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Gender Inclusion in Build Back Better Programmes - Kaluarachchi

**Gender Inclusion and the Impact on Women's Lives in Post Disaster Build Back Better Programmes in Sri Lanka**

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## **Gender Inclusion and the Impact on Women's lives in Post Disaster Build Back Better Programmes in Sri Lanka**

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on consideration and inclusion of gender, specifically aspects in relation to women in post disaster rebuilding strategies and policies in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts in Sri Lanka. It explores whether gender concerns were addressed within the context of the Build Back Better programmes and examines the prospects for promoting livelihood opportunities, household incomes and community benefits. The objectives of the paper are to examine the development of gender inclusivity agenda in Sri Lanka, explore gender in the context of disaster events, and the impact of gender responsive programmes on livelihoods of women. Women's participation and engagement in decision making and the potential contribution of their micro incomes on household earnings are also discussed. The research mainly adopts a qualitative methodology, relying on literature and case study reviews complemented by quantitative data collected by government and international agencies in relation to the location. Policy documents and data sets related to gender inclusion in South Asia, focusing on Sri Lanka and the chosen locations, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, were analysed. Three case studies were selected and reviewed in detail against their aims, objectives, results and benefits. An inductive approach was used for the analysis to identify themes that were common or different in the case study examples. These themes were related to the impact on women's engagement and livelihoods in post disaster contexts. The result and information show that gender inclusion has not advanced considerably. While foundations for gender equity and inclusion are laid, many more progressive initiatives and development protocols are needed to mainstream gender inclusion in post disaster development programmes. It is expected that findings will provide a deeper understanding of gender inclusion in redevelopment activities

and the related governance processes to engage women and respond to their needs with the available resources.

**Key Words-** Gender Inclusion, Build Back Better, Post Disaster Reconstruction, Gender Equity, Gender and Disaster, Participation of Women

## **1.0 Introduction**

In the last decade, several developing countries in South Asia have gone through natural disasters and civil conflicts. The physical destruction that accompanies disasters creates an urgent need to re-build housing and infrastructure facilities within a short time. International agencies have advocated post disaster reconstruction to be an opportunity to 'Build Back Better' (UN, 2006), a holistic concept that improves a community's physical, social, environmental, and economic conditions to create a more resilient community. Enarson & Meyreles (2004) state that sensitivity to gender in post disaster activities provides new strategies for mitigation, new priorities, new forms of collaboration and responds to people's relationships with their ecological, social, cultural, and political environments providing opportunities for new lessons to be learned. Though gender in disaster contexts is in focus more and more (Liddell, 2020), there is relatively little research and a gap in the literature that specifically focuses on how men and women may be differently impacted in their perception of disaster risk and decision-making, and the implications this may have on disaster response and prevention (Huang et al 2012, Lindell et al 2005).

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men and influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society (CIHR, 2020). Gender inclusion is a concept that transcends equality. It is the notion that all services, opportunities, and establishments are open to all people and

that male and female stereotypes do not define societal roles and expectations (Maryville, 2020). Gender equity is defined as fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs (UNESDOC, 1995). Gender inequality remains an issue in many South Asian countries (UN, 2018). Sri Lanka has the second highest Gender Development Indicator in South Asia (UNDP, 2017) and falls in the medium gender equality category. However, the gender gap is highest in relation to income (ADB, 2016).

Gender relations influence all aspects of life: personal, social, economic, and political and in many countries resulting in women occupying a subordinate status within family and community. These gender aspects lead to significant differences in how women and men of all age groups experience and respond to disasters before, during and in the aftermath (Ariyabandu, 2009). No systematic sex disaggregated data are available (Valdes, 2009), but evidence shows that where gender acts as a barrier to fairness and equality, it is women who are disproportionately affected (Castillo & Lucas, 2008). This was the case during the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004), Cyclone in Bangladesh (Chowdhury et al. 1993) and in more recent events, due to their social positions, abilities and cultural norms constraining their access to emergency warnings and cyclone shelters. Even though the loss of women's home-based workspaces, articles, and equipment can have serious repercussions for the household economy, these losses are rarely documented. Nevertheless, many examples have shown that women are not only victims but capable of withstanding trauma, resilient and agents of change (Ginige et al 2009). Sri Lanka has been affected by multiple disasters triggered by both natural and manmade hazards. The recent floods and landslides (2017) contributed to an extensive economic loss and damage to communities and their assets. The country faced its worst natural disaster by the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and droughts in 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, Sri Lanka fought a civil war for decades that ended in 2009 and the reconciliation process is still underway.

The outlook in Sri Lanka is mainly gender binary where society allocates its members into one of two sets of gender roles, gender identities, and attributes based on the type of genitalia (Lorber, 2007). While the early rebuilding programmes were new to the gender inclusion concept, the later rebuilding programmes attempted to incorporate Gender Action Plans (ADB, 2009). Hence it is a unique location to conduct research that contributes to the wider Build Back Better (BBB) programme and gender inclusivity in post disaster rebuilding.

