

# REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTER CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary of Findings .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Problems .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Solutions .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Regarding Policies .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Regarding Our Research and Practice .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Opening Remarks .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Visionary Plenary .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Regional Patterns and Action Issues 1 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Regional Patterns and Action Issues 2 .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Regional Patterns and Action Issues 3 .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Researchers' Roundtable .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Reaching Children in Disasters .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Working Across Barriers .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Building on Women's Strengths .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>39</b>

**MIAMI CONFERENCE  
ON REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS  
June 2000**

**Executive Summary**

**Overview**

Reaching women and children in disasters: What are the issues and how can we best address them? Over 70 practitioners, policy-makers and researchers from North and Central America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean met in Miami for two and a half days in June 2000 to address these questions. This interactive workshop was planned by the *International Hurricane Center at Florida International University* and convened by Betty Hearn Morrow and Elaine Enarson. Representing regions and countries at all stages of development, at risk from different hazards, and in which women and children live very different lives, participants were united in their observations from the field that women and children are both highly vulnerable in disasters and highly resourceful responders. The workshop began with a reception sponsored by the *International Hurricane Center* on Sunday evening.

The program consisted of two plenary sessions and a series of workshops and presentations from a diverse group of international contributors, each summarized by a discussant with expertise in the topic. The meeting ended with the collective identification of recommendations for carrying forth the goal of reducing the vulnerability of women and children, and fully utilizing their strengths and resources.

In order for the outcomes to be shared, several contributing papers, as well as these proceedings, have been made available on the *Gender and Disaster Network* website at: [www.dglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.dglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn), as well as website of the *Laboratory for Social and Behavioral Research (LSBR)* at the *International Hurricane Center*. [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr). A bibliography prepared by Marion Pratt, *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*, is also posted and readers are invited to add to it by emailing their contributions to the *Gender and Disaster Network (GDN)* at [gdn@clio.fiu.edu](mailto:gdn@clio.fiu.edu).

Sponsors of the event included the *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*, the *International Hurricane Center*, The *US Department of Agriculture*, and the *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance*.

## **Summary of the Findings**

### **The Problems**

- There are enormous unmet needs of women and children in disasters.
- Effectively addressing the vulnerabilities of women and children requires disaster management that is tied to mitigation and sustainable development, i.e. that addresses the root causes of inequality.
- As revealed in case studies from around the world, the structural and cultural circumstances of everyday life tend to place women at high risk in times of disaster.
- Most disaster response organizations, public and private, either do not recognize the special needs of women, or, in the urgency of the moment, put aside gender-based policies and practices.
- The gender policies and practices of many development projects around the world have applicability to disaster management, but to date there is little evidence of effective crossover.
- Not only do most disaster evaluation efforts not look at gender issues, they often do not disaggregate whatever data they collect by sex, making gender analysis impossible.
- Women are an under-utilized resource in disaster management at all organizational levels from neighborhood local to national.
- The way in which disaster response unfolds today in many cases creates another set of disasters, or “disastrogenesis” as one speaker termed the resulting negative symptoms.
- Gender-specific data are needed concerning the relationship between impeded role performance and social problems such as family violence, substance abuse, and depression among disaster-affected populations of all ages.
- The increasing population of abandoned street children in urban areas around the world require attention in disaster mitigation and response in order to address their risk and to deal with the increases in their number that are likely to occur after a major event.
- Most disaster planning and response does not sufficiently anticipate that symptoms of individual and family psychological and emotional stress, including woman and child abuse, will accelerate and that appropriate social services should be part of all emergency planning.
- More opportunities are needed for researchers and practitioners interested in gender issues to work together.

