GROOTS International

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LEADING RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S PRIORITIES, PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS

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This publication is a joint effort of GROOTS International, Northumbria University School of the Built and Natural Environment and the United Nations Development Programme.

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Photography: Field images from the GROOTS network, with additional contributions by IRIN/Pierre Holtz (p. 23) and UN Photo: Sarah Hunter (p. 2), Sophia Paris (p. 5), WFP/Amjad Jamal (p. 8), Jean Pierre Laffont (p.17), Shehzad Noorani (p. 18), Evan Schneider (p. 21), Christopher Herwig (p. 26) and M. Wild (p. 77)

Production: Consolidated Graphics (OH, cgx.com)

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FOREWORD

Women living in poor communities are consistently identified as one of the groups most vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change. Their meagre asset base, social marginalization, lack of mobility and exclusion from decision-making processes compound the vulnerabilities they experience. It is important to recognize that women's vulnerabilities are embedded in social, economic and political processes—and the development gaps that reproduce them. However, development processes can empower grassroots women to transform the living conditions of their families and communities and to reverse these vulnerabilities.

In the policy world, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and poverty reduction are each advancing within their own area. This publication shows how for grassroots women, building resilience to disaster and climate change is inextricably linked to advancing development priorities. It explores the links between disasters, development, poverty and gender-based inequality. This analysis is supported by a set of case studies in which grassroots women's organizations working in disaster-struck communities have demonstrated their leadership in securing resource sets in order to address their communities' most pressing development concerns. In doing so, grassroots women are simultaneously improving their everyday living conditions and empowering themselves to be leaders and drivers of development processes that will help overcome the factors that contribute to women's vulnerabilities.

This booklet distinguishes itself from others in the field by incorporating these development initiatives into disaster risk reduction discussions—a connection rarely made in development literature. Furthermore, it offers an atypical perspective on grassroots women as leaders and active agents of strategies that advance disaster risk reduction and long-term resilience.

Practitioners, policy makers and academics can use this publication to support their efforts to invest in grassroots women's active engagement in building resilience—resilience that both empowers grassroots women and benefits communities that are vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change.

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February 2011

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The women whose works are presented in this publication are teachers, trainers, resource-persons and leaders—disaster recovery and development efforts should not reduce them to mere victims. Disaster and development professionals, researchers, scholars and organizations partnering with grassroots women can use these case studies as examples, for ideas or for advocacy efforts.

This publication—firmly grounded in the research and practices of its contributors—is a practical source document of ideas for readers studying and working on resilience issues. In presenting a set of grassroots women's development innovations that build community resilience (and a framework in which to view these innovations), it celebrates women's inventiveness as they struggle to support and feed their families, find and maintain livelihoods, and make their voices heard as they survive and cope with disasters.

The women's groups and collectives described in this publication are grassroots women's groups. 'Grassroots women' are women who live and work in poor and low-income communities, who are economically, socially and politically marginalized and whose survival and everyday lives are directly affected by natural hazards and climate change.

Part I presents a framework through which to view grassroots women's resilience-building activities, illustrating the multiple entry points through which grassroots women approach resilience-building.

Part II presents select case studies that demonstrate the breadth and reach of resilience-building strategies led by grassroots women's organizations. These examples, viewed through a sustainable livelihoods lens, represent a diverse range of themes and groups at different stages of their evolution. Some organizations are mature, with widespread robust networks of women's groups that span multiple cities or provinces; other groups are smaller, nascent and fragile. A commonality among all the groups is that they are organized to collectively secure a range of resources and relationships that cushion their communities from the shocks and stresses of disaster.

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PART I

GENDER, DISASTER AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

INTRODUCTION

It is critical to think of disaster risk reduction in terms of grassroots women-led development. This booklet presents a sampling of grassroots women's work to build their communities' resilience in the face of natural and man-made disasters.[1] Typically, poor women are the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of at-risk populations—vulnerability and marginalization that often increases in the wake of disaster. This is not a natural process. Women's vulnerabilities are socially, not biologically, constructed, and are embedded in social, economic and political processes.

Development programmes and policies that transform social, economic and political processes can reduce grassroots women's vulnerabilities to disasters and climate change effects. In addition, when grassroots women fill public roles in the context of disaster risk reduction, recovery and reconstruction, they are perceived as key stakeholders in development processes.

This publication will enrich understanding of the critical linkages among disaster, development, poverty and gender-based inequality. It presents case studies of grassroots women's organizations that work in disaster-prone communities and have demonstrated leadership in securing resource sets to address their communities' pressing development concerns. These organization have not only improved living conditions, but have also reconfigured relationships among actors and institutions such as families, communities, and local and national governments. These outcomes have reduced women's vulnerability to disasters and climate change.

This section begins by exploring the context of increasing occurrences of disaster and the future risks from climate change, followed by a brief overview of community resilience. It then examines how disaster risk reduction differs from traditional disaster management approaches and uses the Pressure and Release model to illustrate the root causes of disaster and climate change vulnerabilities. It discusses how

1. 'Grassroots women' refers to more than women in general. 'Grassroots women' is used in this publication to refer to low-income and poor women, living most often in economically, socially and politically marginalized communities. They are among those most directly impacted by the problems of disaster and climate change.

Table 1: People killed and affected by disasters, 1989–2008, by region

Region	Killed	Affected
Africa	73,396	511,045,125
Americas	111,023	119,506,527
Asia	1,694,105	4,084,423,546
Europe	127,390	71,968,452

Table 2: People killed and affected by disasters in case-study countries, 1989–2008, by country

Country	Killed	Affected
Bolivia	1,426	2,311,113
Cameroon	1,169	415,775
Honduras	15,854	4,410,647
India	125,814	966,651,615
Philippines	26,998	78,143,893
Sri Lanka	36,901	11,494,702
Turkey	3,852	39,642,959

Tables 1 and 2 are adapted from International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 'World Disasters Report 2009', pp. 174–180. See www.ifrc.org/Docs/pubs/disasters/wdr2009/WDR2009-full.pdf.

disaster efforts tend to marginalize women and presents the sustainable livelihoods approach as a framework through which to view the case studies, using case study excerpts to illustrate grassroots women's ability to build each resource set. It concludes by drawing connections between disasters, resilience and grassroots women's development efforts.

THE INCREASE IN DISASTER OCCURRENCE AND RISK

In world disaster data analysed by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters comparing 1989–1998 to 1999–2008,[2] deaths from natural and technological disasters rose by 62 percent and the number of disaster-affected people rose by 26 percent. The increase in the percentage of deaths varies by region: 68 percent in Africa; 38 percent in the Americas; 52 percent in Asia; and 499 percent in Europe.[3] In Oceania, the percentage of deaths decreased by 76 percent.

In terms of scale, these numbers under-represent the extent and impact of disasters—the figures do not include the impacts of conflict-based disasters; data collection methodologies often exclude small-scale events that do not meet the criteria for being defined as a disaster;[4] and the difficulty of gathering data on disasters imposes a range of limitations. However, the data provides a picture of considerable distress across the globe and calls for an examination of the factors behind the number of vulnerable peoples and why their community resilience is low.

2. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters analysis is based on data from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 'World Disasters Report 2009'. Available at www.ifrc.org/Docs/pubs/disasters/wdr2009/WDR2009-full.pdf.

3. The extreme rise in Europe is due to large numbers of heatwave-related deaths.

4. See the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters' explanation of data collection reproduced in International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 'World Disasters Report 2009'. Available at www.ifrc.org/Docs/pubs/disasters/wdr2009/WDR2009-full.pdf.

DEFINING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Resilience is a community's capacity to organize itself in order to reduce the impacts of natural hazards and climate change by protecting resources such as lives, livelihoods, homes, assets, services, and infrastructure. Resilience includes a community's capacities to advance those development processes, social networks and institutional partnerships that strengthen its ability to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from disaster. Central to a grassroots women-friendly approach is the belief that vulnerability and resilience are shaped by the ability to claim rights, resources and decision-making power. In pre-disaster contexts, resilience includes proactive measures that reduce exposure, vulnerabilities and risks. In post-disaster contexts, resilience includes the ability to organize effective relief and recovery processes.

Community resilience depends on more than financial resources—resilience cannot simply be bought. Though technological and financial investments play an important role, an intangible resource—adaptability—is a critical factor in a community's ability to withstand disaster.

Poor women are experts in resilience. As the case studies will show, they are proficient in adapting to changing social and natural environments, organizing to collectively address problems, drawing on traditional knowledge and improvising skills to face difficulties. Though the enormity of the stresses and shocks often overwhelms their efforts, experience demonstrates that poverty and marginalization do not necessarily mean passivity in the face of disasters, extreme events or development challenges.

This publication will enrich understanding of the critical linkages among disaster, development, poverty and gender-based inequality.

DISASTER AND DEVELOPMENT DISCONNECTS

Formal disaster management is typically top-down, centrally controlled and male-dominated. It is often built on militaristic models that depend on inputs from domestic or external armies (particularly during the crisis phase of disaster) and on those with a military background for planning and implementation. It is also built on assumptions about social breakdown and crisis following disaster events, which demand externally imposed methods of command and control. These frequently overlook or ignore pre-existing grassroots social networks that are often led by and include women. These groups can deliver more appropriate, locally-informed responses without disrupting community structures that have worked during pre-disaster periods. However, a characteristic of the dominant forms of disaster management is that they regard disasters as externally generated, extreme or freak events, disconnected from everyday life and demanding extraordinary efforts to control. Though major disasters typically require external aid in order to cope, external aid should support—not replace—local practices.

Beyond the crisis phase, disaster reduction strategies typically consider matters such as carrying out hazard mapping, providing warning systems, building physical structures to withstand impacts and developing disaster-response capacities. This leads to the assumption that climate change vulnerability and disaster risk reduction are gender-neutral, technical issues that are unaffected by social relations.

The case studies in this publication demonstrate that many strategies are firmly based in development interventions, such as negotiating for housing, providing education and training, improving health, increasing access to credit and widening access to community enterprises. This suggests that development interventions can reduce disaster risk, which requires making the disaster-development connection clear. Making this connection is imperative because the root causes of disaster vulnerability lie in development setbacks, and effective solutions require reconfiguring social relations and securing equitable access to, and protection of, resources.

The Pressure and Release model provides an indication of the range of forces that create vulnerability to disasters. The majority of these pressures are in the traditional development domain.[5]

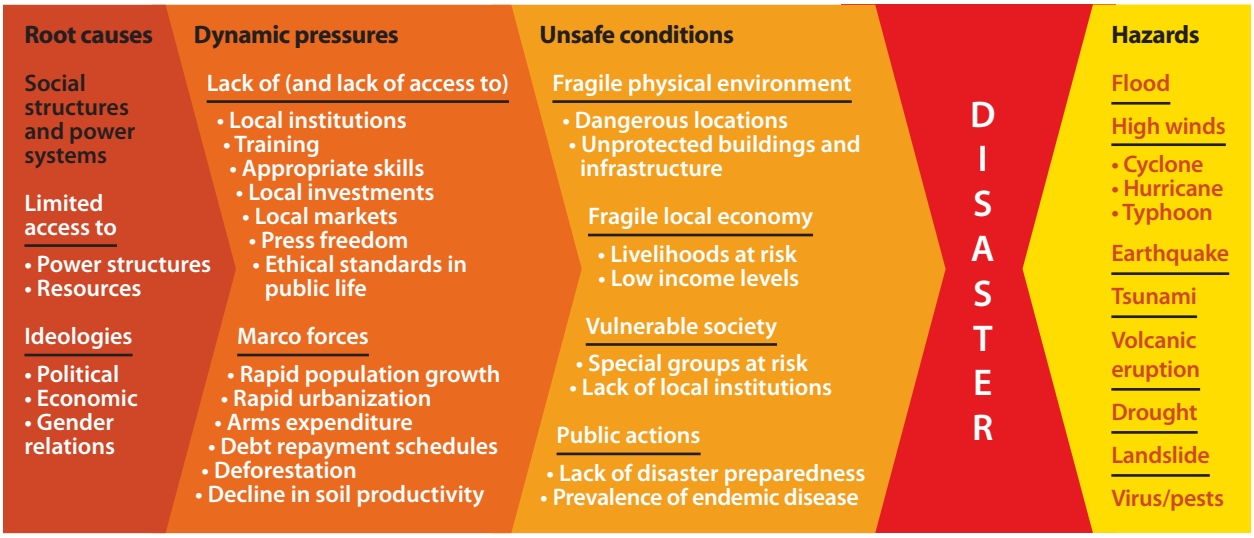
5. See Blaikie, P. Cannon T, Davis I and Wisner B. 1994. 'At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters'. Routledge, London, UK. See also Wisner, B., Blaikie, P., Cannon, T., and Davis, I. 2004 'At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters', 2nd edition. Routledge, London, UK.

The Pressure and Release model shows how underlying factors and root causes (e.g., inequitable power systems, gender relations and limited access to resources) that are embedded in everyday life give rise to dynamic pressures (e.g., rapid population growth or lack of access to institutions or training), which disproportionately affect particular social groups (such as women or girls). This leads to unsafe conditions (e.g., low income, unprotected buildings or lack of disaster preparedness). The crunch comes when these political, economic and social vulnerabilities coincide with a hazard-trigger event.

Being at risk of disaster requires both the hazard and the vulnerability factors, but for too long those working in disaster preparation and recovery field have focused only on dealing with the hazard element and the unsafe conditions of physical structures. Even when the Pressure and Release or similar model/world view is accepted, grassroots women are often left out of the equation—the concrete case study examples will help rectify that. Disaster risk reduction should embrace some of the more difficult and abstract components on the left side of the diagram. Disaster risk reduction should go beyond disaster management and its customary focus on reactive response characteristics to address the underlying causal factors of vulnerability or resilience.

Disaster risk reduction should be equally concerned with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)[6] and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[7] Being rescued from a collapsed home in an earthquake is important (HFA Priority Action 5), but overall recovery will be slow if survivors continue to live with poverty and hunger and women are denied equal employment opportunities (MDG 1). Having a warning system in place (HFA Priority Action 2) will not help women who do not have the education to read or understand warning information or who are not sufficiently empowered to act (MDG 3). Women's recovery from disasters cannot be complete if their reproductive health needs are not met (MDG 5), if their children continue to die from preventable diseases (MDG 4 and 6), if the environment in which they live is not sustainable (MDG 7), or if they are denied the opportunity to contribute equally to integrated disaster and development decision-making (HFA Priority Action 1).

Figure 1. Pressure and Release model



Adapted from: Blaikie et al 1994 and Wisner et al 2004, with thanks to Terry Cannon.

6. See www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.php?id=1217.

7. See www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

GENDER AND DISASTERS

Women and girls are invariably present in any checklist of people considered vulnerable during disaster situations. However, society, not biology, causes this. This publication emphasizes the linkages between disaster and development, and between women's social marginalization and their lack of choice and power to avoid harm. Development processes often place grassroots women at a disadvantage; yet development processes will ultimately engender resilience.

Disasters and climate change risks affect social groups in different ways and to different degrees. For example, extreme events may trigger migration from local communities and the country. Often, when livelihoods are destroyed and productive assets are eroded, it is men who migrate. This can increase remaining women's workloads as they struggle to add to their own tasks those that males of the family used to manage. Natural resource limitations arising from climate change may increase typical women's work (e.g., water and fuel wood collection will be more arduous; climate change may impact women's informal rights to resources).[8] However, the absence of men may also mean greater opportunities for women to step outside previously constrained gender roles and take on new livelihood prospects and more functions in the public domain.

Women and girls' position in disaster preparedness and relief contexts is limited. When they are mentioned at all, their specific vulnerabilities are identified but the social construction of their gendered susceptibility—unequal power relations and deeply embedded patriarchal structures—is often overlooked.

Though greater numbers of women die or are otherwise impacted in some disasters, this is not invariably the case. There are also cases where more men or boys die, sometimes because their social roles create greater risks due to risky behaviours or because they have become disconnected from society's protective mechanisms. Thus, women and girls are not inherently vulnerable; they are made so by inequitable social structures and gender-blind attitudes and behaviours.

8. See Canadian International Development Agency, 2007, 'Gender Equality and Climate Change: Why consider gender equality when taking action on climate change?', www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUImages/Climate%20change3/$file/Gender-2.pdf.

STRATEGIES FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION THROUGH GRASSROOTS WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT

The 2005 World Disaster Reduction Conference acknowledged that all disaster risk management policies, plans and processes should integrate a gender perspective.[9] However, practitioners often reject a specific focus on gender inequalities (in disaster response particularly) because of the "tyranny of the urgent,"[10] in which seemingly more urgent disaster needs take precedence. As a result, gender-neutral programmes often reproduce and perpetuate the gender biases at the root of women's marginalization. Women and girls' interests are unrecognized or intentionally ignored. When women's interests are recognized, the dominant approach tends to treat women as passive victims. Women and girls' more positive disaster and development roles are not recognized as relevant in this situation.

