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# Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building

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Intersectional approaches recognise that people will have different identities, needs, priorities and capacities which are not static, and will shift and change over time – affecting their ability to prepare for, cope with and respond to natural hazards and climate variability. This scoping paper explores intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building, with the aim of informing institutional policy and operational practice.

## Key messages

- Intersectional approaches offer a way to understand and respond to the ways different factors, such as gender, age, disability and ethnicity, intersect to shape individual identities, thereby enhancing awareness of people's needs, interests, capacities and experiences. This in turn will help in targeting policies and programmes.

- Social groups are neither homogenous nor static, and intersectional approaches recognise this complexity by taking historical, social, cultural and political contexts into account. Intersectional approaches help us understand the differentiated nature of vulnerability and resilience. They also draw attention to the social root causes of vulnerability, creating a more nuanced picture.

- Intersectional approaches help to uncover dynamics that can shape vulnerability and resilience. Intersectionality emphasises the constant renegotiation of power relations and how individuals and groups can experience both power and oppression simultaneously.

- There is no single approach or defined set of methods for seeking intersectional understandings of vulnerability and resilience relating to climate change and natural hazards. Better collection and sharing of disaggregated data and analyses relating to the circumstances of vulnerable, marginalised and at-risk people will also be a necessary input to guide resilience policy and programming.

- More research on intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building is required – in particular qualitative and contextual research to fully understand how inequalities intersect and affect people in different contexts.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Natural hazards, including those influenced by climate change, expose existing inequalities. Those who face the greatest levels of risk – and therefore require the highest levels of resilience – are often those who face the highest inequality and barriers to accessing their rights in everyday life. This often includes people with disabilities, women, children, older persons, minority and indigenous groups, LGBTQIA,[1] people with chronic health conditions and others who are contextually marginalised. These are often brought together under the term 'vulnerable or marginalised'. It can be hard to avoid using this term but it is crucial to note that these groups are neither homogenous nor static.

Yet, climate and disaster risk reduction research, policy and programming often focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups as a collective category, or on specific groups of people separately. The value of intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building is that they take complex contextual realities into account. They recognise that groups of people who experience marginalisation have different identities, needs and priorities.

This scoping paper reviews academic research and practice-focused literature on the relevance and application of intersectional thinking and approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building, in order to inform institutional policy and operational practice. Three academic databases – Academic Search, Scopus and Web of Science – were used to identify relevant publications, and grey literature was acquired from the websites of development and humanitarian organisations (see Annex 1 for a description of the methodology). It accompanies a forthcoming BRACED report with case studies in Kenya and Nepal that look at intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building in the case of two different interesting inequalities.

# 2. SOCIAL VULNERABILITY AND THE NEED FOR AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

## 2.1. Defining intersectionality

Intersectionality is an approach to understanding intra-group difference and the existence of multiple axes of identity that govern an individual's or group's relationship to power (Osborne, 2015).

Recently, the concept and its application have travelled across disciplines to inform policy and practice in the fields of development and humanitarian assistance. Davis (2008: 68) defines intersectionality as *'the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of social difference in*

1 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual or allied.

*individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power'*. The concept of intersectionality was introduced and popularised by the critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), who demonstrated that legal frameworks that focus on either gender or race fail to capture the distinct experiences of marginalised black women who simultaneously experience both forms of discrimination.

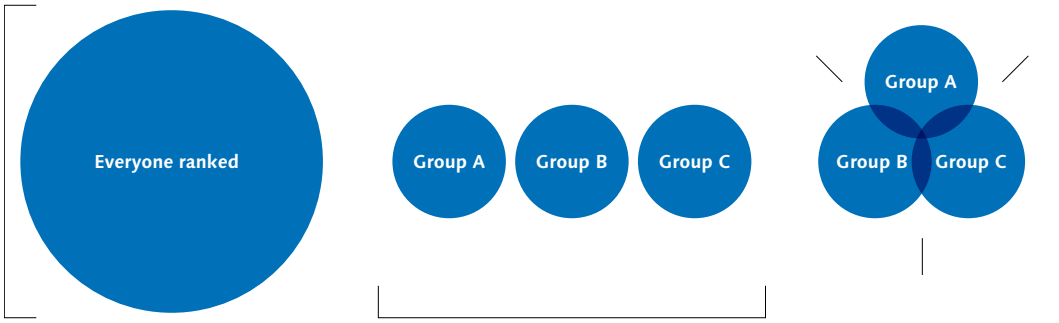
Intersectional thinking challenges 'one-size-fits-all' approaches – often perceived to be the best way to quickly reach most people in emergencies – to offer a framework for better integrating social heterogeneity, by exposing explicit and implicit assumptions about predefined social categories. It provides an analytical tool for understanding and responding to the ways in which individual factors or identities intersect with others, to enable more nuanced understanding of people's needs, interests, capacities and experiences.