## **The Solutions**

- Targeting women with policies and programs is an efficient way and effective way to improve total disaster mitigation and response.
- Women and children are largely untapped resources in disaster response.
- Activities that focus on helping children are an excellent way to bring diverse communities and constituencies together.
- A solid body of empirical evidence on women's disaster risk is essential, gathered by qualitative and quantitative methodologies, from a variety of disaster settings and circumstances, focusing on all levels of analysis.
- Strong advocacy, armed with convincing data, is required in order to convince policy-makers and leaders that gender-based risk exists and that targeting it can be highly effective in making communities more disaster-resilient.
- The most effective disaster response projects are those that actively engage the local community in their own recovery.
- There is evidence that community response and development projects that actively engage women tend to be different, and to be more effective and enduring.
- Effective disaster mitigation begins with educational programs for children and youth.
- The needs of children and youth for developmentally appropriate care and activities throughout the disaster cycle should be addressed in disaster planning.
- Actively engaging children and youth in family and community disaster response is an important therapeutic strategy.
- Greater advocacy, including effective use of the media, is required.
- More educational and training materials directed at the needs of women and children are needed.
- The internet, including the *Gender and Disaster Network's* website and listserv can be a valuable tool in working across barriers to address these issues.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **FROM THE MIAMI CONFERENCE ON REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS**

The conference ended with roundtable discussions to develop general and follow-up recommendations that were then reported and discussed with the larger group. These recommendations were presented as ways in which agencies, public and private, and individuals, beginning with the participants themselves, can begin to change the landscape of disaster mitigation and response to better meet the needs of woman and children.

### **REGARDING POLICIES**

- Promote disaster response policies and practices that address the root causes of vulnerability, particularly for women and children
- Effect change in the balance of disaster resources currently invested in relief and mitigation, directing increased resources toward vulnerability reduction
- Better understand and effectively counter the main constraints to carrying out gender-sensitive recommendations in the disaster context
- Advocate for a gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of all disaster interventions and programs
- Establish a standard practice of collecting disaster-related data in a manner that allows for the assessment and tracking of gender, race, ethnic, and age patterns.
- Develop “best practices pilot projects” where a concerted effort is made to ensure that gender issues are addressed from planning through rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Promote the transfer of knowledge gained from model programs for women and children, such as the “lessons learned” from successful development projects
- Seek an audit of existing services for women and children in the disaster context as a first step to identifying unmet needs
- Promote the expansion of childcare and recreational programs for children and youth in disaster settings
- Actively work to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in disaster preparedness and response organizations and activities
- Advocate for diverse organizations, public and private, active in women's and children's issues to become involved in disaster-related work

- Identify effective spokespersons to address the information needs of policy-makers, researchers, donors, community members and other key actors
- Target key public officials and policy-makers with information about women and children in disasters
- Press for the mainstreaming of educational programs and materials on the needs of women and children in the curriculum of disaster and emergency management training programs at the local, regional, national and international levels
- Develop international mechanisms to expand awareness of and services to children pushed on to the street in the course of disasters
- Work to reduce the morbidity and mortality of street children by developing protocols with disaster organizations to increase their accounting of, and accountability to these children
- Promote the long-term mitigation of future disasters through such actions as global debt reduction and international commitment to the global treaty to ban land mines

## **REGARDING OUR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

- Actively consult with our respective communities of interest to identify resources, vulnerabilities, and priorities for action
- Communicate with organizations supporting or engaging in disaster work about the importance of anticipating and planning for the needs of women and children and the type of research needed to accomplish this goal
- Work creatively through disaster relief projects and organizations to enhance projects that address the needs of women and children
- Fully engage in all disaster-related work the disaster victims, survivors, vulnerable groups, clients and others to whom researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers are accountable
- Consult with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to develop an inventory of significant theoretical, practical and policy issues in gender and disaster research and set up task forces/working groups to address them
- Develop mechanisms for collaborative multidisciplinary, cross-national research and for the sharing of research tools and information
- Translate research findings into user-friendly language accessible to practitioners in all audiences and languages
- Develop teaching and agency support materials on issues important to women and children

- Refine messages and develop innovative strategies for communication, particularly across cultural and geographical barriers
- Commit to exchanging ideas, information, good practices, insights and experiences through the *Gender and Disaster Network*
- Develop at least one publicly accessible archive for knowledge and data on gender-based disaster work
- Work to legitimize disaster research in academic institutions and to increase the opportunities for future researchers to secure academic positions enabling them to pursue gender and disaster issues
- Initiate planning for a follow-up meeting to assess progress, providing increased time for dialogue and incorporating a broader range of national and international organizations

# REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS<sup>1</sup>

June 4, 2000

## OPENING REMARKS

Participants were greeted by Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, and by representatives from several sponsoring organizations, including Stephen Leatherman from the *International Hurricane Center*, Wayne Westhoff from the *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Relief* and the *University of South Florida*, and by Marion Pratt from the *Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID* who made the following welcoming remarks.