This paper focuses on consideration and inclusion of gender, specifically aspects in relation to women in post disaster rebuilding strategies and policies, their development, and the impact on the lives of community in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts in Sri Lanka. It explores whether gender concerns were addressed within the context of the Build Back Better programmes and examines the prospects for promoting livelihood opportunities, household incomes and community benefits that arise from gender inclusivity. The objectives of the paper include an examination of the development of gender inclusivity agenda in Sri Lanka, an exploration of gender in the context of disaster events, and the impact of gender responsive programmes on livelihoods of women. The opportunities for women to participate, engage in decision making processes and the potential contribution of their micro incomes on household earnings are also discussed.

The research mainly adopts a qualitative methodology, relying on literature and case study reviews complemented by quantitative data collected by government and international agencies in relation to the location. This combination can help to reveal the inter-relationships between localised and transformative practices of individuals, families, and other social groups, and their wider socio-cultural, physical, and economical environments (Aitken et al, 2009). Such interdisciplinary research is recognised as a productive and practical way to generate breadth and depth in understanding of complex social processes, such as the role of gender inclusivity in eliminating poverty, enhancing livelihoods and resilience. A literature review was carried

out with keyword searches and included journal papers, stakeholder reports, case studies and action plans. Policy documents and any available data related to gender inclusion in economy, focusing on Sri Lanka and the chosen locations, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, were analysed. The relevant quantitative data that substantiate research arguments were extracted mainly from Department of Census and Statistics and Asian Development Bank (ADB), Sri Lanka. Three case studies were selected and reviewed in detail against their aims, objectives, results, and benefits. An inductive approach was used to analyse the case study review text and identify key criteria that were grouped into generic themes common or different in the case studies. These themes were related to the impact of gender inclusive policies on women's lives in Build Back Better programmes.

The paper first presents a discussion on gender and disaster followed by the development process of policies and strategies related to gender inclusion in Sri Lanka. Women's contribution to the economy is discussed and three case studies that incorporated gender inclusivity criteria in the selected locations are presented to capture insights to project aims, objectives and the extent they were achieved. It is expected that findings will provide a deeper understanding of gender inclusion in post disaster redevelopment activities and the related governance processes to engage women and respond to their needs with the available resources.

## **2.0 Gender and Disaster**

The need to incorporate gender considerations into post disaster reconstruction has been accentuated by many studies (Ginige, 2009, Chakrabarti & Enarson, 2009; Amaratunga and Haigh, 2011; Yi and Yang, 2014; Gotham and Cheek, 2017). In their reviews of gender and resilience in several developing countries, Smyth and Sweetman (2015) reported that, although women had less access to rescue and relief and faced much greater vulnerability than men, a gender-aware and gender-sensitive approach is often missing from the response of the

administration. Hence Gender mainstreaming, a strategy to promote decision making and policy that considers the needs and interests of women and men (Bradshaw, 2015) has become a theme that warrants much attention.

The research gap in relation to gender and how they are impacted upon in disaster is concerning since the research that does exist suggests that women and men are often impacted differently by disasters (Enarson & Meyreles 2004). These differences may exist because women are normally the caregivers for both immediate and extended family members in disaster settings. They often have increased family and domestic responsibilities before and following a disaster, together with their economic dependence on male wage earners, limited economic opportunities, and a wage gap that penalises women (Enarson & Morrow, 1998). These factors are exacerbated by limited access to social services and community networks following a disaster (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008).

Women are known to be more vulnerable to climate impacts not only because of their gender, but also due to a variety of factors including age, levels of poverty, ethnicity and marginalisation (Thomas, 2020). In Sri Lanka, the post tsunami Road Map for Disaster Risk Management (2006) included gender equality as ‘strengthening women’s rights by reinforcing the fundamental rights in the Constitution to ensure a coordinated and inclusive approach to risk reduction and disaster preparedness’. Many projects, as shown in the case study examples (2004-2014), attempted to incorporate gender issues to reduce vulnerability of women to disasters. However, the May 2017 floods and landslides affected more women (401,882 women compared to 377,937 men), and a total of 304,708 households headed by women. The main concerns related to gender issues observed in recent disaster events include:

- Lack of sex disaggregated data at national and local levels hindering planning, decision-making and in providing support in pre and post disaster situations.
- Unsegregated space arrangements in temporary shelters that compromise safety and



security of women and children together with inadequate support when dealing with bereavement of family members and trauma.

- Loss of shelter, uncertainties and fears related to re-location, and recovery of lost livelihoods. Damages to women's and children's familiar spaces including kitchens, toilets, wells and bathing areas, schools, learning spaces and equipment. Lack of engagement by the local level officials in relation to recovery and relocation-related issues and suggestions.
- Loss of livelihood, specifically women's home-based self-employment and disruption of labour opportunities.
- Poor engagement of women in delivering early warnings and preparedness for responses and lapses in drawing on women's capacities in temporary shelter management, and recovery planning.