Intersectionality uses a language that reflects these complexities, helping prevent the simplification of complex local realities. Highlighting complexities is essential to understanding the contexts of inequality and marginalisation, and what is required to build the resilience of individuals and groups. Intersectionality acknowledges that belonging to multiple disadvantaged groups or identities compounds and complicates experiences of oppression in different contexts, which can entail greater legal, social or cultural barriers. For instance, marginalised groups may have fewer resources and face greater barriers to benefiting from social protection or gaining a political voice, which will affect their ability to cope with, prepare for and respond to natural hazards (Osborne, 2015; ADCAP, 2018b; GFDRR and World Bank, 2018). Intersectional approaches can build comprehensive understandings of how social dimensions of gender, identity, power, governance, and institutions intersect in different ecological, economic, and climate contexts to produce webs of distinct exposures, sensitivities and adaptive capacities (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016). The aim is to widen the perspective and reflect on the factors that may be relevant in a particular context (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). An intersectional approach can help avoid generalising complex realities and will always need to be adapted to the specific context (Osborne, 2015; van Aelst and Holvoet, 2016).

The concept of intersecting inequalities goes beyond vertical and horizontal inequalities[2] (see Figure 1) to capture the combination of multiple disadvantages that reinforce the discrimination and exclusion of certain individuals and groups (Kabeer, 2010; Norton et al., 2014). The most enduring forms of identity-based inequalities are ascribed from birth, such as race, caste and ethnicity, and persist over generations (Norton et al., 2014). Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building take historical, social, cultural and political contexts into account and have the potential to assist policies and practices in being more equitable and inclusive, helping prevent vulnerable

2 Vertical inequality ranks everyone by some outcome (e.g. income, education, health). One example is the standard Gini coefficient, which measures the dispersion of outcomes within a given population. Horizontal inequality groups individuals according to some characteristic (e.g. ethnicity, spatial location, wealth quintile), and inequality is determined by the differences between these (e.g. average rural income compared to average urban income) (Lenhardt and Samman, 2015).

**Figure 1: Concepts of inequality**




Source: Lenhardt and Samman (2015).

and marginalised individuals and groups from being left behind. Taking an intersectional approach thus helps provide a more radical, transformational, gendered and power-sensitive framing to the issue at hand (Jordan, 2018).

## 2.2. The relevance of intersectionality to understand social vulnerability to disasters and climate change

Although a disaster may be triggered by a natural hazard, its effect on society is grounded in the social system in which it takes place. The root causes of vulnerability to climate change and natural hazards are constructed over many years and are influenced by social relationships, determined by a number of intersecting factors, such as gender, ethnicity, class, age and disability, coupled with situational variables, such as where people live, their health, household composition and size and the resources available to them to cope. For example, in a Humanity and Inclusion study (Handicap International, 2015), 27% of persons with disabilities had experienced secondary trauma as a result of being psychologically, physically or sexually abused after the disaster.

As such, natural hazards do not affect all equally, and people will have different experiences depending on the context in which they live (Carson et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to draw attention to the way social differences and power differentials affect the nature of vulnerability and resilience (Huynh and Resurrección, 2014; Jordan, 2018). The vulnerability reduction and resilience-building discourse has historically been dominated by natural scientific and top-down technocratic approaches, but there is increasing recognition of these social dimensions (Djoudi et al., 2016; Ravera et al., 2016a; Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018).

Intersectional approaches are highly relevant to the commitments to inclusion made in international policy agreements and agendas. Inclusion is a central commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 'leave no one behind' agenda. SDG 10 calls for reducing inequalities based on sex, age, disability, race, class, ethnicity, religion and opportunity (HelpAge International, 2018a; Twigg et al., 2018). Key to this is the prioritisation and fast-tracking of actions for those often exposed to intersecting inequalities and most at risk of being

left behind (Samman and Stuart, 2017; Norton et al., 2014; Paz Arauco et al., 2014). Indeed, without addressing inequality, it will not be possible to attain the SDGs (Bhatkal et al., 2015).