### **Marion Pratt, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID**

A warm good evening! I and my three colleagues from *USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance* are delighted to be participating in this ground-breaking conference. Over the past several years, both the expansion of the technical staff at *OFDA*, and the merging of our Disaster Response Division with our Planning, Mitigation and Preparedness Division, have facilitated *OFDA's* ability to collaborate effectively with our implementing partners to better address technical and analytical issues associated with disaster response, one of the most important being gender.

Ongoing collaboration with the PVO umbrella organization *InterAction*, through a series of workshops on gender spurred the development of content-specific principles, a new addition to *OFDA's* Guidelines for Proposals and Reporting. These principles are designed to help our implementing partners assess the following issues for every proposed activity:

1. The organization and capacities of a given population in non-disaster settings;
2. The differential impacts of the disaster on women, men, adolescents, and children;
3. The range of potential positive and negative effects of the proposed disaster intervention on the social, environmental, and economic aspects of the society.

We hope these will help serve the wide variety of people in disaster contexts around the world, including:

---

<sup>1</sup> Brenda Phillips, *Texas Woman's University*, prepared the first draft of the conference proceedings that were then finalized by abstracts, papers and comments from many conference participants. Therefore, in some cases the words of the speaker are provided, others are third-person summaries.



[Slide Presentation]

1. Women's groups coming to grips with the AIDS epidemic in Tanzania;
2. Nepalese families at grave risk of the effect of earthquakes in Kathmandu Valley;
3. Somalis gathering hope despite the bleakness of life in a refugee camp in northern Kenya;
4. Bangladeshis who feel the force of annual cyclones and storm surges;
5. Sudanese experiencing simultaneously drought, famine, and war; and
6. Rwandan refugees displaced into camps in Tanzania after the genocid

To name a few!

Important themes that continue to be debated in gender and disaster analyses include: targeting, vulnerability, violence, and agency (that is, recognizing those affected by disasters as much more than just victims). We expect that this conference will help better define these topics and look forward to taking home a vast amount of new information and many innovative ideas to share with our other colleagues and partners.

## **VISIONARY PLENARY**

***What would gender-equitable disaster planning and practice look like?  
Where are we now and what could the future be like?***

**Brenda D. Phillips, *Texas Woman's University, United States***

The ecosystemic framework can be used to analyze the sources and potential solutions that underlie inequitable practice and planning. The ecosystemic framework identifies multiple levels for analytical purposes. First, the micro-level examines interpersonal interactions that impact disaster management. Efforts to ameliorate inequity at this level include efforts by emergency managers and researchers to explore, appreciate, and integrate diverse cultural, economic, gender, national identity, and language perspectives and realities into practice, planning, and academic inquiry. The ecosystemic approach then moves us from the micro-level to the meso-level, where we examine the roles of organizations, agencies, and networks that seek to link the individual interpersonal level to the larger society. Educational programs (degree-granting in particular) are critiqued for exclusionary curricula that lay an inequitable foundation for disaster practice and planning. The exo-level looks at "settings that **have** power" including such things as development policy. As a way of understanding the exo-level, the Miami Declaration on Sustainable Development and Disasters<sup>2</sup> was revisited for its thorough critique of policy that enables vulnerability and inequitable practice. Finally, the macro-level encapsulates previous levels within such abstract structures as the larger culture and political economy. In order for disaster practice and

---

<sup>2</sup> Available on the Laboratory for Social and Behavioral Research website: [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr). Look for the Hemispheric Congress Proceedings under the Publications link.

policy to be more practical, systemic and global changes are required. To facilitate discussion throughout the rest of the conference, the Beijing Platform was examined for its potential to impact disaster practice and planning [Note: The complete text of Phillips' talk, "And Aretha sang, R-E-S-P-E-C-T!" is available on the GDN website: [www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn) and LSBR website: [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr).]