### **3.0 Gender Inclusion in Post Disaster Redevelopment Policies in Sri Lanka**

In the last few decades, integration of gender perspectives to national and international disaster redevelopment policy and programmes has gained attention. As the community response to disasters shifts more towards proactive rather than reactive measures and the vulnerability shifts to resilient paradigms, women's participation and the integration of gender have become strategic aims of the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) process (Nonoguchi et al 2016). Bradshaw and Arenas (2004) argue that stakeholders tend not to address the inter-relationships of gender roles in their reconstruction plans; thus, missing out on an opportunity to translate disasters into opportunities for transformation. The Build Back Better programmes attempt to address this opportunity by recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction actions to strengthen the recovery capacity and decision-making effectiveness prior to the onset of disaster (UNISDR, 2017).

Gender criteria were not integrated when the National Disaster Management Centre was established (2005) in Sri Lanka to coordinate, implement and monitor disaster management projects after the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004). The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs was also not included missing an opportunity for it to play a key role in mainstreaming gender in DRR policies, plans, and programs (Nonoguchi et al 2016). Major international donor agencies funding post tsunami development projects included provisions and targets for Gender inclusion and Gender Actions Plans (GAP) aiming to strengthen women's participation in governance and public affairs and empower marginalised women.

In 2014, National Policy on Disaster Management included a section on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Vulnerable groups were identified as disabled, sick, elderly, pregnant women, children, and displaced (Nonoguchi et al 2016) and included the critical statement: "Disaster management should ensure gender equality and in particular the empowerment of women and girls." Nevertheless, no detailed guidance on how to promote the empowerment of women and girls in disaster management, gender vulnerabilities or gender needs were provided. As of October 2015, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs participates in the regular meetings of the newly established Disaster Management Coordinating Committee (DMCC). This top down governance process is gradually shifting to a more bottom up process by engaging local communities in the decision-making process (Figure 1).

Figure 1- Stakeholders involved in the governance process of post disaster redevelopment Programmes

Currently in South Asia, Rapid Gender Assessments are undertaken when development loans are approved by donor agencies to assess gender equality results and progress against their organisational objectives (ADB, 2016). Aid agencies have identified gender equity as a driver of change essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable growth, reducing poverty, and improving living standards.

#### **4.0 Women's Economic participation and contribution in Sri Lanka**

The Global Gender Gap Index examines the gap between men and women across four fundamental categories; Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment (The World Economic Forum, 2018). Sri Lanka ranks well in several Human Development Indicators, such as maternal mortality, life expectancy and improvements in educational attainment (The World Bank, 2015). Even so, Sri Lanka's overall status of women gender empowerment is below the average level of other developing countries in the region (EFA, 2010) due to low incomes earned by women and the low level of participation of women in the labour force. In Sri Lanka, women made up 53 percent of the working age population, but only 34.4 percent of the employed population (Figure 2), a figure that has remained static for decades (Dept. of Census & Statistics, 2017). Most women in the labour force are engaged in low paid work in plantations and in the garment sector (Wickremesinghe et al, 2006) and contribute 29% of the GDP (DailyFT, 2018).

Figure 2. Women's Participation in the Labour Force- (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2019)

Research in Sri Lanka and other developing countries have revealed that women suffer more from poverty than men (Tudawe, 2001). Unpaid employment is higher among women across age groups, indicating their marginalised position in the society (UNDP, 2017). In Sri Lanka, the unemployment rate for women (7.7%) is more than twice as much as that of men (3.5%) (Dept. of Census and Statistics, 2011) and migrant workers, female headed households, unpaid family workers, unmarried and widowed women in poor families and elderly belong in this category. Female-headed households comprise of 17 percent of the total households in the country (Ministry of Finance, 2000). With the social and cultural customs encouraging women to be principal care givers, many women prefer self-employment, which enable them to carry

out household activities while earning an income. Similarly, gender wage gaps and occupational segregation limit women from participating in the labour force. The legal framework for employment prevents women from taking up night work and the laws governing maternity leave make employers bear the entire cost, potentially deterring employers from hiring women.

There is also an unaccounted economy, the 'care economy' referring to the provision of services of care of children, the elderly, and the infirm. The care economy provides important resources for the development of human capabilities and capacity. It has costs, in terms of lost opportunities and wages, and it has benefits, stronger family and social ties, and high-quality services for the dependents (Folbre, 2006). The reasons for not being engaged in work force illustrate that most women are engaged in housework, being the main caregiver of the family (Figure 3). Even though this scenario is slowly changing in the contemporary society, there is a long way to go before this trend is reversed and the women form at least a substantial proportion of the labour force.

Figure 3. Reasons for women being economically inactive (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report, Department of Census and Statistics, 2017)

## **5.0 Case Studies**

Case studies derive an in-depth understanding of a single or a small number of cases set in their real-world context. This approach is defined by Yin (2009) as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. The case study approach is also viewed as a useful tool for the preliminary and exploratory stages of new research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate (Rowley, 2002). However, exploratory case studies are more suitable when literature or existing knowledge base is poor (Yin, 2009). New research

into nature of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) ascertain that inquiry should converge on multiple realities and can be only be studied holistically in relation to their immediate contexts.