The goal of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is to 'prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience' (UNISDR, 2015). The Framework also calls for disaster risk reduction practices that are 'inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective… [and to] engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards' (ibid.). Similarly, the 2015 Paris Agreement acknowledges inclusion as key to action to address climate change (UNFCCC, 2015).

Recent examples of practical guidance on intersectional approaches include the Accessibility, Attitude, Communication and Participation (ACAP) framework (van Ek and Schot, 2017) and the Age and Disability Capacity Programme (ADCAP) good practice guide on embedding the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian policy and practice (ADCAP, 2018a). Some donors

### Box 1: Benefits of intersectional approaches to resilience-building

Intersectional approaches appear to offer a number of benefits to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building policy and practice, including:

- Recognising the socially differentiated nature of vulnerability and resilience;
- Better integrating social heterogeneity, inequalities and power into considerations of vulnerability and resilience;
- Unveiling explicit and implicit assumptions about categories and avoiding the notion that some core meaning or identity[3] of vulnerable and marginalised groups or individuals determines their vulnerability;
- Highlighting how categories are changing and renegotiated under stressors such as climate change;
- Providing a more nuanced understanding of gender by avoiding simplistic gender dichotomies;
- Yielding insights into people's experiences that non-intersectional approaches may fail to reveal, or even mask, by analysing a single identity.

3 Often referred to as 'essentialism' – the notion that some core meaning or identity is determinate and not subject to interpretation. For example, an essentialist view of female vulnerability and victimisation might characterise women as marginalised victims of climate change, given their inherent biological 'natural' characteristics (Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018).

are also attempting to better understand intersecting inequalities and how to respond to these. For instance, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development 2018–2023 recognises that 'People with disabilities face intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexuality, impairment type, age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, and location which all contribute to disability-related exclusion' (DFID, 2018: 5); and DFID's 'personas' approach facilitates a better understanding of intersectionality and identifying people left behind by development (DFID, 2017).

## 2.3. Intersectionality and social heterogeneity

Even among very vulnerable and marginalised people, there is diversity of experience, capacities, strengths and treatment, in practice and in research, that need to be understood, harnessed and built upon for successful strategies and plans (Osborne, 2015; Plan International, 2018). Individuals and groups are categorised as vulnerable often without understanding how historical, social, cultural and political factors intersect to create their vulnerability (Barbelet and Samuels, 2018). The use of generic categories and the homogenisation of people overlooks specific barriers facing people who are highly vulnerable and marginalised (Lovell and le Masson, 2014; ADCAP, 2018a). Moreover, reliance on generic categories can lead to results that do not adequately inform effective and inclusive vulnerability reduction and resilience building strategies (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016).

The characteristics of vulnerability and resilience are complex and dynamic (Ishii and Pongponrat, 2018; Leap, 2018). ADCAP notes that, for organisations that have implemented the humanitarian inclusion standards, looking at the intersections of gender, age and disability has meant reassessing their approach to social identities and recognising their complexities (ADCAP, 2018a). To achieve this, inclusion advisers have encouraged their organisations to recognise the intersectionality of social identities and how different forms of discrimination affect each other. An inclusion adviser for CBM International, which works on inclusion of people with disabilities, addresses this: 'For us, disability is the key. That is not going to change. It is our mission and it inspires our policies and processes. But we now have cross cutting concepts of age and gender… So we are looking at disability as an intersectional issue.' Similarly, an inclusion adviser with Christian Aid Kenya says, 'My biggest learning is that most organisations hesitate to start something new. So the idea should be to look for entry points in our current work that link with or have synergy with inclusion work' (both in ADCAP, 2018a).

Disadvantaged adolescent girls, who face multiple burdens associated with their gender as well as with their age, have little power in society and may already have very little choice in their lives. A major disaster exacerbates some of the inequalities they face in everyday life – early marriage, lack of access to education or health care, discrimination, violence or abuse (Plan International, 2013). Consideration of their specific needs is therefore required (Save the Children, 2016; Forbes-Genade and van Niekerk, 2018). An intersectional approach can improve understanding of how gender relationships are crosscut by other factors and further shaped by, for example, knowledge, access to communication networks, risk perception, awareness

and social mobilisation, which ultimately influence people's ability to undertake adaptive measures and build resilience (Ravera et al., 2016b).

Simplistic assumptions about categories and vulnerability to climate change and climate variability – for example the assumption that only men are farmers or that women are the poorest and most vulnerable – are seldom backed up by careful empirical investigation. An intersectional approach would give deeper attention to the multiple facets of farmers' identities, for example, and the way these come together to influence vulnerability (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016). Treating identity as one-dimensional masks intra-group disparities and leads to 'one-size-fits-all' approaches, which inevitably leave the most marginalised behind, as larger and more visible groups are easier to identify.

