

BUILDING DISASTER-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Nicole Canali de Castro, Maria Rivadeneira Moncada, Laura Somerset, and Eyosaite Weldegabre Sebehatu

University of Notre Dame – Keough School of Global Affairs

Women in Nepal and the Philippines, along with those in other Asian countries, suffer disproportionately from disasters caused by natural hazards yet are excluded from leadership in disaster preparedness and response (DPR). Even as women make a crucial contribution to community resilience, they are hindered from DPR participation by restrictive social norms, limited financial resources, and lack of institutional support.

Focusing on the local level, this research draws on evidence and field experience from [Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies](#) supported program in Nepal and the Philippines and identifies the barriers preventing women's participation and leadership in DPR. The study analyzes effective strategies for increasing women's participation and leadership in DPR and assesses how women's participation and leadership strengthen overall community resilience to disasters caused by natural hazards.

Research Reports are written to share research results, to contribute to public debate and to invite feedback on development and humanitarian policy and practice. They do not necessarily reflect Oxfam policy positions. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Oxfam.

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Executive Summary

At a Glance

Women are key in disaster preparedness and response at the local level, yet they continue to face barriers that limit their ability to lead. Focusing on communities in Nepal and the Philippines where Oxfam's Asia Community Disaster and Transformation (ACT) program, supported by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, is being implemented, this research draws on interviews with women leaders, community members, academics, policymakers, and practitioners to address the following questions:

- What barriers inhibit women's participation in disaster preparedness and response efforts at the local level?
- Which strategies effectively support their leadership?
- How does their involvement strengthen community resilience?

Based on the resulting insights, the report presents recommendations that Oxfam and other organizations delivering disaster resilience programming can use to strengthen women's leadership and improve community disaster resilience.

Key Findings

1. **Women still face barriers to leadership in disaster response efforts.** These include cultural norms and internalized stereotypes, exclusion from decision-making spaces, and limited education. Economic constraints such as poverty, unpaid care work, and lack of time are other key barriers that inhibit women's ability to lead.
2. **The most successful strategies for strengthening women's leadership in disasters address barriers to participation and promote sustainable leadership.** Effective strategies help women occupy decision-making spaces, build their capacity to respond to disasters, benefit from community social ties, develop economic independence, and use the changing gender dynamics caused by male migration.
3. **When women lead disaster preparedness and response, their communities are better prepared for disasters and respond to them more effectively.** In the process, women's vulnerabilities tend to decrease, disaster responses become more inclusive, and communities develop stronger relationships with authorities.

Extended Summary

Disasters caused by natural hazards pose a major threat to the resilience of communities in Asia—a threat that is worsening because of climate change. These disasters often affect women and girls disproportionately, owing to systemic barriers. Preexisting gender inequalities exacerbate women's disaster vulnerability, constraining their ability to respond and recover.

Despite this, they play important, undervalued, and under-resourced roles in helping their communities develop disaster resilience. While there have been advances in embedding women's rights in international disaster management frameworks and national policies, implementation gaps mean that women are still systematically excluded from decision-making and leadership in formal institutions.

In response to this problem, Oxfam has developed the Asia Community Disaster and Transformation (ACT) program with support from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, in partnership with local organizations in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The program, active since 2020, supports communities in preparing for disasters and responding when they strike, with a focus on empowering women to exercise their leadership and agency in the process. The theory is that when women are supported in participating in and leading local disaster preparedness and response (DPR) efforts, disaster responses are more effective and inclusive, which improves the resilience of the entire community. The ACT program has now been active for more than five years, so there is currently an opportunity to gather data on its successes, obstacles, and impacts. This report is intended to help Oxfam and local partners strengthen the ACT program and to provide guidance for other organizations implementing similar programming.

The report presents insights from fieldwork in the Philippines and Nepal in June and July 2025, including 34 in-depth interviews with women leaders and four focus groups with community members, all from locations where the ACT program is being implemented. It also draws on 15 key informant interviews with academics and practitioners and a literature review. The final analysis shows (1) the factors that inhibit women's participation and leadership in DPR at the local level, (2) the most successful programming initiatives to increase women's participation and leadership in local DPR, and (3) the ways in which the inclusion of women in DPR leadership improves community disaster resilience.

The research finds that the barriers preventing women from leading local DPR efforts are spread across cultural, individual, institutional, structural, and economic arenas. Women are constrained by gender norms and stereotypes and face minimization and exclusion by family and community members. They often internalize these stereotypes, diminishing their confidence and their own perception of whether they are qualified. Despite developments in national disaster management frameworks aimed at promoting women's leadership, implementation remains weak at the local level, and women are often excluded from genuine decision-making. Women also experience limited access to formal education and technical training and face financial and resource constraints that limit their ability to lead.

Based on the lived experiences and expertise of interviewees, the research identifies successful strategies for empowering women to lead DPR. Strategies that establish formal and recognized roles for women to lead, such as gender quotas, gender mainstreaming, and consultative disaster planning, are impactful, as are initiatives that strengthen the capacity of women, such as DPR skills training. Community social ties, particularly friendships between women, are powerful tools to inspire women to become leaders and to remain in these roles. Economic empowerment programs such as livelihood promotion and professionalization schemes (initiatives that compensate DPR leadership with payment, formal recognition, and employment) ensure that women have the independence and resilience to assume leadership positions without the obstacles of economic precarity or control. Strategies that leverage the impacts of

male migration in reshaping gender relations, particularly in Nepal, can also be used to lift women in local DPR.

Interviews with community members and women leaders in locations where women had recently taken on leadership roles reveal that when women lead and participate in DPR, their communities are better prepared for disasters and respond to them more effectively. The communities are more aware of potential threats, are more likely to make plans, and respond more systematically to disasters. Further, where women are empowered to lead, the communities demonstrate higher levels of social cohesion and trust, meaning they cooperate more effectively and are less likely to leave marginalized groups behind. When women lead DPR, they become the bridge between their communities and formal institutions, increasing the community's coordination with and trust in institutions. Finally, their participation in DPR leadership tends to improve women's social standing in the community, making them less vulnerable to the impacts of disasters.

Based on these findings, we recommend that Oxfam and local partners take the following steps:

1. **Implement gender-transformative programming that addresses stereotypes and gender roles in the community, addressing gender inequality at its root.** Roll out community campaigns aimed at behavioral change at the household, community, and institutional levels, and use gender-transformative programming to challenge stereotypes and gender norms.
2. **Improve capacity-strengthening programs for women leaders based on local knowledge gaps.** Provide more in-depth training, introduce refresher training, and conduct knowledge gap assessments to understand local needs.
3. **Invest in strengthening community social networks, and leverage them to recruit and sustain women leaders.** Support initiatives like women's groups and community events that foster strong social networks, and implement promotional campaigns asking women leaders to recruit within their networks.
4. **Promote economic resilience to boost women's leadership.** Address economic vulnerabilities and foster financial independence while advocating for increased government funding to ensure women have access to the resources they need to lead DPR.
5. **Approach women's empowerment programming holistically, addressing both promotion and sustainability.** Design women's empowerment programming using a complementary package of strategies that promote women's leadership and that sustain this leadership over time.
6. **Advocate for institutional support to formalize and sustain women's leadership.** Work with governments to ensure that existing support for women's DPR leadership is fully implemented and to encourage new institutional support that ensures that women have a meaningful voice.
7. **When seeking funding and government support, highlight that women's leadership promotes community disaster resilience.** Articulate the unique impact of women's DPR leadership when seeking funding for new programs and when advocating for governmental change.

Based on data collected in areas where the ACT program is being implemented, this report finds evidence that when women are empowered to lead local DPR efforts, the entire community becomes more resilient to disasters caused by natural hazards. As climate change exacerbates

the frequency and intensity of these disasters, especially in South and Southeast Asia, it is more crucial than ever for Oxfam and other local partners to support the unique benefits of women's leadership. Not only do these efforts contribute to systemic changes in gender relations that reduce the disproportionate burden of disasters on women, but they also help community members realize their rights and improve their wellbeing in the face of shocks, stresses, and uncertainty.

Background and Problem Statement

In Asia, disasters caused by natural hazards have worsened significantly over the past two decades (UNDRR, 2021), and the region remains the most disaster-prone area in the world. Countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines frequently experience severe floods, monsoons, earthquakes, and landslides, leading to devastating human and economic losses that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities (UN ESCAP, 2023).

Evidence has shown that when a disaster strikes, women and girls are often the most affected (Erman *et al.* 2021; Fatouros and Capetola 2021). Studies across different contexts reveal disproportionately high female mortality during disasters. For example, during the 2004 tsunami that affected several countries in Asia, only 189 of 676 survivors across four villages in Aceh Besar, Indonesia, were female, while in Cuddalore, India, female mortality was three times higher than male mortality (Oxfam International, 2005). Likewise, in the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, 42 percent more females died than males (Juran and Trivedi, 2015).

Broader research also shows not only that disasters caused by natural hazards kill more women than men but that these gendered impacts are intensified by socioeconomic status (Neumayer and Plümpner, 2007). Other preexisting gender inequalities exacerbate women's vulnerability in disasters, because their capacity to respond and recover is often constrained by structural barriers. In many disaster-prone areas, women face systemic disadvantages, such as limited access to financial resources, education, and mobility (UN Women, n.d.), which hinder their ability to protect themselves and their families during crises. Furthermore, the burden of household responsibilities often falls disproportionately on women, making it difficult for them to engage in disaster preparedness and response efforts. These constraints are magnified by the social norms and cultural practices that restrict women's participation in leadership roles and decision-making processes, especially in disaster management (Lee *et al.*, 2022).

Disaster risk reduction efforts have focused mostly on building stronger infrastructure, improving evacuation systems, and promoting information accessibility (Tickamyer and Kusujarti, 2020). However, when these strategies ignore gender dynamics and leave women out of decision-making, the efforts miss key opportunities to strengthen communities (Sartorio and Davalos, 2024). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction underscores this point, recognizing that women's participation and leadership are essential for effective and inclusive disaster management (UNDRR *et al.*, 2024). According to UN Women, when women are part of planning and response efforts, the outcomes are more equitable and sustainable (UN Women, 2025). Across Asia, initiatives targeting women's leadership through capacity strengthening programs, participatory risk assessments, advocacy and literacy campaigns, and leadership training have been implemented (Barakat *et al.*, 2017a, 2017b; Dhungel and Ojha, 2012; Widjaja and Carr, 2012).