Disasters are not isolated in time; they do not just appear. They are constructed over many years and through many social, cultural, economic and political processes. This publication considers disaster, development and vulnerability reduction as an accumulated series of actions, inactions and events embedded within social and geographical contexts.

The experiences discussed are not short-term projects imposed from outside but works in progress. The initiatives presented in the case studies are the result of long-term interactions with locally-based grassroots organizations and their partners, including non-governmental organizations, development professionals, government institutions and networks of women's groups. The examples do not provide quick-fix solutions, as so many disaster and development projects often attempt.

The ongoing developmental process of disaster resilience-building is a strength of women's groups and the grassroots women-friendly approach. This is an important factor that should be incorporated and practiced in resilience-building and when assessing disaster-struck and disaster-prone communities. Working with both pre-existing and newly constituted grassroots women's groups will lead to greater successes.

Despite grassroots women's sustained efforts and accomplishments in undertaking development processes that reduce community vulnerability to disasters, their roles often remain unrecognized and their efforts are, for the most part, under-resourced. A recent survey by the Huairou Commission[11] of 23 grassroots women-focused organizations confirmed the active engagement of women in "monitoring and improving access to basic services; negotiating for safe and secure housing;

> "A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training."
>
> **Hyogo Framework for Action 2005—2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters**[9]

9. 'Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters', www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm.

10. Walker, B. 1996. 'Integrating gender into emergency responses'. *Development and Gender In Brief,* Issue 4, http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk//bridge/dgb4.html.

11. The Huairou Commission, founded at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995, is a coalition of seven women's networks and professional development workers. www.huairou.org. In addition to being the founding organization, GROOTS International is a member of the network.

Table 3: Differences between existing disaster risk reduction programmes and those based on grassroots women's realities and priorities

EXISTING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMMES	DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMMES BASED ON GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S REALITIES AND PRIORITIES
Grassroots women identified primarily as vulnerable groups. Classifies grassroots women as a vulnerable group and as victims, thus marginalizing them from decision-making and reproducing their vulnerabilities.	**Grassroots women identified as active agents of resilience.** Sees vulnerability as structural and seeks to redress it by positioning grassroots women as active agents of resilience by incorporating their knowledge, practices and networks into resilience programmes. Actions that support this perspective include: • Setting standards for engaging grassroots women's organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of risk reduction, relief, recovery, reconstruction and risk reduction programmes. • Formalizing public roles of grassroots women's groups in resilience programmes as information managers who can enable information flow between communities and authorities, and create a demand for resilience.
Organizing and advocacy as secondary to disaster-focused actions. Perceives grassroots organizing and engagement with decision makers as secondary to or separate from resilience-building activities, which are often narrowly defined.	**Organizing and advocacy as crucial for grassroots women to advance their priorities.** Perceives mechanisms for grassroots organizing and engagement with decision makers as crucial for advancing grassroots women's strategic resilience priorities.
Invest in physical resource base. Invests primarily in building, protecting and strengthening communities' physical resource base (e.g., housing and infrastructure).	**Investments in social and political resources as key to strengthening physical resource base.** Invests in strengthening grassroots women's leadership, organizations and institutional partnerships as key to building, protecting and strengthening communities' physical resource base.
Short-term action to protect existing resources. Focuses mainly on protecting resources through emergency preparedness, response and early warning programmes.	**Sustained long-term action to accumulate and protect resources.** Promotes strategies that bundle the accumulation of resources with the protection of resources through ongoing development initiatives, recognizing that the poor communities with limited resources are motivated to take sustained action that help them accumulate and protect their resources.
Resources and agenda-setting is with government. Resources flow primarily hrough governments or non-governmental organizations that set priorities for action at local levels.	**Resources are allocated to grassroots organization.** Allocates resources that go directly to grassroots women's organizations so that they act on local priorities, demonstrating their capacities to build resilient communities.

connecting families and communities to government entitlements and poverty reduction programmes; and pioneering sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management approaches."[12] However, it also identified women's feelings of disconnect to disaster risk reduction information, national-level initiatives and decision-making structures. This is despite the global disaster risk reduction policy agenda known as the Hyogo Framework for Action,[13] which explicitly recognizes the need to mainstream gender at all levels.

The action research found that emergency preparedness and response programmes often exclude women. It also identified variations in different stakeholders' definitions of disaster risk reduction. It is not always apparent to some disaster risk reduction stakeholders that when grassroots women's groups are developing livelihood enterprises, promoting food security or other similar initiatives, they are actually working to reduce disaster risk. In addition, when grassroots women organize and develop their human, social, financial and other assets, they are working to address not only their practical, disaster-related needs, but also their strategic, development-related interests. These processes are potentially transformative and not merely reactive. However, women's exclusion from preparedness and response programmes often means that grassroots women and their poverty-focused initiatives are excluded from decision-making processes.

12. The survey, undertaken in partnership with the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction, included 23 grassroots women's organizations from 13 countries. Over one thousand local stakeholders were consulted and 733 questionnaires were completed. 'Women's Views from the Frontline'. Huairou Commission. Available at: http://win.amarc.org/documents/Women_&_Disaster_Risk_Management.pdf

13. See www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo.

GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Poverty plays a decisive role in making communities vulnerable to disaster. Statistics suggest that most disasters happen in developing economies and to the poorest and most marginalized people in those economies, leaving them with little or no choice but to live in the most degraded and disaster-prone locations and with meager assets that impede their ability to cushion the impact of disasters.

Women and girls comprise most of the poor and marginalized. Therefore, in order to reduce disaster vulnerability, development must focus on poverty reduction and gender equality. Unfortunately, women and girls have fewer opportunities to participate as active agents in developmental change. Increasingly, women from poor communities may be seen as beneficiaries, but this can have unintended negative effects because engaging women primarily as victims excludes them from decision-making—thus perpetuating their vulnerabilities.

In contrast, the case studies presented illustrate the active public roles that grassroots women have undertaken in order to shape development processes that build community resilience. These case studies exemplify how disaster and development are inextricably intertwined. Development activities are key to disaster risk reduction—much more so than the obvious and typically reactive disaster-related actions. Providing food aid following a disaster will help keep people alive in the short term, but will do nothing to help their ongoing struggle for food security. In fact, food aid can exacerbate this fundamental problem by undermining local markets and producers and developing a culture of dependence.

The discussed activities fit well within a form of sustainable livelihoods approach,[14] in which disasters are recognized as stresses and shocks within livelihood development processes.

14. See: Eldis, Livelihoods Connect, http://www.eldis.org/go/livelihoods/; DFID's Livelihoods Resource Center, http://www.livelihoodsrc.org/; Poverty-Wellbeing Platform, 'Working with a Sustainable Livelihood Approach', http://www.poverty-wellbeing.net/media/sla/; Chambers, R. and Conway, G. R., 1992, 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century', Discussion Paper 296, Brighton, UK, Institute of Development Studies; Carney, D., 2003, 'Sustainable Livelihood Approaches: Progress and Possibilities for Change'' London, UK Department for International Development.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

"A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, without undermining the natural resource base."

Carney et al 1999, p.8.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches originate in critiques of dominant development discourses and practices that are based on externally imposed, top-down solutions that employ expert outsiders at the expense of indigenous knowledge and practices. Too often, local people were regarded as passive recipients of aid packages devised and delivered by others. Increasingly, participatory processes became more widespread and people's agency—their ability to change their individual and collective lives—was recognized as part of a more people-centred approach. Despite these more democratic principles, gender equity has taken longer to be included in this shift and is one of several identified gaps. Nevertheless, the sustainable livelihoods approach recognizes the many dimensions of poverty and the complexity of poverty-reduction strategies and suggests a more holistic vision.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches can refer to conceptual frameworks for analysis or, more negatively, to an overly managerialist, static set of principles. It is used here in its more positive sense, as an organizing framework to better view the many strategies used by grassroots women in both their discrete and connected forms. The discussion uses excerpts from the case studies to illustrate how grassroots women have made an impact in each of the five resource sets.[15]

The case studies explore how grassroots women in diverse settings have used a suite of strategies and practices to secure resources that advance their development and show that in practice, grassroots women's ability to claim and secure one resource set often is linked to their ability to access others.

Single strategies often contribute to building multiple resource sets. In practice, it is often difficult to disentangle resource sets from one another. It is this difficulty that illustrates the inter-connectedness among the resource sets and that makes the sustainable livelihoods approach a good fit with grassroots women's holistic, collective, multifaceted approaches to resilience.

15. For a detailed set of components, see Twigg, J., 2007, 'Characteristics of a Disaster-resilient Community: A Guidance Note', version 1 (for field testing), August, UK Department for International Development, Disaster Risk Reduction Interagency Coordination Group. Available at: www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=90.

> "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living."
>
> **Chambers and Conway 1992, p. 7.**

The sustainable livelihoods approach was based initially around five resource sets (also known as capitals or assets): human, social (and political), financial, natural and physical.[16] The five resource sets represent the assets and the relationships that represent the different dimensions of development and poverty reduction. The absence of these resource sets contributes to the vulnerability and marginalization of the poor. Natural disasters, climate change and other crises deplete the stocks of these assets, particularly where they are already meagre, thus further impoverishing and marginalizing already fragile populations.

Another critique of the sustainable livelihoods approach was that it frequently ignored or obscured gender. A fully gendered sustainable livelihoods approach would make women fully visible within their households and communities—without excluding men. This publication rebalances what is often a gender-blind story and shows women's leadership in disaster risk reduction.

16. For livelihoods descriptors, see UK Department for International Development, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets: Glossary', www.livelihoods.org/info/guidance_sheets_pdfs/sect8glo.pdf. Political capital descriptor based on the Poverty-Wellbeing Platform, 'Working with a Sustainable Livelihood Approach', http://www.poverty-wellbeing.net/media/sla/.

Figure 2. Sustainable livelihoods and disaster-resilient communities

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS RESOURCES

Human resources

These are fundamental building blocks: without them, it is difficult to make use of the other resource sets. The case studies provide examples of women:

- **Ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods;**
- **Promoting health and access to health care;**
- **Managing information;**
- **Taking part in knowledge exchange/transfer and consolidation;**
- **Using and reviving indigenous knowledge;**
- **Employing social investigation and research;**
- **Providing grassroots women-led learning exchanges and transfer of practices;**
- **Producing grassroots women-led monitoring and evaluation;**
- **Mapping and contingency planning; and**
- **Engaging in personal development and building of self-esteem.**

Mapping risk and vulnerability as part of grassroots-led disaster risk reduction in Honduras

The leaders of Comité de Emergencia Garifuna of Honduras—themselves trained in vulnerability and capacity mapping by grassroots women in Jamaica—transferred this skill to 60 more trainers in five Garifuna communities to carry out mapping exercises in their communities. They are able to analyse risks, vulnerabilities and capacities, and are able to collectively strategize how to advocate for development projects, policies and programmes that will reduce communities' vulnerabilities.

For further information, see case study 1: Securing food, livelihoods and influencing development after hurricane Mitch.

Improving access to health services in tsunami-hit districts of Tamil Nadu

After the Indian Ocean Tsunami, grassroots women in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, India found that communities were incurring high health costs because they were using private clinics instead of the government's network of primary health centres. This led to women mobilizing to form ASHAA[17] groups focused on improving community health and access to health services. The groups later worked with the government to monitor the functioning of primary health centres, helped primary health centre nurses identify sick people in the villages, and collaborated with the centres to prevent epidemics.

For further information, see case study 2: Closing the health gap in tsunami-hit districts of Tamil Nadu.

Using indigenous early warning and response systems to protect crops in Bolivia

In Bolivia, Aymara women are drawing on their indigenous knowledge and culture to protect crops that are vulnerable to frosts and hailstorm damage. Once the signs of frost are seen, the communities attempt to protect crops from freezing temperatures by burning fields, firewood and green herbs to create heat.

For further information, see case study 4: Using indigenous knowledge and culture to protect Aymara livelihoods in Bolivia.

Women as community information managers in post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction in Turkey

After the Marmara earthquake in Turkey, the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work supported grassroots women to create multi-purpose women and children's centres. In managing these centres, women took on a new role: that of community information managers. Women organized community meetings and door-to-door surveys to gather information on women's needs during different stages of the post-disaster recovery process.

For further information, see case study 5: Centres for women and children: Sustaining women's leadership in relief, recovery, reconstruction and development.

17. *Ashaa* means 'hope' in several Indian languages. The acronym ASHAA stands for Arogya Sakhis for Health Awareness and Action. These groups are also referred to by Swayam Shikshan Prayog as health governance groups.

Social and political resources

Social and political resources include informal networks, memberships within formalized groups, relationships of trust that facilitate cooperation, and the power and capacity to participate in, access or influence formal and informal political decision-making and processes.

Social resources in the form of organized grassroots women's groups and networks are vital to grassroots women's abilities to impact institutions and access resources. Anne Marie Goetz argues that women's political effectiveness depends upon the nature of their engagement with a range of institutions in society.[18] Women must progress beyond simple access to institutions and seek a more transformative relationship of power sharing. Grassroots women are building and securing these resources by:

- **Organizing communities and networks;**
- **Building alliances, networking and creating partnerships for disaster risk reduction;**
- **Fostering good governance; and**
- **Enabling equitable access to community decision-making and leadership.**

Partnering with the government to improve access to health services in the tsunami-hit Districts of Tamil Nadu

ASHAA leaders educated communities on entitlements, identified eligible persons and supported them to process their applications to government programmes. By cultivating relationships with the elected panchayat (village council) members, ASHAA health group leaders are able to regularly use the village assembly, or Gram Sabhas, to brief communities on activities and government programmes, to educate the village on health and sanitation, and to build demand for government health and sanitation programmes.

For further information, see case study 1: Securing food, livelihoods and influencing development after hurricane Mitch.

Pressing government for livelihoods options for relocated communities in metro Manila

In response to the demolitions and resettlements resulting from a government flood control project in the Philippines, the Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api, a network of 95 community-based organizations in Metro Manila, organized to identify the responsible institutions. The organization used mass mobilizations and protests to target these institutions, ultimately negotiating a settlement to support income and livelihoods for 3,500 relocated families.

For further information, see case study 3: Securing housing and livelihoods for the urban poor in Metro Manila.

Promoting indigenous women's resilience priorities through negotiations with local authorities in Bolivia

Centro de Mujeres Candelaria helped Aymara women negotiate with local schools to make sure their children learn and appreciate their indigenous knowledge and culture, vital to preparing for harsh weather conditions and preventing the destruction of crops and animals. Centro de Mujeres Candelaria also secured the appointment of indigenous women leaders to the Permanent Forum of Aymara Women and negotiated with local governments to improve infrastructure.

For further information, see case study 4: Using indigenous knowledge and culture to protect Aymara livelihoods in Bolivia.

18. Goetz, A. M., 2002, 'Women's Political Effectiveness—A Conceptual Framework', Chapter 2 in *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policymaking*, Zed Books.

Financial resources

Financial resources are critical for initiating, diversifying and restoring livelihoods. The case studies provide examples of strategies used by grassroots women to access and accumulate financial resources by:

- **Building financial capital assets;**
- **Providing access to credit and markets;**
- **Influencing governments to allocate community funds and budgets;**
- **Forming savings and credit groups, cooperatives and federations to provide community financial services; and**
- **Developing housing and community infrastructure finance options.**

Community enterprise to provide incomes for women and their centres in Turkey

In the earthquake-hit Marmara region of Turkey, grassroots women created women and children's centres to provide childcare and preschool services, and for individual and collective enterprise activities. Some centres were able to get local and municipal authorities to pay for fuel, supplies and food, some women's groups were awarded contracts to provide lunches to construction workers and catering services for events at government agencies, and some centres were able to raise monies through collective income-generating and fund-raising events. Approximately 2,000 women became economically active and explored new job opportunities and small business potential in their settlements and provinces.

For further information, see case study 5: Centres for women and children: Sustaining women's leadership in relief, recovery, reconstruction and development.

Improving access to emergency and income generating loans in Cameroon

The Ntankah women's group has a revolving loan fund that provides micro-loans to its members to start their own businesses and become self-sufficient, to pay for school fees or to enrol in training programmes. Income-generating activities include organic soap and palm oil production, raising and selling chickens, and baking and selling pastries. In addition, the group also provides emergency loans that can be used for a range of purposes, including buying food, medicines, transport to hospitals, funerals or legal fees.

For further information, see case study 6: Organizing women to protect natural resources.