## 2.4. Beyond the gender binary

Gender inequalities deeply shape people's vulnerability and resilience to risks, but sometimes other social differences, such as ethnicity, access to education and geographic location, may be equally or even more important to understand who is at risk and who is able to gain protection (Carson et al., 2013; Carr and Thompson, 2014). Identifying gender as a single analytical category does not adequately capture the vulnerability and resilience of all women and men (Carson et al., 2013; Huynh and Resurrección, 2014). Gender intersects with other identities (Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018; Jordan, 2018), yet Iniesta-Arandia et al. (2016) found that the intersectionality of gender with other identities was nearly absent in analysis of vulnerability, adaptation and resilience, although there are notable exceptions to this – for example work by van Aelst and Holvoet (2016) on the intersections of gender and marital status in accessing climate change adaptation and that of Gaillard et al. (2017) on the role of gender minorities in disaster risk reduction.

The experiences of marginalised people are defined by many identity factors (Oxfam, 2015). An intersectional approach considers gender in relation to other categories of identity in order to facilitate a relational inquiry into different axes of inequality and social difference (Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018). It situates gender as a way of thinking that goes beyond the age- and sex-differentiated understanding of power relations and inequalities between men and women.

Despite the recognised importance of taking gender into account, there remains a lack of nuance and depth of understanding about how best to support different categories of women to cope with environmental shocks and stresses (Lovell and le Masson, 2014). Women are often represented as a homogeneous group and/or compared with men (as the other homogeneous group) in policies and programmes that aim to build resilience (Huynh and Resurrección, 2014). Intersectional approaches in gender analysis are still lacking in most organisations. Djoudi et al. (2016) conducted a review to determine whether gender was framed using an intersectional lens in climate change adaptation and found that intersectionality was not sufficiently considered and gender was basically approached from a simplistic perspective of 'men' and 'women'. Such representations fail to account for the complex intersectional interactions between gender and other factors, for example those based on class, age, education, disability, ethnicity, location and sexuality (Carr and Thompson, 2014).

Effective and responsive policies and programmes that aim to build resilience need to take into account how gender intersects with other categories of social difference that are subject to disadvantage (Djoudi, 2015). Intersectionality exercises can chart the different issues, potentials and constraints at the different nodes of intersection across social factors. Such a disaggregated approach helps deconstruct homogeneous categories and recognise fundamental differences within and across categories (Carson et al., 2013). An overly narrow version of gender mainstreaming may lead to ineffective policies and the further marginalisation of some women and men (van Aelst and Holvoet, 2016). The message here is not to reduce the relevance or importance of gender in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building but to make it clear that gender is just one identity that interacts with others (Carson et al., 2013; Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018).

While binary gender analysis may ease the design of policies and programmes, it is not the most effective approach for addressing vulnerability and resilience, for which a much broader framing is required (Carr and Thompson, 2014; Owusu et al., 2018). A narrowly framed gender analysis of vulnerability is not as effective as a wider effort to integrate several factors in the gender analysis, asking how biological, social and cultural categories determine identities, interact and contribute to marginalisation and inequality (Djoudi, 2015).

Organisations do not need to become experts on a wide range of identities: they can strengthen existing gender work using an intersectional approach (ADCAP, 2018a). Mercy Corps' gender approach considers intersectionality in recognising that complex crises affect men, women, boys and girls differently and that vulnerability to crisis is compounded by intersecting identities, such as age, caste, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity (Mercy Corps, 2018). This takes the 'resilience of whom?' question in Mercy Corps' approach to resilience

### Box 2: Case study – beyond gender to age and disability inclusion, Christian Aid

Christian Aid's inclusion advisers have introduced age and disability inclusion strategically, using an intersectional approach and building on the organisation's primary work on gender. Initially, there was some resistance, particularly from gender focal staff. Questions included: 'Why do you want to water down our gender work? Is it strategic to include age and disability if we don't have enough capacity? We are not specialists… Historically, we haven't invested in these issues even though there have been a few projects with a disability focus.' The advisers responded by emphasising that the aim was not for Christian Aid to become experts on a wide range of identities, but rather that the agency's gender work would be strengthened using an intersectional approach to development and humanitarian work. Since then, training and webinars by inclusion advisers have taken a 'gender plus' approach, by including age and disability.