### **5.1. Case Study Selection**

All BBB programmes in Sri Lanka are administered through Asian Development Bank and it is a challenge to identify completed case study examples with sex-aggregated data, focusing on post disaster context, with a time frame to illustrate long term impact. The case study locations, Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts in the North East of Sri Lanka were both affected by civil war (1983-2009) and destroyed by the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004). The social framework and the economic infrastructure in these districts were severely damaged, leaving people with limited livelihood opportunities. Batticaloa and Trincomalee also have high number of war widows and households headed by women when compared with the other districts (ADB, 2016).

After reviewing several projects, three that had project-specific gender development themes; gender mainstreaming or gender inclusive targets were selected. All three were monitored by funding agencies according to the same guidelines and protocols. The three case studies that informed the research covered a mix of rural and urban locations, variety of sectors and included criteria that addressed the constraints and needs of marginalised people or ethnic minorities (ADB 2015 & 2016). These were initially evaluated for their aims and objectives to establish the gender considerations and the end results were reviewed for the impact on the community. Qualitative analysis was carried out by an inductive approach that examined key words, phrases within the case study review literature and identified similarities, relationships and criteria that were common or distinctive in the example studies. Case study analysis as well as theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study in related literature assisted in this review and evaluation. Further analysis and cross comparisons resulted in identifying more

generic themes that are common to the examples which illustrate the impact of gender inclusive policies on women's livelihoods, economic capability, and their engagement with the community.

Case Study 1 had sex-disaggregated data collected by the funders that enabled gender analysis and the monitoring of gender equality results. Case study 2 & 3 had limited sex-disaggregated data collected, which made it challenging to examine how aims and objectives were achieved. Case Studies 2 & 3 also piloted the employment of a gender specialist in the project to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and increase the awareness of gender inclusion, participation of women and men in village development planning and decision making.

## **5.2. Aims, Objectives & Results of Case Studies**

### **5.2.1 Case Study 1- Improving Connectivity to Support Livelihoods and Gender Equality, 2009-2013.**

This project supported the reconstruction and maintenance of the rural access roads, improving the mobility and transportation of local communities. Project objectives included promoting skills development for rural communities, particularly vulnerable groups; identifying options to upgrade rural transport services; and documenting social and gender-related results. It aimed to assess if and how the new access roads contributed to the narrowing of gender inequalities and explored whether there were differential benefits for women and men and how these affected gender roles, relations, and inequalities.

The project aimed to engage 50% participation by women in livelihood training activities and achieved 66% exceeding targets. Short training courses on enterprise development, cattle farming, poultry farming, small trade and business, and commercial home gardening were taken by 1,529 women and 605 men. Younger community members were provided with vocational training courses including electrical wiring, driving, tailoring, nursery teaching, welding,

automobile mechanics, beauty therapy and hairstyling (84 females and 70 males). At completion, 74% of the trainees in “semi-skilled” training program were women, which exceeded project expectations (ADB, 2015). Dairy farming, home gardening, handicrafts, and cookery, deemed to be of interest to women were also introduced. In the more comprehensive training courses, women preferred traditionally accepted vocations such as dressmaking, preschool teaching, and beauty and hair styling.

Mid project survey reported that women were the sole income earners in approximately 15% households. At completion of the project, women’s contribution to household income had improved and the percentage of women contributing equally as men to household finances risen by 20%–25% (ADB, 2015) (Table 1)

Table 1. Women’s contributions to household income increasing because of the project. (Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils- Performance monitoring survey report, 2012)

All participants benefitted with the improved access to services and markets. For 30%–50% of women, the most positive impact was improvement in children’s travel to school and was identified as the primary benefit. The roads improved access to local and regional markets, schools, and health care facilities (Figure 4).

Figure 4- Key criteria that benefitted from Case Study 1 (ADB, 2015).

In relation to engagement with local officials, 94% of participants stated there had been no change in their interactions other than a few meetings at the start of the project, and around 86% of participants did not meet with officials on a regular basis (ADB, 2015).

### **5.2.2 Case Study 2- North East Coastal Community Development Project (NECCDEP), 2004-2010.**

This Project aimed to reduce poverty and meet basic needs in the tsunami-affected provinces

engaging most vulnerable communities to promote social mobilisation. Women were recognized as the most disadvantaged with a clear focus on supporting women with loans, acknowledging that women and men had been affected by the conflict in different ways and the recognition of the high numbers of households headed by women in project areas. Several strategies were included to enable women's engagement and respond to their needs. Several targets were set for women's participation in all activities of the project, including in decision-making in key activities.

Overall, 65% participation rate of women in the project was achieved exceeding the target of 50%. Priorities were identified by women in 32% of the projects and included common wells, production centers, multipurpose buildings, markets, preschools etc. In this instance, the target of 50% was not met. On average, 55% of participants in environmental and conservation projects were women. Four information centers that focused on women's needs were also established. From the 661 community groups formed, 277 (42%) were women's groups. 96% of the loans were given to women to promote livelihood activities and small enterprises. Voluntary labour programmes were organised so that women could adjust timing around their other responsibilities.