Financing livelihoods in drought-prone areas of Tamil Nadu, India

Rural women in the drought-prone areas of Tamil Nadu organized self-help groups of 12–20 women in which women saved and pooled their monies to create a group fund. The self-help groups were later federated to aggregate the financial power of the individual groups. Self-help groups provided crisis credit for food, travel, house repair, medical expenses and loans for investing in small businesses. Over the past 10 years, these groups have saved approximately Rs 0.6 million and taken loans amounting to Rs 40 million—95 percent of which have been repaid.

For further information, see case study 8: Taking on moneylenders, middlemen and markets through community enterprise.

Natural resources

Natural resources include protection and development of land, soil, water, forests and fisheries. Several rural grassroots women's groups whose sustenance depends on natural resources are involved in:

- **Conserving natural resources and protecting biodiversity;**
- **Practising sustainable agriculture;**
- **Promoting indigenous food crops; and**
- **Preventing practices that deplete natural resources.**

Protecting biodiversity for food security in hurricane-affected Honduras

After Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, the Comité de Emergencia Garifuna ensured livelihoods and food security by reviving and improving the production of the manioc root, plantain, and traditional root crops that had been ignored by previous development and relief efforts. Further, it encouraged traditional methods of soil conservation, conducted training in organic composting and pesticides, pioneered the provision of grafted fruit trees in their coastal communities, explored new strategies to sell surplus, and built the first Garifuna farmers' market.

For further information, see case study 1: Securing food, livelihoods and influencing development after hurricane Mitch.

Regenerating soil and curbing shifting cultivation in Cameroon

The Ntankah's Village Women's Group developed an environmental protection and livelihoods initiative involving over 300 women to curb the practice of shifting cultivation agriculture. About 150 women have been taught sustainable agricultural practices and soil fertility management techniques such as proper land preparation, seed selection, and the importance of agroforestry. The training included the importance of integrating leguminous (nitrogen-fixing) trees into the farming system, trees for use as windbreaks and forage materials for small ruminants (an essential livestock).

For further information, see case study 6: Organizing women to protect natural resources.

Protecting medicinal plants to sustain livelihoods and biodiversity

Grassroots women's federations linked with the Covenant Center for Development in Tamil Nadu, India are part of a community-owned enterprise that gathers and markets medicinal plants. Aware that too much competition can result in overharvesting and depletion of local plant stocks, gatherer groups keep records of their harvest practices (also necessary for eco-friendly collection practices certification). Women are also actively involved in forest protection committees, promoting the sustainable harvest of forest products such as medicinal plants, edible fruits, gum, resins, nuts, and wild honey.

For further information, see case study 8: Taking on moneylenders, middlemen and markets through community enterprise.

Physical resources

Poor communities are usually characterized by the absence of physical resources such as roads, water supply, sanitation systems and decent housing. Usually, accessing these resources is associated with men and institutional actors. However, the case studies show how grassroots women have organized several initiatives to improve their physical environments. Their efforts include:

- **Improving water and sanitation;**
- **Securing housing and shelter;**
- **Accessing community tools and equipment; and**
- **Building community resource centres and women- and child-friendly spaces.**

Restoring and upgrading buildings in hurricane-hit Honduras

In Honduras, Garifuna women from the Comité de Emergencia Garifuna de Honduras arranged for the repair of hundreds of houses, businesses, and public buildings and supported a process in which women were empowered and trained in non-traditional work. In addition, the Comité has made a practice of buying land for relocating housing to safer areas, thus enabling the poorest families to participate in reconstruction processes.

For further information, see case study 1: Securing food, livelihoods and influencing development after hurricane Mitch.

Securing tenure for the urban poor in Metro Manila

In Metro Manila, a federation of grassroots organizations enhanced informal settlements' resilience to disasters by helping them gain security of tenure through low-interest mortgages for land purchases and improvements. One member organization was able to negotiate a community mortgage with the Quezon City Local Government, in which it acquired a large plot of land capable of housing 95 families.

For further information, see case study 3: Securing housing and livelihoods for the urban poor in Metro Manila.

Developing housing solutions for renters during recovery and reconstruction in Turkey

A women's cooperative in Turkey negotiated with the government to secure housing for renters in some of the temporary settlements, and began monitoring social and infrastructure services provision in the new permanent settlements. The renters established four women's housing cooperatives, intending to leverage housing loans with assets they created through savings groups. Land was eventually obtained, upon which 50 houses were constructed.

For further information, see case study 5: Centres for women and children: Sustaining women's leadership in relief, recovery, reconstruction and development.

Creating women's resource centres in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, Viru Vanitha replaced two small, underused community buildings in poor condition. The new centres are managed by women's associations and provide office space for the Women's Bank and the women's associations, and space for safe places for women, a focal point for their organizing and information exchange, for training and education activities and for social activities during festivals and holidays.

For further information, see case study 7: Making space for grassroots women-led development.

FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY

INSIGHTS

- The Pressure and Release model shows that disaster vulnerability is rooted in social structures and systems that reproduce exclusive access to power and resources. The sustainable livelihoods approach demonstrates that poverty and vulnerability are multidimensional, as are disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction and resilient development. The different resource sets or assets that represent this multidimensionality do not function in isolation, but work together to collectively reduce the impact of disasters or climate change.

  In practice, it is difficult to disentangle these elements and gauge their individual effectiveness in advancing resilience. Similarly, in the case studies presented, grassroots women's ability to secure physical, financial and natural resources are inextricably tied to their ability to build their human, social and political resource base.

- Conventional disaster management approaches see grassroots women as vulnerable groups rather than as agents of change and resilience. However, women strive to reduce risk and vulnerability of poor communities in disaster-prone areas by accumulating, building, renewing and protecting the community resource base. The case studies illustrate how grassroots women successfully used a variety of innovative development efforts to steadily build a strong resource base. These resources—physical structures, social networks and financial assets—are those that poor communities draw upon to reduce their disaster vulnerability.

- Active engagement in community problem-solving enables grassroots women to undertake public decision-making roles. These public roles reposition grassroots

women in the eyes of their families, communities and decision-making bodies. This in turn enables grassroots women to claim power and resources that contribute not only to building resilient communities, but also to sustaining their involvement in long-term development.

- Resilience pertains to the ability to anticipate, reduce, and recover from the impacts of disaster by protecting and strengthening the assets and relationships of communities. Given that the poor have a meagre resource base to begin with, and that women are typically among the worst-off in already marginalized communities, any endeavour to craft a socially just and effective community resilience and disaster risk reduction strategy must engage, learn from and support the efforts of grassroots women and their communities. Achieving disaster resilience depends on more than just managing hazards and disasters—it depends on development that is inclusive, equitable and socially just. Thus, grassroots women's leadership in community-based actions, projects and enterprises is a step towards disaster risk reduction strategies that redress women's marginalization while addressing their communities' most pressing practical needs.

- Grassroots women living in poor communities and working on development issues rarely label their efforts to accumulate and protect resources or claim power as reducing disaster risk or vulnerability. Nevertheless, when these sustained actions are undertaken in disaster-prone communities it becomes clear that development actions to accumulate and protect human, social, political, natural, financial and physical resources are indeed actions that reduce vulnerability to disasters and climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING PRO-POOR, GENDER-EQUITABLE RESILIENCE PROGRAMMES

In general, institutions neither recognize nor resource grassroots women's efforts to strengthen their families' and communities' capacities to cope with disaster. Grassroots women undertake public roles that reduce disasters' impacts by advancing development, accelerating community recovery and ensuring sustained community participation in reconstruction and development. These roles include organizing and mobilizing communities to build up their resource base. Examples of public roles played by communities to build their community resource base include: organizing and negotiating with decision makers to ensure food security; monitoring delivery of health services, secure housing and safe shelters; improving community access to water and sanitation; negotiating market access; and demanding greater accountability from government on behalf of their communities.

The following are ways in which institutional actors can resource and recognize grassroots women's public roles and thus promote a pro-poor gender-equitable approach to resilience.

1. Put funds in the hands of grassroots women's organizations to drive the demand for resilience

Directly channelling funds to grassroots women's organizations enables them to demonstrate their capacities to handle money, to initiate actions that advance community resilience and to create wide learning and action networks that create a demand for resilience programmes and policies. This counters the dominant model of funding in which funds go to national governments who then set the priorities for resilience programmes at the local level. Frequently, these priorities are disconnected from the priorities and concerns of local communities. GROOTS International, along with the Huairou Commission, initiated the Community Disaster Resilience Fund through which a series of grassroots-led demonstrations are being funded in the Latin American, Caribbean and Asian regions. These demonstrations are located within learning and action networks through which practices can be transferred and scaled-up. The demonstrations include grassroots initiatives to partner with local and national governments.

2. Invest in grassroots women's leadership and organizations for long-term change

The economic, social and political vulnerabilities of communities living in poverty can only be reduced through sustained, long-term change. Women need their own organizations and leadership to sustain their new public roles, influence decision-making and bring about lasting change in their communities. Empowering grassroots women is central to their ability to build the resource base and the relationships required to withstand the adverse effects of disasters and climate change.

3. Empower grassroots women to negotiate and partner with government and local authorities

Grassroots women's exclusion from decision-making is a factor that significantly contributes to their vulnerability. Furthermore, their absence from decision-making processes reproduces their status as victims. This exclusion is one of the reasons for the disconnect between development and disaster risk reduction programmes and grassroots women's priorities. Grassroots women's ability to influence decision makers not only serves to increase accountability and responsiveness to women and their communities, but is also critical for mainstreaming and scaling up grassroots-led practices through collaborative efforts. A key strategy for redressing grassroots women's exclusion from decision-making is to facilitate the development of local platforms and partnerships through which grassroots women can dialogue, negotiate and collaborate with local authorities to institutionalize effective grassroots-led practices.

4. Enable grassroots women's organizations to manage information

Supporting grassroots women's participation in programmes means assigning them clear roles in government or non-governmental organization programmes. One of the roles that women have successfully undertaken is that of information managers. In mapping and surveying their communities, grassroots women have played the role of information gatherers and disseminators, using collective information to negotiate for resources and improve access to services and infrastructure. As community information managers, grassroots women can also convey to their communities information about entitlements, government programmes and policies.

5. Appoint grassroots women leaders to monitor and evaluate development and disaster reduction programmes

Getting grassroots women to monitor recovery, risk reduction and development initiatives is an effective strategy that benefits both grassroots women and governments. Appointing grassroots women as monitors repositions them in the eyes of their families and communities, and ensures that government or non-governmental organization programmes are well informed of community needs, priorities and problems. Grassroots women's involvement in monitoring and evaluating programmes has effectively provided feedback to government and local authorities on what does and does not work for the community.

6. Resource peer exchanges through which grassroots leaders can transfer and scale up effective community resilience practices

Grassroots women's expertise must be reinforced through peer learning exchanges in order to transfer their practices to other risk-prone communities. Experienced grassroots leaders who have mastered practices know how these practices can be applied in other disaster-affected or disaster-prone communities. Peer learning exchanges are powerful collaborative learning tools that support the rapid transfer of knowledge and practices and reaffirm grassroots leadership, knowledge and experience.

Today, the GROOTS International network has over 350 grassroots resource persons who can transfer knowledge and practices and who can mentor their peers on how to cope with disasters, what to expect, and how to navigate protracted recovery and reconstruction processes. These grassroots resource persons have expertise in a variety of areas, including mapping risk in their communities, restoring agriculture, securing food and shelter, and accessing credit and markets.

7. Provide multi-purpose spaces for women and children

For grassroots women to empower themselves to take action, they need safe physical spaces in which they can organize and in which they can ensure their children's safety. Regular gatherings of women are usually the first step towards organizing collective action. The experiences of Foundation for the Support of Women's Work in Turkey, which pioneered the use of safe spaces for organizing women in the context of disaster response and recovery, have demonstrated ways in which Centres for Women and Children can respond to a range of needs as response, recovery and reconstruction processes unfold. Centres can be used as safe spaces for social support, income generation and childcare, and can also be used for collecting and disseminating information and negotiating with officials.

Grassroots women undertake public roles that reduce disasters' impacts by advancing development, accelerating community recovery and ensuring sustained community participation in reconstruction and development.

PART II

BULDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

SECURING FOOD, LIVELIHOODS AND INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENT AFTER HURRICANE MITCH

Comité de Emergencia Garifuna – Honduras ■ **SUZANNE SHENDE AND ANALUCY BENGOCHEA**

After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, governments and large non-governmental organizations did not meet the needs of the marginalized, Afro-indigenous Garifuna community located on the Caribbean coast of Honduras. To fill this gap, the Comité de Emergencia Garifuna[19] organized themselves. Listening to community priorities, this grassroots, women-led organization focused on livelihoods, natural resources and food crops in order to fully recover and to protect Garifuna communities from future disasters. Combining indigenous Garifuna practices and wisdom with scientific knowledge, Comité organized seed banks for food security and livelihoods, planted fruit trees to limit erosion of coastal areas and helped relocate communities from high-risk areas. The strong leadership demonstrated by grassroots women leaders, combined with effective practices and partnerships with regional and international networks, earned Comité legitimacy and support from policy institutions and recognition from other community-based organizations interested in learning from their practices.

BACKGROUND

The Comité de Emergencia Garifuna de Honduras, a community-based, non-governmental organization of the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna,[20] came together in the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. They were driven to do so not only by the suffering inflicted on the region's poor communities, but also by the inequalities that they witnessed in the human response to the disaster. The loss of lives, crops, and infrastructure in their marginalized communities were multiplied by the neglect, ignorance, corruption and inaction of authorities and the powerful elite.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Forming women-led organizations and networks

The activists initially came together in Trujillo, Colón in order to coordinate community response and relief efforts. These efforts included people organizing to clean debris and provide food, shelter and clothing to their neighbours and nearby towns. As news of their activities spread, Comité became a source of information and a reliable local partner for the fair and transparent distribution of donations. Within its organizing strategy, Comité adhered to the principle in which those actively working on the ground—feeding the hungry and caring for the displaced—would be involved in decision-making processes. Thus women, who were the majority of first responders, emerged as the majority in the formal decision-making structures of the Comité.

As the organization obtained more resources, it expanded its work to other coastal towns affected by the disaster. Comité leaders reached out to existing community networks, such as neighbourhood groups (*patronatos*), water collectives and youth sports teams, making sure to include associations and clubs in which women were dominant members (e.g., cultural dance groups, teachers, health volunteers, midwives, and church groups).

19. Garifuna Emergency Committee of Honduras.

20. For background information on the Garifuna and their struggle, see Ryan, R., 2008, www.rightsaction.org/articles/honduras_garifuna_032808.html.

Restoring agriculture and reviving indigenous crops

As communities began using received materials to rebuild houses and repair small businesses, people were emphatic that they could not live on donations forever—they were eager to restore their farms and put their own food on the table. The first step towards these goals was to replace the agricultural tools required for cultivating land. As there were not enough resources for each farmer to have her own set of agricultural tools, Comité provided a set of tools to each village to share. Each village then elected a group of farmers to form tool banks to organize the sharing of the tools. Women's numbers as the majority of small-scale farmers in the Garifuna community was reflected in tool bank membership.

All the work of Comité was driven, implemented and monitored by the communities themselves. While not every initiative was successful, community control allowed for quick evaluation and modification of ideas that were not working.

The Comité made available seeds and saplings to replant basic Garifuna food crops. Seed banks systematically preserved the diversity of traditional root crops, plantains and other crops vital to livelihoods and food security.[21]

The Garifuna revived basic sustenance crops (e.g., manioc root, plantain, and traditional root crops) that had been given attention by national and international development programmes and relief efforts after the hurricane. The Comité combined ancestral wisdom with modern agronomists' knowledge to improve production. It encouraged traditional methods of soil conservation, but also conducted training in organic composting and pesticides. The cultivation of crops that were becoming scarce (e.g., taro root, red grow yam, sweet potato and ginger) was restored, and the Comité pioneered the provision of grafted fruit trees in their coastal communities. Improved production motivated Comité members to explore new strategies to sell their surplus, and so the Comité negotiated for space to build and open the first Garifuna farmers' market.

21. Seed banks are nurseries in areas protected from floods and hurricanes. The banks have a variety of seeds and cuttings available for replanting in the event of weather disasters, pests, or scarcity.

Participating in house construction

In restoring infrastructure after Hurricane Mitch, Comité built 13 houses from the ground up and repaired hundreds of buildings, houses, small businesses, schools, community centres and traditional women's dance clubs. In addition to the physical structures left behind, the participatory construction processes empowered and trained women. In an area in which 200 families were relocated, other donors required monetary contributions (in addition to labour) in order to obtain houses. However, the Comité ensured that the 60 poorest families were able to benefit from this.

