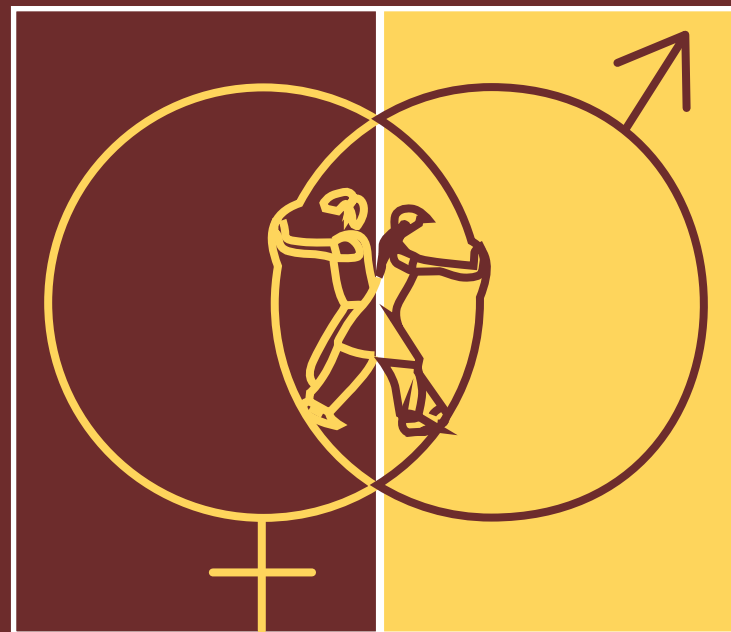


# Gender Sensitive Disaster Management

A Toolkit for Practitioners



Chaman Pincha

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*A Toolkit for Practitioners*

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**N. Vinod Chandra Menon**  
Member



**National Disaster Management Authority**  
Government of India  
NDMA BHAVAN, A-1 Safdarjung Enclave  
New Delhi 110 029. India

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### FOREWORD

Chaman Pincha's new publication "**Gender Sensitive Disaster Management: A Toolkit for Practitioners**" and the companion volume titled "**Indian Ocean Tsunami Through the Gender Lens: Insights from Tamil Nadu, India**" are welcome contributions to the disaster discourse because they centre-stage gender analysis in the context of the post-tsunami responses of the Government, civil society and the disaster-affected communities. The Toolkit for Practitioners provides the nuts and bolts for mainstreaming gender sensitive interventions in disaster management in all phases of disaster management, including preparedness, mitigation, response, rehabilitation and recovery phases. In this Toolkit, Chaman Pincha has integrated the concepts and strategies related to gender, analysed disaster risk and vulnerability profiles, interfaced the logic with field insights garnered through interactions with disaster-affected communities and development practitioners and compiled the tools and techniques for mainstreaming gender in all phases of disaster management.

I am confident that this Toolkit will be a significant contribution to the disaster management literature in India. This Toolkit can also be a valuable resource material for Trainers and to the students of social sciences and humanities, especially to those pursuing their studies in social work, psychology, sociology and gender studies. I am sure that this Toolkit will also be welcomed by development practitioners and representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations as it will provide them useful insights on gender-aware disaster management interventions. I hope Chaman Pincha's contribution in this field will encourage academics, practitioners and other stakeholder groups concerned with various aspects of disaster management to explore similar studies.

I wish both these publications all success and hope that it will benefit humanity by reaching out to those organisations, institutions and individuals working at the cutting edge level with disaster-prone communities.

(N. VINOD CHANDRA MENON)

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Mobile : 9810111328 E-mail : vinodmenon@ndma.gov.in

## Preface

Oxfam International is a confederation of thirteen organizations working together with partners and allies around the world in over 100 countries to create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger and injustice. When disaster strikes, Oxfam and our partners move quickly to provide life-saving assistance to those in need. Once the immediate danger has passed, we work to rebuild lives and reduce the risk of future disasters. In this endeavor, Oxfam adheres to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which entitles all people to physical safety, secure livelihood, basic social services, a life with dignity, and a say in the decisions that affect them.

Oxfam believes that disasters result from the interaction of social vulnerability and natural hazards, which combine to put certain groups of people at greater risk than others. This understanding of vulnerability and risk is crucial to our efforts to address the differential impacts of a disaster on men, women, children, the elderly, and the physically challenged. Oxfam believes that disaster response and risk reduction activities—viewed through a vulnerability lens—have the potential to be important catalysts for social change.

Experience has time and again highlighted the particular vulnerability of women and girls in disasters. Oxfam seeks to respond to women's needs after a disaster and, equally important, to engage in work to address the root sources of their vulnerability (social, economic, and political). Oxfam works worldwide to help women campaign for legal reforms, acquire literacy skills, raise the income of their families, strengthen their voice, build peace in their communities, and understand their human rights.