**Julie Demichelis, Urban Planner, Washington D.C., United States**

We humans have never conquered or controlled nature, which responds to our "scientific and commercial advances" with increasingly intense forces. Many disasters stem not from some truly extraordinary natural event, but from our geographical marginalization of socially subordinated persons -- disproportionately women and children -- toward unsafe living environments. These people remain without access to basic mitigation and preparedness resources, or sometimes basic knowledge. Often, we see vast public and private resources used to rescue such persons from slow- or fast-onset natural events we know -- well in advance -- would injure them.

Our effective preparedness for such crises has not yet matched our potential to integrate viable disaster planning (mitigation, preparedness and response) strategies into regional economic development schemes. We must strive to make disaster - planning activities a collective responsibility that builds upon and strengthens public-private relationships at the local level -- where risk-reduction and disaster mitigation show most immediate returns. As outsiders, we can seek women and their local advocates in their daily spaces -- to listen to their self-perceptions and needs, to work with them to weave their ideas into disaster planning practices that interact with neighboring communities' ideas. Plans that they own and practice. As professionals and academics in a new economy, we can creatively link these communities with others to enhance their participation in these new disaster-planning activities.

We must form a broader, co-existential "we" vision of disaster planning. This conference is a timely forum to address and improve the nature, extent and timing of popular methods used by public emergency management officials, which often neglect and undermine capacities of women and children, our primary clients in this gathering's endeavor. Let's recast our planning criteria in light of social cost-effectiveness for them rather than political acceptability for others. Let's put our clients first. Grass roots empowerment is key. Women need access to credit. We must provide help without a heavy institutional context, rules and regulations. Local development must be sustainable after we leave. Some practitioners and managers have no gender experience. We should help managers understand our points and adapt to other languages and cultures. For example, when talking with businesses, use the term "risk exposure" rather than vulnerability. We need pilot projects for legal frameworks. We must avoid imposing our values on others. We must generate policies in context so they work.

**Vishaka Hildellage, *Duryog Nivaran*, Intermediate Technology Development Group (Sri Lanka), South Asia**

Disasters are an outcome of social, political and economic happenings in society. **They** are processes rather than events. The key to understanding the reasons **behind** disasters and how to mitigate them is to understand vulnerability and risk issues – why some are more vulnerable than others. It is clear that the poor are at the highest risk. Cultural beliefs are also important, such as in Pakistan when people often believe that disaster is God's way of punishing them. But the key reason behind disasters is economic marginalization. Women and children in general, especially in South Asia, don't have equal access to resources. In disasters, women have less access to getting help and the result is higher deaths, injuries, and disabilities. Women-headed households have little way to earn a living. In Bangladesh, for example, they must send their children to work because women are not allowed to work outside the home. Because we tend to see disasters as events, we don't see the development context. More proactive disaster mitigation is needed, including more money spent on mitigation. Victims should be more actively engaged in mitigation. In the future, sustainable development planning must consider the full environment and future generations. We must include disasters in sustainable development planning. We should consider disaster mitigation as a process and understand the hidden factors such as economic empowerment as a way to reduce vulnerability. Remember **that** women can contribute effectively in planning, management and mitigation. [Note: ITDG's main focus is technology for development. They have developed a network in South Asia. Publications are also available in Spanish through their Peru office (*La Red*).]

[Note: A family emergency prevented Madhavi Ariyabandu from *Duryog Nivaran* attending. Her paper, "The Impact Of Hazards on Women and Children," is available on the GDN and LSBR websites.]