Comité raised funds so that a community located in one of the most vulnerable, low-lying areas of Honduras could buy land to relocate itself. This land provided space to construct 190 houses. Though all the materials had to be ferried over by boat, united community action successfully finished building the houses, and the community has been able to move out of the path of the deadly river and sea. However, the resettled community continues to press for a range of services, including the completion of a road to make the new town accessible by land.

Preserving indigenous culture and natural resources

The organization responded to the need for the sustainable use of natural resources—vital to the survival of the Garifuna people—by incorporating reforestation, the cultivation of medicinal and artisanal plants, collaborating with schools to replant wild fruit trees along the coast to prevent erosion and sand invasion, and identifying ways to reduce community vulnerability to future disasters. For example, the use of mechanical grinders will allow women to get manioc root out of the ground in quantity when there is flooding and process it into casave, a long-lasting dry bread—effectively reviving a traditional food crop through technology introduced to secure food in the event of floods.

Demanding government accountability

While the Comité saw its greatest successes in its work in the Garifuna communities, the organization has also engaged the government in order to advance its development work and to protest against the injustices and corruption that impede marginalized communities' development. Efforts have included supporting community protests on behalf of farmers whose water supply was contaminated by the construction of an illegal highway. Unfortunately, while local authorities came out in support of the Comité, they did not have the power to rein in the wealthy cattle ranchers who continued to benefit from the road and keep it open through substantial financial resources and threats of violence.

The Comité has also been an advocacy partner to Garifuna communities, particularly with regard to land rights, which are critical to the recovery of agricultural livelihoods after a disaster. This has meant opposing certain national legislation and international agency programmes, which threaten to erode land rights or Garifuna control over resources obtained from their ancestral lands. The Comité has won significant battles through national and international alliances, but not without losing some leaders to violent assassination. This struggle for land continues, particularly as coastal lands become more and more valuable to outsiders.

Influencing disaster risk reduction and other disaster policy and practice

The Comité de Emergencia Garifuna proactively sought to influence national policy, particularly through its participation in networks such as GROOTS International. Comité's members have joined together with other grassroots women's organizations and indigenous women's groups in Central America to initiate a partnership with the Central American disaster management agency, the Coordination Center for Disaster Prevention in Central America[22] to press for resourcing and recognition of indigenous and grassroots women's roles in reducing community vulnerability to disaster.

Grassroots women in hurricane-prone Jamaica have trained the leaders of Comité de Emergencia Garifuna in vulnerability and capacity-mapping. In turn, Comité has trained 60 trainers in five Garifuna communities to carry out these mapping exercises and to strategize on how to advocate for development projects, policies and programmes that will reduce communities' vulnerabilities. The village maps identifying risks and capacities are tools to educate neighbours and to inform and pressure the government. Among other successes, one village used these tools to negotiate with local authorities for a footbridge.

> "The woman is the centre of everything. If the women did not struggle for this town, who knows where we would be now? Because as women, we are the ones who live in flesh and bone all that has happened. We have women organized here in Santa Rosa de Aguan ... because we women see the future, we see how we can move forward."

Mayor Palacios, of Aguan, the town hardest hit by Hurricane Mitch

22. Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Garifuna Comité's approach to livelihood recovery and its ongoing development efforts focused on food security, the sustainable use of natural resources, community participation and women's empowerment. Its efforts have improved communities' nutrition, incomes, environmental and cultural preservation, land tenancy and biodiversity. In addition, thousands of trees have been planted, sixteen towns have established tool banks, five have seed banks, and Garifuna trainers are transferring strategies to other Garifuna towns.

Comité trained women's groups, schools and farmers in various topics and supported micro-businesses to flourish. Though not all Comité's attempts to be heard at the national level yielded immediate results, it saw increased opportunities after receiving recognition in international policy venues, including the Mitch +10 Conferences and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Fifteenth Conference of the Parties. This attention facilitated Comité collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and coordination with the national disaster management agency.

The Comité's work in the wake of Hurricane Mitch demonstrates the extent to which locally-based, women-led organizations can become a strong force for building long-term resilience to disaster risks and climate change through self-determined sustainable development projects. As a result of the organization's strategies, communities have become stronger and more united in order to confront other challenges that have come their way. They have become more experienced, confident and capable in interacting with their local authorities. Young people in particular learned valuable lessons from Comité's successful and ongoing efforts. Women have become more vocal and confident in undertaking leadership roles. Women's growing leadership is not only evident in meetings and events organized by Comité, but also in the new organizations that have formed (e.g., in agricultural collectives). Ultimately, Garifuna women and men have encouragingly emerged as public office candidates and office-holders.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Since Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the Comité de Emergencia Garifuna has worked steadily to empower women and men in the Afro-indigenous Garifuna community and has been committed to reducing their communities' vulnerabilities to future hurricane damage. The Comité's first priority was helping women and men self-organize to restore their farms, livelihoods and homes after the disaster. Its priorities later expanded to sustaining active grassroots women's leadership in the transformation from disaster relief to recovery, reconstruction and ongoing development processes. In every aspect of its development efforts, Comité is investing in protecting its natural resource base, food crops, livelihoods assets and houses. The Comité is also leveraging its knowledge and expertise in order to scale up its effective practices, to gain recognition and resources to address its priorities. These investments are essential for resilient development.

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CASE STUDY 2

CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP IN TSUNAMI-HIT DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU

ASHAA women's groups and Swayam Shikshan Prayog – India ■ ASHA SITARAM

The post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction processes created opportunities for grassroots women to play a critical role not only in those processes, but also in their communities' ongoing development. This case study focuses on the Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts, two of the worst-affected districts of Tamil Nadu—196,184 people were affected in Nagapattinam; 99,704 in Cuddalore. In these districts, mainstream recovery and reconstruction processes focused primarily on house (re)construction and restoring livelihoods in the fishing and agricultural sectors—overlooking women's long-term health and sanitation concerns. This case study describes the process by which women in these two tsunami-hit districts organized to address this 'health gap' in their communities and how they continue to sustain, transfer and expand this work, long after relief and recovery programmes have ended.

BACKGROUND

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)[23] is an organization with more than fifteen years of experience in facilitating community-driven recovery-to-development processes that are sustainable. Following the large-scale earthquakes in Maharashtra (1993) and Gujarat (2001), SSP mobilized grassroots women's groups to participate in reconstruction and local governance processes. This mobilization helped transform large-scale disaster recovery and reconstruction processes into empowerment and development opportunities for grassroots women's groups. With SSP support, the grassroots networks led and transferred recovery practices, including restoring livelihoods, educating homeowners on safe construction practices, training masons, setting up sustainable community enterprises and enabling grassroots women to act as community information managers and monitors in government reconstruction programmes.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Identifying health as a priority

Drawing on grassroots leaders' experience following two major disasters—the earthquakes in Maharashtra (1993) and Gujarat (2001)—SSP engaged and mobilized tsunami-affected districts' community members (women in particular) in recovery and development processes.

In January 2005, a few weeks after the Indian Ocean Tsunami, SSP began working with affected communities by creating spaces for women to organize and share ideas, and facilitating networking, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, and awareness-raising campaigns. SSP also organized village-level health camps and trauma counselling training for women's self-help group leaders. Grassroots women's groups also became actively involved in identifying vulnerable people, such as widows and senior citizens, and helped them access relief aid and government programmes. Grassroots women leaders (who had extensive experience in working on disaster recovery in

23. Swayam Shikshan Prayog translates to Self-Education for Empowerment. SSP is a learning and development organization based in Mumbai. Its goal is to move poor women and communities from the margin to the mainstream of development. Today, SSP operates in ten of the most disaster-prone districts of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, reaching out to over 300,000 families. SSP currently undertakes interventions in four sectors: savings and credit; sustainable livelihoods; water and sanitation; and community health.

the two disaster-affected states of Maharashtra and Gujarat) expressed their interest in reaching out to grassroots women in tsunami-affected Tamil Nadu in order to support and prepare the leaders to capitalize on the opportunities and face the challenges created by large recovery and reconstruction processes.

In order to transfer experience and knowledge of post-disaster recovery and development to tsunami affected women in Tamil Nadu, SSP convened a ten-member team (including grassroots leaders) of people who had been active in post-earthquake recovery processes in Maharashtra and Gujarat. As grassroots women survivors from Maharashtra and Gujarat earthquakes travelled through tsunami-affected villages advising women on restoring livelihoods, accessing government services and training women in house reconstruction, they recognized that community health, water and sanitation needs were being neglected—women and children's health and health-related needs in particular. Emergency health care had been extensively provided by the government and other agencies immediately after the tsunami, but by May 2005, these services were withdrawn, and health services gradually returned to the ineffective and inaccessible pre-tsunami levels. Communities' poor access to water and sanitation and overcrowded and unhygienic temporary shelters clearly demonstrated the need for preventative and curative health services.

Organizing ASHAA health governance groups

Experienced community leaders and non-governmental organization partners identified and trained women in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam in public health issues. These women mapped village settlements and surveyed families in order to understand major health problems, health related expenditures and peoples' ability to access health services. The emerging picture showed that because most people used private health care providers, access to health care services was often very expensive. The network of government primary health centres, while almost free of cost, was perceived to be indifferent to the poor, inefficiently managed, poorly stocked and ill-equipped to serve grassroots women and their families' health needs. It was also evident that women were neglecting their own health. This escalated both costs and health related crises that could have been prevented by earlier diagnoses.

SSP mobilized community-based health volunteers and trained women to organize health camps in the villages. The grassroots women simultaneously reached out to doctors from public and private hospitals and went door-to-door convincing women to attend the health camps. Local women were identified and trained to educate their communities on women's health needs, basic sanitation, environmental sanitation, personal hygiene and children's health.

By May 2005, grassroots women in twenty communities were routinely monitoring health service provision and the health needs of the disaster-hit communities. It was these women who became the core leaders of the first ASHAA[24] health governance groups. ASHAA leaders called village-wide meetings to educate and mobilize communities around the importance of working collectively to improve community health and sanitation. In each village, 15–20 women—many already actively involved in local community development activities—volunteered to form health governance groups and began to meet regularly. Meetings were used to educate group members and plan actions to improve communities' health and access to health services.

24. Arogya Sakhis for Health Awareness and Action.

Driving the demand for better health and sanitation services

The process of engaging women in assessing their communities' health needs was the first step towards creating demand for better health, water and sanitation services. The information collected was used to mobilize self-help group members to work towards improving their and their communities' health. Swayam Shikshan Prayog began linking women from self-help groups—many of whom were also members of the ASHAA health governance groups—to primary health centres. This meant that women would monitor the functioning of health centres, offer to assist health centre staff identify sick people in their villages, collaborate with primary health centre staff to prevent epidemics and encourage communities to use the primary health centres.

As ASHAA groups began to formalize their roles in improving community health, women began to take greater ownership of this process of awareness-building and proactively organized to educate communities on women's health. They organized training and awareness sessions on pregnancy, pre- and post-natal care, sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition, personal hygiene, community sanitation, seasonal diseases and environmental health. ASHAA disseminated knowledge and information through a variety of learning forums such as health awareness talks given by doctors or nurses, health check-up camps, and food festivals to promote nutritious food.

As women became more conscious of health issues, they began to make more demands on primary health centres and other health service providers. ASHAA leaders often accompanied women to primary health centres to demand for affordable, quality services. ASHAA also monitored the health centres service quality and responsiveness. ASHAA groups provided feedback to the health centres, either through the centres' planning meetings or local village health committees. In one case, ASHAA members from several villages in Tamil Nadu pointed out to the staff of their local health centre its unwelcoming and unhygienic conditions and proposed that the staff take action to encourage people to use the centre. In response, the primary health centre implemented a series of improvements, including planting gardens on the premises and initiating a new waste disposal system to make sure that facilities were clean and hygienic. Now, women state that this health centre is "as good as any private clinic."

Early in the recovery process, water and sanitation emerged as priority issues for women. For example, in one of the villages (Kilamooverkarai village in Nagapattinam), women felt that they were in a better position to maintain individual rather than community toilets. ASHAA leaders successfully negotiated with a non-governmental organization to provide the basic brickwork and the soak-pits, mobilized families in the village to invest their own funds, and facilitated access to a government sanitation grants programme to complete the building. Similarly, recognizing that ASHAA could not improve people's health without addressing the water supply, the groups negotiated with officials to provide potable water to their villages.

ASHAA groups also organized numerous preventive actions, such as cleaning streets and surroundings, ensuring chlorination of water tanks, promoting nutritious diets and preventing mosquitoes from multiplying.

ASHAA members have developed strong relationships with the elected *panchayat* (village council) members. Health group leaders regularly use the village assembly, or *gram sabhas*,[25] to brief their communities on activities and government programmes and to educate the village on health and sanitation issues. These efforts have built community demand for government health and sanitation programmes.

ASHAA groups began with driving demand and improving delivery of public health care services, but recognized the need for communities to continue to use private clinics and service providers. The groups have negotiated with a network of private clinics and hospitals to secure affordable services to community members belonging to the ASHAA villages and their networks.

25. Village-level meetings with gram panchayat (village level government).

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

By early 2007, there were ASHAA health governance groups with more than 800 members in 41 of the 80 worst affected Tsunami-hit communities of Tamil Nadu, with 80 ASHAA trainers providing health and sanitation information and implementation support to new women's groups. Today, ASHAA groups are networked through the Women's Federation for Disaster Management and Community Development. The Federation coordinates, strengthens and standardizes ASHAA activities across each district. By charging membership fees to cover administrative and some operational costs, the Federation is able to sustain groups and reduce their reliance on Swayam Shikshan Prayog and external funding.

ASHAA groups have a unique role in improving health and health service access. They are consumers that drive demand for affordable, effective delivery of quality health services. Simultaneously, ASHAA groups are collaborators that partner with government-run services to improve effectiveness and quality and to enable service providers to reach the poorest, most vulnerable communities.

The health camps, rarely held before the tsunami, are now held regularly in communities where ASHAA women work. Women are more confident about discussing their own health issues and health risks, including those related to sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive health—issues they were previously reluctant to articulate.

These grassroots women's activities have created a consciousness around personal health issues and public health concerns. Their efforts enable primary health centre staff to better reach and serve their target populations. These women's efforts have made the health centres more responsive and accountable to poor communities. For example, prior to ASHAA groups' involvement, the village health nurse (who makes regular village visits to attend to sick community members) found it difficult to identify and attend to sick people in his or her target villages. With ASHAA groups' intervention and guidance, the nurses have been more effective in regularly visiting and successfully identifying and attending to patients.

The ASHAA groups have improved information flows between government and grassroots women. Prior to the existence of these health groups, communities were either unaware of government programmes and services, or if aware, did not know whether they were eligible or how to access them. ASHAA leaders are playing an important role in educating communities on entitlements, identifying eligible persons and supporting them to process their applications to these programmes. When communities experience problems with programmes, the health groups are also able to convey these to government officials, village councils and health centres.

Women and their families have increased their use of public health facilities.[26] Women have also remarked that since their involvement in the ASHAA health groups, their health expenditures have significantly declined (by approximately 72 percent). This drop in health expenditures can be attributed to the improved accessibility of health services, increased awareness, preventative health measures and an increased reliance on improved public health services.

26. A survey of ASHAA members found that prior to joining a health governance group, 39 percent of respondents were using private health facilities most often; 16 percent were using public facilities most often; and 45 percent were using both equally. After having joined an ASHAA group, only 1 percent of respondents were using private health facilities most often, while 77 percent were using public most often and 22 percent were using both equally.

Women's new roles in the development and disaster risk reduction landscape

Since the tsunami, grassroots women have taken on new and important roles in and beyond their communities. They are community mobilizers and organizers who can educate their communities to change health- and sanitation-related behaviours. ASHAA groups act as liaisons between the community and service providers. They assist primary health centre staff and other outsiders seeking information about the community or seeking to effectively reach community members. They also help community members acquire information on programmes and services provided by governments, non-governmental organizations and private institutions. These women are peer educators and advocates for their communities. Through the GROOTS International network's community trainers' initiative on resilience-building, health group members have learned to build the capacities of trainers, who are now recognized as grassroots experts. These experts have advanced knowledge, practices and partnerships and the ability to scale up their work and transfer practices to disaster-prone communities in other districts, states and countries. These new public roles have led the community (including men), community leaders and the government to increasingly recognize these grassroots women as critical players in the development and disaster risk reduction landscape. Women, empowered as actors in the arena of health care, have also been able to bring greater understanding and attention to previously neglected issues of sexual and reproductive health.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

When analysed through the lens of resilience-building, the improvements seen in community health and sanitation along with the increased responsiveness and accountability of health service providers represent gains in reduced health risks and reduced losses in future disasters. Accessible and accountable health services and improved community sanitation play critical roles in building community resilience to disasters because they address vulnerabilities that place poor persons at higher risk. Long-term resilience-focused development that improves access to and the quality of basic services, such as health and sanitation, reduces vulnerabilities that heighten community risk.