Over the last few decades, Oxfam affiliates have conducted a number of research studies aimed at understanding and addressing the gender-differentiated impact of disasters. However, every disaster presents new challenges and opportunities for learning. The magnitude of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami triggered a massive humanitarian response; thousands of local, national, and international organizations rushed to the Tsunami-affected areas to provide assistance. Not all of them had previous experience in disaster response and recovery and many did not have a deep understanding of the gender considerations.

This Toolkit builds on a comprehensive research conducted by Ms. Chaman Pincha and her team on gender differential impacts of the Tsunami and gender mainstreaming strategies of NGOs in Tamil Nadu in their Tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts. The key strength of this Toolkit is that the tools for gender mainstreaming in disaster management are sharpened by a bright and committed group of NGO staff and grassroots women's federation members, with their insights, experiences, emotions, and inputs. The process of working with the NGO staff and grassroots women in developing these tools helped the author understand and address issues and facilitating factors in mainstreaming gender equity considerations into disaster management policies and practices.

We applaud and appreciate the committed work of the author and her team, which has yielded remarkable insights grounded in both concept and the field experience. We hope humanitarian agencies involved in disaster relief and risk reduction will find in it a useful tool for integrating gender-equal strategies and approaches.

**N. Hari Krishna**

*India Humanitarian Country Team Representative*

*Oxfam America*

October, 2008

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This Toolkit would not have been possible without the intimate revelations of women, men and Aravanis\* who readily participated in focus group discussions and in depth interviews and shared their turbulent experiences in settings marked by trust and mutuality. I am deeply grateful for their courage and willingness in recounting their painfully personal feelings and circumstances which cannot be adequately described in words.

I profoundly value the keen co-operation of the NGOs who, in spite of their busy work schedules readily spared time for us throughout our research process and were eager to be informed of our research findings. BLESS, AVVAI, CARE Trust, EKTA, FPAI, PEDDA, PURA, SASY, SNEHA, HOPE, and PRAXIS collaborated substantially with the research process described in the Toolkit.

The contribution of my team members has been immense. Terrence Berger convinced me of the relevance of the chapter on tools and also persuaded me that “a talk to me” sort of Toolkit would be more effective than a descriptive one. His illustrations are scattered throughout this Toolkit. Usha meticulously tested and validated most of the tools in the field along with me. Usha’s translation will help take the findings of this research across Tamil Nadu and reach the large Tamil Readership. Judy, a visual communication student at Loyola College, Chennai, worked hard to understand and translate the nuances of the content into illustrations.

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*\* A distinctly recognized, at the same time most marginalized and stigmatized group of persons in India. Some of them are born androgynous, and do not identify themselves with either male/ men or female / women. Contrary to popular perception, they prefer not to describe themselves as men trying to be women, although they like to wear women’s clothes. In different areas in India, they are also known as Hijras or Jogappas.*

Notwithstanding his busy calendar, Professor N. Vinod Chandra Menon, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India, put in long hours reviewing the draft and providing pointers for further refining and deepening the content through his insights and counsel. Professor Menon has encouraged me all through the process of finalizing this Toolkit and its title. The Toolkit has benefited immensely by his ideas and inputs.

Mr. N. Harikrishna, Humanitarian representative India, Oxfam America, has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. He tirelessly went through several versions of the chapters and his critical contributions helped me enrich the contents. The total engagement and intellectual rigor that he brought to bear on the draft versions have significantly added to the depth of this work. In addition, his creative inputs. In addition, he contributed creative inputs to the cover design.

Mr. Russel Miles and Ms. Gabriel Kurk Wisner, Oxfam America too have gone through the draft version of the present Toolkit and offered new perspectives, the additions of which made the Toolkit more relevant to humanitarian agencies.

The participants from different NGOs and Federations in the Gender and Disaster workshop where the draft Toolkit was piloted deserve special thanks. Their viewpoints have made us take a fresh look, leading to major revisions in our work.

I value the editorial support from Dr. Kanchan Mathur and Dr. Shobhita Rajgopalan, Professors from Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur, Rajasthan, for the first draft of the present work. Valuable contributions have come from the review of the second draft of the Toolkit by Dr. Thamizoli, Social Anthropologist; Ms. Kanchan Gandhi, Research Scholar, National University of Singapore; Dr. Bhanu, Chair Person, Inter-agency Group, Uttar Pradesh, and Ms. Nilovna, Director, SPARSH, Orissa.