Women and communities are not passive actors; they have been instrumental in disaster preparedness and response efforts, even when their contributions go unrecognized. Women often take on key roles in preparedness—such as securing household resources, protecting assets, and organizing community support—yet their efforts are frequently undervalued or confined to post-disaster recovery (Khan *et al.*, 2023). In the Philippines, for instance, women play critical roles in mobilizing aid and coordinating community responses when government efforts fall short, but their work remains systematically under-resourced and unpaid (Villaceran *et al.*, 2023). Likewise in Nepal, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority has recognized that local women, especially in vulnerable and rural communities, are the first responders and bring invaluable knowledge based on their direct experiences with past disasters (Albay, 2023).

To enhance these capacities, several strategies have been implemented to promote women's participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction. These approaches often involve capacity strengthening programs that focus on disaster mitigation and adaptation and provide tools for women to enhance their leadership roles. For instance, international organizations such as UNESCO have conducted training sessions aimed at strengthening disaster management skills among women (UNESCO, 2021). On the other hand, in Nepal, Oxfam has introduced women's empowerment as a key component of community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) interventions to engage marginalized women in community-driven processes to identify local problems, develop solutions, and enhance disaster preparedness at both household and community levels (Dhungel and Ojha, 2012). In the Philippines, the strategies include participatory risk assessments, community mobilization, and capacity strengthening efforts focused on developing ecologically sound and women-inclusive livelihood interventions (Barakat *et al.*, 2017a). In Bangladesh and Indonesia, Oxfam supports strategies that include training for women on early warning systems and disaster response (Widjaja and Carr, 2012), supporting women's advocacy for their rights, and promoting policy frameworks that improve women's access to resources (Barakat *et al.*, 2017b).

In this context, Oxfam has implemented the Asia Community Disaster and Transformation (ACT) program since 2020, in collaboration with local organizations in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The program supports the adaptive capacity of local humanitarian actors in vulnerable communities where floods, droughts, and powerful storms pose a persistent and growing threat to life and livelihoods. ACT aims to reduce vulnerability and suffering by improving disaster preparedness, response, and recovery capacities and enabling local actors to co-lead relief and rehabilitation efforts with local and national authorities. It focuses on increasing community capacities and leadership, with an emphasis on transformative roles for women and youth; strengthening and protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable groups while engaging public and private actors; and enabling systematic knowledge sharing among communities, local and national actors, and international organizations to strengthen humanitarian leadership. More details on the ACT program are provided in the appendices.

This research examines the role of women in disaster preparedness and response in Nepal and the Philippines, two of the four countries where ACT programming is being implemented. These two countries were chosen because of Oxfam's strong relationships with local partners, geographic accessibility, budgetary considerations, and access to logistical elements such as translation and field support. While the challenges women face during disasters are well documented, there is a gap in the literature surrounding which specific strategies are most effective in promoting women's participation and empowerment in disaster preparedness and

response and how these strategies promote overall disaster resilience, not only for the women involved but for their entire communities. Thus, the study examines the barriers women face in participating in and leading disaster preparedness and response efforts, evaluates strategies that effectively promote women's leadership, and considers how women's participation influences overall community resilience. The primary data collected for this study is intended to provide insights into disaster preparedness and response (DPR) efforts of local and national governments and inform the programming of Oxfam, local partners, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to promote women's DPR leadership in Asia.

Researcher Reflexivity Statement

This report has been prepared by a team of graduate students from the University of Notre Dame as part of a research collaboration with Oxfam. The research team consists of four international researchers, from Brazil, Ecuador, Ethiopia, and New Zealand, with backgrounds in political science, international relations, environmental studies, and sociology. As international researchers from different continents with no roots in Nepal or the Philippines, the team members acknowledge and recognize their positions as external researchers who investigate local contexts and communities without that valuable insider knowledge.

The researchers had the opportunity to present fresh and multiple perspectives to community members and those involved in the research while recognizing the limitations their positionality presented. From the beginning, the researchers critically examined their own assumptions, thereby opening more doors to work closely with local partners and stakeholders while addressing challenges and identifying potential gaps in understanding.

Literature Review

Women's DPR Leadership in Asia

Existing literature on this issue examines the drivers of and barriers to women's leadership and participation in disaster preparedness and response in Asia. In regions where women have historically been excluded from disaster leadership, the literature suggests that when women are equipped with knowledge, practical tools, and opportunities for participation, they are more likely to engage in leadership roles. However, significant barriers, such as restrictive social norms and economic constraints, often prevent women from entering these spaces (Pervez *et al.*, 2022).

Conversely, some reports suggest that women in the Philippines already play an important role in DPR but are systematically undervalued and under-resourced in these roles (Villaceran *et al.*, 2023). Women in these contexts are generally unpaid and lack resources to support their work, leading them to fund it using personal resources. In Nepal, however, women are still in the process of assuming leadership roles on a large scale. While the literature suggests that migration patterns involving men moving overseas in search of work can increase women's vulnerabilities (Lama *et al.*, 2017), these patterns are also rupturing traditional gender roles. This

situation is increasing women's agency in DPR and creating space for them to have more decision-making power, such as financial management at the household level and engagement in community leadership (Ghimire et al., 2021; UNU EHS, 2024).

Despite existing research, there is a gap in the literature surrounding which specific strategies are most effective in promoting women's participation in DPR at the local level. Further, studies lack detail on how these strategies promote overall disaster resilience, not only for the women involved but for their entire communities. This report intends to address these gaps.

Defining Leadership and Participation

For the purpose of this report, leadership and participation are defined as a social process of engagement in the public sphere and at the community level, culminating in coordination for disaster preparedness and response. A leader uses their knowledge, connections with institutions, capacity to manage resources, and communication skills to ensure their community is resilient in the face of disasters caused by natural hazards. They motivate others to prepare for the impacts of hazards, to respond to disasters in a timely and efficient manner, and to take on leadership positions themselves. In the framework of this research, a leadership role is performed not only through authority, power, or a title, but also through the fostering of trust among peers and effective communication across communities. This definition was an important determinant of the sampling for each of the groups of interviewees. For example, while key informant interviews focused on interviewing people in formal institutional positions, such as practitioners, academics, and political figures, in-depth interviews featured women who engage unofficially in DPR in their communities and who did not necessarily have a formal title.

Defining Community Resilience

In the context of disaster preparedness and response, community-level resilience begins with the ability to withstand temporary shocks from disasters caused by natural hazards. At a basic level, it requires all levels of the community—from individuals, to households, to local institutions—to be able to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from hazards and risks (UN, 2020). However, Oxfam aspires to a more holistic and transformative model of community resilience in which communities realize their rights and improve their wellbeing in the process (Jeans et al., 2016). In Asia, Oxfam's vision for resilience means that *"women, men and children are less affected by shocks, stresses and uncertainty, thrive in the face of them, and systemic changes mean that fewer people are exposed and vulnerable"* (Jennings and Manlutac, 2016: 6). Oxfam also views resilience as gendered, meaning that women and men experience vulnerability in different ways and that efforts to improve community resilience must be gender-responsive (Jennings and Manlutac, 2016). Resilient communities where citizens enjoy peace, economic stability, gender justice, and equal rights are better able to plan for, withstand, and build back from disasters caused by natural hazards. Community resilience must also be context-specific, based on local knowledge, practices, and values (Jeans et al., 2016).

Project Design

Theory of Change

Guided by the mission of Oxfam and the ACT program, this report tests the theory that when women in Nepal and the Philippines are supported in participating in and leading local DPR efforts, disaster responses are more effective and inclusive, which improves the resilience of the entire community.



Research Questions

The report seeks to answer three research questions in the context of Nepal and the Philippines:

1. Which factors inhibit women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response at the local level?
2. What strategies are most successful in increasing women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response at the local level?
3. How is the resilience of communities to disasters caused by natural hazards improved by women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response?

Location Selection

The study aims to provide generalizable insights into the ACT region and Asia more broadly by selecting two countries that represent two different realities. The countries selected were the Philippines, located in Southeast Asia, and Nepal, located in South Asia. Both experience different challenges from disasters caused by natural hazards, given their varied institutional capacities, vulnerabilities, and cultural contexts. These countries were also chosen because of Oxfam's strong relationships with local partners, their geographic accessibility, budgetary considerations, and access to logistical elements such as translation and field support. The communities selected as the location of interviews and focus group discussions are highly vulnerable to disasters caused by natural hazards and are areas where ACT programming is being implemented. In addition to these locations, Manila and Kathmandu were chosen as the centers of operations to conduct key informant interviews with experts, academics, and officials in the areas of disaster risk management, gender, and planning, as well as with advocates and

representatives of civil society organizations. The locations visited are described in detail below.

The Philippines

Located in Southeast Asia and composed of more than 7,000 islands, the Philippines has been ranked as the most disaster-prone country in the world. According to the World Risk Index, there are an average of 20 cyclones every year (IOM, 2024 Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft & IFHV, 2025). Hazards include sea-level rise, extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and heavy rainfall.

Although the Philippines is highly vulnerable to risks caused by natural hazards, not all islands and provinces in the country are equally vulnerable. For this reason, this research chose to focus on Eastern Samar, one of the five provinces of Eastern Visayas, which is known as one of the most earthquake-, typhoon-, and tsunami-prone areas in the country (IOM, 2024) and one of the provinces most affected by Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. Although available statistics are unreliable, the total death count from Yolanda in Eastern Visayas was reported as 5,924, and more than 14 million people were affected.

