

GENDER RESPONSIVE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Highlights from a desk review

CONTEXT

Caribbean countries share a number of characteristics that increase vulnerability to disasters, including small populations, limited economies of scale, and undiversified economies. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened underlying challenges. Evidence from around the world¹ and the region² shows that disasters can be especially devastating for women, given underlying gender inequalities in economic opportunities, assets and voice. This underscores the importance of integrating gender into the disaster risk management (DRM) cycle, including preparedness and recovery.

Under the Canada Caribbean Resilience Facility (CRF), a desk study in 2020 assessed the status of gender responsive disaster preparedness and recovery in nine Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. The study focused on:

- Gender gaps and other inequalities, including women's participation and leadership in related programs and initiatives and
- How gender has been integrated into disaster and climate change laws, plans and policies at the national and sectoral levels; and the extent of implementation.

Progress in gender integration to date has been limited, although there are examples of good practice.

Figure 1 summarizes the CRF countries' current state of gender integration in disaster preparedness and recovery policies and plans, compared against good practice principles (in green). The red boxes highlight the extensive problems and constraints associated with agenda setting, policy design and adoption, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

¹ Gender Dimensions of Disaster Risk and Resilience - Existing Evidence, Alvina Erman, Sophie Anne De VrieRobbé, Stephan Fabian Thies, Kayenat Kabir and Mirai Maruo, 2021 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35202/Gender-Dimensions-of-Disaster-Risk-and-Resilience-Existing-Evidence.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