Following disasters, the health of surviving communities often suffers and sanitation standards fall, particularly for persons residing in temporary shelters. Reduced risk comes in many forms: improved sanitation and health will reduce the negative impact of disasters, and increased awareness of health issues, disease prevention and sanitation will allow communities to respond more effectively after disaster to reduce threats to their health. In case of a future disaster, women are well-equipped to make collective demands to, and partner with, relief organizations, government agencies and service providers, and to help provide a coordinated response to their communities for the efficient and effective use of resources and aid.

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CASE STUDY 3

SECURING HOUSING AND LIVELIHOODS FOR THE URBAN POOR IN METRO MANILA

Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api ■ **FELOMINA DUKA AND CICERO JUAN AGUILAR JR.**
with Josephine Castillo, Nerisa Lascano, Patricia Herrera and Emma Manjares

Governments employ relocation as the primary disaster risk reduction strategy in urban poor communities that are located in degraded, disaster-prone sites. The new locations, though arguably more physically secure than the original settlements, are typically distant and poorly serviced, which can impoverish already vulnerable populations. The Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api (DAMPA) approach demonstrates that relocation by itself is not the most effective solution for the urban poor. Instead, a multi-pronged approach is needed that will take into account not only a new settlement's physical location but also its security of housing tenure, basic services, employment opportunities and community ownership of solutions. Critical to operationalizing this multifaceted understanding of disaster risk reduction solutions is recognizing and supporting the role played by one of the most vulnerable yet knowledgeable segments of poor populations—grassroots women who have vast experience and are invested in accessing and managing the resources needed to sustain the lives and livelihoods of the urban poor.

BACKGROUND

DAMPA is a women-led federation of 95 grassroots people's organizations. The group was formed in 1996 in response to the massive demolition of urban poor enclaves in Metro Manila and the subsequent resettlement of poor families to remote relocation areas without the benefits of adequate consultation and access to basic services. With a total membership of 22,754 urban poor families (approximately 136,500 individuals), DAMPA works in the greater Metro Manila area and in relocation areas in three adjacent provinces, all on the island of Luzon.

The communities where DAMPA works are characterized by densely populated settlements, often on degraded disaster-prone lands (such as those close to large dump sites); a lack of decent, secure housing; inadequate basic services; minimal opportunities for work and livelihood; and a lack of voice and participation for communities in development planning and governance. These factors contribute to the fragility and vulnerability of these communities, putting them at high risk in the event of floods, typhoons or earthquakes.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

In the DAMPA experience, disaster risk has been used as a rationale to displace and relocate urban poor families. Between 1992 and 1996, more than 4,000 urban poor families, mostly from flood-prone areas along the Pasig River and its tributaries, were relocated to distant areas. In 1998, the threat of flooding prompted the relocation of 3,500 families living in the areas of Caloocan, Malabon, and Navotas in Metro Manila. The relocation, however, did little to alleviate the communities' precarious socioeconomic situation. One vulnerability was merely replaced with new vulnerabilities. Though the relocation sites provided safe housing, the sites had inadequate basic services and there were few opportunities to earn a living. In a DAMPA-conducted focus group, a number of women leaders claimed that their lives had become more difficult since relocation. Women often saw relocation as creating a new generation of urban poor. For example, one woman directly attributed her children's failure to finish college and improve their lives to their displacement from the city.

Another leader remarked: "At least in Navotas [where they lived before the relocation] there were opportunities to get work. Life was difficult there, but there were always opportunities for work because we were near commercial centres, the fish-port, etc. Here we are all poor. If you want to find work, who will have money to pay you?"

More than from physical hazard or environmental factors, the vulnerability of the urban poor to disaster often stems from unequal development processes: social exclusion, economic marginalization, and lack of voice in policy formulation. Improving poor families' access to basic services, ensuring secure land tenure, housing, and livelihoods are integral to building resilience and disaster risk reduction. Informal settlements often lack sanitation, water supply, electricity and roads, and the threat of eviction prevents poor people from making investments in improving the safety of their building structures. For the urban poor, secure housing remains a major challenge to their ability to improve their socio-economic status, a condition that not only compels them to seek housing in disaster-prone areas but also compounds their disaster-related vulnerabilities.

Community organizing and capacity building

Leaders from the urban poor, the majority of whom are women, organized communities that are networked and linked through DAMPA. The grassroots leaders facilitate meetings of urban poor organizations to discuss local problems and issues, generate solutions, develop a collective development agenda, and organize mass actions to press authorities to dialogue with the urban poor. DAMPA member groups have focused on issues such as secure housing and land tenure, eviction, demolition and involuntary resettlement, basic services provision and local development planning.

DAMPA also engages in various training activities in order to build leaders' and volunteers' capacities to address poverty issues, encouraging them to become familiar with their rights as guaranteed by international and national laws and policies.

Mass action to advocate for the urban poor

Community-driven participatory research, undertaken by local leaders, is a key component of building local knowledge and an information resource base. These research activities focus on collectively studying local situations; understanding how women and men in poor communities experience government programmes; and developing strategies addressed at the agencies and persons that are responsible for developing and funding these programmes. In response to the demolitions and resettlements in Navotas as a result of the government's flood control project, community-driven investigation and research efforts revealed that the Department of Public Works and Highways and the National Housing Authority were the major agencies designing and implementing these projects, and that the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation was the main provider of funds.

DAMPA used mass mobilizations and protests to target these institutions, including the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, to highlight the potential violations of international standards for voluntary relocations and to gain the attention of the Government of Japan.[27] DAMPA uses a range of strategies to confront, engage and partner with the government, and has since partnered with it in several different sectors to find alternative solutions to reduce the urban poor's disaster vulnerabilities.

27. The Government of Japan subsequently withdrew its support when it learned that poor communities had been involuntarily resettled in sites with inadequate basic services and no livelihood options.

In-city solutions to secure housing

In order to strengthen poor communities' abilities to weather disaster situations, DAMPA has been engaging the government to find solutions to the lack of housing tenure and housing finance for urban poor families living in informal settlements. Secure tenure provides low-income communities with a foundation for building an asset base that can serve as a cushion during disasters when normal livelihood activities are thrown into disarray. Secure tenure also creates incentives and opportunities to make capital improvements to their houses and a recognizable basis for making claims in post-disaster situations. One of the ways that DAMPA has been able to gain security of tenure for informal settlements, and thereby enhance their resilience to disasters, is by accessing the government's Community Mortgage Programme.

This programme enables organized communities to secure mortgages at interest rates of 6 percent per annum for uses such as collectively purchasing land, developing sites by improving access to basic services and building houses. Samahang Pagkakais sa Sitio Kumunoy, a member organization of DAMPA, was able to use the Community Mortgage Programme to negotiate a community mortgage with the Quezon City Government. The organization was able to acquire a 9,000 square meter plot to house 95 families.

Another organization in the DAMPA network, Dumpsite View Neighbourhood Association, is an organization of garbage collectors in Payatas. The Association used a direct purchase option to secure land tenure for their community. The organization purchased a large plot of land already occupied by the community after negotiating the price and terms of payment directly with the landowner. The land was then divided among individual Association members. DAMPA savings cooperatives made housing loans available to buyers to make the down-payment for the land. The organization is responsible for collecting monthly payments from individual owners and coordinating payments to land owners. The wholesale purchase of land, coupled with the long-term tenure of the DAMPA members, provides leverage to communities to negotiate for a better price with the landowner.

Partnering with government to promote livelihoods

DAMPA advocacy efforts, coupled with its strong constituency base, provided an opportunity to collaborate with the Income Restoration Subcommittee of the Department of Public Works and Highways, the CAMANAVA[28] Flood Control Project and the National Housing Authority to address income and livelihoods for families who have been relocated as part of the government's flood control projects. This programme, a result of advocacy by DAMPA and other organizations, aims to assist 3,500 relocated families to increase their incomes within a two-year period. Improved livelihoods will lead to an asset base that can be drawn upon in the event of crisis.

Access to affordable medicine

Responding to the high cost of medicines, the DAMPA Community Pharmacies mobilized funds to purchase and make available affordable, safe, generic medicines in poor communities. The programmes include training on dispensing medicines, and programme partners range from non-governmental organizations to government agencies such as the Department of Health's Community Health Programme, the Bureau of Food and Drugs and Barangay-level local government units. Capital for the community pharmacies is raised from members, with the government providing matching funds. The success of the Community Pharmacies prompted the Department of Health to seek DAMPA assistance in implementing their own *Botika ng Barangay* (Barangay Pharmacy) Programme, which was conceptualized to provide national access to essential drugs. This partnership provides DAMPA with access to government officials to press for pro-poor policies and programmes related to health services.

28. Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela City.

Alliance-building and networking

DAMPA strategies were primarily community-led, but its alliance-building and networking efforts generated a wide support network of groups that provided technical and political support. These included community organizing and political support from non-governmental organization allies such as: the COPE Foundation and the Urban Poor Associates (Philippine non-governmental organizations specializing in community training, anti-demolition and crisis intervention); Bishop Teodoro Bacani and the Urban Poor Ministry; the social action arm of the Archdiocese of CAMANAVA; SALIGAN (a legal resource non-governmental organization doing developmental legal work with women and based in Ateneo University); the TAO-Pilipina (a group of architects and engineers specializing in alternative housing design); the Philippines Red Cross Society (providing emergency response training to communities); the Philippine Cancer Society; the Department of Health; and the Department of Public Works and Highways. These individuals, organizations and agencies have assisted local communities in their advocacy work and in crafting solutions, which include in-city housing solutions and financing income restoration and health programmes.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

These strategies and approaches have produced considerable impacts in terms of making public resources and services accessible to poor families and improving their ability to both mitigate the risk of disasters and to enhance their ability to recover in the wake of disasters. About 3,500 poor families have benefited from DAMPA efforts to secure land and housing tenure. In a highly earthquake- and flood-prone city, secure tenure means that homeowners are in a better position to invest in protecting their houses. DAMPA has been able to set up 35 community pharmacies in 28 poor communities, providing low-cost generic medicines to an estimated 50,000 poor families. The Income Restoration Programme has been able to provide 5,000 to 10,000 Philippine Pesos in low-interest loans to 252 families in order to enable them to initiate income-generating activities.

Partnerships have also been built with government and private agencies to improve service delivery to poor communities. Active government partners include the Department of Health, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of Public Work and Highways. Private agency partners include the Philippine Red Cross, the Philippine Cancer Society, many non-governmental organizations (such as the TAO-Pilipina, Lihok Pilipina and Bantay Banay), and a broad federation of women's organizations partnering with institutional actors such as police, non-governmental organizations, and Barangay officials. These relationships with government, civil society actors and other professionals strengthen DAMPA's ability to access knowledge, information, financial resources and ability to advocate for government programmes that are responsive and accountable to the urban poor—particularly to women living and working in these communities.

The greatest impact has been the capacity development of 500 urban poor leaders and volunteers in 95 communities to address local problems more effectively. These leaders sit on various local development and planning bodies organized at the local government level, where they actively participate in local governance and development planning activities in their localities.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

For DAMPA, reducing risk through relocation was not a viable solution. DAMPA focused its efforts on reducing the impacts of natural disasters on poor families by building programmes that address vulnerabilities stemming from poverty and marginalization. Alternative solutions included: providing appropriate and affordable housing through community housing finance and in-city solutions; negotiating voluntary resettlement processes and access to basic social services; promoting income generation, livelihoods development and social protection; creating linkages and partnerships with local and national government; and strengthening the voices of women, children, and the elderly, groups most marginalized in mainstream development and disaster-related efforts. DAMPA viewed this combination of strategies as far more effective in building resilience among urban poor communities than simple relocation efforts.

DAMPA accomplishments in advancing development solutions that reduce poor communities' vulnerability to the risk of flooding and address their livelihoods and decent living conditions demonstrate how poor communities living with the risk of disasters must be involved in developing solutions. Top-down solutions fail too often because they do not consider community priorities or multifaceted concerns or have underestimated the capacity of organized grassroots organizations to find their own solutions. DAMPA has not been content to protest and challenge government programmes—they have taken steps to partner with national and local governments to implement alternative solutions.

From the DAMPA perspective, conditions of poverty, deprivation, and exclusion teach the poor to be resilient in the sense that they are daily forced to adapt to these conditions and maximize whatever opportunities are available in spite of contextual conditions. Such a response runs counter to the prevailing idea of the poor as beneficiaries of aid rather than as partners in problem-solving.

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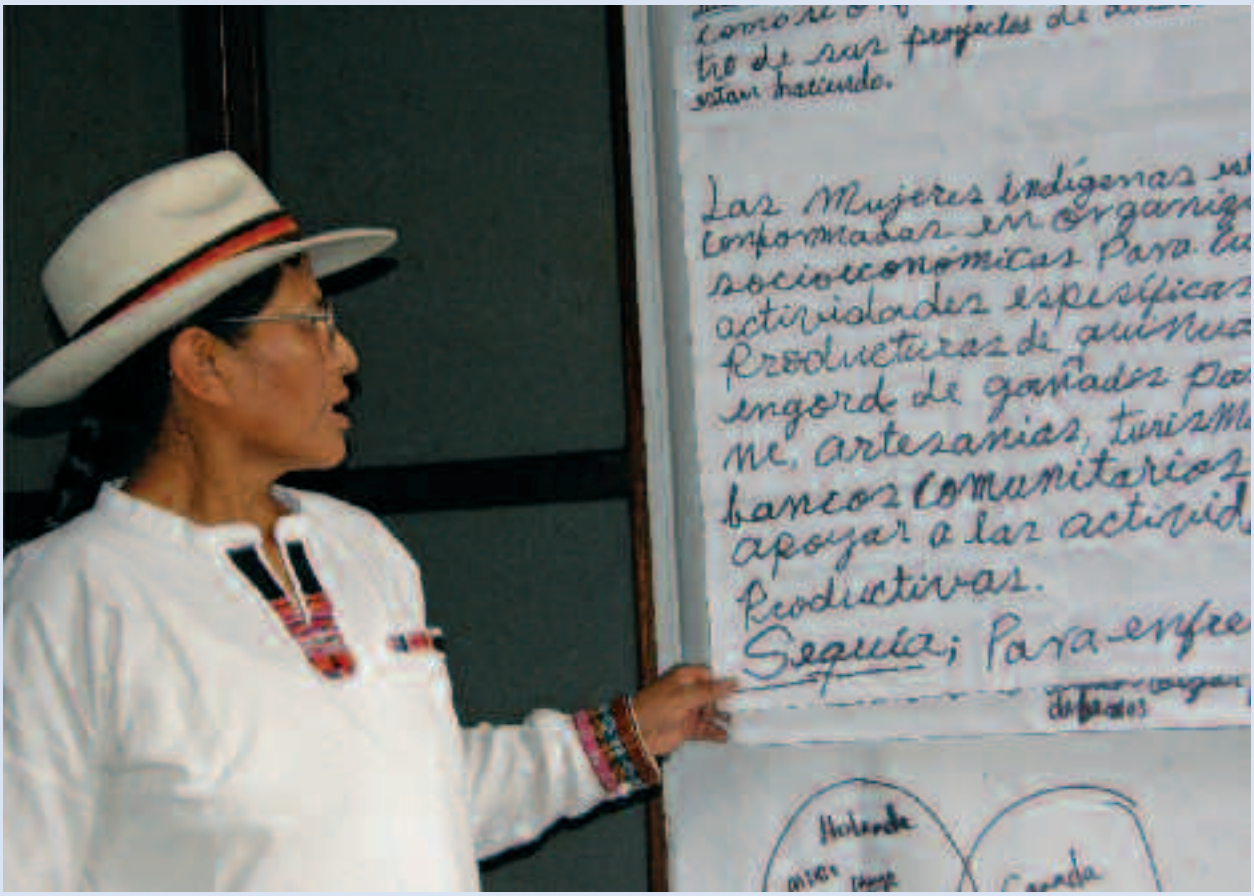
CASE STUDY 4

USING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE TO PROTECT AYMARA LIVELIHOODS IN BOLIVIA

Centro de Mujeres Candelaria ■ CLOTILDE MARQUEZ CRUZ with Centro de Mujeres Candelaria



Years of surviving the harsh conditions of the altiplano (high plateau) region of Bolivia has enabled the indigenous Aymara to evolve a set of practices to protect their natural resources, crops and food. Rural households depend primarily on subsistence farming and livestock for their survival. An annual rainfall of 300 mm allows farmers to grow potato, coca, quinoa, beans and barley for human consumption, and alfalfa to feed cattle, sheep and llamas. Aymara women have successfully advocated with local schools to ensure that their children appreciate the indigenous culture and knowledge, which is critical to the survival of their communities.