This research focused on the municipalities of Dolores and Salcedo in Eastern Samar province, areas prone to flooding and highly exposed to storms and typhoons due to their location along the eastern coast of the Philippines. Dolores is a coastal municipality bounded on the east by the Pacific Ocean, while Salcedo is composed of 41 barangays (smallest territorial and administrative local government unit), including 26 coastal barangays and two island barangays, which are often the first to be affected when a typhoon hits the coast, further increasing their exposure and vulnerability to disasters (Municipality of Dolores, n.d.; Municipality of Salcedo, n.d.). The vulnerability of the province is determined not only by the frequency and magnitude of typhoons but also by the capacities of its inhabitants. Eastern Samar is one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines, with a poverty incidence of 37.4% (Eastern Samar Provincial Government, n.d.). The poorest people are engaged in agriculture and fishing, sectors that by themselves are low income-generating activities, making it difficult for those people to respond and recover adequately when a disaster strikes (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2023).

Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked country that borders China and India. Its total population is approximately 31 million. The country is subdivided in seven provinces: Bagmati, Gandaki, Karnali, Koshi, Lumbini, Madhesh, and Sudurpashchim. According to 2021 estimates, the literacy rate overall is 69%. However, the gap between male and female literacy is wide: 79% of men are literate compared with less than 60% of females (CIA, 2025). Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. It ranks 10th on the Climate Risk Index, meaning it is one of the countries most affected by natural hazards and disasters. Owing to its climate vulnerability and geography, it is prone to damage during earthquakes and climate-related disasters such as floods and landslides (World Bank, 2024b).

As in the Philippines, Nepal's vulnerability depends not only on the magnitude or frequency of disasters, but also on institutional capacities and specific conditions that vary between provinces and districts. In this context, the research team selected the district of Kanchanpur as the primary Nepal field location, mainly because of its accessibility and Oxfam's close

relationship with local partners who have links with the leaders of the Community Disaster Management Committees. These are community networks, organized at the municipal level, that seek to defend the rights of people affected by disasters and strengthen resilience through awareness-raising and preparedness activities.

Kanchanpur is a disaster-prone district on Nepal's western border with India. It is primarily affected by floods, with other risks, including landslides, due to its location in the Mahakali River basin. For the purposes of this research, the team visited several communities in the municipalities of Beldandi, Mahakali, and Bheemdatta, all municipalities where subsistence farming is the main economic activity (National Statistics Office, Government of Nepal, 2021). The district is also characterized by high levels of labor migration, with many men from the municipalities migrating as a result of poverty and lack of work, mainly to India, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates (Thakuri, 2025). Scholars interviewed in the research mentioned that this has significant impacts at the family and community levels, as women in the communities are left in charge of livelihoods and domestic work.

Methodology

The report was compiled using qualitative methods: in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a literature review were used to collect the data, and a thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The data was collected during two months of field work in the Philippines and Nepal over June and July 2025. In total, 35 in-depth interviews were conducted with women involved in local disaster preparedness and response efforts, with 19 women interviewed in Nepal and 16 interviewed in the Philippines. In the report, they are referred to as "women leaders." Two focus groups were conducted in each country, featuring a minimum of six members from communities where women are engaged in disaster resilience leadership and participation strategies. In each country, one focus group featured only women, and the other featured all genders. In total, 31 people participated in focus groups in Nepal, and 13 in the Philippines. The difference reflects the number of community members in Nepal that asked to participate once they saw the researchers in the village. Since the methodology prescribed a minimum but did not constrain the number of community members, those contributions were welcomed. In the report, focus groups participants are referred to as "community members." The research team also conducted 15 key informant interviews with academics, government officials, and DPR practitioners, with nine such interviewees from Nepal and seven from the Philippines.

For recruitment, participants were identified with the help of Oxfam and partner organizations and invited directly. In order to be recruited, participants needed to possess specific characteristics that located them in one of the interview groups. First, a woman leader was defined as a woman who holds a leadership role in DPR within her community. She was someone who participated in capacity strengthening programs, managed community initiatives, and/or took on formal or informal decision-making responsibilities. Second, a community member was defined as someone who did not hold a DPR leadership position but was directly affected by DPR activities. Finally, practitioners, policymakers, and academics were recruited based on their expertise in disaster management and/or gender equality in Nepal and the Philippines. A list with details about the participants for each group of interviews (such as age and occupation), without compromising anonymity, can be found in the appendices.

The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded (with consent from the participants), transcribed, and translated into English. The transcripts were analyzed using a thematic analysis framework in ATLAS.ti software.

Field Implementation

The research project was divided into three phases. During the initial phase, from January to May 2025, the scope and methodology of the project were co-designed with Oxfam, and the field logistics were planned. The second phase, from June to July 2025, involved fieldwork across the Philippines and Nepal. Over the third and last phase, from August to December 2025, the research team compiled and processed data gathered in the field to prepare the final report.

The interviews and focus groups followed a semi-structured format and were conducted by local interview facilitators with experience in qualitative methods and translation into English. The interview guides were adapted after arrival to the field to better suit the local context and improve flow. All goals for data collection were met, and the final sample size was 121% of the initial target. In addition to data collection in the field, the team conducted courtesy calls with municipal mayors, provincial governors, and disaster risk reduction officers. These courtesy calls improved the team's knowledge of the local context and integrated the research in the communities.

Community and Stakeholder Validation

The researchers followed a research validation process to ensure that key stakeholders and community members could provide input and feedback based on their expertise and lived experiences and understand the results of the research they contributed to. During a series of workshops, Oxfam country teams (Oxfam Philippines and Oxfam in Nepal) and local partners (Sentro para sa Ikauunlad ng Katutubong Agham at Teknolohiya [SIKAT], Center for Disaster Preparedness [CDP], and National Environment and Equity Development Society [NEEDS Nepal]) had the opportunity to review the findings, comment on the analysis, and identify gaps in relation to the ACT program's objectives and ongoing activities. Researchers presented the results to interviewees who participated in the research to close the feedback loop, recognize the contributions they made, and ensure that they could incorporate the findings into their ongoing work. This validation was crucial to ensuring an ethical and participatory research process aligned with Oxfam's commitment to local humanitarian leadership.

Research Limitations

During the research, several logistical and methodological challenges shaped the data collection and analysis.

One key issue involved interviewee recruitment and efforts to ensure the sample size was large and diverse enough to generate robust insights. Although the research team worked closely with Oxfam and local partner organizations who facilitated community access, this reliance on organizational intermediaries constrained participant selection to existing networks and

relationships. Without independent access beyond these networks, the team could not reach all demographic groups in the broader community. Consequently, interviewees across both field sites were less diverse than originally intended, particularly regarding religious background, caste, and disability status. This dynamic, while necessary for building trust and ensuring safety, meant the research primarily reached women already engaged with Oxfam or partner programs, potentially missing the voices of the most marginalized or excluded women.

All community-level interviewees had participated in women's empowerment initiatives led by Oxfam and local partners or lived in communities where these initiatives were implemented. Their reflections on effective empowerment strategies were therefore shaped by experience with Oxfam's programs specifically, rather than representing a broader landscape of approaches. To gain insight into more general best practices, the team also conducted interviews with academics and disaster risk reduction practitioners with comparative knowledge across multiple programs and contexts.

Budget and logistical constraints limited fieldwork to two of the four ACT program countries. Additionally, climatic conditions such as Nepal's monsoon season prevented access to planned villages, requiring identification of alternative safer locations.

Since the research team was not fluent in local languages, interviews were conducted by local interpreters with researchers present. Interviewee responses may have been shaped by self-consciousness around external researchers. Additionally, because analysis relied on English translations of original transcripts, the team's ability to interpret deeper contextual meaning and cultural nuance was limited.

Research Findings

The following section presents the key findings of this research. While the study includes data from both Nepal and the Philippines, it is not designed as a comparative analysis. Instead, it provides a broad understanding of women's leadership experiences in different contexts, highlighting how local social structures, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks shape women's roles in disaster resilience and how their involvement can increase overall community resilience. The findings aim to identify common patterns as well as context-specific nuances that can inform more inclusive and effective approaches to DPR across the ACT program region.

Although each context is different and women's experiences of disasters may vary, this research identifies common patterns of barriers to leadership. At the same time, specific nuances emerge that deserve attention depending on the locations studied. For example, in the Philippines, participants suggest that women's engagement becomes more feasible once childcare and domestic responsibilities are reduced, making it more common to see retired or senior women occupying local DPR leadership positions. In contrast, younger women in Nepal participate more actively, reflecting changing household dynamics and community needs shaped by male migration. In the Philippines, it is more common for women to engage in DPR through formalized barangay structures with defined roles. In Nepal, the migration of men has reconfigured community responsibilities, leading women to assume leadership roles they traditionally have not occupied. These contextual factors help explain variations in how barriers

are experienced and how leadership empowerment strategies operate differently in each setting.

Barriers to Women's Leadership in DPR

This section presents findings responding to the first research question: *Which factors inhibit women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response at the local level?* The results come from interviews conducted with women community leaders, academics, and practitioners in the fields of risk reduction, gender, and local government and non-governmental organizations. This combination of perspectives provides insights into women's experiences in their own words while also contrasting them with technical and comparative views from practitioners with experience on a broader level. Together, the findings identify five types of barriers that limit women's participation and leadership in these contexts: cultural, individual, institutional, structural, and economic barriers. These barriers interact with each other at different levels, creating overlapping obstacles to women's leadership.

Cultural Barriers: Social Norms and Gender Stereotypes

"Questions like, 'What can a woman do?' are often raised. Whenever a woman tries to move forward in her work, she faces criticism and discouragement."

—Woman leader from Nepal

The findings reveal that women's participation in DPR is highly constrained by gender norms, stereotypes, and expectations. Women who participate in community activities face invalidation, minimization, and exclusion from community members, and some women fear opposition from husbands or in-laws if they engage beyond domestic responsibilities. Family members directly undermine and invalidate women by pressuring them to stay within the household. Most of the interviewees, particularly married women, state that they are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles.

