

DRENCHED INEQUALITIES: EXPLORING THE GENDERED CONSEQUENCES OF FLOOD DISASTERS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Natural disasters have consistently posed significant challenges to human societies; however, not everyone is equally affected by these disasters. Biological, sociological, and cultural variables all work together to make women more vulnerable than men. This study examines the various ways women are exposed during and after natural disasters. Beyond physical risks, women also endure psychological and emotional hardships, heightened stress, anxiety, and exposure to gender-based violence in post-disaster settings. Limited access to healthcare, clean water, and reproductive services further exacerbates their challenges. Despite these obstacles, women play critical yet undervalued roles in disaster response and recovery efforts through their knowledge of local networks and community support. The study indicates that only inclusive disaster management strategies, which address gender-specific vulnerabilities, can improve community resilience and ensure equitable recovery outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters have occurred repeatedly throughout human history, causing widespread devastation and posing significant challenges for the affected people. In recent years, scholars and policymakers have acknowledged the disparate effects of catastrophic disasters on different social groups, particularly women (Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). A combination of biological, social, and cultural factors often renders women more vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters (Mishra & Rath, 2024). Additionally, gender roles imposed by society and cultural norms often restrict women's mobility and access to resources, exacerbating their vulnerability during catastrophes. The effects of natural catastrophes on women extend beyond the obvious physical challenges. A study

conducted by Bhutto & Wang (2024) highlights the psychological and emotional impact that natural disasters have on women. The devastation of homes, livelihoods, and community support systems can lead female survivors to face a range of psychological challenges.

Furthermore, post-disaster circumstances frequently foster an environment that facilitates gender-based violence (Ferris, 2011; Parkinson & Zara, 2013). Another study (Bradshaw, 2013) indicates that women may experience barriers to accessing healthcare, clean water, sanitary facilities and reproductive health services. Poor post-disaster aid programs and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate women's vulnerability. Despite these challenges, women demonstrate remarkable resilience and play

crucial roles in disaster response and recovery. Studies have shown that women frequently participate in community-focused disaster management initiatives due to their knowledge of local environments and social connections (Bradshaw & Fordham, 2013; Ariyabandu, 2009). Unfortunately, their contributions are often overlooked or undervalued to a significant extent. Addressing the varied consequences of natural disasters on women requires gender-sensitive approaches to disaster management and policy development. This study examined the unique vulnerabilities and experiences women encounter during and after these events. This will help identify and address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women. Identifying gender-specific vulnerabilities is essential for developing effective disaster management programs that strengthen women's empowerment and well-being in disaster-affected areas.

1. Case Study of Pakistan

Pakistan has frequently experienced the devastating effects of natural disasters due to its location. These multiple catastrophic disasters, including earthquakes, floods, droughts, and landslides, have a significant impact on its inhabitants. The catastrophic earthquake that occurred in northern Pakistan in 2005 was one of the most major natural disasters in modern history (Halvorson & Hamilton, 2010). The earthquake, measuring 7.6 in magnitude, resulted in extensive devastation, resulting in almost 73,000 fatalities and the displacement of millions. Entire villages and towns were destroyed, leaving survivors to deal with the difficult task of rebuilding their lives in the aftermath. Another type of natural disaster that occurs frequently in Pakistan is flooding. The country's yearly flooding impacts millions of people due to its geographic location. In 2010, Pakistan saw one of its most catastrophic floods, impacting almost 20 million individuals and inflicting significant destruction on infrastructure, crops, and livelihoods (World Bank, 2010). The floods increased the vulnerability of already marginalised communities by

causing widespread relocation, fatalities, and economic suffering. The destruction caused by the 2010 flood was unprecedented in Pakistan's history. Although the mortality rate is comparatively low, under 2,000, and injuries are below 3,000, more than 18 million individuals have been impacted. Nearly 2 million households are classified as "severely affected" (National Flood Reconstruction Plan 2010). The floods severely impacted Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. Over 20 million individuals were affected, with 7 million displaced from their homes, and the economy suffered significantly. Six million children were profoundly impacted. Estimates suggest that \$5 billion is required for restoration and reconstruction (Barohi, 2011).

Table 1: Key Impacts of the 2010 Floods in Pakistan

floods, and droughts. These calamities have been terrible.