BACKGROUND

The group Centro de Mujeres Candelaria, established in 2000, organized grassroots women into community-based organizations that continue to draw on ancestral knowledge and practices to predict hazardous events and to protect their farms and food from them. Rather than function as individual groups, the women's groups collaborate with other organizations, such as rural unions and agricultural producers' cooperatives, to arrive at a consensus around their plans for the agricultural season. Through their political platform, the Permanent Forum of Aymara Women, these women also advocate with decision makers to recognize the contributions and respond to the needs of indigenous women, while ensuring that indigenous knowledge and culture are protected and passed down to the next generation.

In addition, the group works to empower indigenous Aymara women to advance their social and economic status. The organization's work has two main strategic areas of action: to organize indigenous Aymara women and link them to decision-making processes; and to support women to sustain their livelihoods and ensure food security in their communities.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Organizing women to advance community priorities

Centro de Mujeres Candelaria has advanced women's economic activities by organizing grassroots women into community banks, artisan cottages, craft centres and other socio-economic groups. These organizations enable women to access credit for livelihoods, for education for their children and for health-related emergencies. In addition to these practical functions, the small groups also provide a space for women to develop a collective analysis of their conditions as the basis for countering their marginalization.

As large numbers of men migrate to cities in search of employment, women are primarily responsible for managing and supporting both the household and the

community, which includes sustaining the social fabric and indigenous culture and ensuring the community's survival. Together with community counsellors and local authorities, Aymara women have negotiated with local schools to make sure their children learn and appreciate the indigenous knowledge and culture of the Aymara. Women see traditional knowledge as vital to their families' and communities' survival, as it enables children to read early warning signs, prepare for harsh weather conditions and prevent the loss of crops and animals.

Candelaria counts among its major achievements the appointment of indigenous women leaders to the Permanent Forum of Aymara Women. As part of their activities in the Permanent Forum, women leaders conduct training activities to transfer their knowledge to other women's groups. In addition, Centro de Mujeres Candelaria has successfully negotiated with local governments to improve infrastructure and has partnered with them to construct roads, bridges, schools and toilets in their communities. Despite these successes, it still faces challenges in convincing local authorities that women are capable of developing policies for infrastructure building, education, and income-generating activities.

Centro de Mujeres Candelaria has also strengthened Aymara women's groups capacities to collectively address environmental risks and vulnerabilities. Grassroots groups spread throughout the mountainous regions of the Patacamaya province in the department of La Paz, Bolivia developed a series of livelihoods and agricultural practices that draw on their ancestral knowledge to protect their families' and communities' agriculture, livestock, water and food security.

Leaders from Aymara women's microcredit and livelihoods groups are elected onto an advisory committee that guides the work of all the women's groups, encouraging them to jointly plan for the agricultural season using ancestral knowledge of the Aymara and coordinating with rural unions, agricultural production cooperatives and associations. Agricultural plans include selecting fields at different altitudes; promoting organic farming methods; conserving soil; rotating crops; using drought-resistant seeds; creating seed banks and using appropriate technologies. The Aymara women's networks currently involve 1,030 women in the Aroma, Los Andes and Omasuyos communities, and work closely with organized rural unions, agricultural cooperatives and associations in the surroundings of Lake Titicaca.

Using indigenous knowledge to protect crops and food from hazards

A major challenge for the communities in the region is to reduce the impacts of drought, frost, hailstorms, snowfalls and thunderstorms, which can destroy 50 to 60 percent of annual crops and livestock. For each of these hazards, the Aymara draw on their ancestral knowledge and practices to predict weather changes and prevent disasters by protecting their crops, livestock and food.

The Aymara have traditional community mechanisms for monitoring and collectively responding to changing weather patterns. Local farmers and community elders or counsellors meet each year in August to discuss and plan for the year, taking into account the history and patterns of climate change that they have been witnessing over the years. The care and monitoring of agricultural units (*aynuqas*) is the responsibility of community watchpeople (*kamani*), who continually survey crops to prevent pests and diseases. In addition, they also monitor plants, birds, animals and weather conditions such as cloud formations and temperature fluctuations in order to warn the community of impending droughts, frosts, hail and snow. Women combine the advice of these community counsellors with their own experience to read the signs from their natural environments to counter the effects of inclement weather.

Communities can time their sowing and harvesting activities and storage of crops and seeds according to information they gather from the world around them, making sure that they have enough for prolonged periods of low rainfall. For example, the

number of wild rabbits and the placement of their burrows in relation to the river bed can indicate drought or a long dry season. The blossoming and withering of the t'ulas plants indicate the beginning and end of the rainy season. This ancestral knowledge is combined with newer solutions, such as the construction of water tanks at different locations to harvest rainwater to weather the dry periods between May and August. This ensures that there is enough carefully distributed water to irrigate small fields and to provide water for people and animals.

The Aymara are equally vulnerable to frosts that occur in January and February. This is also the period in which hailstorms can completely destroy flowering or maturing crops. In addition to hail, community watchpersons are particularly vigilant to temperature extremes that could ruin crops overnight. They predict frosts by studying cloud formations, winds from the South Pole and bird and animal calls. Upon sensing the signs of frost, the Kamani alerts the community by playing the *pututu* (an alarm call produced by the horn of a bull) and the communities respond by burning fields, firewood and green herbs to create smoke that heats the air, protecting the crops from freezing temperatures.

Traditional practices also help protect livestock and their offspring from snowfalls in June and July. If grazing land is covered for a week or more, the weaker will not survive the combined effects of the intense cold and lack of food. To prepare for snowfalls, women make sure that there is enough food for their animals by collecting and storing dry fodder (*jipi*, made from threshing quinoa, barley, beans and other dried grasses).

In spite of the wealth of ancestral Aymara knowledge in predicting weather changes and protecting livelihoods, food, water and livestock essential for their survival, community leaders recognize that unpredictable weather patterns caused by climate change will make it more difficult to predict and prevent disaster. With changing weather patterns, bio-indicators and historical information accumulated over many generations will no longer lead to accurate predictions. However, communities continue to draw upon indigenous knowledge to take actions to secure and conserve water, food and other resources to ensure their survival.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Indigenous women's groups have a wealth of ancestral knowledge to draw upon in order to reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards—the rural Aymara's ability to withstand the *altiplano*'s harsh climate and rugged terrain depends on such knowledge. Organized women's groups are using indigenous early warning systems and traditional Aymara practices to prepare their communities for impending hazard events and to protect their land, crops, livestock, food stores and water; resources that are crucial to the survival of these rural communities.

In addition to these practices, the Aymara have unique community mechanisms for pooling their information and knowledge to collectively monitor and plan for each agricultural season. Centro de Mujeres Candelaria is organizing women to negotiate with decision makers not only to recognize women's roles and contribution in development and disaster risk reduction, but also to protect their indigenous knowledge, culture and practices, which are among the most valuable assets that must be transferred to future generations who will have to adapt to climate change.

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CASE STUDY 5

CENTRES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN: SUSTAINING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN RELIEF, RECOVERY, RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Foundation for the Support of Women's Work – Turkey ■ **NIL AYHAN**

In the post-disaster response to the Marmara earthquake in 1999, grassroots women-managed centres for women and children began as spaces where women could safely meet, support one another and provide services for children. But as the process unfolded from relief and recovery to reconstruction and development, grassroots women's organizations adapted and expanded the functions of the centres in response to their multiple needs, turning the centres into social spaces that nurture grassroots women's leadership in transforming their communities. By restoring and enhancing access to services, forging social and information networks, improving incomes and increasing political influence, women are shaping the development processes that are reducing their vulnerability to future disasters.

BACKGROUND

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work is a non-profit organization founded in Turkey in 1986. The Foundation promotes grassroots women's leadership in order to improve the quality of women's and communities' living conditions. The Foundation's work focuses on empowering low-income women, enabling them to organize around their practical needs with a view towards addressing the long-term strategic priorities of transforming their societal positions and influencing decision-making processes.

The 1999 Marmara Earthquake occurred in the densely populated urban and industrial Marmara region, and left more than 18,000 casualties, 48,000 injured and 200,000 homeless. An estimated 800,000 people took refuge in temporary shelters in 121 tent cities.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Providing spaces for women and children after the Marmara earthquake

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work got involved in disaster relief efforts immediately after the earthquake. It began by working with young volunteers distributing emergency aid. The Foundation quickly saw how disaster relief could be an opportunity for grassroots women to reposition themselves in their communities and influence public decision-making processes. The first step was to create conditions under which women could start organizing and identifying their collective priorities for action. It was clear that they would need a space to meet, share information and support each other.

Inspiration came from the Foundation's Neighbourhood Mothers Programme,[29] in Istanbul's low-income communities, which trained mothers to provide early childhood education in childcare and education centres. This training allowed the centres to be managed through parental and community involvement rather than professional, government certified, paid staff.

29. In large cities, most rural migrants live in informal settlements with poor housing conditions that lack adequate infrastructure and services. Isolated and cut off from rural support networks, the lack of childcare or preschool services makes it particularly difficult for women to accept employment.

These centres were rapidly adapted for the disaster-affected areas of the Marmara region. Within two weeks of the earthquake, the Foundation set up the first four women and children's centres in the tent cities. In collaboration with local women, volunteers, and the Social Services Administration, a large tent was designated the centre and childcare was provided in large shipping containers. These were community spaces for women to bring their children, to meet and support one another, and—over many cups of tea—to overcome their trauma and sense of loss. The centres rapidly became places for women to self-organize to play more public leadership roles. They began to redistribute and redirect relief aid to those who most needed it, they negotiated with camp managers to improve food and sanitation services, and they began to restore incomes by organizing livelihood activities.

Women in the earthquake-affected communities were trained in early child development and education. In addition to running childcare and preschool services in the women and children's centres, the women offered home visits—first in their tents and then later in the temporary settlements—to support young mothers and to monitor the children's development. The centres kept records, tracking children's progress and consulted with experts when needed. This practice of grassroots women-managed early childhood education through the centres has since evolved into a permanent programme of the Foundation, with standardized processes and training methodologies that grassroots leaders have transferred across Turkey. Many centres' curricula include emergency response training for children.

Fostering women's leadership in livelihoods, service delivery and housing

With the Foundation's support, nine women and children's centres were established in temporary prefabricated settlements by the recovery phase. Ten thousand women were reached through activities organized by women in these centres. Through training, study tours and technical inputs, grassroots women began to initiate a range of activities through the centres.

In addition to managing the childcare and educational services, women introduced collective enterprises, incomes from which would contribute to the running of the centres. Regular community information meetings and multisectoral workshops were organized to identify resources and partnerships. In addition, contracts with municipalities and governments were established to secure public resources and formal recognition for the centres. Although the early child development services provided by the centres were not licensed at the national level, they were (and are) often recognized and resourced by authorities at the local level due to their high-quality education and accessibility.

As women became more active in the recovery and reconstruction processes, they were compelled to address housing as a priority. After engaging authorities, women learned that while the government was going to replace homeowners' houses, renters were not entitled to replacement housing. In response, women began negotiating with the government to secure housing for renters in some of the temporary settlements and monitoring social and infrastructure service provision in the new permanent settlements. The renters established four women's housing cooperatives with the idea that they would leverage housing loans with assets they created through the cooperatives. After extensive negotiations with the Ministry of Public Works, one of cooperatives obtained land on which 50 houses were constructed.

Women as community information managers

The women and children's centres were also spaces where women took on new roles as community information managers. Women would organize community meetings and door-to-door surveys in order to gather information on women's needs during different stages of post-disaster processes. These surveys and meetings were used to draw an accurate picture of which families were most in need of aid and health care. Data collected included the number and needs of injured and disabled people in the community, how many families were eligible for government programmes, the level of damage to buildings, the amount damage and losses incurred by families, and families' eligibility for various governmental programmes.

Child-mapping, a methodology in which women surveyed the number of young children in a settlement and compared that number to the availability of relevant services, evolved as a tool for grassroots organizing around childcare issues in other parts of Turkey. Women's groups in need of childcare and preschool services surveyed families with similar needs in their communities. The survey findings were then presented to government officials in order to negotiate for public resources. Encouraged and inspired by the success of this methodology, the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work recently initiated a local gender-budgeting action-research process, identifying community needs and juxtaposing these against resources allocated in the municipal budget.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Recognition and resources

Increased interaction with authorities during their housing and information-gathering activities generated resources and business opportunities for the centres and individual women. Some centres were able to get local and municipal authorities to pay for fuel, supplies and food for the centres. Some women's groups were awarded contracts to provide lunches to construction workers and catering services for events at government agencies, including the governor's office. The women's groups negotiated for space in local fairs and downtown stores owned by municipalities, and on stands to display their products in a national department store chain. Collective income-generating and fund-raising events (e.g., sales, tea parties, catering events, excursions to nearby centres) were organized to benefit the women and children's centres. Through the different livelihoods initiatives supported and promoted at the women's centres and cooperatives, approximately 2,000 women became economically active and explored new job opportunities and small business potential in their settlements and provinces.

Women's public leadership was gradually recognized and strengthened in terms of public resource allocations and women's participation in formal partnership bodies. The women and children centres provided the women's groups with identity, legitimacy, visibility and respect in the eyes of local authorities and temporary settlement communities. Both administrators and community residents were impressed with the range of activities at the centres and started viewing them—and referring people to them—as information houses. Women and children centres provided entry points for local women to organize in groups in order to improve their economic conditions, access information and start negotiating with local authorities around reconstruction processes and long-term development of their communities. Women's groups gained formal recognition from other non-governmental organizations and governments, local decision-making bodies and formal platforms, such as Local Agenda 21.[30]

A new movement for women and children's centres led by grassroots women

The management of the nine women and children centres in the earthquake-affected areas—Adapazari, Duzce and Izmit—was handed over to grassroots leaders who formalized their organizations by registering Turkey's first women's cooperatives. These nine centres in the earthquake region became demonstrations that showcased high quality parent-run childcare services and curricula that included inculcating respect for ethnic diversity. Grassroots leaders from these centres became trainers who have since transferred this model throughout Turkey. They have also participated in peer-learning exchanges and advised grassroots women from disaster-affected communities in India, Indonesia and Iran. The founders of the cooperatives became trainers of new cooperatives throughout Turkey and in 2009, founded a national network of women's cooperatives of about 60 member bodies.

Women's experiences in the region in terms of coming together, establishing and running their own organizations made their organizational skills visible and created a new model for grassroots organizations. This created a new movement in Turkey: grassroots women's cooperatives. Women with common concerns approach the Foundation, and women from disaster-affected areas teach them how to organize and run a cooperative. 300 women organized themselves in the initial post-earthquake stage. By

30. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, governments and major groups in every area in which humans impact the environment; see www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/. Local Agenda 21 is a local government-led, community-wide and participatory effort to establish a comprehensive action strategy for environmental protection, economic prosperity and community well-being in the local jurisdiction or area; see http://www.gdrc.org/uem/la21/la21.html.

2005, the number of women involved in the women's community centres had grown to 10,000, and the number of cooperatives in Turkey has increased to 60. These women-led community-based organizations are seen as channels that connect non-governmental organizations and public programmes to grassroots women and their communities. These activities build resilience as they create widespread and robust information and action networks with linkages to local and national governments. In the event of future disasters, these networks will be able to respond rapidly in coordination and collaboration with authorities.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The initial benefits of organizing through the women and children's centres in the relief and recovery phase were that women who had lost their families, friends and livelihoods became part of social support networks and were no longer isolated. The centres later went on to nurture grassroots women's organizing processes, through which women transformed their roles and their communities by addressing community concerns such as services for children, livelihoods and housing—all of which are crucial for reducing the vulnerabilities and advancing the development of poor and disaster-prone communities.

Grassroots women's leadership was catalysed during the relief phase, but as the post-disaster process of women's organizing and leadership continued through to the recovery and reconstruction phases, the women and children's centres evolved into multi-purpose 'hubs' that fostered women's public leadership. More than a decade later, the number of centres continues to grow and they continue to be vibrant spaces managed by women who are empowering themselves to advance their priorities.

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work's experience with women shows that post-disaster efforts can lead to women's empowerment and has the potential to initiate long-term social change by increasing women's access to resources and by increasing their knowledge, capacities and self-confidence to assume leadership roles in organizing self-help groups. Post-disaster situations open up opportunities because decision makers are more open to participation and partnerships. Post-disaster conditions created socially acceptable reasons for women to participate in the public arena. When future disasters strike, these women will be better placed to resist, respond and recover as a result of the strategies and processes that they have put in place.