"For me, the lack of support is the main barrier that makes it hard. Lack of support, sometimes lack of support of family in their homes: 'You are a woman, don't do it.' In other words, it is the work of men; you can't do it."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Additionally, widespread prescriptions of what women "can" and "cannot" do are consistent across interviews, implying that women are not strong enough to take care of response activities when a disaster strikes. This is also reflected in discriminatory attitudes that frame women as weak or incapable, justifying their exclusion from participation and leadership, particularly in DPR.

Individual Barriers: Internalized Gender Norms and Stereotypes

"Women are afraid: afraid that they might make a mistake, like they are not comfortable with themselves,

that the help they will provide may not be right, and that they won't do the right thing."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Gender stereotypes are not only external pressures—they also have consequences for women's confidence. Internalized gender stereotypes arise as one of the main challenges to women's participation. Because many women internalize gendered norms in ways that seriously limit their confidence, they often believe that their value lies only in household work and that they are less capable than men.

"Talking about myself, I used to be intimidated even by the presence of one or two people; I would get mute in front of them."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Many women express a tendency to withdraw, saying *"I am just a woman, I will stay at home."* Others hesitate to speak up owing to fear of social disapproval or resistance from family members. These factors reinforce feelings of being less worthy or unqualified and discourage them from taking part in community or leadership activities.

Institutional Barriers: Exclusion from Decision-Making Spaces

"As a young girl, I faced the challenge of not being taken seriously or truly heard. During relief distribution after disasters, especially when dealing with people from outside the community, I've been mocked or ignored."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Although national disaster planning frameworks in Nepal and the Philippines include measures to promote women's participation, their implementation at the local level remains weak. Efforts such as quotas or formal representation tend to be more visible in urban areas with active civil society but are far less effective in remote and rural communities. Even when women participate in local DPR committees, such as the Community Disaster Management Committees in Nepal, they often face discrimination and exclusion.

"Sometimes women are included in committees just for the sake of meeting a quota. They're there in name but not involved in actual decision-making."

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

As this interviewee mentions, sometimes their contributions are undervalued, and their voices do not carry the same weight as those of men in decision-making processes. Persistent patriarchal mindsets shape institutional dynamics. In many communities, leadership positions such as mayor or chairperson are held by men while women are relegated to deputy roles, limiting their influence. This exclusion has practical consequences during crises. One DPR expert noted that safety in evacuation centers is a concern, particularly regarding gender-based violence. When women are not in positions of leadership, the planning and decision-making around, for example, mitigation of gender-based violence often do not consider gender perspectives, which can affect the design of safe and inclusive disaster response measures.

Structural Barriers: Limited Education and Access to Information

“Many women are still left behind due to illiteracy. As a result, those who are educated tend to be more recognized and respected by others.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Education emerges as a major barrier across interviews, particularly in Nepal. Many women mention that they have limited formal education, which affects their confidence to speak up and limits their participation in community or DPR activities. The national data reflects these inequalities: adult literacy remains lower among women than among men, with a gender gap of 20% (World Bank, 2025a). Beyond literacy, years of schooling in rural areas are still very low overall. Previous studies have shown that rural households have less education than urban ones; rural household heads have only 1.8 years of schooling on average compared with 5.6 years in urban areas (Panthhe and McCutcheon, 2015). Women explain during interviews that this lack of education within the household contributes to the lack of support they receive. Both women and practitioners mention that husbands and in-laws with limited education often reinforce stereotypes about women’s roles and discourage their participation beyond the household.

“If they give us the capability . . . we will be more capacitated to make things. Even creating beds or a small hut, so we would not rely on men.”

—Community member from the Philippines

In the Philippines, where both women and men have very high literacy rates (World Bank, 2024a), the issue is less about formal education and more about access to information and practical and technical skills. Women note that they still need specialized training to contribute effectively to DPR, support their barangay, or strengthen their own livelihoods. For some, the challenge is simply not knowing where to start. Overall, the findings show that closing gaps in formal education and ensuring access to practical technical training are both necessary for women to participate effectively in DPR, build self-reliance, and strengthen resilience.

Economic Barriers: Financial and Resource Constraints

“Women are doing so much unpaid labor already, so when you ask them to attend a meeting or training, they have to find time in between everything else. Without support at the household level or incentives like childcare, it’s difficult for them to fully engage.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Financial insecurity is another major obstacle to women’s participation in DPR activities. Many women live in deep poverty and highlight that they must prioritize basic needs, leaving little time for community engagement. In Nepal, poverty remains high, with 20.3% of the people living under the national poverty line. This number is higher in Sudurpashchim province (34.2%),

where the study was conducted. Women experience slightly higher poverty rates (9.5%) than men (8.6%), and rural areas show a much higher incidence of poverty (11.6%) than do urban areas (8%) (World Bank, 2024d). Additionally, migration of male household members to earn money overseas adds to women's burdens. With partners working abroad, women are left to manage the household, care for children, and secure daily income. Remittances account for more than 30% of Nepal's GDP, and in 2021 at least a quarter of households had at least one member living abroad (World Bank, 2024c). However, our findings suggest that male migration may place women in a position to take on both household responsibilities and certain DPR efforts within their communities

"Families prioritize livelihoods compared to participating in the community, because some of them are daily wage earners. So they count their time, the losses. If they want to work [for the community], they won't have food at night."

—DPR practitioner from the Philippines

In the Philippines, 15.5% of the population lives under the national poverty line, but this share reaches 24.0% in rural areas (World Bank, 2025b). In the study, some women mention that they are solo parents and manage both household and livelihood tasks. These economic pressures reduce the time and capacity women have to engage in DPR and community activities, so, as many women note, lack of time is a significant constraint to their participation. Participants emphasize that when survival is the priority, community activities become secondary. As highlighted earlier, women's engagement in DPR activities in the Philippines may become more feasible once childcare and domestic responsibilities are reduced, which helps explain why many women interviewees from the Philippines are retired or senior women. In contrast, interviewees in Nepal are much younger, reflecting changing household dynamics shaped by male migration.

Successful Strategies for Strengthening Women's Leadership in DPR

This section presents the findings that respond to the second research question: *What strategies are most effective in increasing women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response at the local level?* It is important to highlight that this section is not an evaluation of the ACT program—it is a thematic analysis that highlights the most successful strategies for addressing the key barriers mentioned by the interviewees. The results are based on interviews with women community leaders, as well as academics and practitioners in the fields of DPR, gender, and local governance, which includes interviewees not involved in the ACT program.

Below is a ranking of the five strategies mentioned most by each group of interviewees. This list showcases the different perceptions of the groups interviewed and how these perceptions contributed to answering the second research question.

Table 1: Five most commonly mentioned strategies by women leaders in Nepal and the Philippines

Rank	Strategy Name	Description
1	DPR capacity strengthening trainings	Training and skills building for women, specifically for DPR.
2	Community-managed funds	Community-managed funds made up of local contributions, used to support members during disasters or emergencies; funds given by government to communities to prepare for and response to disasters.
3	Social ties	Leveraging of social ties to encourage and strengthen participation; existing leaders encourage their networks to take up leadership positions; women in leadership roles remain in these positions because of the social benefits and meaning they receive from them.
4	Livelihood promotion	Interventions to improve the community's ability to secure basic needs and improve wellbeing through sustainable economic activities.
5	Participation in disaster planning	Involvement of women in the development of community disaster plans.

Table 2: Five most commonly mentioned strategies by academics, policymakers, and practitioners in Nepal and the Philippines

Rank	Strategy Name	Description
1	Gender mainstreaming	Making women and gender minorities an integral dimension of policies and programs.
2	Quotas and participation	Representation of women in DPR leadership positions, which inspires other women to participate and lead; this could occur through a legal or political mandate, such as the imposition of gender quotas.
3	Inclusive approaches	Integration of not only women, but also men, youth, and people with disabilities in DPR.
4	DPR capacity strengthening building trainings	Training and skills building for women, specifically for DPR.
5	Participation in disaster planning	Involvement of women in the development of community disaster plans.

Successful strategies not only address immediate barriers to participation but also create enabling environments that sustain women's leadership in the long term. Although promising practices have been identified, the research methodology does not provide a counterfactual that tests whether different strategies could have been more impactful. Further, although all the strategies discussed seem to have positive effects, the results suggest the importance of moving toward multisectoral approaches.

Occupying Decision-Making Spaces

“The government wants to have a gender balance. In the member of parliament elections, 33% should be female—that’s a reserved seat. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to have that 33% in the parliament. If the government did not have a policy to include women in this vital position, they would not have the opportunity to have a candidacy in the deputy mayor role as well.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Interviews with academics and practitioners widely mention the importance of focusing on formal structures to ensure women’s inclusion and representation, highlighting particular strategies as effective. First, establishing gender quotas or reserved positions for women in government, community leadership, or disaster committees is useful.

“It is very important, even in the offices, that there are requirements. . . . At least 40% or 50% or 60% should be women.”

—DPR practitioner from the Philippines

Second, it is important to use gender mainstreaming—that is, to integrate gender perspectives into all stages of disaster preparedness and response, from programming, planning, and policymaking to implementation. While these strategies provide real opportunities for women to engage in decision-making spaces, multiple academics and practitioners underline that they do not directly target the roots of gender inequality. Therefore, successful programming takes advantage of quotas and gender mainstreaming strategies while also investing in other strategies, such as the ones further explained in the following sections of the report.

Third, it is effective to promote participation in disaster planning by consulting women in the community and ensuring they are active participants in drafting and validating processes. When women are included in disaster planning, they have access to organizations and political authorities. These relationships are used as avenues to advocate for a community’s demands. As a consequence, women’s leadership roles are recognized by institutions and by the community, making leadership sustainable for women in both Nepal and the Philippines.

“Some of the very proactive municipalities, they take gender [into] consideration. They are engaging women and other groups in their plans and policy, like even [in the] yearly planning process. . . . Then they talk about their issues, challenges, and then also budget those—maybe not all is covered, but at least they prioritize and start keeping into their planning process. And then they implement that.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Moreover, women leaders often raise the concern of having limited time to invest in community leadership owing to multiple burdens related to housework. For women to occupy decision-making spaces effectively, some academics and practitioners highlight the importance of strategies that address care work, such as inclusive approaches, and flexible disaster preparedness training. Although such strategies have the potential to respond well to this key barrier, women leaders do not mention strategies that directly reduce care work. Therefore,

when addressing occupying decision-making spaces, Oxfam and partners should be mindful of this existing gap.