Source: ADCAP (2018a).

a step further. When considering the intersection of gender and resilience, most past research and programming has focused on the question of vulnerability. 'Resilience of whom?' asks how some groups or individuals may be differently vulnerable. Four guiding questions frame Mercy Corps' resilience analysis, helping understand how shocks and stresses threaten desired development outcomes (ibid.).

## 2.5. Avoiding victimisation, understanding power and enabling agency

Presenting vulnerable and marginalised people as passive victims of disasters and climate change misinterprets the institutional and political causes of vulnerability, obscures their role as agents of adaptation and resilience and often excludes them from policy and programme development (Lovell and le Masson, 2014; Ravera et al., 2016a; Rao et al., 2017). Vulnerable and marginalised people have the right and agency to build their own resilience. Such recognition is critical for building resilience: however, few approaches and strategies recognise this agency. The resultant failure of policies and programmes to address the root causes of disaster risks further reinforces inequalities arising within local power structures, while leaving the challenges of climate change and natural hazards unaddressed (Djoudi et al., 2016; Jordan, 2018; Smith et al., 2017).

Moreover, the concept of resilience has been criticised for removing the inherently power-related connotation of vulnerability. Most resilience discourse is power-neutral and under-theorises social difference, socio-cultural contexts, inequalities and the often-oppressive ways in which the *status quo* is maintained

**Figure 2: Mercy Corps' approach to resilience**


Source: Adapted from Mercy Corps (2018).

(Smith et al., 2017; Jordan, 2018). Further, there is a risk of classifying people into fixed categories as 'oppressed' or 'oppressor' and neglecting the complexity and constant renegotiation of power relations that produce and (re-)enforce inequalities (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014). Recent work on resilience-building stresses the need to integrate inequalities and power into considerations of how communities are reorganised in response to climate change and natural hazards (Bond, 2018; Leap, 2018). From an intersectional understanding, how different individuals and groups relate to climate and disaster risks depends on their position in context-specific power structures based on social categorisations (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014).

Development is as much about power as it is about technical solutions, as those who have power can support or hinder change. Vulnerability and resilience to climate change and natural hazards must be conceived in part as political phenomena and should not be isolated from power. Thinking politically helps us identify where power lies in practice and how decisions take place. It can also help us understand how those who may seem relatively powerless can still effect change (Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018; Haines and O'Neil, 2018). The power relations that determine access to resources, information and the availability of options and choices are shaped by the identities and positions of vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups (Djoudi et al., 2016).

An intersectional approach can analyse how power differentials work together to produce differentiated vulnerabilities and shape the development of adaptation strategies to climate change and other associated drivers of change for different categories of men and women (Owusu et al., 2018). Instead of approaching power and inequalities as zero-sum games in which individuals and groups are considered either privileged or oppressed, intersectional analysis emphasises the fact that individuals and groups can experience both power and oppression simultaneously because of who they are and how they are positioned *vis-à-vis* intersecting inequalities. Intersectional approaches reject either/or conceptualisations of both power and inequalities (Djoudi et al., 2016; Leap, 2018), instead enabling people to express and experience their own capacity because such an approach creates a pathway of analysis enabling agency across and beyond social categories.

An intersectional approach can reveal agency and emancipatory pathways in adaptation processes by providing a better understanding of how the differential impacts of climate change shape, and are shaped by, the complex power dynamics of existing social and political relations (Djoudi et al., 2016). Intersectionality gives policy-makers the ability to identify the complex interplays of structure and agency across scales of space and time that present opportunities and barriers for reorganising communities in response to socio-ecological disruptions (Leap, 2018). Such an approach offers a framework for better integrating power into considerations of vulnerability and resilience (ibid.). Inclusive practice should lead to vulnerable and marginalised people having greater voice and agency over the decisions that affect their everyday lives as well as their resilience to environmental shocks and stresses. This ensures that vulnerability reduction and resilience-building activities build on local knowledge, account for contexts and power relations and facilitate ownership and agency of those most likely to be affected by environmental shocks and stresses (Smith et al., 2017).

# 3. INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Though vulnerability and resilience are largely shaped by social, gendered, political and economic conditions and processes, often the focus of programme interventions is on climatic or other environmental drivers (Huynh and Resurrección, 2014; Rao et al., 2017).

In relation to resilience thinking, a number of factors come into play when a disaster strikes, making people vulnerable in different ways (Barbelet and Samuels, 2018). While resilience can be important for the functioning of systems, it may also maintain a system in an undesirable state. Indeed, pervasive aspects of a community, such as uneven gender relations, poverty and exploitation, can be highly resilient to change (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016). Resilience should not therefore be detached from the underlying causes of vulnerability. Failure to recognise the differentiated nature of resilience risks exacerbating vulnerability instead of addressing its underlying determinants (Jordan, 2018).