Gender training including gender awareness was conducted to create a supportive environment for women's participation. 30% women participated in District Committees; and special gender training programmes were provided for committee participants. Gender balance training was provided to women and men focusing on the household division of labour and its impact on women's income-generating activities.

### **5.2.3 Case Study 3 North East Community Restoration and Development Project (NECORD-II) Tsunami- Affected Areas Rebuilding Project (TAARP), 2005-2010.**

The project included several strategies to encourage women's participation and social



mobilisation across all segments of the community, including the vulnerable and the marginalised. It encouraged the formation of small enterprises for vulnerable groups and women and promoted women's involvement in community-based organisations. The project aimed to target much wider rehabilitation and development aspects than the other two case studies and promoted gender inclusive activities in many infrastructure, community, and livelihood development programmes (Hunt et al, 2010).

Women participated in training activities to improve their employability and the project actively promoted women's entry to high levels of public administration.

The project promoted education by restoring services and facilities, encouraging recruitment and teacher training of women and men willing to live in project areas. A large cohort of female students (45,151) and female teachers (1826) benefited from the reconstruction of schools, classrooms, water supply and sanitation facilities, and living quarters. Similarly, another group of women (220,736) and 38 female health officers benefited from the provision of new facilities that include a maternity ward and living quarters for doctors and midwives to retain them in the rural area. Forming of Women's Rural Development Societies increased social cohesion.

## **6.0 Impact of Gender Inclusivity on Women's lives in Post Disaster Build Back Better Programmes**

Disasters severely compromise women's ability to earn a living due to their dependence on agriculture, home garden crops and the informal sector. The informal status of their economic activities mean that a large proportion are unable to benefit from government compensation schemes meant for Small and Medium Enterprises that have been affected by the disasters. Additionally, as women's livelihoods are often home-based, the loss of their homes add to their hardships further worsened by social obstacles against property and land ownership, limited access to financial resources and assets, all of which are central to recovery.

The Case Study (CS) data and information illustrate that while the selected schemes had incorporated [several](#) gender inclusion criteria, only an incremental increase in women's engagement and empowerment is evident after completion. The limited impact is mainly on local contexts and does not expand to regional or national contexts. Even though there was community engagement, women's engagement with local officials or the governance processes were limited or non-existent.

Gender inequity remains mainly due to women's position in society, position in the household, limited livelihood options and the wage gap. While all three case studies provided training to increase employment opportunities there is no data available in relation to how this training has impacted women's lives in the long term. It also strengthens the case that disaster research needs to have a robust sex disaggregated data collection and monitoring process to capture any long-term impact on women's position in society and their contribution to household income. More research is needed as most stakeholders fail to recognise women as main actors, but rather as victims or passive beneficiaries (Bradshaw 2013, Hewit 1997). Case Study 1 had collected more gender related data and provides more insights to the influence of gender inclusion policies. Findings from similar research may lead to a better understanding of not only the causes of women's vulnerability, but also what prevents women and other marginalised groups of people from actively participating and taking leadership roles in post-disaster recovery activities.

In the Eastern District of Sri Lanka, women's contributions to the economy are mainly through informal home-based production and caregiving services, micro enterprises, and paid labour. With the damages and destruction to homes and contents, self-employed would lose their assets such as food-preparation utensils, machinery, furniture, and raw materials etc. Home garden cultivations are mostly carried out by women, and will be destroyed, covered with mud and sand in the case of natural disasters, requiring cleaning and re-planting in most cases. Due to

suspension of production activities, wage labour opportunities will be non-existent for long periods of time.

The case studies provide insights regarding how opportunities for women can improve their participation in community and decision-making activities and income earning capacities in post disaster contexts, that can have an impact on gender-based vulnerabilities. In the chosen case studies, women reported that their participation in Community Based Organisations enabled them to have ownership, accountability, and a positive influence on small-scale rural projects. While generic influences from the Post Disaster Re-development programmes can be easily identified, several underlining themes that provided direct benefits from gender informed BBB programmes can also be recognized in the example cases. These interrelated themes have an impact on many aspects of women's lives and their improved status in community resulting from gender inclusive policy implementation.

### **6.1 Benefits from improved infrastructure.**

The access road developments addressed several gender related issues and derived different benefits for women and men as their travel purposes and patterns differed according to gender. Women were inclined to make brief and recurrent local trips than men and together with improved access, benefits include improved safety and livelihood options and improved contributions to family incomes. This was more prevalent in CS1 while in CS2 women improved their management skills by maintaining small infrastructure projects that increased social capital. In CS3 the women and wider community had multiple benefits from improved infrastructure assets such as schools, classrooms and sanitation facilities that enabled employment opportunities.

Kumarage (1998) theorised that 'female participation in the labour force is low due to low mobility facilities for women and thus improved mobility is likely to improve their living

conditions'. Investment and development of rural roads offered more benefits for women with convenient, faster, and safer travel with better access to social services, such as education and health care, and access to markets. They could take the crops to market as well as buy products needed for small home crafts easily, which provided them with many livelihood improvement opportunities.