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CASE STUDY 6

ORGANIZING WOMEN TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group – Cameroon ■ **VERONICA KINI**

This small, isolated, village-based, organization's work in Cameroon demonstrates strategies used by grassroots women who have recognized the need to shift their livelihood activities from those that degrade and erode a sustainable natural resource base to those that protect natural resources and diversify livelihoods. This shift is crucial to their survival, as well as decreasing erosion and landslide risks, particularly in times of heavy rain and flooding. As a result, they are educating their communities on the adverse affects of shifting cultivation farming practices and exploring alternative livelihoods options that will increase grassroots women's incomes.

To strengthen their ability to control land and how it is used, the Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group (Ntankah) initiated negotiations with local authorities to increase and secure women's access to common property resources and to advocate for changing traditional cultural practices that deny women ownership of land.

BACKGROUND

Ntankah is a community-based organization that began in 1996 as a collective farming group. It is led by 24 women who are elected to the executive committee. This women's group is based in the small village of Ntankah near Bamenda in the mountainous north-west region of Cameroon. This is a savannah grassland region with a few mountainous forests and marginal soils that are highly susceptible to erosion caused by heavy rains. In addition, traditional shifting cultivation practices degrade soil quality. The region has a population of about 2.5 million and a population density of over 120 inhabitants per square kilometre, which is among the highest population densities in the country. About 78 percent of its population is rural.

Subsistence agriculture constitutes the mainstay of the economy and livelihoods of the region. Agricultural incomes are earned through traditional, non-mechanized farming on small plots, which are the result of the region's dense population and fragmentation of land. Soil degradation and erosion are the principal environmental risks in the region, putting natural resources, agriculture and food security at risk. Heavy rains coupled with unsustainable farming practices are causing lower crop yields, loss of traditional medicinal plants, decreasing game animals (particularly the cane rat), reduced forest cover, increased landslides and bush fires (with associated loss of lives, livestock and property), poorer nutrition, reduction in access to fuel wood, and increasing vulnerability, poverty and marginalization.

Continued land degradation also leads to conflict and confrontations between farmers and grazers, in which women generally suffer most. The challenges for Ntankah and other grassroots women have been to organize and educate their communities on how to reduce environmental risks (and thus the impact of disasters), how to enhance alternative sustainable livelihood strategies, and how to use dialogue and partnership to promote community collaboration with local governments.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Promoting sustainable agriculture to protect the environment

Recognizing that land and ecosystem degradation threatens rural communities' food security, livelihoods and stability, Ntankah developed the Grassroots Women Environmental Protection and Poverty Alleviation Project, which involves over 300 women[31] in curbing shifting cultivation practices. About 150 women have been taught sustainable agricultural practices and soil fertility management techniques such as proper land preparation, seed selection, and the importance of agroforestry. The training included the importance of integrating leguminous (nitrogen-fixing) trees into the farming system and trees for use as windbreaks.

Promoting revolving farming practices

Ntankah's revolving farming strategy supports individual and community incomes while building group solidarity. Each member (or group of members) is assigned a different day on which their individual plot is collectively farmed (a communal plot is farmed as well). What takes an individual several days to farm only requires a few hours when a large number of members works the plot at once. Revolving farming builds solidarity while advancing efficient use of scarce resources. Individuals benefit from income generated from the sale of their crops and the farming of their land when they are unable to do so due to illness or other reasons. The community and group benefit from the sale of the group's crops—proceeds contribute to a group fund that can be reinvested in farming tools or elsewhere. This practice creates an alternative approach to land use and incomes by maximizing the use of existing farming plots, thus reducing the practice of shifting cultivation agriculture.

Supplementing incomes

In line with the promotion of organic agriculture to reduce the erosion of natural resources, the Ntankah group has introduced compost production using household and farmland waste. The group has also constructed a modern 20-sow capacity piggery. Manure from the piggery is used on the group farm and distributed among group and community members to improve soil fertility, increase yields and ultimately, farmers' incomes. The group intends to use pig manure for the production of biogas to reduce the need for fuel wood.

Another conservation measure is the domestication of cane rats—a major source of protein and a delicacy in the region. To enhance foods security, the Dordrecht-Amanda Foundation assisted in training fifty-eight women in rearing and husbandry techniques.

31. This was developed by Ntankah C.I.G. in association with the Global Environment Facility Small Grant Programme of UNDP, within the framework the memorandum of understanding, 'Women Empowerment and the Global Environment', signed between the Huairou Commission and UNDP.

Improving access to emergency and income generating loans

Ntankah also has a revolving loan fund, *Njangi*, which provides micro-loans to its members. Loans enable group members to pay for school fees or training programmes, or to become self-sufficient by starting their own businesses and putting to use the entrepreneurial skills gained from mother's centres. These loans have made it possible for women in the group to buy and sell goods in local markets. Income-generating activities include organic soap and palm oil production, raising and selling chicks from incubators and baking and selling pastries. Members attest that this access to credit has guaranteed them at least the basic necessities. In addition to production and consumption loans, the *Njangi* also provides emergency loans which are used to buy food, medicines, test for HIV/AIDS, transport people to hospitals, pay for funerals, legal fees, and expenses related to claiming property rights.

Influencing decision-making

Ntankah women have successfully promoted women in local government by encouraging them to run for elected office. This has inspired young women and provided a vision of grassroots women's priorities that includes issues such as education, natural resource conservation and market access.

Ntankah successfully promoted one of its member's entrance into local government by using funds from its micro-finance project to organize a publicity campaign, canvas the village and organize communities to vote in large blocks on election day. Despite intimidation tactics, men misleading would-be voters at locations of polling stations and many husbands telling their wives to stay home, Ntankah succeeded in electing the first woman into their local government. Through their members in elected office, Ntankah women have promoted sustainable farming practices to other farmers in the area and have worked to secure land rights for widows who want to sustainably farm their plots.

Ntankah also influenced *fons* (local chiefs) to permit women into traditional councils. Traditional councils are led by *fons* who own large plots of land and have the power to designate its use in any manner they wish. Ntankah council women have promoted the success of revolving farming practices and have been given additional land for farming. Ntankah has used these plots for the Grassroots Women Environmental Protection and Poverty Alleviation Project, and been able to experiment with organic farming practices learned through peer-to-peer exchanges with other women's groups across Cameroon. Unfortunately, legal and cultural obstacles prevent the women from expanding sustainable practices that would prevent additional degradation of natural resources and reduce risk.

Negotiating with local authorities to secure women's access to land and natural resources

Currently, group members are carrying out local-to-local dialogues[32] (with an emphasis on land and forests) with administrative authorities in order to secure women's continued access to common property resources. The dialogue process ultimately aims not only to enable women to access common property resources, but also to change cultural practices and property laws that deny women ownership and inheritance of land. This process of organizing, dialogue and negotiations to ensure women's access to land and natural resources is being undertaken within the framework of the Women Land Link Africa regional initiative, a rights- and development-based approach to secure housing, property and inheritance rights for women. Grassroots women's ability to change land use patterns and prevent erosion of natural resources is influenced by their ability to access and control land and common property resources.

Organizing public spaces for women

The establishment of mother's centres have implications for grassroots women's ability to shape development and for mitigating disaster and climate risks. After connecting with the Mothers' International Network—the international network of mother's centres—Ntankah was inspired to set up a Mother's Centre of its own and to join the Network. The Ntankah group uses the centre as a community information centre, a document base, and as a space for convening women for information, learning, training. It is now connected to the Internet, and has helped to bring new information and communication technologies to the grassroots, greatly facilitating local and international communication. Courses, seminars and social activities regularly draw about 100 women to Ntankah's Gaife Mother's Centre.

32. Local-to-local dialogues are a methodology through which grassroots women and women's groups initiate and engage in ongoing dialogue with local authorities, with a view to influencing policies, plans and programmes in ways that address women's priorities.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

As a result of its organizing and advocacy, the Ntankah group and three of its network members became part of the Food for Progress 2006 programme funded by the United States Department of Agriculture. This is an agricultural and tree products programme involving over 500 women from three villages. The programme seeks to raise the living standards of households in vulnerable communities by enhancing the marketability of crop trees, tree products, fodder species and medicinal plants. The members of Ntankah Common Initiative Group are now actively engaged in producing tree nurseries for consumption and sale.

They are also working towards creating better on-farm working conditions, more productive and sustainable farming systems, greater stability in the supply of quality products to processors and end users, increased demand for and use of crops and a wide range of environmental services for current and future users. In addition, the group aids in empowering other women and vulnerable groups by developing both income generation and general life skills. For example, a project provided for a cassava processing unit with a capacity of 750 kg per day. To operationalize the unit, members have received training in business management, planning and bookkeeping. This has created opportunities for women to greatly expand the area under cultivation and to build their entrepreneurial capacities. The three village groups have elected women committees for project management, sales, marketing and general monitoring.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The Ntankah women's group's activities demonstrate the extent to which initiatives and strategies organized and developed by a relatively small group of village women can impact on development and disaster risk reduction. The Ntankah women have greatly enhanced awareness of the need for sustainable agriculture in order to combat the significant risks of environmentally damaging farming practices, and of the need for protecting the local natural resource base. However, Ntankah's ability to do so is linked to its ability to build its human, social, political and financial assets through advancing grassroots women's organizations' capacities, opportunities and leadership, and by influencing decision-making processes. These actions, which began with a small group of village women, have won formal recognition from other community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, governments and international organizations. The work of the Ntankah group also provides a base to organize and establish linkages among their networks in order to address the lack of women's ownership of land and the lack of control over natural resources—upon which communities' survival depends.

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CASE STUDY 7

MAKING SPACE FOR GRASSROOTS WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT

Ran Arunalu Women's Association, Jayashakthi Women's Association and Sevanatha Urban Resource Center – Sri Lanka ■ **MARNIE TAMAKI**

After a disaster, experts usually fly into affected communities to provide relief, build houses, plan recovery and reconstruction—and then leave. With them, knowledge, information and funds also tend to leave the community. The experience with the Indian Ocean Tsunami was similar.

The Ran Arunalu Women's Association, led by Sevanatha Urban Resource Center during the post-tsunami reconstruction period, sought to invest in women's organizational and leadership expertise in order to catalyse grassroots women's capacities to be permanent active agents of resilient development.

BACKGROUND

Recognizing the importance of advancing grassroots women's leadership, the Sevanatha Urban Resource Center (a community development non-governmental organization) facilitated the formation of two local women's associations in Moratuwa and Matara. Viru Vanitha, meaning 'strong women', is the local name given to a post-tsunami initiative to organize and empower grassroots women in two Sri Lankan cities. The project demonstrates how grassroots women could be engaged in local development processes.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

The newly established grassroots women's associations, Ran Arunalu in Moratuwa, and Jayashakthi in Matara, identified the most urgent issues in their communities: the high cost of borrowing money; the lack of livelihood opportunities; the lack of formal recognition of land ownership; poor infrastructure; and social problems, such as illegal drug use.

Grassroots women in new public roles in their settlements

The project focused on two main goals: strengthening organizational capacities, and building community resource centres in order to develop and manage space for women's activities.

The project team first held small kitchen meetings in order to identify active grassroots leaders. They then loosely divided a settlement into smaller clusters in which women began to meet regularly to reflect on their situation and identify priorities. The project went on to support grassroots leaders' visits to the Women's Bank in the neighbouring district of Hambantota, where women saw for themselves how forming savings and credit groups would help them to increase their incomes. During their visits to women's groups, they found two broad categories of activities: one related to savings, loans and livelihoods; the other related to community development.

The women's groups formed savings and credit groups in order to increase members' savings and capacity to invest in increasing their income. In addition, the savings and credit groups helped women contribute to community development

activities. Expanding women's access and control over monies leads to increased access to emergency funds, increased household incomes, an improved quality of life for the whole family. Such changes tend to reposition women in their families' and communities' eyes.

Some examples of the women's associations' development initiatives include women in Moratuwa organizing their communities to construct a path in their settlement with small funds they received from Sevanatha (a non-governmental organization), and organizing their community to clean and remove garbage from drains (thus preventing flood-causing run-off). In Matara, faced with a similar problem of garbage-clogged drains, women organized community members to monitor affected locations in order to identify people who were throwing garbage and prevent them from doing so. The women also demanded that municipal workers regularly cleaned the drains in their settlement.

The ongoing struggle of women from squatter settlements in both Moratuwa and Matara, however, is to obtain secure tenure to land. A benefit of engaging municipal councils in actions to improve their settlements is the recognition that communities receive from municipal officials, which they can then leverage to advance their negotiations for land tenure.

At a learning workshop held in March of 2007, one of the grassroots leaders evaluated the gains of the organizing processes: "The big change is that women have changed their attitude. They are now more motivated to act. Earlier no one showed interest in community issues, now they have organized actions to clean the neighbourhoods and then a celebration for Women's Day. In one cluster there was water seepage on the road and women collected money to repair this. Most men supported us but did not actively participate. Previously we had no contact among women—especially if we lived in different clusters—but now we are working together."

Designing, developing and managing community resource centres

A third of Viru Vanitha's funding was used to replace two small, underused community buildings in poor condition. The new centres will be managed by the women's associations and can function as safe places for women to organize, exchange information, receive and provide training and education, or as a refuge area. These uses are all facets of building community resilience in the flood- and tsunami-prone coastal areas and of adapting to the uncertainties of climate change.

Developing the women's space began with a participatory collaborative design *charrette* held in each community. This combined discussions and agreements on activities that women intended to organize and the spatial needs of the women and their key partners (e.g., non-governmental organizations and municipal functionaries). The results of the three-day *charrette* were presented by grassroots leaders to the larger community, local elected officials (specifically the mayors, who gave their support), and international donor representatives. Through the process of the design charrette, women were able to detail their experiences and expectations. This became a public declaration of intent, which reinforced accountability for all parties and was an important and quick lesson in design and construction processes.

Women formally monitored the construction progress through regular site meetings and acted as informal observers throughout the process. Actively involved in building construction, the women had a good understanding upcoming maintenance and management issues.

The Moratuwa centre is about 2,800 square feet, three times the size of the building it replaced. Its main floor houses a medical and dental clinic; it is an exemplary space designed and used by women. In partnership with the clinic, the main waiting area can also be used for larger public events that can incorporate its small outdoor courtyard. As requested by the women and the municipality, the roof featured reinforced construction in order to permit future additions—such as a small residence for an on-call nurse. There are also small planters to demonstrate and teach traditional plant growth.

The Matara centre is 1,600 square feet, and includes a small community reading room and a showroom area for displaying crafts and products. Jayashakthi intends to run a small hostel for special events (such as exchanges and training programmes) and a women-only fitness centre.

The centres were collectively designed to consider both community members' needs and income-generating considerations. For example, both centres have kitchen facilities for use in community events and community catering businesses.

In the centres, the large meeting space is used for social activities. There is office space for the Women's Bank and the women's associations, and a flexible area for workshops and training in computer use, after-school tutoring or other programmes. Though individuals are not allowed to make money directly from the buildings, because the space can be utilized to hold community markets, individual women can sell their products.

All project partners supported the buildings' eventual ownership by the grassroots women's associations. However, both the buildings and the land are owned by the state and cannot be fully turned over to a non-governmental organization. Thus, securing space for women materialized as a management partnership, where the municipality provides basic services (power and water) and the women's associations manage and use the space for their activities. The women maintain the building and manage rentals and other activities, with proceeds going to their associations.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Ran Arunalu and Jayashakthi women's associations have participated in several networking and peer exchange events to access and disseminate information. The groups supported training programmes to increase their associations' membership and to build organizational sustainability. In 2008, they presented their work at the Asian Grassroots Women's Academy at Cebu City, Philippines, and the Sustainable Cities Conference in Durban, South Africa. At these conferences, listeners were impressed and wanted to learn more about how grassroots women had taken on community contracts to improve sanitation facilities in their settlements. Through Sevanatha, both associations are part of Sri Lanka's CLAP-NET,[33] which enabled them to link with other groups working on post-tsunami reconstruction.

Both associations were the first women's societies to be formally registered with their municipalities. In Sri Lanka, community-based organizations registered with municipalities are eligible to get grants, undertake community contracts for the construction of small-scale infrastructure, and to act as agents for distributing construction materials. Women's persistence in linking to government programmes and partnering with local authorities also enabled them to enter decision-making bodies such as the municipal council's advisory group. This is a strategic alliance that women will continue to develop in their ongoing negotiations to secure tenure.

33. The Community Livelihood Actions Programme Network provides guidance to community groups that are engaged in savings and credit activities, improving housing and sanitation, or livelihood improvement activities.

Though municipal authorities agreed to provide title deeds, the cost of the titles is considered too high by community members. Land tenure is an important consideration in both pre-disaster planning and post-disaster recovery, where women without land titles have fewer opportunities to influence land use decisions or to claim equitable compensatory rights should their homes be damaged or destroyed.

