which they have an impact: each approach has to be grounded in locally-specific circumstances based on an understanding of sociocultural contexts and needs. At its best, gender analysis plays a critical role in identifying and understanding vulnerable segments of communities, in channelling resources to those most in need, and in helping to mobilise the capacities of those whose contributions are often overlooked because they are deemed to be 'helpless'. Lessons from the field illustrate that without a gender-sensitive lens a great deal of important information about disasters is likely to be overlooked to the great detriment of people and their recovery.

See Annex 4 for issues to be considered in developing gender-sensitive outreach, and Annex 5 for self-assessment tools for disaster-responding agencies.

The road ahead

> Taking gender seriously requires a paradigm shift in organisations.
> Gender is a pervasive life or death issue.
>
> *- Reynold Levy, International Rescue Committee (Morris 2003)*

Summary

Natural hazards are commonplace throughout the South Asian region. Every year millions of people are exposed to the consequences of earthquakes, cyclones, floods, droughts, and landslides; lives are lost and livelihoods are disrupted; and the financial costs of repairing devastated infrastructure and recouping lost productivity are enormous setbacks to development efforts. Acknowledging the tremendous physical and social costs of such events, the new paradigm of disaster management recognises that effective hazard prevention, preparation, and mitigation should address the needs of vulnerable segments of society, of whom women constitute a large proportion, as well as recognising that local-level initiatives must be included in DP/M work.