

GENDERED IMPACTS OF COVID19

Dr Asenath Maobe (Post Doc Research Fellow: Gender and Disaster Management) and Dr Joanes Atela

Brief Objectives:

1. To discuss the relationship between gender and disaster risk reduction- gender lens
2. To highlight the gendered impacts of COVID-19 based on; health, unpaid care, economical and gender based violence
3. Explore priority measures and responses to the gendered impact of COVID-19 towards “Build Back Better” (resilience and livelihood).

Key Messages

- COVID-19 has revealed existing gender disparities
- Substantial differences in the way men and women of all age groups face and deal with disasters, exist
- Gender mainstreaming is key in disaster risk management
- Women and vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected on: health, unpaid care, economic livelihoods and on gender based violence
- Mitigation measures should employ a consultative and cross borrowing approach towards buiding back better beyond COVID-19



The unfair and unequal treatment of working women is one reason why I went into politics. In the late 1960s, as a student volunteer doing social work in Lisbon's poor areas, I saw women in tough situations, doing menial jobs and carrying the weight of their extended families. I knew this had to change – and I have seen important changes in my lifetime. But decades later, COVID19 threatens to bring back these conditions and worse, for many women around the world.



Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General, United Nations

Background

In the context that we live in, risks abound and are systemic in nature. Proliferating risks are emerging in ways never anticipated before. We now live in a world where one hazard cascades to multi-hazards and a never-ending chain starts. Perhaps it is time that institutions, policymakers, and financiers did focus more on preventing the risks and losses that arise from risks than preparing and responding to risks as and when they occur. Nairobi Risk hub

With COVID-19, the systemic nature of risks has been exposed, and the potential cascading impacts laid bare. It is also correct to note that; gender equality gains might have been eroded. Consequently, the vulnerability has intensified, where the poor, the marginalized, the aged, the disabled, men, women, boys, girls, communities, and countries bear the brunt. The Sendai Framework monitor records unpleasant statistics regarding disasters and vulnerability. It shows that the least developed countries approximately record 40% of deaths and 48% of livelihoods disrupted whenever disasters occur. The framework recognizes the need for reducing risks and building resilience and livelihoods.

Notably, the framework acknowledges all the critical role that gender plays in disaster risk reductions. Women, for instance, are considered vital stakeholders in DRR efforts, especially at grassroots levels. However, their roles in DRR decision-making are limited. This policy brief highlights the impact of COVID-19 and the responsive measures towards the suffering, in the spirit of not leaving anyone behind, and social inclusion.

GENDER LENS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

- Gender aspects existing in society create substantial differences in the way men and women of all age groups face and deal with disasters before and after they strike (Bradshaw & Fordham, 2015).
- When DRR strategies are developed through proper gender, age, and inclusion study, local leadership will be able to generate better suitable policy instruments and programmes responsive to different needs
- The presence of gender-sensitive stakeholders also drive the process more critically to ensure no one is left behind in disaster prevention and response as well as in finding long-term solutions,
- Gender mainstreaming allows for flexible financing arrangements of different sources to support outcome-based programming, allowing innovation and adjustments (Ahmad, 2018).
- Analyzing the potential risks through a gender lens will more accurately discover multi-hazards and their impacts on different groups of people: the elderly, the disabled, and the vulnerable.
- Recognizing the extent to which disease outbreaks affect women and men differently is useful in designing equitable policies and guidelines.

Figure 1: The Kenyan informal economy, number of work-

Activity	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Manufacturing	2,438.8	2,596.2	2,728.9	2,878.8	3,044.9
Construction	307.2	322.9	348.6	367.8	385.2
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	7,196.6	7,612.5	8,111.3	8,557.1	9,005.6
Transport and Communications	376.2	399.7	422.3	445.5	470.2
Community, Social and Personal Services	1,168.5	1,239.0	1,316.1	1,388.2	1,462.5
Other	549.5	579.7	612.6	646.2	683.2
Total	12,036.8	12,749.9	13,539.6	14,283.6	15,051.6

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Economic

Economic Impacts

In Kenya COVID-19 has been described as a feminine disease because women's jobs are the worst hit.

The majority of the women work in the informal sectors such as education, hotel and industry- fig.1 above.



THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF COV-

- a) Quarantine and social isolations
- b) Lost incomes and increased poverty levels leading to stress
- c) Vulnerability due to exploitative relationships occasioned by COVID-19
- d) Inability to escape from perpetrators of violence due to lockdowns
- e) Children are also exposed and vulnerable to sexual exploitation since they are home- schools are closed
- f) Lack of psychological support for people stressed over lost jobs, thus domestic feuds.