June 5, 2000

## Regional Patterns and Action Issues 1

***How are women and children across the globe impacted by hazardous environments and disasters and how do they respond? What changes are needed to address the root causes and social conditions of vulnerability?***

**Moderator:** Jean D'Cunha, Independent Scholar and Gender Consultant, Thailand

**Brigitte Touré, Centre de Recherche et de Documentation en Economie de la Sante (CREDES), (Paris), Africa**

Africa accounts for 7% of the world's disasters and 67% of the direct mortality. Thirty-three out of 48 of the least developed nations are in Africa. Vulnerability is economically determined, complicated by chronic political unrest, long-lasting conflicts, recurrent drought, and cultural changes. Disasters include drought, famine, floods, epidemics, and technological disasters: conflicts, violence, technological disasters such as transportation disasters on sea and road. During drought, there are gender differences in roles and responses. Few gender-disaggregated data exist on floods. In epidemics such as HIV and malaria there is gender disparity. In armed conflict, rape is used as a weapon and war results in displacement and increasing vulnerability. They are trying to use health as a bridge for peace, but it is important to analyze and verify data on all of these issues.

Twenty-six out of a total of 53 countries have been affected by conflict. War, strife, food shortages, displaced populations all increase mortality and morbidity. During such conflict we see the collapse of state functions, the mixing of civilians with combatants, violence on civilians, a fluid and versatile situation, the development of an economy of war and the impact of humanitarian assistance. In drought, women must migrate without their livestock, leaving them in austerity. They also lose precious resources including jewelry, household utensils, small ruminants, milk, etc. Landmines have been a particular problem, with maimed women surviving to live in impacted families. In Somali, 40% of the landmine victims were women, 38% were men, 18% were boys and 4% were girls.

Lessons learned included the relevance of the specificity of African disasters and that we must gather and look at disaggregated data by gender. We must train at the community level, focusing on women. We must re-socialize boys after war. We must provide mental health support to the poor. We must provide gender tools. We must remember that women remain reluctant and men are not convinced of these issues. We must review and compile data, document and disseminate lessons, plans, laws, maintenance and procedures.

**Cheryl Anderson, *University of Hawaii, Social Science Research Institute, Southern Pacific Island Region***

The Pacific Islands range in geographic diversity from the large volcanic islands to small atolls, some spread hundreds of miles from island where political power is concentrated, with varying degrees of development, population, and urbanization. Gender relations have been largely influenced by western colonialism, although some of the matrilineal and local types of power in social relations still exist in many of the islands. The natural hazards that impact the islands include tsunamis, earthquakes, typhoons, floods, wildfires, erosion, extreme tides, and drought. Many of these events are the consequences of global climate change and variability, and have been felt throughout these islands, often in ways more drastic and immediate than in other places in the world.

For nine years, I have worked in the Pacific Island region in the field of hazard mitigation. My knowledge of the impacts on women from disasters comes from experiences working with the women and from observation, but often not as a direct result of targeting women in the projects with which I have been involved, and this is where I have increasingly become aware of a gender gap in disaster management.

Field study notes from response to hazards in small Pacific Island nations and several anecdotes from the region indicate that women generally have more control over resources within the community and within the household. Examples come from observations during typhoon preparation and drought mitigation associated with the 1991-1992 ENSO warm event. The women worked with the natural resources, and understood the natural hydrology of the island. They were able to find potable water resources to sustain the community. Since hazards often affect the availability and distribution of resources, the local resource managers---the women---need to have access to good information and alternatives for mitigating hazards.

During the 1997-1998 El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) warm event, the *Pacific ENSO Applications Center (PEAC)* provided precipitation forecasts and warnings about the impending drought throughout the region. As a result of three-years of education about climate variability and technological improvements in forecasting ENSO warm events, the governments of the US-affiliated islands took measures which drastically reduced the impacts of the climate change on human suffering and loss. Although the results of gender participation have not been quantified, there were women **who** participated on some of the ENSO task forces in the US-affiliated islands. The **island** jurisdictions that had women participate tended to be more involved in public education and awareness programs reaching into the small villages, compared to the other islands without women on the task force.