I thank Ms. Sunita Rabindranathan for working together with me in the preparation of the initial version of the Toolkit. My sincere thanks to Dr. Nalini Keshavraj, Manager, the erstwhile TNTRC for her advisory inputs. Many thanks to Ms. Bimla Chandrasekar, Director, EKTA, and Mr. Prithvi Raj, CARE Trust, for their participation in the consultation process to sharpen the initial version.

I greatly value contributions from members of the Gender Community of Solution Exchange. I had raised queries in the Gender Community in the process of developing this Toolkit, and members' responses have been very useful. Please refer to *Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit in Disaster Response* at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/cr-public/cr-se-gen-06070701-public.pdf> for full text of the individual responses.

I thank Ms. Usha Thiagarajan for her crisp copy editing which sometimes extended into content editing. I specially wish to register my appreciation for her ability to understand the writer's intent and convey it effectively.

I am grateful to Earthworm Books, an alternative publishing house for issue-based literature, who happily agreed to publish the Toolkit.

Many thanks to Mr. A.N. Subramanian from Madras Graphics for the excellent work he has done in producing these books and providing me space and hospitality at his office, whenever necessary.

My heart-felt thanks to Brother James, Secretary, NANBAN Trust for hosting the publication and dissemination process. His generous support all through the publication and dissemination process kept me motivated. My warm acknowledgement to the support I received from all my colleagues at NANBAN Trust.

I fondly remember the support I received from Ms. Shanthi Devapiriam, Director, Anawim Trust, for hosting the first phase of the research project and initial version of the Toolkit.

Many thanks to Oxfam America without whose support for this independent study, the publication would not have been possible.

I dearly thank my family, especially my mother-in-law, Ms.Arokiya Mari, and my friend Indira Kadambi for their childcaring support without which I would not have been able to work on this project. I cherish Vishakha, my 12-year-old daughter's support by way of enduring my absences even while I was at my home - office, with a cheerfulness that amazed me. Her innocent belief in her mother kept my spirits high.

**Chaman Pincha**

*pincha.chaman@gmail.com*



## Introduction

The risks and vulnerabilities that people face from natural disasters are as much a product of their social situation as their physical environment. Vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals and social groups evolve over time and determine people's abilities to cope with disaster and recover from it. Social networks, power relationships, knowledge and skills, gender roles, health, wealth, and location, all affect risk and vulnerability to disasters and the capacity to respond to them.

There is enough evidence that in any disaster disproportionately large number of women are affected more severely relative to men . Worldwide, it has generally been established that when gender issues are not addressed fully or sufficiently, in both development and disaster contexts, they perpetuate and in many instances augment existing gender-based inequities. Since the world conference on women in 1995, in Beijing, "gender mainstreaming" has been recognized as an overarching strategy to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated in all areas, sectors, and levels to promote gender equality. Mainstreaming gender in disaster preparedness and response involves viewing and analyzing situations through a gender perspective and render gender inequities explicit. To build gender-sensitive strategies and initiatives in disaster management process, it is necessary to address both the practical gender and strategic gender needs of women and men as well as transgender persons.

This Toolkit is the outcome of a research study undertaken to understand gender mainstreaming strategies used by NGOs and the Government in the context of their responses to and management of the Tsunami aftermath in Tamil Nadu. The field outcomes were analyzed through a gender perspective to understand the differential impact of disasters and coping strategies on women/girls, men/boys, and other marginalized groups, including Aravanis.



In the design and presentation of all components of this Toolkit, our chief focus has been on the development of the 'how-to' of incorporating a gender perspective in the overall planning and practices of disaster management.

The Toolkit is divided into four chapters. The first Chapter clarifies concepts related to gender. The matter is presented in a manner that both facilitates an understanding of the concepts as well as lends itself to being used by concerned agencies in gender sensitization exercises. The second Chapter spells out the consequences that arise when disaster and gender issues interact. The Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck Tamil Nadu in December 2004 is the broad contextual backdrop that illustrates some of the gendered consequences of disasters and disaster management. It comprises multiple cases and outcomes of numerous focus group discussions with the grassroots women, men, and transgender persons. The chapter demonstrates how to view situations through a gender lens. It helps answer the question 'Why gender mainstreaming?'

The third Chapter is populated with tools which when applied would promote good practices in integrating gender concerns in disaster response and preparedness. The last Chapter highlights some good examples of NGOs' (Non Governmental Organizations) gender sensitive interventions. The chapter also underscores the importance of gender analysis by focusing on some of the unintended negative consequences of seemingly gender sensitive interventions through field based evidences.

Although the Toolkit is location/region specific and draws from disasters in a specific context, it has developed the nuts and bolts for gender mainstreaming by building on the lessons gleaned from the Tsunami response. The tools are intended for use by all those engaged in the disaster management, i.e., policy makers, donors, NGOs and researchers in their efforts to build resilient and gender-just communities.