The number of people entering the informal economy in Kenya has grown steadily over the last five years by a 5.45% average increase to almost 15.1 million in 2019 (see fig.1). This sector, whereas it plays a significant role in the creation of employment, it is also faced with challenges such as low earnings and safety complications due to: insufficient infrastructure, poor working conditions, and security issues. Indeed, this informality exposes the workers to socio-economic vulnerabilities and low-quality jobs. With the arrival of COVID-19, the vulnerabilities have further exacerbated. Invariably, women top in Kenya's informal employment and, gender inequalities are rife in this sector.

Unpaid Care

Caring responsibilities are also commonly referred to as; unpaid care (Sevilla & Smith, 2020). Therefore, outstanding care work means work that consumes one's time and energy; it is not remunerated and, accordingly, does not make it to the national accounts.

Gender gaps in caring responsibilities persist from early age amongst women and girls; as Ferrant and Thim (2019) establish, these tasks increase for women after marriage and childbirth. With COVID-19 and the closure of schools and lockdowns, it is evident that people are suffering the impacts of the virus besides the health impact. More child/elderly care responsibilities are borne by women and girls more than before.

Health

During this pandemic, women and girls are not accessing quality healthcare for several reasons, such as;

Lockdowns and government bans

Resources meant for the reproductive care of women have been reallocated to combat COVID-19

Women comprise almost 70% of the health workforce and work as the front line service workers, and are exposed to COVID-19 infection.

Besides;

Consistently, women miss on the health decision making/leadership positions in as much as they comprise of the majority.

With the scarce resources, women are exposed as they work with less Protective Equipment during this pandemic.

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence has been dubbed as the shadow pandemic-

During this pandemic cases of gender based violence are on the rise, the reasons are attributed to the lockdowns and close proximity with the perpetrators. The GBV impacts are more evident in women and children, and girls. Together, we need to rethink the best approach to this all consuming shadow pandemic which is happening in the background of COVID19



Mitigation Measures Towards Building Back Better

These measures, though not exhaustive, can be a good starting point:

- The formation of social protection by Kenya's government to cushion the vulnerable groups of people, especially women, who live in informal settlements and have lost their income and livelihood sources.
- Through feasibility analysis, cash would be transferred to the elderly, the disabled, and women who do not currently access food.
- The government would consider cushioning the vulnerable with tax reliefs and support rent waivers for a period as people build back lost revenues
- Increase safeguarding ethics on gender-based violence, using E-Based reporting and response to the afflicted.
- Train women and girls on response to gender-based violence through seminars and informal community learning centres.
- Use a multi-sector approach to addressing gender-based violence vide communities, national offices, and international during COVID-19.
- Involve women in decision making involving the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and ways to mitigate the effects, including the inclusion of the elderly,

About the Tomorrow's Cities Hub

Tomorrow's Cities is the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Urban Disaster Risk Hub – a five-year global interdisciplinary research hub.

Our aim is to catalyse a transition from a culture of crisis management to one of multi-hazard risk-informed planning and decision-making, for cities in low-and-middle income countries.

We are one of 12 UKRI GCRF Hubs funded as part of the UK AID strategy, putting research at the heart of efforts to deliver the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Programme enquiries:
support@tomorrowscities.org

the disabled, men, and women into the pandemic committees.

- Unpack gender complexities integrate the gender dimension in designing measures to help vulnerable groups because they have different needs (Copley et al., 2020).
- Include the services of gender specialists to champion the gender needs towards recovery and beyond COVID-19.
- Governing authorities to employ gender-disaggregated data through rapid surveys to better appreciate gender dynamics in disaster risk management.
- Use gender toolkits to train people on resilience and disaster reduction towards better livelihoods and building back better.
- Provide health-protective wear for women who bear the most brunt in the frontline and at homes in caring responsibilities that have soared this time.
- Enhance medicare for pregnant and maternal health for women amidst the pandemic and allocate budgets for reproductive health.
- Inclusion of women in decision making and economic empowerment to build back better after the pandemic <https://www.arin-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Technical-Report-No.005.pdf>

References

1. Ahmad, A. (2018). Conceptualizing disasters from a gender perspective. In *Disasters: Core concepts and ethical theories* (pp. 105-117): Springer, Cham.
2. Bradshaw, S., & Fordham, M. (2015). Double disaster: Disaster through a gender lens. In *Hazards, risks, and disasters in society* (pp. 233-251): Elsevier.
3. Copley, A., Decker, A., Delavelle, F., Goldstein, M., O'Sullivan, M., & Papineni, S. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic through a gender lens. In: World Bank.
4. Ferrant, G., & Thim, A. (2019). Measuring women's economic empowerment: Time use data and gender inequality.
5. Sevilla, A., & Smith, S. (2020). Baby steps: The gender division of childcare during the COVID19 pandemic.
6. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics- Economic Survey (2020). <https://www.theelephant.info/documents/kenya-national-bureau-of-statistics-economic-survey-2020/>
7. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr308/fr308.pdf>

tomorrowscities.org



UK Research
and Innovation



GCRF

Tomorrow's Cities is the UKRI GCRF Urban Disaster Risk Hub