"You have to work not only with women, but with their husbands as well, or their partners and their entire families, because that care role that she's currently doing now has to be redistributed."

—DPR practitioner from the Philippines

Strengthening Capacity and Legitimization

"For me, what can help us women to help in the community is training, support, and women's empowerment, because if there is support and we are given training, we will know what to do, where to go, and who to approach."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Interviews suggest that capacity strengthening training in DPR skills and broader technical skills is widely effective. Women with more technical expertise and disaster training feel more empowered. According to data from the study, empowerment follows knowledge and capacity strengthening for the following reasons: First, knowledge breaks down internalized barriers to leadership. Many women comment on having been shy, not feeling comfortable speaking up, lacking confidence, or fearing criticism before taking disaster preparedness and response training, leadership training, or technical skills training. After training, the women state they feel capable of taking on positions within their communities.

"I didn't have the courage to speak up. It was the same for many women at the village level. When [Oxfam's local partner] came and formed the CDMC [Community Disaster Management Committee], things began to change. Initially, women were not in a position to speak; even now, some still hesitate and wish they wouldn't be handed the microphone. But after the formation of the committee, both women and men began participating, and women gradually started expressing themselves more confidently."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Second, these strategies also legitimize leadership roles because others in the community come to recognize those with training as qualified leaders. Once women leaders know what to do and where to go, people listen to them and ask for help. Many women use the word "trust" to refer to having legitimacy as leaders in the community; the word "trust" is used 30 times in the interviews in contexts of legitimacy or lack of legitimacy, in both Nepal and the Philippines. Being trusted by the community is usually preceded by having gained specific skills or being able to perform tasks from a professional-level position.

"Last year, we experienced a massive flood, one of the most severe in the past 30 to 40 years. In response, our CDMC [Community Disaster Management Committee] carried out exemplary work that became a true milestone for our community. The dedication and coordination we showed during that crisis earned us the trust of others, and as a result, people now actively join and support any events or activities led by the CDMC."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

While most women comment that training and capacity-strengthening programs have greatly helped them increase their confidence and knowledge, other women interviewed, as well as practitioners, have identified the need to improve the training workshops provided, to ensure that knowledge progresses, and the need to offer periodic refresher courses to keep knowledge up to date.

“There should be regular refresher trainings. It should not be a one-time training with no follow-up for two years. Any kind of training should be supported with periodic refresher sessions to keep our knowledge and skills up to date.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Strengthening Social Networks

“I’ve personally encouraged other women to step forward, get involved, and work for the betterment of our community.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Findings suggest that strategies that strengthen informal and formal relationships that connect women within their communities can be highly effective in both promoting and sustaining leadership and participation. These strategies foster community environments where women leaders are accepted and supported. They shift norms and strengthen networks within the community. During interviews, many women comment on feeling inspired and encouraged to participate when other women are involved, highlighting the importance of representation and connections. Women leaders mention using their positions and social ties to motivate others to participate. In some cases, women report that when villagers feel pessimistic and disengaged, holding neighborhood meetings can help them motivate each other.

“I can proudly say that the unity among women in Sundarnagar is rare. We don’t envy or discriminate against one another. We live in harmony, and that unity is the reason our preparedness efforts are so strong”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Practically, interviews suggest that the following strategies are the most effective in strengthening social networks: First, academics and practitioners propose investing in the formation of women’s groups or associations, spaces where they can build a sense of solidarity and address their interests and concerns.

“There are women leading various groups now. Earlier, when there was only one woman, it was difficult to speak up. But by forming groups, we’ve gained the confidence and strength to raise our voices.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Second, it can be effective to leverage personal connections, incentivizing women involved in DPR to motivate and engage their friends and neighbors.

"I talk to them, explaining that participating in DPR training is good for their family and for themselves. I encourage them to attend and join."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Third, it is useful to invest in inclusive approaches, which involve integrating men, youth, and other community members into disaster preparedness and response efforts in order to indirectly reduce women's multiple burdens.

"The role of women in our group is that we are the ones who segregate our food. . . . The children's role is that they help in cleaning the community. The youth created a group so that they have a role to play, even if we were devastated. The effect is not that severe, because we help one another."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

This finding aligns with feminist research on consciousness-raising, where through the sharing of personal life narratives, people realize that experiences are collective and subsequently conceptualize broader political and structural problems (Nelson, 2018). Therefore, strengthening social networks can not only enable women's leadership and participation, but also broadly address gender inequalities, motivating social action.

Developing Economic Independence

"Now I have a climate-resilient dragon-fruit farm and cultivate flowers. Being part of the group has made me financially independent. I no longer have to ask my husband for money, though we work together as a team. Since becoming involved with the organization, I've realized the importance of livelihood; it has helped me live with dignity and not rely on others for support."

—Woman leader from Nepal

The research suggests that when women are economically independent and control their own income, household and community dynamics shift. Once they are financially independent, they can get involved in DPR without needing permission or financial support from others. Financial empowerment also reduces the multiple burdens women juggle, helping guarantee stability. It promotes the long-term sustainability of leadership for the same reasons.

"Personally, I believe that if women are provided with life-skills training to enhance their livelihoods, they would be even more motivated."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Successful strategies include livelihood promotion, which focuses on building income-generating activities, such as business development, market access support, or agricultural support. Women on the ground report having more resources to help their families and

communities during disasters after engaging in these strategies. Another strategy is community-managed funds that can be built from local contributions or from external donations, including government funding. They are funds managed by the community and used to help members prepare for or respond to disasters or other emergencies.

“The primary thing that we women did was create a group where we saved our money. We didn’t know that we would have such a big contribution, regardless of only 10 or 20 pesos saved.”

—Woman leader from the Philippines

A final impactful strategy in this category is professionalization, which transforms leadership roles into paid jobs and ensures women are recognized for their contributions. This strategy is most often mentioned by academics and practitioners as a way to ensure recognition and sustainability in DPR roles.

“We provided training to those women, . . . and they got employment also. We paid them, because they got employment for a month. That helped during the crisis. They lost [their] house, everything, but it helped them to survive their economy at least one month.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Leveraging Migration Impacts

“Since most of the male members are away for foreign employment, it’s mostly women, children, and the elderly who remain in the village. In the past, only men would come forward to learn and lead, but now it’s the women who are stepping up.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

In the context of Nepal, it is common for men to migrate abroad looking for employment. Male absence can increase families' and communities' vulnerabilities by reducing help available during evacuations and disasters and increasing women's workload. However, it also shifts community dynamics, creating more opportunities for women to engage in leadership roles in DPR and expanding women's influence in public life. Women in Nepal describe the scarcity of men involved in DPR and mention their efforts to fill the gaps in leadership roles at the local level.

“After the 2015 earthquake, we trained local masons. We provided lots of trainings, . . . mostly to males. After the reconstruction, they left this place and migrated somewhere for work. . . . If there is no male, then the female has to come. That’s why there is a little bit of increase in women’s participation. If you look overall, migration is not that good, but for women’s participation, it has provided some limited space to confront for women.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Strategies that respond to the impacts of migration by strengthening women's agency and reducing their vulnerabilities are critical. Interview data show that DPR capacity-strengthening

and livelihood programs in Nepal are helping communities adapt to these migration patterns. Many men who receive DPR training subsequently migrate for work, creating gaps in local leadership, knowledge and community systems even if they send remittance home. As a result, women—who remain in the community long term—are increasingly stepping into these roles. Practitioners note that investing in women’s skills, leadership, and economic independence not only fills the gaps left by migration but also strengthens overall community resilience.

“The positive aspect of migration is that males are abroad or somewhere, and they send money to them, so women are empowered in that sense . . . because the husbands or sons are sending money to them. . . We have to bring women from [the] household to the outer world. Until we make a program like this, the program cannot be sustained. To make that, we have to increase their livelihoods. We have to make them independent.”

—DPR practitioner from Nepal

Impacts on Community Disaster Resilience

This section presents the findings in response to the third research question: *How is the resilience of communities to disasters caused by natural hazards improved by women’s participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response?* Data was collected from focus groups made up of community members (of all genders) in locations where ACT programming had taken place over the past several years. Focus group discussants were asked to reflect on the changes experienced in the community as a result of this increase in women’s DPR leadership, with the baseline being the period immediately before ACT program implementation. Data from in-depth interviews with women leaders was also used to assess the impacts on community resilience.

As a result of women’s increased leadership in DPR, five main areas of positive change in the wider community were identified: better preparation for disasters, more effective responses to disasters, decreased vulnerability of women, increased social cohesion and inclusion, and improved engagement with formal institutions.

Communities Are Better Prepared for Disasters

“Things have changed for the better. If a disaster is about to happen, we get early warnings because everyone informs us. We have become more aware and prepared.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

In communities where more women have recently taken up leadership roles in disaster management, community members report being more informed about what to do during a disaster and more cautious about potential threats. Many point to the impact of disaster response plans, early warning systems, and evacuation drills implemented by women leaders as part of the ACT program. As a result of these initiatives, they note feeling less afraid of and more prepared for future threats.

Reflecting on last year’s flood, we had also undergone a flood simulation drill beforehand. That simulation

taught us an important lesson: when the siren goes off, we must immediately evacuate our homes. This message was clearly understood and remembered by all the citizens [of the community]. So, when the siren sounded at midnight, everyone evacuated to higher ground. We consider this one of the major achievements of our local CDMC [Community Disaster Management Committee]."

—Community member from Nepal

During interviews, many women leaders also describe the important role they play in disseminating information about how to prepare for incoming threats. They highlight their skills at convening community meetings, communicating with a wide range of groups, and convincing community members to take threats seriously. Women leaders also note that their families in particular end up better prepared after they become engaged in DPR leadership initiatives. The women recall developing contingency plans to protect their family members, their assets, and their income. Academics and practitioners highlight that women in Nepal and the Philippines usually lead their households and manage the family resources, so after receiving training on DPR they are well positioned to implement these skills in their households.