Safety concerns on roads differed according to gender and night travel was not an option for women and girls, if there were concerns regarding potential violence or harm. Family members had differential access to modes of transportation and rehabilitated roads made it possible to travel by bicycle and motorized transport for both men and women. Though transport became easier, women did not have priority over any motorized transport over men which illustrated their inferior position in the household.

## **6.2 Training for Traditional and Non-traditional Livelihoods.**

All three cases included training women in traditional and nontraditional livelihoods. Although many women were comfortable with traditional female occupations (sewing, hair styling etc.), these sectors were often oversaturated and had little possibility for expansion. Thus, it was important to encourage, train and support women to engage in nontraditional livelihoods that had better potential of generating an income. However, to be successful, it was important to engage the wider community to accept women working in new and innovative employment and initiatives, as they required longer-term support, commitments and resources from their local governance systems as well as their families. This change in mind-set has been slow to materialise in some situations where cultural norms took precedent.

Generally, in all cases, participation in training activities improved engagement, livelihoods and earning capacity together with their confidence and status in family and local community. In CS1 the younger group were more interested in vocation related training while the older

women were attracted to home-based livelihoods. In CS2 & CS3, that included gender balance training, improvements in employment opportunities were present while CS3 predominantly offered female unskilled workers opportunities in agriculture and fish-drying activities.

### **6.3 Increased Engagement in Community Decision Making.**

Women's contribution to Community Based Organisations, including managing and maintaining small infrastructure projects helped to increase their confidence, status and social capital. While this aspect was prevalent in all three case studies, CS2 and CS3 saw a greater openness between wives and husbands and women getting more engaged in discussion of different types of matters in family and community. In these two case studies, women reported that they exchanged information with their husbands about community development projects and related technical issues. In CS2 this was the result of providing women with new knowledge and skills giving them confidence, increasing access to credit and income, and organising women into groups that involved them in community decision making. In CS3 the women went on to form Rural Development Societies.

### **6.4 Opportunities for employment.**

Employment opportunities increased for female unskilled workers in new agricultural facilities and enterprise activities established by women. In CS2, with the training provided, women were able to try out many home-based crafts independently or jointly with the assistance provided by the community organisations while in CS3, the seed packets for home gardens, and post-harvest training resulted in increased harvest from women's home gardens and reduced vulnerability to poverty. Additional water supply improved the crops, increasing incomes and nutrition and reduced time spent by women fetching water.

Overall, in all three case studies, income generation and subsistence food production by women reduced vulnerability to poverty. Opportunities were provided for short-term employment as targets for improving women's employment were built into the initiatives. Women had the opportunity to earn an income, learn new skills and gain confidence. The jobs were mainly temporary, in the informal sector with no added benefits. Equal pay for men and women was observed and resulted in improved livelihoods and status in society. In CS2 more loans were offered to women while CS3 encouraged the formation of small enterprises by offering micro credit and funding.

### **6.5 Increased Contributions to Household Incomes.**

Women's ability to start new or expand existing income-generating opportunities was constrained by lack of time, social norms, attitudes, and restricted access to commercial resources. Benefits for women could not be assumed as family incomes they earn may not be shared equally nor will they result in equitable benefits. Disparities and gender relations within households influenced how women benefitted from increases in household income as decision-making and resources within the family were not shared equally. The female headed households benefitted from increased income but could only be achieved with the support of extended family support for child care or where adult children were present.

In CS1 there was an increase of women who were the sole earners while in CS2 the income generation and contribution reduced their vulnerability. In CS3 the improved infrastructure strengthened the women's capabilities and contributed to their income generating capacity.

In a much wider country context, Sri Lankan women possess 92.6% of literacy rate, above its regional peers and the share of female university student level is around 60% (DailyMirrorLK, 2016). This educational status is not reflected in the economy, emphasizing a significant gap in

transforming available human resources to generate economic outcomes. The economic contribution of women is vital to sustain the economic growth in a changing socio-economic landscape (Daily FT SL, 2018). After many initiatives and projects to engage women in the labour force the overall data for Sri Lanka shows it has not increased significantly. In 2018 this amounts to 35.9% while the male labour force participation rate is double at 74.7%. This is again more significant in the Eastern District Batticaloa and Trincomalee where the labour force participation is the second lowest compared to other districts in the country (Figure 5).

Figure 5- Labour force participation in Sri Lanka, Capital City Colombo, Batticaloa and Trincomalee in 2017 (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report, Department of Census and Statistics 2017)

International financial agencies and donor organisations have recognised this potential and are looking to promote micro-financing schemes and lend small business loans to women via local aid packages to promote entrepreneurship in women (Morgan Stanley, 2015). A strong cooperative effort of various stakeholders, particularly government, local authorities, industry, investors and citizens are critical to create supportive environments that can promote women's labour force participation, which will not only empower women but also improve family living standards, uplift rural economy and leads to overall economic prosperity of the nation.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

Collecting sex-disaggregated data in relation to gender roles, responsibilities, work, and relations is key to advance research in gender inclusion to inform further research, policy and strategies. Gender roles, family dynamics and household roles are inter-related and improving this type of data collection and analysis is crucial to documenting gender equality results and impacts. This lack of data could also be due to the lack of a representative assessment teams with local knowledge and challenges.