*PEAC* researchers have also convened a series of workshops with the *United Nations Disaster Relief Office* (since incorporated into the *South Pacific Applied Geoscience*

*Commission*) in Suva, Fiji to develop a methodology to assess the impacts of the ENSO event, identify vulnerabilities, and provide mitigation options for disaster managers. What has been striking in the development of the methodologies through the series of workshops, in conducting hazard risk and vulnerability assessments, and in the mitigation planning for the Pacific Islands is the disproportionate gender representation. Men far outnumber the women at the national, regional, and sub-regional workshops. For example, three women of thirty-five government participants attended the Fiji national assessment in June 1999—one in health services, one in social services, and one meteorologist. Two of these areas are more traditional fields for women, and only one from the sciences. Then, at the regional workshop, two women climatologists from the same country participated, but all of the other managers were men. The indication from these experiences is that women do not receive as much information about the hazards and opportunities to mitigate impacts.

Given the disparity in gender representation for education about the hazards and in the planning processes for disaster management and hazard mitigation, it seems that overall disaster management would be improved by increased participation from women within the planning processes. We will not continue to have the successes seen in the 1997-98 ENSO warm event if we continue to ignore half of the population of the islands. Attention to gender roles and information needs must be better incorporated into disaster management strategies.

**Enrique Gomáriz, *Fundación Género y Sociedad (GESO)*, Costa Rica  
“Gender Analysis of the Disaster Caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America”**

The Foundation did a gender analysis of Hurricane Mitch sponsored by the *Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)*. It provides the only gender breakdown of data collected. In most cases the collection of gender-related information was not deemed a priority in the emergency. To not include a breakdown of data by sex is an institutional decision. Organizations did not have gender information when they made the disaster-related decisions nor was it incorporated into aid. In the countries with breakdowns by sex, there is coinciding information indicating that the majority of deaths were men (54% in Nicaragua and 57% in El Salvador). The explanation given is that men **stayed** in their homes trying to save tools and animals from both flooding and pillaging. In some cases men's rash behavior translated into human losses. The majority of the disappeared are believed to be men who did not reach shelters and perished in their homes or emigrated to other countries after impact. Men's gender-specific activities included watching over family and community belongings, search and rescue, transfer of the injured, opening roadways and clearing rubble. Women's activities more typically included protecting children, caring for the injured, setting up shelters, preparing and distributing food, giving out information, and caring for family and community needs. Female vulnerability was increased by their not being familiar with how to escape from the water, including climbing to trees and rooftops. Their restricted autonomy meant they could not leave the home for biological, reproductive and cultural reasons. Women's organizations said they did not make a strategic response (in the sense that

they react with punctual actions and with discussion with the national authorities about the management of disasters). There was a weakness in coordination between organizations. Some women's organizations worked at the local level by helping at shelters where they had previous experience. [Note: Copies of the slides from Gomáriz's presentation are available on the GDN and LSBR websites.]

**Vishaka Hidellage, *Duryog Nivaran - Intermediate Technology Development Group* (Sri Lanka), South Asia**

In India and Pakistan, poverty is the main problem. Illiteracy is also high, with up to 76-80% of women being illiterate. Women are not landowners and live in disaster-prone areas if they do own property. There are cultural barriers to participating in the labor market. Women are four times more likely to die in low-income countries (an International Red Cross statistic). Capacity-building must include increasing literacy, improving mobility problems, and attending to female-headed households. In a study in Bangladesh (Kafir), the Shariah law was used to take land from women when the men died after disaster. Women, when hearing cyclone warnings, take the children and search for shelter -- and there are reports of women being raped en route to shelter, a double-edged vulnerability. Some are prevented from going to shelters. In a case study of Pakistani river floods, women often lost the jewelry from their dowry which meant they could not marry. A recent story told of a man who sold his 15-year-old daughter to buy food for the men. Another told of only women and children left in some villages after disaster. Women will bond in a situation like this in order to rebuild their lives without the men but they have little access to resources. In India, the caste situation means that some women are more vulnerable than others. For example, higher castes have more right to water. The fundamental issue is poverty, and women are more likely to be poor.

**Discussant: Walter Gillis Peacock, *International Hurricane Center, Florida International University, United States***

We need to continue to link development and disasters. "Developed" should be redefined to mean that we have reduced vulnerability. We need to attend to the cultural, economic and social roots of vulnerability. We need a revolutionary shift and alteration of deep and fundamental biases. We should acknowledge that matrilineal structures are a resource and part of the solution. We should think about what would a society look like that gives voice to everyone.