Impact Area	Details
Date of Onset	July 2010
Affected Population	20 million people
Deaths	1,985 (official estimate)
Injured	2,946
Displaced Persons	7.2 million
Homes Damaged/Destroyed	1.6 million
Crops Affected	2.2 million hectares (including rice, cotton, sugarcane, maize)
Livelihoods Lost	Millions are dependent on agriculture, livestock, and daily labour
Infrastructure Damage	Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and irrigation systems
Provinces Most Affected	Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan
Estimated Economic Loss	USD 10 billion
International Aid Pledged	Over USD 1.74 billion (from various international donors and UN agencies)

Source(s): Government of Pakistan (2010), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010).

Due to these devastating natural disasters, the government has been compelled to implement extensive preventive measures to safeguard the population from the catastrophic effects of natural disasters. In recent years, the Pakistani government and various organisations have undertaken initiatives to enhance disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. The creation of disaster management authorities, early warning systems, and community-based programs aims to mitigate the effects of natural disasters and enhance resilience. Nevertheless, persistent obstacles, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and socioeconomic inequalities, continue to hinder efficient disaster management and exacerbate the vulnerabilities experienced by affected individuals. To summarise, Pakistan's geographical location and climatic conditions make it vulnerable to a variety of natural disasters, including earthquakes,

Consequences, including loss of life, displacement, and economic difficulties. To enhance community resilience in Pakistan, comprehensive policies that prioritise disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and sustainable development practices are necessary to address the challenges posed by natural disasters.

2. Literature Review

The gendered dimensions of catastrophic consequences have drawn much attention in recent years. Moreover, the unique risks and experiences of women both during and after disasters have been investigated. Examining noteworthy conclusions and perspectives from relevant research that has investigated the diverse impacts of disasters on women and the importance of gender-responsive approaches in disaster management is crucial. The two primary categories of disasters that frequently arise in the developing world and necessitate international relief efforts are anthropogenic emergencies and natural disasters (Cuny, 1983). Individuals from various age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds have unique

vulnerabilities (Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004). Natural disasters do not discriminate based on gender. They usually exacerbate already-existing social inequalities, which disproportionately affect women and marginalised communities.

Because of systemic injustices, caregiving responsibilities, and limited mobility, women are more vulnerable during and after disasters (Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). In the South Asian context, gendered vulnerabilities are further magnified by poverty, patriarchal norms, and limited access to resources and decision-making spaces (Bradshaw, 2013). According to Enarson and Chakrabarti (2009), gender inequalities make women more vulnerable and limit their ability to deal with and recover from disasters. Furthermore, research has highlighted the unique challenges that women face in such crises. Enarson (2016) notes that women's reproductive health concerns are frequently disregarded during catastrophe response and recovery efforts. Following a disaster, women's health and well-being can suffer as a result of limited access to key reproductive health services. Another theme that has been investigated is the issue of violence against women. According to Enarson (1999), disasters generate situations that enhance the likelihood of violence against women, including higher levels of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. The breakdown of social institutions, overcrowded shelters, and inadequate security measures create an unsafe atmosphere for women, aggravating their vulnerabilities. To overcome these challenges, experts and practitioners have emphasised the importance of gender-responsive approaches in disaster management. Enarson and Pease (2018) believe that gender mainstreaming in catastrophe policies and activities is crucial for reducing the impact on women. It entails incorporating a gender perspective into all stages of disaster management, such as risk assessment, planning, response, and recovery.

Furthermore, promoting women's involvement and decision-making in disaster management procedures might improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of interventions. Research in Pakistan on the impacts of natural disasters has highlighted the interplay between gender and vulnerability more frequently. Halvorson (2003) emphasises that women, especially in rural

regions, endure substantial hardships during floods, including the loss of livelihoods, obstacles to relief access, and greater gender-based violence. Despite Pakistan's frequent devastation by floods, gender-responsive disaster policies and recovery frameworks are inadequately developed (Sultana, 2010). Furthermore, post-disaster assistance and reconstruction frequently perpetuate conventional gender roles instead of contesting them. The literature analysis highlights the disparate effects of disasters on women, emphasising their heightened vulnerability and unique challenges during such events. The findings underscore the need for gender-responsive strategies in disaster management that address the unique needs and experiences of women. By acknowledging and rectifying gender disparities and empowering women as catalysts for change, disaster management initiatives can enhance resilience, diminish vulnerabilities, and foster more equitable and inclusive results for all.

