

**Second Plenary Panel Breakout Session: GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES**  
**DISCUSSION NOTES**  
**Mandarin Room**  
**3:15 – 4:15 pm**

**Facilitator:** Maigee Chang

**Recorder:** Bob Alexander

**Participants:** S.H.M. “Bapon” Fakhruddin, Monowar Akhand, Prafulla Mishra, Patricia Stukes, Niki Rattle, Sara Ahmed, Ayse Yonder, Mary Hope Schwoebel, Abigail Sines

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**1) What grassroots initiatives are you aware of that may be similar to the experiences of the panel?**

- S.H.M. Fakhruddin (CEGIS – Bangladesh): vulnerability analysis for livelihood project (coastal zone Bangladesh) – women/school teachers/age group focus groups (perceptions of floods / disaster time actions / coping mechanisms)
- Monowar Akhand (Bangladesh): did mapping (risk, roads, etc) to involve all people and minimize risk (for evacuation patterns)
- Prafulla (Oxfam - India): self-help groups (access to small money) helps avoid men using women
- Patricia Stukes: Indians who have not gotten tribal recognition; 1<sup>st</sup> thing they want to do is organize (status as non-profit); then work with architects to make sure that architects listen – need to figure out how to facilitate to get what they really want (rather than just use what you have available); men refuse to be involved until women give it the OK (women will negotiate 1<sup>st</sup>, then men take credit)
- Preparedness training – went from >100,000 dead down to 127 dead
- Niki (cook island red cross): forming red cross branches in all inhabited cook islands; give them the tools (training as relevant, send back to islands to train own people; do VCA before looking for outside help [so can best utilize own resources]); all islands different in terms of Vs and Cs; focus on community initiative – community set up own capacities for looking after themselves with assistance of national office and other stakeholders (no competition, but all for survival with cooperation of all); gender: take local women and personalize gender (health system, all other aspects of life) and allow women to relate gender (CEDAW) to how fits into daily lives [make relevant to them] – they can then relate it to the VCA (how does it relate to ME? Not just what’s imposed by others)
- Sarah Ahmed (Uttan): drought-prone & earthquake (Gujarat) – SETU (bridge = information) = community resource centers for information (how do you prepare the community? [droughts/floods every year] how strengthen access to water? [local rights/access]) – NGOs very involved in

- building water resources BUT focused on irrigation (not drinking water that's needed); example of self-help groups: access to markets and infrastructure – diversification away from land-based to livelihood strategies (including markets, remittances) helps build resilience
- M.H.S.: reconstruction projects – realized that gender is about both men and women
- 2) What have been some of the challenges of these initiatives in your organization/country/community that will prevent implementation of strategies?**
- S.H.M. Fakhrudin (CEGIS – Bangladesh): problems with methodology in data analysis for flood management study in panel
  - Ayse: People laugh when come to do surveys with them – can get info in other ways without surveys (and lie to surveys for fun); need to partner with local people to get accurate data; tendency to favor “outside experts” over local experts – how partner with communities (shouldn't be competing for positions when many things can be done by community)? Deal with discrepancy in payments – not just men/women but women/women; women tend to work better in groups (but aid often given to households rather than building communal facilities & group empowerment) – and are heard better in numbers as well (as an organized group) – challenge is overcoming aid to individuals (and focus on empowerment of groups)
  - M.A.: Religion perspective very important; need to have volunteers
  - P.S.: how go into the community and get trust of people? How be mindful of what's in the community & not impose what you have when inappropriate?
  - Prafulla: Finding balance regarding how much international expertise is needed relative to local expertise/knowledge; need to facilitate sharing what the community doesn't know while being sensitive to what they do know (using participatory tools)
  - Need coordination (local NGOs, INGOs, government) – what to do & when by whom (e.g., evacuation & shelters)
  - Mary Hope S.: how get men back into gender discussion? [response by P.S.: language is already geared towards men, so need to direct such discussions towards women; men seen as asset & women as weak/liability; women talk underemphasized & that course needs reversed – so balance very sticky; patriarchy is a sticky problem][Sarah: not just men getting involved but which men & how? Self-help groups now for men/mixed as an example; another problem: men just aren't there (so women are easier to work with), but somehow need to engage both based on the resources that you have (if you have men, work with men; if women, work with women; but still need to be careful about men dominating – so key challenge is balance & strategic alliances of which men might best work]; summary: how best harness strengths of both men and women?

- Abigail Sines (EWC): how deal with class divisions that cross-cut gender? [sarah: how work with forms of exclusion? NGOs may deal with different groups since people can't sit in the same meeting; very difficult to address caste][Ayse: in turkey, no castes but different classes (wealth/education & gypsies) – up to NGOs to give stronger positions to weaker ones (empower weaker groups); summary: gender is intertwined with other cross-cutting divisions
- S.M.H.F.: women asked to take data of flooding but shirked responsibilities – solution: find way to compromise between women and men in terms of responsibilities so that they all felt responsible

**3) What opportunities might you be able to use to build gender sensitive tools and implement gender fair practices at the grassroots and community levels?**

- Balance of roles to make responsible
- Communication network (e.g., utilization of local knowledge, simplifying warning system)

**4) What type of support or tools will be required?**

**5) What would be a good measure of effectiveness?**

**6) Are there experiences from grassroots initiatives that should be included in the Honolulu Call-to-Action?**

- Participatory action research
- Facilitate community self-reliance / VCA for best utilization of local assets

**7) What statement about grassroots initiatives do we want to contribute to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, January 2005?**