GENDER AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: PERU

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

KEY FACTS

- Research focused on five aspects of an EWS where gender is most influential: vulnerability, participation, dissemination, response, and power and decision making.
- 90 per cent of respondents think that women are more impacted by flooding and mudslides than men.
- Women are more involved in the EWS than men: 54 per cent of women have participated in community risk mapping, compared with 20 per cent of men.
- Women are not as well connected for information and immediate warnings: only 52 per cent of women own a mobile phone, compared with 84 per cent of men.
- 96 per cent of women think authorities need to do more to consider gender-based needs in the EWS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All marginalised gender groups need to be provided with training and knowledge which meets their needs. This should include support to protect livelihood assets, stress management and counselling, and technical training.

All marginalised gender groups need to be able to access warnings directly. Redressing the imbalance in mobile phone ownership and access will be vital in ensuring that people of all genders have equitable access to immediate information.

An emphasis on long-term preparedness and clear household level decision support tools may support women to be confident in taking the lead and responding. Exploring options to reduce the risk of loss and damage to property may encourage men to evacuate promptly.

All marginalised gender groups need to be effectively represented in community, local government, and national level structures. The promotion and endorsement of people of all genders as authoritative voices is vital for their participation in groups, committees, and agencies to be active and meaningful.

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CHECKLIST FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EWS

CASE STUDY: CECILIA*

Cecilia*, an 83-year-old woman with visual impairment from Chosica, Peru, has experienced flooding in her neighbourhood since 1978. She sees women as having a vital role in supporting the community during flooding. Women stay in the community longer, whereas men often migrate for work, and women have more opportunities to talk with neighbours and educate and inform other women about the risks they face and what actions they must take to prepare.

Cecilia is not part of the response brigade herself because of her visual impairment, but she participates in the meetings and is well informed. ‘Nowadays women are more confident than before. The women who participate in the brigades are easier to approach. They are more accessible when they talk to their neighbours and explain what to do.’

She sees men as being less likely to share their knowledge: ‘Authorities always look for the [male] leaders. But women are better leaders. They talk directly and demand what is needed. When women are together, we do not let ourselves get pushed around by the authorities.’

She believes that the alert system has made the biggest difference for the elderly, because they generally stay inside their homes and do not always have good communication with their neighbours, so are vulnerable to missing out on key information. The signs that have been installed, the activation of the siren, and the solar-powered monitoring systems give Cecilia and her neighbours peace of mind.

Note: * indicates that names have been changed

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References and Further Reading