3. Statement of the Research Problem

The existing literature on gender and disasters emphasises the importance of integrating gender perspectives into disaster prevention, emergency response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Gender dynamics, shaped by societal structures, result in distinct roles, responsibilities, capacities, and experiences for men and women. These differences become particularly pronounced during crises and disasters, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. However, despite the growing recognition of these issues, a comprehensive analysis of how gendered experiences intersect with various phases of the disaster process remains lacking. This study aims to address the gap by examining the gendered impacts of disasters, with a focus on the specific challenges and inequalities faced by women during different phases of disaster management, including prevention, response, and recovery.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study employs a feminist political ecology (FPE) and vulnerability theory framework to examine how floods in Pakistan affect men and women differently. The research employs these interconnected theoretical approaches to examine how social,

political, and economic factors influence the varying experiences and outcomes of men and women during and after natural disasters.

4.1. Feminist Political Ecology (FPE)

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) theorises that gendered power dynamics are directly connected to environmental crises and access to resources. It challenges the notion that natural catastrophes affect everyone equally, instead examining how gender, class, and location interact to make people more or less vulnerable (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayer, & Wangari, 1996). In the case of floods in Pakistan, FPE helps illustrate how women's limited mobility, caregiving obligations, and lack of involvement in decision-making processes exacerbate their challenges in addressing catastrophe risks and recovery efforts. It also examines how governmental policies and humanitarian efforts can either support or challenge existing gender hierarchies.

4.2. Vulnerability Theory

Scholars such as Cutter (1996) and Wisner et al. (2004) have explained this theory, which defines vulnerability as the traits and situations of people or groups that affect their ability to foresee, cope with, resist, and recover from dangers. It highlights the

social, economic, and political conditions—such as poverty, landlessness, and a lack of education—that make certain groups more vulnerable to the effects of disasters. When applied to gender, vulnerability theory shows how structural disparities make women more likely to be harmed and less able to adjust before, during, and after floods. This study goes beyond a simple view of women as passive victims by combining various concepts. Instead, it examines closely the political, institutional, and cultural factors that create gendered vulnerabilities and influence how people in Pakistan access resources, recover from disasters, and build resilience in the aftermath.

5. Phases of Disaster Cycle

Every stage of the disaster cycle requires specific interventions and strategic planning. Mitigation and prevention are the primary actions in the pre-disaster phase. During the emergency phase, relief services prioritise preventive measures to prevent further loss of life through activities such as search and rescue. The rehabilitation phase emphasises medium-term measures, including the construction of temporary shelters and the provision of essential food supplies to the impacted populations. In the reconstruction phase, the physical and social infrastructures of impacted regions are restored.



Figure 1: Disaster Management Cycle with Gender Markers
 Source: Adapted by the Author from Enarson (2016), UNDP (2010)

6. Objectives of the Study

The floods in Pakistan in 2010 caused significant social, economic, and structural devastation. This study seeks to elucidate the causal relationships between gender dynamics and disasters. The primary objective of this paper is to analyse the effects of a natural disaster from a gender perspective. This study examines the various impacts of flooding on women in the immediate, medium, and long term, including a brief analysis of the crisis that ensued following the 2010 flood in Pakistan.

7. Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research methodology that examined secondary sources to investigate the impact of natural disasters, such as the 2010 floods in Pakistan, on women. The research utilises a diverse array of existing materials, encompassing scholarly journal articles, policy studies, disaster impact assessments, and gender-focused evaluations from governmental and international organisations. This study employs thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns, narratives, and gaps in women's experiences, vulnerabilities, and coping strategies related to flood disasters. The selected sources are critically investigated using feminist political ecology and vulnerability theory. It will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how structural inequities shape varied gender catastrophe outcomes. This methodological approach allows the research to synthesise multiple views while highlighting systemic difficulties in disaster response and gender inclusion in Pakistan.

8. Results and Discussion

This study emphasises the disproportionate impacts of natural disasters on women and the underlying societal structures that exacerbate these vulnerabilities. It also highlights the critical need for a gender-sensitive approach to disaster management; the discussion synthesises findings on the gendered dimensions of disaster response and recovery, focusing on Pakistan's 2010 floods as a lens to understand broader issues of gender inequality in disaster scenarios.