The results and information from the case studies show that nearly 15 years after the Asian Tsunami and the long civil conflicts, gender inclusion has not advanced considerably in the Eastern District of Sri Lanka. While foundations for gender equity and inclusion are laid, many more progressive initiatives and development protocols are needed to mainstream gender inclusion in post disaster development programmes. While all three case studies illustrated impact from gender inclusion there were distinctive characteristics that were particular to each case. CS1 demonstrated how improving infrastructure and access can empower women and their contribution to community while CS2 illustrated how women can make a significant contribution by engaging with the decision making and the governance process. CS3 proved how women's participation and mobilisation in the economy can be achieved by micro credit and funding schemes.

In learning lessons from the cases, several challenges can be identified to eliminate barriers, minimise vulnerabilities and maximise opportunities.

- More focus is needed on supporting women's involvement in decision-making and management of projects. Currently they are only involved in small local infrastructure projects that have direct impact to their households and community. They are not engaged in the governance process, locally or regionally.
- More attention is needed in livelihood methods and enterprises that will increase the productivity of women's labour. A major gap in gender inclusion in work force is still evident and more training in innovative ways of engaging them in the workforce must be piloted and mainstreamed.
- Clearer policy guidelines are needed on supporting women entrepreneurs in terms credit and loan provisions, as are more monitoring and analysis to ensure that women can obtain financial assistance and benefits from increased income.



It can also be concluded that engaging in Community Development Organisations and Women's Organisations boost skills and confidence as well as influence community decisions. Future initiatives could explore strengthening these organisations so that they can play meaningful roles. These can also provide the care network that is needed when women enter the work force.

A number of international financing and donor agencies are exploring Microfinance projects in developing countries. The aim is to lift women out of poverty, promote education and income, which can lead to health and nutrition improvement, productivity and contribution to the economy (Morgan Stanley, 2015). Harvard Business Review (VanderBrug, 2013) states, 'Women in emerging markets reinvest 90% of every dollar earned into their families' education, health and nutrition, compared to only 30 to 40% of every dollar earned by men'. The case study results illustrated that promoting entrepreneurship in women can have an impact on achieving long term sustainable development goals endorsed by the Build Back Better Programme. Needless to say, that an effective governance framework must be in place to achieve success in these long-term ventures.

In consideration of the post disaster development issues, purposeful and sustained long term strategic action should be taken to ensure that gender analysis and social inclusion of recovery needs and issues are carried out, prior to forming multi-sectoral recovery and reconstruction policies. Further, in the recovery approaches there should be short, medium and long-term strategies for consideration within the overall recovery strategy. The participation of communities including women through consultations, meetings and engagement is a balanced approach to analysing perception of needs and related supply. This kind of engagement and assessments help with evaluation, participation of communities in their recovery and also provide information to communities of their entitlements. It also helps to review and promote the need to consider Build Back Better, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities

through a decentralised lens as against the previously centralised approach.

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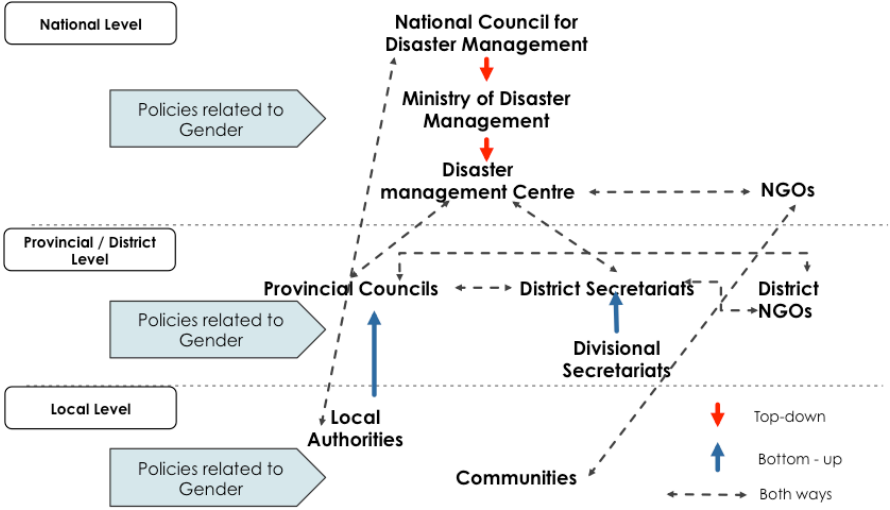


Figure 1- Stakeholders involved in the governance process of post disaster redevelopment Programmes