Communities Respond More Effectively to Disasters

"I've learned how to raise awareness in the community, how to help keep the community safe, and how to protect myself and my family during emergencies."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Focus group participants and women leaders both highlight that compared with the period before ACT program implementation, their communities now react more quickly and respond more systematically to disasters. Women note the benefits of early warning systems and disaster response plans they have implemented, which focus group members report being aware of and following during disaster situations. As a consequence, community members recall communicating more effectively with one another during disasters than previously because there is a clearer division of roles and a more coherent system to disseminate key information.

"Without the CDMC [Community Disaster Management Committee], people in the village wouldn't know what's going on. Now we know where to go and what to do in case of hazards like fires or floods. Through the CDMC, we come together as a community to solve our problems and support each other in times of crisis."

—Community member from Nepal

Women who have been trained in specialized skills can provide lifesaving assistance and support essential decision-making. In locations where women have received training in specialized DPR skills, such as first aid and evacuation procedures, women leaders note the difference they have observed in their communities' disaster responses. This is particularly important in communities where many men have migrated away. They recall routinely providing lifesaving assistance and supporting essential decision-making in times of crisis.

"I have learned how to carry out rescue operations, how to connect with others, and how to keep people

safe.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Academics and practitioners point out during interviews that many women are already the informal custodians of important statistics in their communities, keeping track of information about where community members live, the makeup of households, and who is most vulnerable. These respondents highlight how strategies that train women to apply these skills in disaster contexts and that legitimize women’s leadership can ensure these abilities are put to good use in disaster scenarios. Relatedly, focus group members and women leaders report that the uptick in women leaders has improved the efficiency with which disaster resources are distributed in their communities. They note that essential resources like food, water, and medical supplies are now reaching their intended recipients more quickly. This change reflects the intimate knowledge women have about their communities’ needs. As a consequence of all these factors, community members report that they have observed less disaster-related damage to people, assets, and livelihoods since more women have taken up leadership roles in their communities.

Women’s Vulnerability Decreases across the Community

“When there was a typhoon or a flood . . . before, I felt shy asking for help from boys. It’s different when it’s a fellow woman who helps you. That is one of the reasons that motivated me. . . I challenged myself to help other women.

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Women leaders discuss during interviews how learning DPR skills has made them less physically vulnerable to disaster shocks. They know what to do during an emergency and are equipped with more skills to keep themselves safe. Women involved in leadership also report feeling more confident, respected, and valued in the community after becoming more active in DPR.

Further, many focus group participants believe that the vulnerability of all women in the community tends to decrease as a result of women’s DPR leadership, reducing their exposure to disasters. This is because they receive more gender-inclusive support during disasters (such as safe evacuation shelters) and they feel more comfortable confiding in women leaders for help. Academics and practitioners further highlight how training women to provide first-aid training in disaster contexts ensures women in the community feel comfortable seeking treatment and receive safe, gender-responsive care. During interviews, community members also observe that women’s leadership often boosts the social status of women in the community, helping reshape gender norms and reduce gender discrimination for all women.

“Not long ago, women in our community were confined to household chores. Women’s voices were dismissed during meetings and gatherings, with the belief that we were incapable. But today, we can stand up for our rights anywhere.”

—Community member from Nepal

Social Cohesion and Inclusion Increases in the Community

"Now we know one another, we've built strong community ties, and our capacities have grown. Most importantly, we now have the courage and the knowledge to face disasters together."

—Woman leader from Nepal

As a result of women's leadership, community members and women leaders report higher levels of trust, interdependence, and respect for one another. Women describe how they inspire other members of the community to participate in DPR efforts, which promotes closer bonds between all community members. Community members report cooperating more effectively during disasters and being more motivated to continue engaging in DPR efforts.

Academics and practitioners highlight that in communities where women have engaged in DPR leadership, DPR responses are generally reported to be more inclusive of marginalized groups such as people with disability, elderly people, and LGBTQIA+ groups. During interviews, women leaders often note the special emphasis they place on caring for vulnerable members of their community, making plans before disaster strikes to ensure someone has a dedicated role to escort them to safety.

"We do house-to-house visits after a typhoon; afterwards, we report the needs of the children, pregnant women, and senior citizens."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

Communities Trust and Engage More with Formal Institutions

"After I began working in disaster response, people started recognizing me as someone who steps up during times of crisis and actively addresses community issues. They now see me as a person who can raise their concerns with the relevant authorities. Even outside of disaster situations, I have continued to support and assist community members."

—Woman leader from Nepal

After getting more involved in DPR, many women leaders believe they have begun to serve as a bridge between their communities and formal authorities. Mediated through their leadership, women outline how their communities are now able to communicate more frequently and effectively with decision-makers on issues that affect them. These leaders also believe that their communities have begun to trust authorities more and that their concerns will be taken seriously.

"Before, we didn't even know who our ward chairperson was, but now we approach him with our problems and he prioritizes them, especially since we live in the vulnerable river basin area."

—Woman leader from Nepal

Communication with authorities improves not only on DPR matters, but also on broader topics affecting the community, such as economic and infrastructure issues. Women leaders describe

how their work in DPR has strengthened their relationships with local authorities, giving them direct access to people with the power to help when a bridge collapses or a household is struggling financially. They often point out that their experience leading DPR efforts is what gave them the confidence to represent their community. As communities begin to represent themselves more effectively, they become more economically and socially resilient, putting them in a stronger position to cope with disasters.

“Things have really changed. In the past, we struggled with irrigation, but after joining the committees, we even have the chairperson’s contact number and can call him directly. The ward provided us with two irrigation motors.”

—Woman leader from Nepal

Additional Findings

In addition to answering the research questions, the interviews provide broader insights that can be used to inform interventions promoting women’s leadership in DPR. Women highlight the reasons that motivate them to become leaders and that sustain them in these roles. Interviews with women leaders, academics, and practitioners also shed light on women’s unique leadership traits and the value they bring to DPR efforts. These interviewees discuss how women’s definitions of leadership often differ from traditional individualistic definitions. Finally, interviews with community members and leaders reveal how these groups define community resilience for themselves and what matters most to them when preparing for and responding to disasters caused by natural hazards.

Women’s Motivations for Leadership

“As long as I can extend help, I will help—because we are human. We need to help other people. It is not okay that you just watch.”

—Woman leader from the Philippines

A significant finding outside the scope of the research questions are the motivations compelling the women interviewed to take up leadership positions. This provides insights for future campaigns and programs encouraging women’s DPR leadership. Women’s motivations for being leaders tend to be shaped by faith, family roles, cultural norms, and lived experiences. In the Philippines, common values of service and compassion are highlighted, while in Nepal, women describe cultural expectations and moral duties to care for others that extend from the household to the community. Across both countries, the responsibilities of motherhood encourage women to participate to protect their families. Women also highlight the traits they acquire through socialization, since from a young age they have been taught to prioritize the wellbeing of other people. Their lived experiences in witnessing and surviving repeated typhoons, floods, and earthquakes are also strong motivators to prepare for other disasters that might arise in the future. Encouragement from peers, NGOs, and community leaders is another critical driver, and many women gain the confidence to lead after observing other women take on the role in their communities.

Unique Traits of Women's Leadership

"I made a conscious decision to ignore the background noise and negative comments because I knew they came from a place of ignorance. I kept pushing myself, and that made all the difference."

—Woman leader from Nepal

The research shed light on the distinctive leadership qualities women use to support effective disaster preparedness and response efforts. Women emphasize that they already possess leadership skills even before any formal training is given or formal recognition is awarded. These traits are shaped by women's experience managing households and caring for others—activities that demand resourcefulness, empathy, and the ability to multitask. In addition, interviewees highlight their courage and persistence in times of crisis, noting how they take the initiative to organize, protect, and mobilize family and neighbors despite constraints. These traits are not new or externally taught, but long-standing strengths that allow them to step naturally into leadership roles during times of disaster. The women position themselves as active agents rather than passive recipients.

Who Counts as a Leader?

"As a leader, she doesn't make decisions on her own. She is kind and approachable. You can request from her. . . . [She is] one of those who attend to the members of her community."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

When defining leadership, women in both Nepal and the Philippines move away from ideas of formal authority or titles. Rather, the way they describe leadership is as a collective and relational practice rooted in guiding, informing, and supporting others. In Nepal, women describe leaders as those who share knowledge with others about risks and preparedness, ensuring that no one is left unprotected. In the Philippines, leadership is seen in concrete acts such as checking on neighbors, helping families evacuate safely, and coordinating relief. These findings show leadership to be defined less by hierarchy and more by service, cooperation, and the ability to inspire trust. These descriptions of leadership differ from traditional, institutional definitions of leadership that focus on the male-dominated view of leadership as occupying an official role and holding formal power. Instead, women's definitions center on solidarity and action.

Communities Define Resilience for Themselves

"I can say that our barangay is ready, if there is continuous livelihood [with sustainable economic development in the community]. Even if a disaster happens, we will always recover. The livelihood that was given will not be lost."

—Woman leader from the Philippines

The research data also reveals how communities themselves define resilience, influenced by their own values and experiences. In Nepal, resilience is described as *"standing again"* after floods or earthquakes, rebuilding homes, and regaining confidence despite repeated shocks.

Adaptability also means finding new sources of income, particularly for women whose husbands have migrated abroad. In the Philippines, resilience is strongly tied to recovery from typhoons: women describe resilience as being able to repair livelihoods quickly, care for children under stress, and maintain hope even after repeated disasters. In both contexts, resilience is seen as a collective responsibility involving caring for neighbors, sharing resources, and offering emotional support to ensure the whole community can recover together.

Case Study

Ushi¹ is an agricultural worker and mother of four living in a flood-prone village next to a river in Kanchanpur district, Nepal. For much of her life she farmed rice, but the crops were often destroyed by extreme weather that submerged her home in water and seemed to come without warning. She was nervous about socializing outside her house and was caught up in trying to make ends meet before the next rice yield.