8.1. Gendered Vulnerabilities in Disaster Contexts

Natural disasters disproportionately impact women because of prevailing social, economic, and cultural disparities. Women frequently encounter heightened vulnerability owing to constrained access to resources, limited mobility, and caregiving obligations. These gaps intensify during catastrophes, amplifying their vulnerability to hazards such as displacement, poverty, and gender-based violence. The views and needs of women are frequently overlooked in catastrophe preparation and response, obstructing equitable recovery. Mitigating these gendered effects necessitates the incorporation of gender-sensitive strategies throughout all stages of crisis management.

8.2. Inequitable Access to Disaster Alerts

Pakistan lacks a well-structured early warning system equipped with advanced technology. Numerous catastrophe management measures are documented in planning documents. During the floods of 2005 and 2010, individuals consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequate early warning system. In most instances, only mosque speakers have been utilised for this purpose, resulting in individuals residing beyond the audible range of mosques being the last to learn the news. In the rural regions of KPK, Punjab, and Sindh, personal face-to-face connection is a dominant mode of communication. Women often lack the ability for unrestricted mobility to take advantage of such a mode of communication. Men predominantly possess access to radios and various telecommunication devices. Women are primarily dependent on male relatives to have access to such information. A considerable number of women believed that community gatherings served as an efficient method of communication. Media reports indicate that in communities aware of impending floods, women regarded word-of-mouth information as a warning (Oxfam International, 2011; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2010). At the same time, men did not perceive it as such, believing that official communication channels and evacuation orders were necessary for it to be deemed a warning (UNIFEM, 2010). In numerous regions, cell phones and text messaging served as early warning systems, while in Sindh, government officials utilised them for

announcements; nonetheless, women and girls lacked autonomous access to these resources.

8.3. Challenges in Evacuation and Rescue Operations

The subsequent action following the activation of the early warning system is to evacuate the impacted region promptly to mitigate losses. The evacuation operations are primarily conducted unevenly across the affected communities. According to one study, women suffer particular challenges during evacuation, including a lack of privacy, mobility constraints, and limited access to transportation and information. It also limits their ability to respond to flood warnings and seek safe shelter (Oxfam International, 2012). The fragmented evacuation operation resulted in the presence of diverse populations in numerous relief camps, leading to issues of conflict and segregation. To ensure women's safety, relief camps should be established near towns with easy access to transportation and other essential services. During the evacuation, women and children should be prioritised. Effective evacuation plans require organised transportation, ensuring that families remain together and that vulnerable individuals within communities receive priority treatment. Nonetheless, the minimal death toll indicates that government personnel executed rescue operations more effectively in various regions of the country.

8.4. Cultural Constraints and Gendered Risks in Post-Disaster Relocation and Sheltering

Floods, in most cases, cause considerable damage to housing near riverbanks, and the primary priority of the government and aid groups is to offer shelter to the affected population. In Pakistani society, male family members often decide to relocate without consulting women, who are not involved in the decision-making process regarding the relocation or the specific district or camp where the migration will occur. Primarily, displaced individuals were housed in community facilities, such as school buildings, followed by those residing in camps. Women have distinct concerns that vary based on their location and type of housing. It is believed that women living in shelters such as camps and schools are afraid of sexual harassment, loss of privacy, and overall uncomfortable

owing to cultural and security concerns (UN Women, 2011). A television report indicated that a family expressed their intention to marry their daughter to a relative of the host family as a gesture of appreciation for providing shelter and sustenance during their time of need (UNIFEM, 2010).

8.5. Unequal Access to Humanitarian Aid in the Post-Disaster Phase

Humanitarian organisations, including government agencies, are responsible for ensuring that there is no acute food scarcity during the rescue and relief phase of a disaster and that all segments of society have access to relief commodities. There should be no discrimination when humanitarian materials are distributed. Because men dominated distribution queues, women often reported difficulties accessing aid. It made it more difficult for them to safely and fairly receive relief supplies, particularly in rural or conservative areas (International Rescue Committee, 2011). In numerous instances, the distribution process and teams lacked female members. The planning for the locations of distribution centres accessible to women was minimal. Charity organisations and government agencies also supplied cooked food in the camps. Women report consuming food at least once a day and, in some locations, twice a day. Evidence of discrimination in food consumption between men and women, as well as between boys and girls, is exceedingly rare. It is attributed to crises that foster solidarities, wherein the vulnerable receive preferential treatment in the immediate aftermath. Men's testimonials indicate they perceive an obligation in their responsibilities as protectors to care for others during crises that necessitate heroic actions. Access to free meals may become increasingly restricted over time (Barohi, 2010).