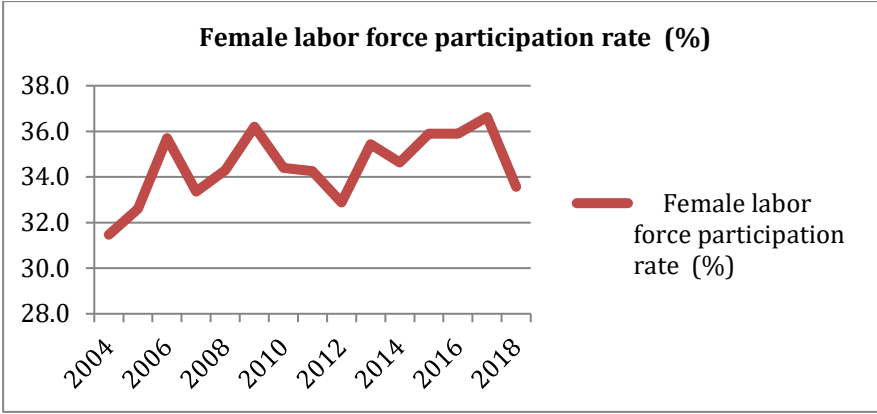


Figure 2. Women’s Participation in the Labour Force- (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2019)

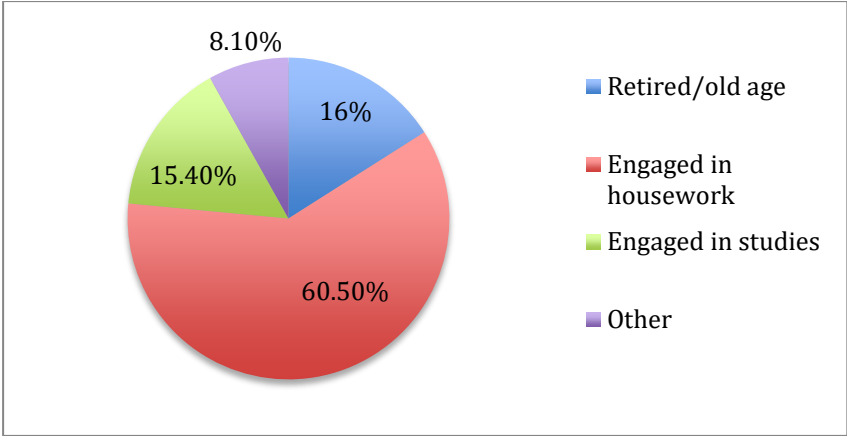


Figure 3. Reasons for women being economically inactive (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2017)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Trincomalee District (%)</b>	<b>Batticaloa District (%)</b>
Beneficiaries of the project who experienced an increase in household income	89.7	86.5
Non-beneficiaries who experienced an increase in household income	42.1	53.7
Women contributing to household income before the project	26	10.9
Women contributing to household income at project closure	44	35.3

Table 1. Women's contribution to household income increasing as a result of the project. (Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils- Performance monitoring survey, 2012)

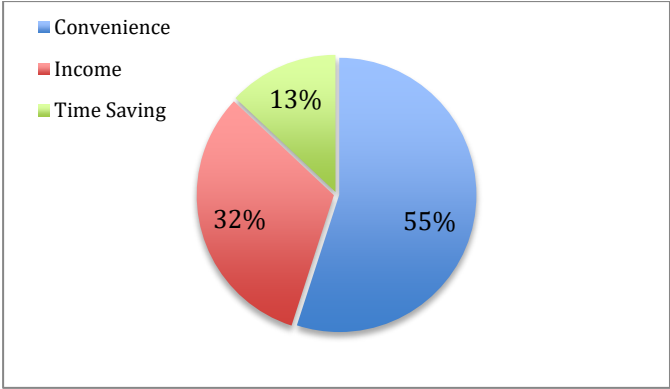


Figure 4- Key criteria that benefitted from the project (ADB, 2015).

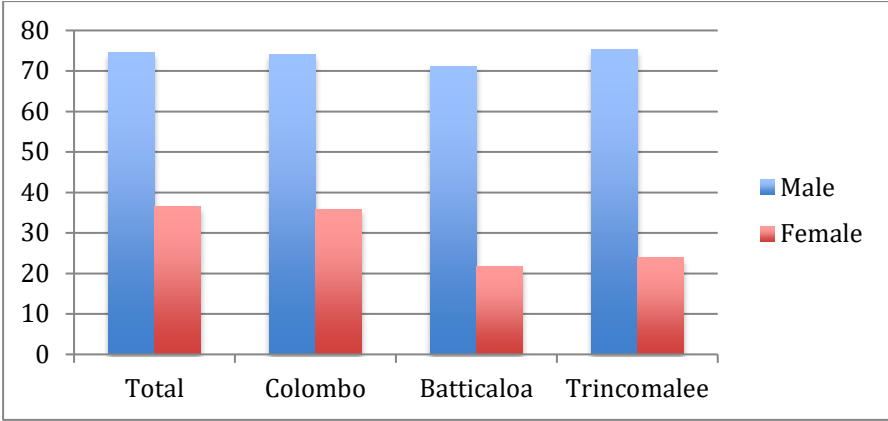


Figure 5- Labour force participation in Sri Lanka, Capital City Colombo, Batticaloa and Trincomalee in 2017 (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report, 2017)