"Before, there was no one to teach or encourage us. Our lives revolved around cooking, getting the children ready for school, and repeating the same routine. We would cultivate rice once every six months and then repeat the cycle."

After the ACT program was implemented in her community, Ushi was motivated to join her local Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC). She received training on what to do during a disaster, learning skills such as how to warn community members about an incoming flood, prepare emergency kits, and relocate elderly community members to safety. Usha was inspired to contribute to the CDMC's emergency fund, a joint savings pool that distributes money to community members following disasters. She also received financial support from the Committee to start a climate-resilient fruit and flower farm, which grows high-value crops that are less vulnerable to extreme weather.

When a flood struck Ushi's community recently, the CDMC received an early alert and activated a warning siren. Ushi rescued elderly community members by relocating them to higher ground, managed relief materials, and found shelter for those who were displaced. The door-to-door awareness campaigns she had participated in earlier paid off, and members of her community knew how to keep themselves safe.

Ushi is proud to be a member of the CDMC and believes she is making a real difference for her community. She has made strong friendships through her work and notices that members of the community now trust her knowledge and skills. When local government officials are writing new policy plans, they often call on her and her CDMC colleagues for their input. Ushi also worries less about being able to support her family because she has a more sustainable source of income—in fact, she has been training other community members to grow climate-resilient crops too.

"Even last year, half of my house was submerged, but I still felt a strong urge to go out and help the community. It was raining heavily with strong winds, and I had no umbrella or torch (flashlight), but I went

¹ "Ushi" is a pseudonym used to maintain confidentiality.

| *anyway. We don't take anything with us when we die, but when we help others, it brings a sense of pride."*

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, we make seven recommendations that Oxfam, other organizations and local partners delivering similar disaster resilience programming can use to strengthen their interventions. Implementing these recommendations will enhance DPR program's ability to promote women's leadership, sustain women in these roles for the long term, and foster overall disaster resilience within communities. Specifically, for the ACT program, implementing these recommendations over the next five years—prioritizing investment in women's leadership in DPR will contribute to a more sustained community resilience.

International efforts are increasingly directed toward achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation—a Paris Agreement framework aimed at strengthening the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities in the face of climate change. These recommendations offer guidance for DPR practitioners and policymakers seeking to advance this goal, using approaches grounded in gender justice and human rights.

Recommendation 1: Implement gender-transformative programming that addresses stereotypes and gender roles in the community. Although women's situations have improved in both countries, our findings reveal persistent patterns of exclusion and discrimination toward many of the women interviewed. We recommend strengthening communication strategies aimed at behavioral change and continuing to apply gender-transformative approaches that tackle the root causes of inequality. In practice, this involves advocating to shift laws, policies, systems, resource distribution, and everyday norms and behaviors; including gender analysis in every stage of programming; and developing measurable objectives (Marcus *et al.*, 2021).

Recommendation 2: Improve capacity strengthening programs for women leaders based on local knowledge gaps. Although capacity strengthening strategies have improved women's confidence and trust, interviews reveal that many training programs remain basic and do not delve deeply into the content. At the same time, there is demand for periodic refresher training. Therefore, we recommend conducting assessments on knowledge gaps in order to design training programs that are adapted to local needs and that promote continuous and pertinent learning.

Recommendation 3: Invest in strengthening community social networks, and leverage them to recruit and sustain women leaders. Women are inspired to become leaders when they are encouraged by members of their social networks, and they remain in these positions because of the social value and meaning they receive from colleagues. We recommend investing in strengthening community social networks, including by supporting women's groups (like self-help savings groups in the Philippines and women's empowerment centers in Nepal), community clubs, and public events that bring community members together. We also recommend implementing promotional campaigns for women's DPR leadership that ask existing leaders to recruit members of their network.

Recommendation 4: Promote economic resilience to boost women's leadership.

Addressing economic vulnerabilities and fostering financial independence are vital to increase women's leadership while addressing the multiple burdens they juggle. Economic constraints can be mitigated by implementing livelihood promotion programs, supporting DPR professionalization schemes that provide women with a salary, and promoting women's community emergency savings groups. On a systemic level, advocating for an increase in government funding for disasters can ensure that women have access to the resources they need to lead DPR.

Recommendation 5: Approach women's empowerment programming holistically, addressing both promotion and sustainability. The research suggests that some strategies are effective in promoting women's leadership while others work to sustain that leadership over time. Promotional strategies include gender quotas, gender mainstreaming, and DPR capacity strengthening training. Strategies that sustain women in leadership roles include professionalization, community-managed emergency funds, livelihood promotion, and leveraging of social ties. Research data suggests that promotion strategies could lose effectiveness over time if not supported by sustaining strategies. To design effective women's empowerment programming, strategies should not be delivered in isolation, but combined in a package of promotional and sustaining strategies.

Recommendation 6: Advocate for institutional support to formalize and sustain women's leadership. The Philippines and Nepal have made progress in implementing DPR gender mainstreaming initiatives such as gender quotas, but national and local policy still has implementation gaps at the community level. Women's roles are often symbolic, meaning women do not have equal decision-making power. Enacting recommendations 1 through 5 will address some of these implementation gaps, but governments must continue providing funding and institutional support for women's DPR leadership. We recommend working with governments to ensure that existing support for women's DPR leadership is fully implemented and to encourage new institutional support that ensures women have a meaningful voice in local DPR.

Recommendation 7: When seeking funding and government support, highlight that women's leadership promotes community disaster resilience. Women's leadership in DPR promotes gender equality, but it also leads to broader resilience across the entire community. This should be articulated to make a stronger case when seeking funding for programs that support women's DPR leadership and when advocating for gender mainstreaming across government DPR initiatives. When women are empowered to lead, the whole community becomes more resilient to disasters, and this is a powerful business case.

Conclusion and Future Work

This report examined the barriers and enablers of women's leadership and participation in disaster preparedness and response, as well as the impact this leadership has on overall community resilience. The findings suggest that social and internalized norms, structural exclusion from decision-making, limited education, and financial constraints are the leading barriers to women's leadership and participation. To overcome these barriers, research data

maps the most effective strategies in promoting women's empowerment. These strategies work in different dimensions of empowerment, from the individual to the systemic level.

To target individual empowerment and legitimization within communities, capacity strengthening in DPR and broader technical skills training are the prominent strategies. Inclusive approaches and investment in women's and community associations aim to address both social and internalized barriers to leadership by leveraging and strengthening social ties. To reduce poverty and financial dependency, livelihood promotion programs, community-managed funds, and professionalization strategies are highlighted as effective. To focus on institutions, gender quotas and gender mainstreaming are pointed out as the best strategies when added to other strategies to guarantee sustainability. Moreover, the research findings support the assumption that women's leadership and participation in DPR promote overall community resilience. Communities are better prepared and respond more effectively to disasters, women's vulnerability decreases, social cohesion and inclusion increase, and trust and engagement with formal institutions are strengthened.

In addition to answering the initial research questions, research data reveals further findings. The analysis presented here provides new information on women's motivations for leadership, traits of women's leadership, and context-specific definitions of leadership and resilience. This information contributes to a deeper understanding of local dynamics that directly influence programming effectiveness. At a broader level, the findings confirm that women's leadership and participation improve DPR and community resilience and give evidence to support the recommendations listed in this report. Recommendations include implementing gender-transformative programming, improving capacity strengthening training, investing in community social ties, promoting economic resilience, and adopting holistic programming.

Although the report is not designed as a comparative analysis between Nepal and the Philippines, the research points out context-specific elements that configure women's leadership and participation in each country. While migration has been reshaping community responsibilities in Nepal, in the Philippines women engage more commonly through formalized and professional roles. Furthermore, the data shows that women engage at different ages in each country. Research data suggests that older women engage in the Philippines, indicating that engagement becomes more feasible once childcare and domestic responsibilities are reduced. In Nepal, younger women are more involved in leadership, reflecting, again, how male migration changes household dynamics and community needs.

Several gaps remain to be addressed in future research. First, similar research could be conducted in Bangladesh and Indonesia to provide roughly comparative data for the ACT region. Second, it would be useful to investigate the sustainability of leadership roles over a longer time frame to assess whether women disengage over time, especially considering Nepal's migration movements. Third, further work could explore how factors such as age, marital status, disability status, ethnicity, or caste interfere with women's ability to get involved in disaster contexts. Finally, further research could use a similar design to this study and apply it to communities not assisted by Oxfam partners. This comparative approach would help validate the barriers presented here. As the canon of research expands, programming and government initiatives can enable more women to take up leadership roles and help their communities thrive in the face of disasters.

Overall, this research affirms that women's leadership in DPR contributes to community resilience by helping communities prepare better and respond more effectively. Women's leadership and participation also reduce other women's vulnerabilities, increase social cohesion

and inclusion, and promote successful engagement with institutions. Thus, the report shows how disaster preparedness and response are achieved by ensuring that the whole community has the power and resources to build resilience. The path begins with inclusion. Women's empowerment is not simply a strategy for a better future; it is the answer to a safer present.

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Appendices

Overview of ACT Program

With an unprecedented increase in the number and severity of natural disasters, marginalized and off-the-radar communities in Asia are witnessing countless risks to their lives and livelihoods. The fallout effects often limit their abilities to participate and learn disaster risk reduction approaches.

To mitigate this increased vulnerability, Oxfam has set up the Asia Community Disaster Preparedness and Transformation (ACT) Program to help marginalized and remote communities in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines prepare for and respond to natural hazards.

The ACT Program aims to reduce vulnerability and suffering among marginalized, disaster-prone communities by improving their disaster preparedness, response, and recovery capacities and by supporting their capacity to co-lead relief and rehabilitation efforts in collaboration with local authorities.