8.6. Inadequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Disaster Camps

No civic planning for sewage and trash disposal occurred during the initial weeks of the flood. The UNIFEM consultation reports indicate that the latrine system in Jaffarabad, Sindh, is inadequate, with five facilities serving three hundred women and their children (UNIFEM, 2010). The improper

disposal of waste, particularly uncovered excreta, poses significant hygienic problems. Women and girls reported a lack of clean water for everyday usage, and many camps lacked soap. A Gender Needs Assessment (GNA) survey indicates that 55% of participants had access to latrines and bathing facilities, while 44% did not (United Nations Population Fund, 2011). This contradicts the testimonials documented in case studies, which indicate a pervasive lack of privacy, suggesting that access is inequitable and that all emerging data obscures the distinction between internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and those outside of them (Barohi, 2010). In some regions, when latrine access was unavailable, individuals opted to defecate in open fields or within camp boundaries; however, ladies were unable to cleanse themselves openly. This has constituted a significant health and sanitation risk (UNIFEM 2010). The established gender division of labour in rural regions imposes the responsibility of cleanliness on women. Women and adult females are primarily responsible for water collection.

8.7. Disparities in Disaster Healthcare Delivery
Health facilities in rural parts of Pakistan have been insufficient. Medical needs and circumstances during floods change rapidly depending on the duration of the water's presence. During the post-disaster phase, access to healthcare and medical support, as well as the availability of water purification equipment, are crucial. The UNFPA study offers comprehensive information on women's health access in camps, including breastfeeding practices and maternal health after Pakistan's 2010 floods. The majority of women received medical assistance within ten days of arriving at the camps, excluding those in Sindh. There were considerable inequalities among regions, and lactating moms encountered challenges due to stress, malnutrition, and insufficient privacy or assistance (UNFPA, 2011).

8.8. Collapse of Women's Informal Livelihoods
Women predominantly serve as farm labourers in flood-affected regions of Punjab and Sindh. In rural areas of Punjab, livestock handling is predominantly a responsibility of women. Floods significantly affect women's livelihoods. Women who employed skills

such as sewing and crafts to earn a living have also lost their tools, raw materials, workspaces, and clientele (UNIFEM, 2010).

8.9. From Classrooms to Shelters: The Educational Fallout

A significant discrepancy already existed in school enrolment rates between boys (66%) and girls (34%) (National Education Management Information System, 2012). The flood has extensively damaged educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Punjab. A report published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010) indicates that the floodwaters have demolished 9,088 educational institutions. According to one report, the 2010 floods in Pakistan greatly affected children's access to education. Over 5,500 schools were damaged, with over 5,000 serving as shelters (Save the Children, 2010). Because schools were closed, infrastructure was destroyed, and schools were converted into temporary shelters, the 2010 floods made it more difficult for girls to access education. Due to safety concerns and cultural norms, particularly in conservative and rural communities, many families pulled their daughters from school (Ahmed, Barkat, Ahmed, Tahir, & Nasir, 2022).

8.10. Insecure Shelters: Women's Safety Concerns in Relief Camps

In the camps, no official security measures have been observed. Internally displaced people have implemented their security measures in several cases. One study indicates that general security perceptions were consistent between men and women. However, emotions of unease were more pronounced among women (Oxfam, 2021). Understandably, women often experience uncertainty and insecurity when they are removed from their familial and communal surroundings. The National Commission on the Status of Women has proposed providing women and girls with torches and whistles to enhance their safety during nighttime mobility to latrines and to signal for help in the event of male hostility (National Commission on the Status of Women, 2011).

