

“EVERYDAY DISASTER EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY” REPORT FOR WORKSHOP 6

Facilitator: Nehir Varol

Reporters: Oya Çakın & Esmâ Buluş Kırıkkaya

Summary Report

Extensive efforts to minimize risk in natural disaster settings are possible with constant education and awareness raising programs. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is a global project to reduce risk. This action plan defines priorities and creates practical methods for risk prone communities to prepare them for the worst possible scenarios. One of the priorities of HFA is to provide training at every level to create a security culture. As it is widely known, the more we provide disaster education, the more we reduce the level of risk.

One of the acknowledgements of HFA is that “all the disaster management policies, decision making processes and educational activities have to be organized with the consideration of gender differences.” Education and training also needs to be provided to the women and the vulnerable people.

It is widely known that women and children constitute the most vulnerable category in the disaster setting. Although in majority of the societies, because of their economic, social and cultural backgrounds the women occupy more vulnerable position, they can play key roles for the processes of change and development.

In this workshop, the following titles are discussed and the suggestions are proposed.

- Is it possible to provide gender sensitive disaster education?
- How can one describe gender sensitivity in disaster related education?
- How can we improve disaster consciousness of women and children?
- How effective and sufficient training material can be produced?
- What kind of educational methods can be more suitable for women?
- How can the media be utilized for effective disaster education?

Personal Experience and Suggestions

* I am an expert on educational program development. In the process of program development, teaching programs need to be completed with the addition of practical training. Generally, there are 1-2 day programs available for the trainers themselves and this is not sufficient. These programs need to be prepared more carefully and the trainers need to be educated with the best possible methods. “Disaster Education” courses have to be included in the main curriculum and have to be taken not only by the elementary school teachers but all sorts of teacher candidates. Only by doing this, we can be sure that the teachers can be more effective in the process of disaster education. We always need to keep in mind that the media occupy a very significant position in every society not only for informing people but also structuring the agendas in various topics. Because of this reason, we need to decide how best to benefit from it for disaster education and how to increase the level of media literacy for this purpose.

* I study Disaster Sociology (drought in specific). On the basis of my experience based upon the research that I conducted in Indonesia, I want to highlight the importance of responsible behavior along with training in disaster setting. High level disaster education without raising the consciousness of the people for proper behavior in disaster setting reduces effectiveness of the fight against the natural disasters. Holding only public agencies responsible to reduce the impact of the natural disasters, in other words, somebody else is going to solve my problems kind of attitude, is another type of problem that needs to be solved. To change this way of thinking, all societies need to invest for the better human capital. Having women noticed their own power and internalize the specific knowledge that they have, will put them in a more advantageous position during and after the disasters.

* Nowadays I work on secondary and high school level disaster education books. I work in the field at the same time. I study the visual materials that are used in course books. Generally in these pictures the women and children are presented as the needy ones, who are rescued by the men. Generally only men are represented as the care giver and help provider. Education needs to be given outside of the school systems as well. In tsunami or flood conditions, diarrhea is so common that sometimes it kills more people than the disaster itself. The knowledge for the cure of diarrhea is generally held by women. Only after teaching this knowledge to the boys/men of the households they seem to become more involved in the household affairs. Women need to trust themselves and need to know the value of the knowledge that they have.

* Women and children need to be provided sufficient knowledge for every stage of disasters. While grouping people for training, vulnerable people and others need to be brought together equally. Training programs need to be constant and should be added to the curriculum. Media can be an effective venue to provide confidence to the women. The social environment needs to be organized in a way that women could support themselves.

* Educational programs are not created with the consideration of the gender factor. I am a university professor. In my university, in undergraduate and graduate programs, we offer disaster related courses. These need to be open to the education studies students and have to be updated in terms of their gender aspects.

* Disaster management is much more than delivering blankets to the victims and pre-disaster preparation is crucial. In the school system, the disaster education is received only by the elementary and secondary school children who consist of only 5 % of the general population. For the rest of the society, unfortunately, there is no education. Adults also need to be educated. Media's support for this purpose is not sufficient. It, either, does not function or functions in a negative way. To reach out to the rural areas artistic activities such as theatre plays and concerts needs to be utilized. Women can easily have access to these kinds of activities. These venues will also bring consciousness of affiliation to the rural people. Women are keepers of knowledge in a society. The knowledge in the hands of men can easily go away, however women keep and protect it.

* I joined this workshop to elaborate on what can be done in the public sector. Generally disaster education is only considered within the formal education. However people working in various parts of the public sector also need training for disaster preparedness. I believe there are gender awareness issues in the majority of the public agencies. This even is not considered as a problem. There has to be specific training programs for public servants. Within the

national education structure and the parliament, special commissions need to be structured for this purpose.

* I am from an institution which is responsible for girls' education. Our activities are directly related to natural disasters, such as drought. We do worry a lot about the displacement of children after disasters. The recovery process took much longer in Africa and the displacement influences children's education negatively. Everybody focuses on the immediate life saving efforts and education generally suffers from it. Even during the recovery process the education of the children needs to remain on a regular schedule. My institution is part of an international network. Through this network we develop programs/tools. Since we generally include gender aspects of these programs in later stages, women are generally caught unprepared.