² https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/gender_cc_drr.pdf

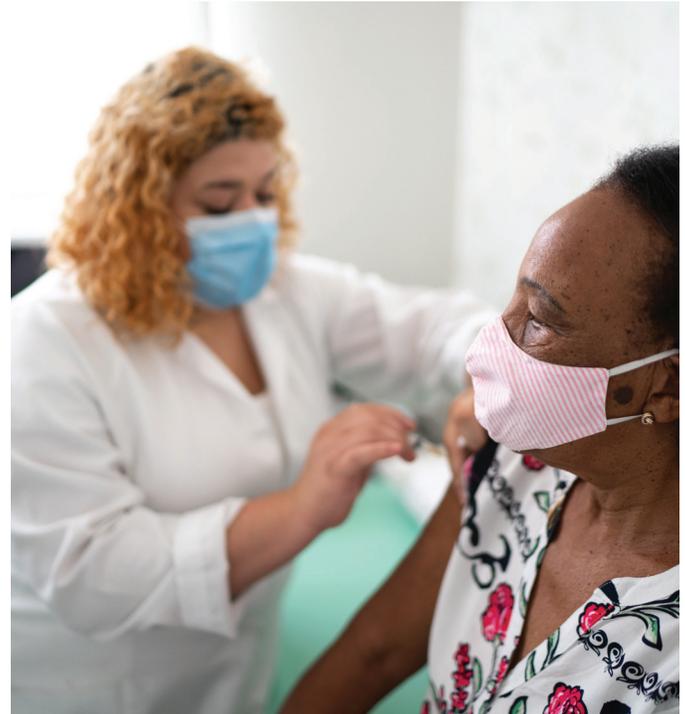


Photo: FG Tardie

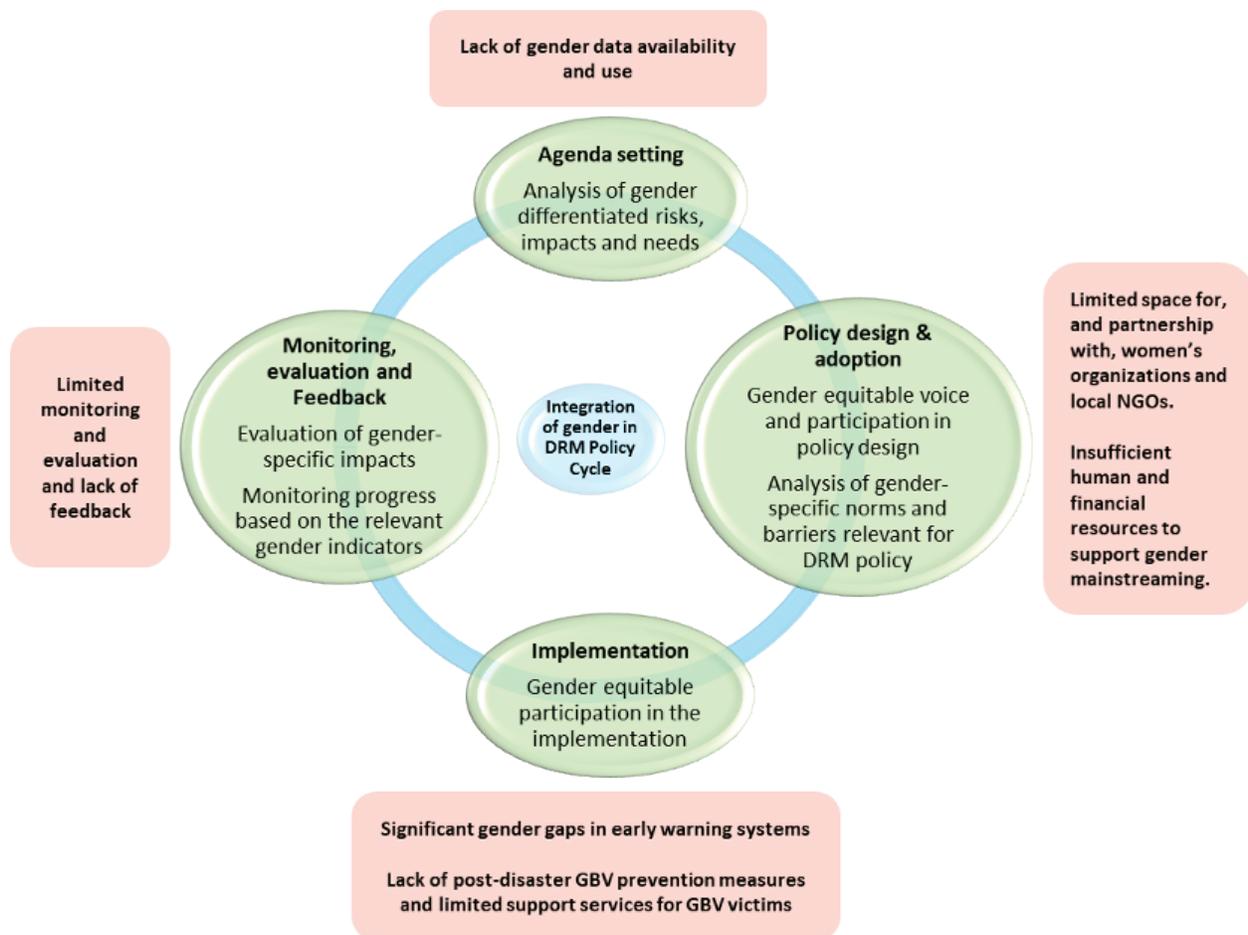
There is some good news.

Action plans: Five CRF countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – address gender-based violence in their strategic action plans. For example, the National Office for Disaster Service in Antigua and Barbuda, in collaboration with the Directorate of Gender Affairs, trained shelter managers, health care workers and police officers on the risks and prevention of GBV in post-disaster settings.

Women's participation in DRM: In Jamaica's Negril Climate Risk Atlas Project (2015), for the community hazard mapping, more than ¾ of the participants were women.

Women's leadership: In Saint Lucia, the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development and the Ministry for Health and Wellness are both currently headed by women, and the National Emergency Management organization partners with women's organizations to integrate a gender perspective into DRM.

Figure 1: Overview of the extent of gender integration in the Disaster Risk Management policy cycle in nine Caribbean countries



Overall, however, the extent of gender integration in DRM policies is currently limited.

A review of DRM policies in all nine countries revealed that the coverage of gender typically does not go beyond general statements about the importance of assessing the specific needs of women and girls in DRM activities.

A range of key recommendations aim to close gender gaps in in the design and implementation of DRM activities, including:

1. Improve the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data on disaster impacts, and track how many women are in leadership and decision-making positions in DRM.
2. Ensure gender assessments and analysis are conducted for national and sectoral disaster and climate-related policies, with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress.

3. Create space for the meaningful engagement of women's groups in all stages of the DRM cycle.
4. Raise public awareness of gendered risks and women's critical roles in disaster and climate change resilience.
5. Strengthen country level expertise and resources for sectoral-level analysis of gender roles and risks of disasters, in collaboration with CDEMA.
6. Strengthen gender responsive Early Warning Systems and post-disaster GBV and domestic violence prevention measures.
7. Integrate gender into the design and implementation of shock-responsive social protection programs.
8. Increase training and mentorship opportunities for women and girls in the DRM cycle.

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