8.11. Displacement and the Escalation of Gendered Violence

The existence of violence against women in Pakistani society cannot be denied, and the severity of this problem is exacerbated during times of crisis. According to the National Commission on the Status of Women (2011), women and girls were exposed to a higher risk of sexual violence in overcrowded camps that lacked enough privacy and safety. Even in camps, women who traditionally observe purdah have experienced feelings of exposure, vulnerability, and threat due to the presence of unfamiliar men. Displacement facilitates violence against women by disrupting public and private areas and resulting in the loss of home. Women have documented instances of sexual harassment in camps comprising mixed groups of tribes, families, and communities.

8.12. Unequal Access to Financial Aid: Women and the Watan Card Program

The government of Pakistan initiated various programs in the flood-affected regions to assist the local population. As a response to the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the Watan Card program was launched as a government-led cash distribution initiative. The impacted households were initially intended to receive financial assistance of PKR 20,000 per household in two phases. This system has several problems for women, including a lack of CNICs, a lack of distribution methods that are sensitive to gender, and accessibility problems for marginalised groups, particularly women (National Database & Registration Authority, 2011). Only 79 per cent of women were able to apply for support, in contrast to 99 per cent of men (ActionAid Pakistan, 2011).

8.13. Institutional Frameworks for Disaster Management in Pakistan: Progress and Gender Sensitivity

Because Pakistan is susceptible to several natural and artificial disasters, including earthquakes, floods, droughts, and acts of terrorism, disaster management in the country is an endeavour that is both essential and difficult to accomplish. To address these difficulties, the institutional frameworks for disaster management in Pakistan have developed over time. The National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) is the primary national organisation responsible for disaster management in Pakistan. It was founded in 2007 under the National Disaster Management Ordinance. The NDMA oversees policy formulation, coordination, and surveillance of disaster management operations in the country. Following the 2010 floods, the government established a National Oversight Disaster Management Council (NODMC). Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) exist in several provinces. Each of Pakistan's four provinces—Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan—along with the two autonomous territories, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, possesses its own Provincial Disaster Management Authority. Provincial Disaster Management Authorities are responsible for coordinating and implementing disaster management initiatives at the provincial level. The establishment of the Gender and Child Cell signifies that NDMA recognises the heightened vulnerability of women and children during disasters, necessitating their targeted consideration in rescue and recovery efforts (National Disaster Management Authority, 2014). The Gender and Child Cell has proposed six recommendations for the recovery and rehabilitation of women and children following any disaster. The National Oversight Disaster Management Council was established in September 2010 to oversee, facilitate, and monitor the utilisation of funds, as well as coordinate recovery and reconstruction efforts. The Flood Reconstruction Unit within the Planning Commission was established to develop a flood reconstruction plan and to collaborate with federal, provincial, and international entities.

Conclusion

The study examines the complex relationship between disasters and gender, with a particular focus on the 2010 floods in Pakistan. It demonstrates how pre-existing social, cultural, and economic inequalities exacerbate women's vulnerabilities during disasters, spanning all phases of the disaster cycle, from preparedness to recovery. The study finds that Women face unique challenges related to mobility, access to resources, safety, and participation in decision-making, underscoring the urgent need for

gender-sensitive approaches in disaster management frameworks. The analysis reveals significant gaps in current disaster management practices, including inadequate early warning systems, inequitable access to relief resources, and insufficient consideration of women's specific needs in evacuation and shelter planning. These systemic deficiencies not only increase the risks that women face during disasters but also impede their capacity to rehabilitate and rebuild effectively. The study also emphasises the psychological, social, and economic impact on women, particularly those who are threatened by gender-based violence or lose their livelihoods. However, they have been confronted with several challenges, and it is clear that women have demonstrated resiliency and made significant contributions to disaster response and recovery. Women play pivotal roles in supporting their communities, leveraging local knowledge and social networks to address immediate needs. However, their efforts often go unrecognised, and their participation in formal disaster management processes remains minimal.

This study emphasises the importance of integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of disaster management. By addressing women's unique vulnerabilities and harnessing their strengths, disaster management can become more inclusive, equitable, and effective. Key strategies include enhancing women's participation in decision-making, implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for recovery and rehabilitation. In conclusion, the 2010 floods in Pakistan serve as a compelling case study that highlights the pressing need for gender-responsive disaster management policies. By transforming disasters into opportunities for social change, policymakers can not only mitigate the immediate impacts of crises but also address the root causes of gender inequality, fostering resilience and empowerment for vulnerable communities.

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