ACT is focused on three intertwined outcomes:

- Increase capacities and leadership of target communities to enable local actors to respond effectively to small-scale disasters, with special emphasis on transformative leadership roles of women and youth.
- Strengthen and protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable socioeconomic groups, enabling them to respond to and recover from recurrent natural disasters, while maintaining or increasing their access to productive assets and actively engaging with relevant private and public sector actors to access services.
- Enable communities, local and national actors, and international organizations to systematically share knowledge to strengthen local humanitarian leadership and disaster preparedness.

ACT's program objectives are as follows:

- Enhance local humanitarian leadership.
- Improve knowledge and capacities to deal with disaster risks.
- Conduct market studies to foster public-private partnerships that minimize market disruption in case of a disaster.
- Enhance women's economic empowerment.
- Work in partnership with civil society, networks, and the private sector.
- Improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).
- Build emergency response funds.

Timeline of Fieldwork

Activity	June				July			
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
Fieldwork in the Philippines								
Travel to Manila								
Research in Dolores (in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews)								
Research in Salcedo (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions)								
Oxfam regional learning event in Bulacan								
Research in Manila (key informant interviews)								
Fieldwork in Nepal								
Travel to Kathmandu								
Research in Kanchanpur (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions)								
Research in Kathmandu (key informant interviews)								
Departure								

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews: Questions

Background

Please answer these background questions:

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) Where are you originally from?
- 3) Are you married?
- 4) Do you have children, and if so, how many?
- 5) Can you tell me about the kind of work you do, whether it's paid or unpaid?

Community Resilience and Leadership

- 1) Can you think of a leader in your community, and describe what they do?
- 2) Can you give an example of one time your community responded well to natural disasters, like floods or storms?
- 3) Thinking about times when disasters happened here, how did you help respond to them?
- 4) Can you tell me about how you are currently involved in your community?
- 5) Has your role in the community changed since you got involved in efforts to prevent and respond to disasters?

Suggested probes:

- i) Has this role changed the way others see or treat you?
 - ii) Did you expect your role to change?
- 6) What motivated you to engage in responding to disasters, like floods or storms, in your community?
 - 7) Can you remember any challenges you faced when you started taking on more responsibility in responding to disasters in your community?
 - 8) What do you think makes it hard for other women to take part in community efforts when there is a disaster?
 - 9) In your opinion, what would help other women feel encouraged to join community efforts for preventing or responding to disasters?

10) Since taking part in your community's disaster efforts, do you feel more prepared for future disasters? In what ways?

Suggested probes:

- i) Can you describe specific skills or knowledge?
- ii) That's interesting. Can you explain a little more about it?

Final Question

11) Is there anything else you would like to tell me or share with me regarding today's topic?

Focus Groups: Questioning Sequence

- 1) Let's start by getting to know each other. Can you share with the group your name, and what you spend your time doing (such as study, work, hobbies)?
- 2) To begin with, I want to ask if there have been many disasters caused by natural hazards ((like floods, storms, or droughts) in the community in your recent memory. Can you highlight any that stand out to you?
- 3) Thinking back to recent memory, how well do you feel your community has prepared for disasters caused by natural hazards, and how well has it responded to them?
- 4) Can you think of any examples of women in your community who are involved in disaster preparation or response? What kinds of things are they doing?
- 5) Are you aware of any initiatives in your community that are designed to promote women's participation and leadership in disaster preparedness and response? What are they?
- 6) What impact do you think these initiatives are having on your community?
- 7) How do you think women's involvement in disaster preparedness and response contributes to your community's ability to anticipate, prepare for, and recover from disasters caused by natural hazards?
- 8) If women were more empowered to participate and lead disaster preparedness and response than they are now, do you think anything in your community would change?
- 9) What are some changes or initiatives that could be implemented in your community to ensure that women have a more influential role in disaster preparedness and response?

Key Informant Interviews: Questions

- 1) Could you introduce yourself, your role at your organization, and briefly describe your work?
- 2) Can you tell me about how you and your organization contribute to promoting women's leadership in disaster preparedness and response at the local level?
- 3) In your view, what role do women currently play in preparing for and responding to disasters in this community?
- 4) Why do you think it is important for women to be involved in community disaster preparedness and response?
- 5) What do you see as the barriers to women leading and participating in disaster preparedness and response in their communities?
- 6) Can you give any examples of programmes you are aware of which successfully empowered women to lead and participate in disaster preparedness and response in their communities?
- 7) We are interested in the concept of gender mainstreaming: the practice of making women and gender minorities an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programmes, to promote gender equality in all spheres. In your opinion, how important is gender mainstreaming in national disaster management policy for empowering women to lead disaster preparedness and response at the local level?
- 8) Have you observed any real-world changes taking place at the community level as a result of gender mainstreaming policies?
- 9) If you could design a program to promote women's leadership and participation in disaster preparedness and response, what would it look like?

Interviewee Demographics

Women Leaders in the Philippines				
No.	Marital Status	Age	Number of children	Occupation
1	Widowed	71	6	Barangay secretary
2	Married	57	4	Former barangay councilor
3	Married	48	3	Barangay health worker
4	Married	45	5	Barangay health worker
5	Married	54	7	Barangay councilor
6	Widowed	60	4	Barangay official
7	Married	59	4	Barangay councilor
8	Unmarried	32	1	Unemployed/informal
9	Widowed	50	4	Barangay councilor
10	Married	46	4	Barangay captain
11	Domestic partner	31	1	Staff at the municipal disaster risk office
12	Unmarried	23	0	Barangay youth councilor
13	Married	58	3	Barangay health worker
14	Unmarried	55	7	Unemployed/informal
15	Married	41	2	Barangay secretary
16	Married	61	3	President of the women's organization

Women Leaders in Nepal				
No.	Marital Status	Age	Number of children	Occupation

Women Leaders in Nepal				
1	Married	32	1	Housewife
2	Married	32	2	Teacher
3	Unmarried	33	0	Student
4	Unmarried	23	0	Student
5	Unmarried	23	0	Social mobilizer
6	Married	35	2	Farmer
7	Married	51	2	Farmer
8	Unmarried	39	0	Tailoring
9	Married	33	3	Housewife and livestock worker
10	Married	26	2	Housewife
11	Married	37	4	Farmer
12	Married	29	1	Farmer
13	Married	31	2	Housewife
14	Married	30	2	Farmer/housewife
15	Married	41	2	Housewife
16	Married	33	2	Former teacher/housewife
17	Married	29	2	Farmer
18	Married	40	2	Ward member/saleswoman
19	Unmarried	24	0	Community worker

Focus Group Participants in the Philippines					
No.	Gender	Age	Occupation	Highest level of education	Length of residence in the community (in years)
1	Female	49	Housewife and barangay health worker	Third year of high school	27 years
2	Female	37	Barangay health worker	High school graduate	37 years
3	Female	59	Housewife	High school graduate	41 years
4	Female	32	Barangay health worker	High school graduate	32 years
5	Female	42	Housewife	Vocational graduate	17 years
6	Female	45	Not stated	College graduate	45 years
7	Male	41	Contractual work	College graduate	14 years

Focus Group Participants in the Philippines					
8	Male	62	Barangay secretary	College graduate	62 years
9	Female	46	Self-employed	College graduate	46 years
10	Female	53	Farmer	College graduate	53 years
11	Female	26	Job order employee	College graduate	26 years
12	Male	53	Lorry assistant	College graduate	32 years
13	Male	66	Fisher folk	College graduate	66 years

Focus Group Participants in Nepal					
No.	Gender	Age	Occupation	Highest level of education	Length of residence in the community (in years)
1	Male	31	Agriculture	School leaving certificate	31 years
2	Female	30	Housewife	Second grade	9 years
3	Female	32	Housewife	School leaving certificate	12 years
4	Female	25	Housewife	School leaving certificate	9 years
5	Female	57	Housewife	Third grade	24 years
6	Female	47	Housewife	Not stated	15 years
7	Male	42	Agriculture	Seventh grade	42 years
8	Female	32	Agriculture	Bachelor's degree	4 years
9	Female	27	Agriculture	Ninth grade	22 years
10	Female	30	Agriculture	Seventh grade	24 years
11	Female	30	Agriculture	Ninth grade	14 years
12	Female	42	Agriculture	Fifth grade	26 years
13	Female	51	Agriculture	Not stated	51 years
14	Female	32	Teacher	High school graduate	8 years
15	Female	37	Agriculture	Twelfth grade	17 years
16	Female	36	Not stated	Tenth grade	7 years
17	Female	35	Not stated	Fifth grade	19 years
18	Female	45	Not stated	Not stated	25 years

Focus Group Participants in Nepal					
19	Female	23	Not stated	Twelfth grade	23 years
20	Female	25	Not stated	Twelfth grade	3 years
21	Female	21	Not stated	Twelfth grade	21 years
22	Female	27	Tailor	Tenth grade	5 years
23	Female	21	Not stated	Twelfth grade	21 years
24	Female	25	Housewife	Twelfth grade	8 years
25	Female	28	Tailor	Tenth grade	10 years
26	Female	33	Agriculture	Eighth grade	11 years
27	Female	37	Agriculture	Twelfth grade	8 years
28	Female	26	Agriculture	Eleventh grade	26 years
29	Female	32	Agriculture	Tenth grade	13 years
30	Female	31	Teacher	Bachelor's degree	6 years
31	Female	38	Grocery shop owner	Tenth grade	11 years

Academics, Policymakers, and Practitioners in Nepal and the Philippines		
No.	Country	Position
1	The Philippines	Former gender in emergencies adviser
2	The Philippines	Local chief executive
3	The Philippines	Research and policy specialist
4	The Philippines	Director of the Center for Women's and Gender Studies
5	The Philippines	DRR technical officer
6	The Philippines	Advocacy, training, and influencing program manager
7	The Philippines	Rural women project coordinator
8	Nepal	Disaster risk reduction coordinator
9	Nepal	Disaster risk reduction coordinator
10	Nepal	Director of the Center of Disaster Studies
11	Nepal	Social development advisor
12	Nepal	Former worker in the development field
13	Nepal	Disaster risk reduction officer
14	Nepal	Former risk-reduction program and advocacy manager
15	Nepal	Disaster risk reduction officer
16	Nepal	Independent consultant

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Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

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