* I would like to touch upon the ways in which to create effective methods for gender sensitive disaster education. One of the participants of this session just shared that women need to find ways to raise self confidence. By this way of thinking, you can put women into a special category, a category of people with weakness and this bothers me. Let me give an example from India. Swimming and climbing to the trees are known as the talents for men, not for women. Girls do not walk on the beaches. If you are a woman with no training to climb trees or swim, you are in trouble in disasters. Therefore both education and the responsibilities need to be shared equally.

* Since I am an active professional in communication sector, the coverage of disasters got my attention in television series. For instance, never in these series does one call 911 to get help. Instead a person cries out the window. Pretty often I write to the communication regulation agency (RTÜK) to file complaints about this situation. This is a sign of lack of education in the media. Talking about the media, I am not only talking about the national media, but also seriously considering the local ones. Generally formal education comes to our mind when we talk about education, but life long training is as much as important as the formal one. There is a lot that can be done by the communication people. A fireman/firewoman can be good at putting out a fire, but s/he may not be the best one when teaching it to the others. Communication professionals can do this better. Of course the audience also needs to be alerted. If you place an olive oil ad on the TV screen around dinner time, you can get the attention of women. Education programs should not be repetitive and should be planned carefully. The education of the children that is provided in schools should not be in conflict with the one that is given by the mothers. Similar people need to be trained together. For instance, we organized an education competition. We gave bonus credits to the children, whose families have disaster preparation plans for their households. To bring families to the picture, we organized picnics. The families felt important and honored. We searched for extra methods to bring women in and we especially approached house wives. I should also note it that our first aid training manikin was unisex. We can do many things even with those who do not see the necessity of this kind of outreach work. We can teach them their blood types and the emergency numbers in case of emergency.

* 1999 East Marmara Earthquake was the peak moment for disaster awareness for many. Significant urban progress was made. Izmit and Istanbul had received immigrants from every corner of Turkey and therefore the outcome of this tragedy was felt in all over Turkey. One of the negative effects of this situation became a kind of false consciousness. Now for the majority of the people in the country natural disaster is akin to an earthquake. The continuity of disaster education depends upon the institutions. Universities, especially the technical

departments, are now aware that our country is located on a disaster zone. There are a great many graduate research projects being conducted on the subject. For instance my professor advised nine different theses herself. As somebody who worked for the NGOs, I should tell you that the children are crucial to reach out women. For instance, while teaching folk dances to the kids, we managed to convince women to participate in our disaster related meetings.

* I am speaking as somebody who worked a lot to train people for disaster preparedness. For instance, in Bakırköy, Istanbul we reached out all the taxi drivers for this purpose. We have done a lot, but of course this is not enough. Not only the educational structure and universities but also the political power needs to handle/support these efforts.

* We got trapped between the needs and the requests. The all crucial decisions are taken by the center. To make these issues part of our daily lives, we need to increase the level of sensitivity in general. The group that we call people/citizens is not a homogenous group. In some cases it is difficult to find volunteers. In some other cases, such as Pakistan for instance, it is easy to find volunteers but it is observed that these volunteers are abused by some agencies. The concepts that are in use are very important. The concept of volunteer work is widely respected but the level of volunteer coordination is low. We need to prioritize the volunteer work in general.

* We need to provide gender sensitive education to the communities that we deal with. Public servants and the citizens need to learn the same concepts. Some time ago, when we talked with search and rescue people, we asked for their practical and strategic needs. How much over time they carry out during the disasters? How much for women? How much for men? Having this kind of information is important for solid decision making in disaster training.

* Thanks a lot to the organizers. On the basis of my own experience, I created a different perspective for disaster management. For disaster preparedness, for instance, Turkey is ahead of us. However, we are better for coordinating the forces and gender education. It is important to keep up with various disaster types. What can we do, when we experience a chemical disaster?

* It is crucial to create awareness. It is difficult to bring women to the meetings. They need to be visited in their own environments. We need to be part of their daily life. People try to do their best in their own life/environment. To reduce damage in disasters, the efforts of municipalities are crucial.

* As far as I understand, the ingredients of the educational programs and their implementation are far from being satisfactory. It seems that these training programs are being given in different settings and contexts. Maybe we should organize a program specifically for Turkey. Various disaster programs are already over saturating the schools. Disaster preparedness is already in the curriculum and we are just approaching the schools, without doing anything else. We need to expand these educational efforts to the rest of the society.

Workshop Report

The workshop participants have agreed upon the following points:

- The educators who are active in formal and informal disaster education need to be trained properly.

- “Disaster Education” courses have to be taken by the school teachers at all level and these courses need to be developed by the joint efforts of academicians and the field experts.
- Formal and informal education needs to be in harmony and complete and the programs for women need to be part of their everyday life.
- To maximize the positive effects coming from the media, media literacy programs need to be supported.
- In cooperation with the television companies and the producers, the television series should be part of disaster awareness efforts. For reaching this goal, media personal need to be trained.
- Adults also need to be educated. To reach out to the rural areas artistic activities such as theatre plays and concerts needs to be utilized.
- To prepare background studies for program development on disaster education, deeper and more advanced studies need to be conducted.
- Gender discrimination in course books need to be dealt with and graduate level programs need to be updated on a regular basis.
- Reducing repetition and the waste of financial sources, the cooperation among the related agencies and sectors need to be prioritized and supported.
- All educational efforts related to disaster relief and education needs to be continuous.