The establishment of a women's community resource centre was a means of forging an important link with the municipality and of providing a visible physical presence of women's activities in the community. The centre acts as a focal point in emergency relief, recovery and reconstruction, and as a base for community activities. It is able to provide stability and a place for fostering women's leadership and collective action. In practical terms, two old and underused buildings have been replaced with new facilities. Women are active in the community through the centres, and have an identity within the community. Good partnerships have emerged, and women can continue to strengthen their organizational capacities and rebalance power differences.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Initially, this initiative appears to be firmly focused on meeting development needs. However, it becomes clear that the initiatives developed by these two grassroots women's associations have implications for building long-term organizational and institutional sustainability and, through that, strategies for disaster risk reduction. Women's vulnerability in disasters is exacerbated by the burdens and restrictions placed upon them by confinement to traditional domestic roles—which is compounded by their lack of participation in community organization, decision-making and management. Resistance to future disasters depends not only on the community's capacity to rebuild the previous physical fabric, but also on rebuilding the social fabric by broadening and strengthening its asset and resource base through the participation of all its members.

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CASE STUDY 8

TAKING ON MONEYLENDERS, MIDDLEMEN AND MARKETS THROUGH COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

Gram Mooligai Company Ltd. and Covenant Center for Development – Tamil Nadu, India ■ UTKARSH GHATE AND JOHN BRITTO

Nearly 56 percent of the population of the drought-prone state of Tamil Nadu, India depends on agriculture and related activities. However, this sector accounts for only one seventh of the state's total income. Grassroots women and a partner non-governmental organization, Covenant Center for Development, seek to increase rural incomes in order to reduce mass migration to urban areas and pressure on cities.

The scaled-up, sustainable businesses owned by women's federations and self-help groups supported by the Covenant Center build on local, traditional skills and resources. The effectiveness of their strategies for community-owned businesses in the semi-arid areas of Tamil Nadu is borne out by their ability to increase incomes of the rural poor; sustain, scale up, and leverage institutional support; and transfer this grassroots approach to rural enterprises from drought-prone areas to coastal areas—including those devastated by the Indian Ocean Tsunami. The initiative is simultaneously protecting biodiversity, conserving natural resources, supporting communities to access financial resources, and adding value to traditional livelihoods.

BACKGROUND

When the Covenant Center for Development began in 1989, its goal was to improve the lives of children living in Madura's slums. On finding that the city was flooded with migrants driven out of rural areas by chronic drought,[34] Covenant Center believed it could do more by promoting community-based solutions for sustainable livelihoods in the Madurai, Sivaganga, Virudhanagar and Dindigul districts, all located in the semi-arid, drought-prone Ramnad plains of Tamil Nadu.

Covenant Center found that the majority of able-bodied men from the rural districts around Madurai city would regularly migrate to urban areas in search of employment, leaving women, children and the elderly behind to cope with the lack of income and inadequate food—a third of the families left in the villages did not have sufficient food, and 50 percent of children suffered from malnutrition. Unpredictable rains and failed crops led landless labour to move from farm work to other sources of income such as charcoal making, collecting and selling medicinal plants and fruit, and other small trading and vending activities. But invariably, the small size of their businesses, their lack of information, their high indebtedness and their powerlessness led to their exploitation by moneylenders, middlemen and markets—leaving women with meagre incomes.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Organizing self-help groups to improve access to credit

Rural women were mobilized in self-help groups of 12–20 women, in which each woman saved Rs. 20–30 a month and pooled their savings to create a group fund. Group members could take loans at interest rates collectively determined by the members. Self-help groups provided crisis-credit for food, travel, house repair and medical expenses, and for business loans, such as investment in livestock, tailoring machines and small shops. After six months to a year, it was common for the self-help groups to open a bank account and access bank loans at an interest rate of 1 to 1.5 percent per month.[35] Over the past 10 years, these group have saved approximately Rs. 0.6 million and taken loans amounting to 40 million; 95 percent of which have been repaid.

34. Years of severe drought: 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987 and 1989.

35. While some consider this a high rate of interest, members of self-help groups find it considerably lower than interest rates charged by local moneylenders.

Federating self-help groups to leverage their collective power

Women from an initial 620 self-help groups joined together to form federations of self-help groups. Federation leaders, treasurers and accountants were chosen from among the groups. In cases where CCD provided staff, the staff was still paid by—and accountable to—the grassroots federation leaders. Each constituent self-help group paid a small sum for membership and annually elected the federation's committee members, who decide on policies and guidelines for lending, attending training programmes, linking with banks, insurance companies and other industries, and accessing social protection and government entitlement programmes for children and the elderly.

Thus, the self-help groups brought women together, gave them access to credit, enabled them to account for and manage money and provided opportunities for collective decision-making and priority setting. The federations then aggregated the individual self-help groups' financial power to leverage capital to promote members' small businesses. The persistent concern, however, remained identifying local resources and traditional skills livelihood options that would provide sustained incomes to the rural poor and would prevent or reduce migration.

Upgrading traditional livelihoods

While there was local demand for local products based on traditional skills and resources (e.g., fruit pulp, nuts and herbs), the community businesses needed to evolve to navigate these markets. Rural markets had low absorptive capacities and urban markets demanded high-quality standards, which were difficult for rural producers to achieve through traditional production methods. The Covenant Center for Development partnered with federation leaders to transform and scale up traditional livelihoods through value-added processes. In addition to the credit leveraged, women with activities in common were encouraged to pool their resources and to work collectively in order to take advantage of economies of scale. In addition, market information and appropriate technologies were provided, raw materials were processed in order to fetch higher prices, and agents were appointed by women's groups to bypass or negotiate with middlemen.

One such upgrade was for women selling the *tulsi* leaf, a traditional remedy for coughs. Through market surveys, women found that the processed leaf can be sold for five times the price of the raw leaf. By providing the machinery for processing and powdering the leaves, the Covenant Center provided small businesses within the federation access to high value, quality conscious, niche markets. This facilitated their gaining the Indian Standards Institute mark for quality assurance, and ensured increased returns for the women.

Scaled-up, sustainable community owned enterprises

A survey of self-help groups told women that members were spending a minimum of Rs. 200–300 per month on medical expenses. The solution to this problem was led by a senior federation leader, Kasthuri Chandrasekar, who inspired and trained neighbours to grow medicinal herbs in kitchen gardens. This enabled members to halve their health care expenses by treating several common health problems with a dozen potted plants. Grassroots women, supported by non-governmental organization partners,[36] revived their traditional knowledge of herbal medicines and home remedies and helped supply plants. Kasthuri trained hundreds of other women how to grow and use kitchen herbal gardens. These women in turn trained more women, and the practice spread to 20,000 rural households in Madurai.

36. Foundation for the Revitalization of Local Health Traditions and the Covenant Center for Development.

Herbal medicine enterprise: Gram Mooligai Company Ltd.

In addition to reducing health expenses, the medicinal plants initiative also became the basis for a scaled-up community enterprise that provides sustained incomes. In 2000, a community-owned enterprise for gathering and processing medicinal plants was initiated by 30 self-help groups who, with the support of non-governmental organization partners, contributed their savings as seed capital (Rs. 500,000). Funds were raised from foundations and donors[37] to cover the costs of a building, machinery, initial labour costs, raw materials and marketing. The collective marketing agency was incorporated as Gram Mooligai Company Limited, with the women's self-help groups as shareholders. The self-help group members also selected the governing board members who would be responsible for company policy, its periodic evaluations and governance. Community control and management was ensured by a decision to allow only gatherers or farmers' groups to buy company shares.

The company has been selling medicinal plants to large companies manufacturing herbal medicines such as Himalaya Drugs and Natural Remedies. After trading raw medicinal plants for three years, Gram Mooligai Company Limited has expanded and developed its business by processing plants to develop 10 ready-to-use herbal formulations that have been standardized and clinically tested. These medicines are being marketed by self-help group marketing teams who earn a 35 percent commission on these products. It is important to the women's groups that their own families and communities also benefit from the use of herbal medicines, so there are currently about 20,000 rural customers within the rural women's network. Income from the herbal medicine enterprise has enabled many of the region's landless labour to survive drought.

Women's federations are aware that the risk of competition can cause over-harvesting of medicinal plants, depleting local plant stocks. Thus, the women's networks of gatherers committed to harvesting only mature plants, leaving the rest to regenerate. This practice will sustain both the stocks of plants and the women's income over time. Gatherer groups keep records of their harvest practices, necessary for eco-friendly collection practices certification. Cultivators of medicinal plants often practice organic cultivation, which requires carefully updated and maintained records.

The quality and efficiency of their methods have been supported by an independent study commissioned by non-governmental organization partner, the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions from the Botany Department of the American College, Madurai. Women are also actively involved in forest protection committees, promoting the sustainable harvest of forest products such as medicinal plants, edible fruits, gums, resins, nuts, and wild honey.

In addition to the herbal medicine enterprise, grassroots women's groups have received support to initiate community enterprises focused on retail marketing of food and energy-efficient stoves.

Aharam, community enterprise for retailing high-quality, low-cost food

Based on a finding that the rural poor are compelled to buy poor quality food, five federations of self-help groups created Aharam to enable women to buy pulses, oilseeds and spices directly from local farmers and then sell these to households within their networks. This means local women can buy better quality food for prices 5 percent lower than what they otherwise would have paid—while increasing local farmers' incomes. This community enterprise for retailing food employs about 100 women to source and sell quality, low-cost food to 1,000 poor families around Madurai. Customers are provided free credit for 2 months to pay for their groceries, and about a third of all the goods such as pulses, millets, spices and oil are sourced directly from 100 local farmers. A significant portion of Aharam's profits comes from supplying food products in bulk to industrial buyers (e.g., mango pulp to the Parle Agro Company, and it has requests to supply tamarind pulp to the Birla Retail Company).

37. Funds were raised from Ford Foundation, Danish International Development Agency and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust.

Adharam, community enterprise for clean, green energy

Rural women spend a significant amount of time and energy collecting fuel wood, which is becoming increasingly expensive. In addition, the smoke generated by firewood causes health hazards,[38] particularly for women and children. In 2000, to promote clean and safe energy in rural areas, the Covenant Center for Development launched Adharam, a community enterprise to provide clean, green energy. Adharam partnered with British Petroleum to sell smokeless stoves using biomass pellet prepared from farm waste. By 2006, the company sold 15,000 smokeless stoves in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.[39] Selling stoves and biomass pellets prepared from farm waste has provided a sustainable income source to about 100 rural women agents. The smokeless stoves reduced women's fuel wood collection work and costs; reduced the indoor pollution and the accompanying respiratory problems caused by smoke; and reduced household carbon emissions by 70 percent. Since the Indian Ocean Tsunami, this enterprise has expanded to Nicobar.

Transferring grassroots women-led approaches to tsunami-affected areas

Recognizing the effectiveness of the Covenant Center for Development's approach to community enterprises, it was invited to work with coastal communities in Tamil Nadu to rebuild their livelihoods following the Indian Ocean Tsunami in December 2004.

The Covenant Center found that while non-governmental organizations and the government focused primarily on fishermen, coastal farmers whose livelihoods suffered equal damage were overlooked. A federation of 1,500 farmers was organized to address this. Kasthuri Chandrasekar was among the leaders who travelled from Madurai to coastal areas in order to mobilize tsunami-affected women in Nagapattinam, Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram. She said: "We encouraged women to attend the District Collector's meeting to get more information and learn about the government funds that they could get for their families or communities. Then, we organized small groups of farmers whose land had been salinated by the tsunami waves. People said they would not be able to grow anything on this land for 3 years. But we worked together to treat the soil with gypsum to flush out the salt. The farmers were organized into federations and were given loans to grow crops. Because of our work the farmers could harvest a good crop within a year's time."

In the Nagapattinam district, most organizations in tsunami-hit communities focused on fishermens' livelihoods, replacing their boats and nets. Unfortunately, fisherwomen, who are primarily vendors, were neglected. These women were organized into fishvendors' federations and supported with credit, market stalls, transportation equipment and ice boxes to resume and upgrade their vending activities.

Further south, in the Kanyakumari district, a community-owned coir enterprise was organized to restore the livelihoods of 500 coir workers affected by the tsunami. Similarly, 500 coastal artisans (e.g., shell craft workers) were federated and supported with funds, training, tools and market access. In the nearby Rameshwaram district, another 500 women were organized to collectively sell seashells to the Kanykumari federation to use in their crafts. Today, the livelihoods federations actively promotes mangrove forest conservation, sand dune conservation and responsible fishing.

As part of disaster recovery processes, grassroots women have initiated many disaster risk reduction programmes. These include building tanks to improve water supplies, building walls to protect areas from coastal erosion or flooding, and establishing tree plantations as windbreaks. Improved, permanent housing protects families from cyclones and earthquakes, and women are at the forefront of accessing government entitlements.

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38. The most recent figures from the World Health Organization show that in developing countries where mortality is high, smoke from solid fuel is one of the top four risks leading to death, disease and injury. 'Practical Action. (2004) Smoke—The Killer in the Kitchen'. Available at: http://www.practicalaction.org/smoke/report_1.

39. Sales in Maharashtra is through a partnership with self-help groups linked to the non-governmental organization Swayam Shikshan Prayog.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Covenant Center for Development partners with four women's self-help group federations. The federations have over 16,000 women members from more than 300 villages in nine districts. The federations include networks of artisans; medicinal plant cultivators and collectors; fishing, farming and coir communities; community based organizations; and coastal resource-based activity groups. The Covenant Center for Development's model for economic empowerment through community-based sustainable enterprises is being transferred to 15 non-governmental organizations in eight other Indian states, covering more than 10,000 coastal fisher people and 10,000 dryland farmers.

The most obvious impact of the community enterprises is women's economic empowerment, which helped many families rise above the poverty line. The Government of India places the poverty line at Rs. 500 per month—the community enterprises support women to earn approximately Rs. 1,000 per month. Women's earnings, coupled with their access to credit through the self-help groups, enables them to cover household expenses without becoming indebted to moneylenders. The increase in incomes also means that families have attained food security. In addition, the increased access to finance means that families need not wait for daily wages to buy food; rather they can buy and store food in advance.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The grassroots women's federations, with their non-governmental organization partner, the Covenant Center for Development, have pioneered a series of innovative strategies to secure sustained incomes for grassroots women living in rural areas. They have systematically moved from organizing self-help groups to federations that leverage institutional finance to scale up community enterprises that have niche markets and are based on local skills and resources. These enterprises have succeeded despite the challenges they face in highly competitive and exploitative rural and urban markets. While Covenant Center, other non-governmental organizations and professional partners have provided support to develop these businesses, the businesses are all owned and governed by grassroots women. These community enterprises are building resilience in multiple ways by increasing women's incomes, by reducing rural indebtedness, by improving health and food security, and by increasing the use of clean energy.

Though the community enterprises and their approach to sustainable livelihoods were initiated in semi-arid, drought-prone areas, this case study demonstrates that grassroots women leaders have led the transfer of this approach to tsunami- and flood-prone coastal areas.

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GROOTS INTERNATIONAL

Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) International is a global network of organizations that empowers grassroots women's groups to lead development processes in their communities and to influence public decision-making. Operating as a flexible network across 30 countries, GROOTS fosters a movement of grassroots women who can articulate and demonstrate a pro-poor, women-centred approach to sustainable community development.

GROOTS International's thematic work on community resilience began more than ten years ago when members experiencing disasters in Honduras, India, Jamaica and Turkey realized that though disasters were devastating, they also presented opportunities to change development strategies and to transform social relations. Recovery initiatives and processes created opportunities for women to reposition themselves in their communities and to undertake public roles in relief, recovery, reconstruction, adaptation and development in order to enhance their quality of life.

In 2008, GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission (a larger coalition of women's networks and professional partners founded by GROOTS International) launched the Community Disaster Resilience Fund as a mechanism to channel resources directly to grassroots women's groups in at-risk communities. The Fund supports grassroots women's groups to demonstrate their capacities to scale up effective pro-poor disaster risk reduction practices and to collaborate with local and national governments to upstream these initiatives. The Community Disaster Resilience Fund demonstrations were initially undertaken in four countries: Guatemala, Honduras, India, Nicaragua and Peru. In the second phase, pilot programmes are being scaled up in phase one countries, and demonstrations are being initiated in six new countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

UNDP AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The Gender Team of the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) is the institutional anchor of UNDP work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Through its extensive field presence, UNDP facilitates the integration of gender equality in the work of its country offices and has initiated and implemented numerous innovative initiatives.

Through dedicated interventions that empower women and promote gender equality, the UNDP Gender Team works to empower women by mainstreaming gender in all core UNDP practice areas.

UNDP

UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

World leaders have pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the overarching goal of cutting poverty in half by 2015. UNDP's network links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach these Goals. Our focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, environment and energy, and HIV/AIDS.

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