Intersectionality emphasises the importance of context: intersections are experienced in different ways from one context to another. For example, a study looking at the impact of inequalities associated with ethnicity found clearly differentiated outcomes on women's education between Spanish speakers and indigenous groups in Bolivia and Peru, while in the Philippines ethnicity appears to have had less of an impact on education outcomes (Lenhardt and Samman, 2015). Given this multiplicity of contexts and everyday lived experiences, the key lesson for policy, practice and research is to be cautious about generalising and to recognise the need for a range of vulnerability reduction and resilience-building strategies (Rao et al., 2017). Intersectional analysis offers an opportunity to highlight rather than disregard complexities, which is essential to understanding the contexts of inequality and marginalisation (although this is a potential barrier to uptake by operational agencies).

Despite the benefits that intersectional approaches offer, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction research, policy and programming tend to focus on vulnerable groups as a collective category, or on specific vulnerable and marginalised groups. And yet the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals can bring more informed opinions and different perspectives to discussions of vulnerability and resilience, improving the effectiveness of policies and programmes (UNISDR, 2017a; van Ek and Schot, 2017; Forbes-Genade and van Niekerk, 2018; Mercy Corps, 2018).

For example, in the humanitarian sector, policy, guidelines and programming are increasingly addressing the inclusion of older people with disabilities. This involves not just addressing their needs for assistance and protection but also enabling them to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them, so they can exercise their rights in full (HelpAge International, 2018b). Their inclusion is motivated by a range of humanitarian and good programming principles: the need to uphold impartial humanitarian action, support to the most vulnerable, rights-based approaches to humanitarian action, the 'Do No Harm' approach and commitments

to gender-sensitive programming or protection (Barbelet, 2018). Human rights commitments and commitments under the Inclusion Charter[4] require humanitarian organisations and donor governments to ensure inclusion of older people, including understanding how age intersects with sex and disability (Barbelet and Samuels, 2018; HelpAge International, 2018b). Barbelet (2018) on the South Sudan response found respondents from humanitarian organisations felt the Inclusion Charter, the leave no one behind ethos of the SDGs and the work and advocacy of HelpAge had all contributed to progress.

Policy-makers and operational agencies are beginning to adopt intersectional thinking and approaches. Various approaches have been suggested. For example, Jones et al. (2018) highlight the case for policy and programmatic action to ensure more inclusive development in line with the SDGs. They suggest five key areas for action to support adolescents with disabilities, including addressing intersecting disadvantages. Specific recommendations include undertaking comprehensive mapping of programming and services to identify gaps and solutions for the hardest-to-reach groups and

### Box 3: Community Resilience Assessment and Action in Myanmar

The BRACED Alliance in Myanmar developed a method to collect and analyse data that can be used to assess the resilience of a community and to use this information to design specific interventions that will strengthen resilience (BRACED Alliance, 2015). Their method built on established vulnerability and capacity assessment tools to bridge disaster reduction and climate change approaches. While the method was informed by, and mindful of, existing social inequities in Myanmar, including gender inequalities, the assessments also aimed not to make any assumptions about who the most vulnerable groups were in each community. This involved looking beyond gender inequalities as a major factor of marginalisation, but also exploring other risk factors including people's age or ethnicity. Therefore, each community-based assessment was different and each intervention was designed accordingly to the context of the community. This approach can also generate trade-offs: for practitioners involved in supporting women's rights, important resources (time, funding, human capacities) were therefore spent on assessing what the problems were, whereas women and girls are subjected to numerous discrimination and inequalities that are already known and documented (see also Le Masson, 2016). In other words, an intersectional approach is necessary to tackle assumptions (who is most at risk?) but there is a risk that pervasive inequalities remain unchallenged.

4 Signed at the World Humanitarian Summit, the Inclusion Charter consists of five steps, on participation, data, funding, capacity and coordination, that humanitarian actors can take to ensure assistance reaches those most in need and supports them to move out of crisis and on to a path toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. See www.inclusioncharter.org

individuals and tackling invisibility to ensure involvement in planning and programming.

At a strategic level, agencies have begun to adopt approaches to give staff, partners, governments and donors a better understanding of how different factors intersect to shape vulnerability and exclusion. HelpAge International (2018a) sets out a framework to stimulate better understanding of the intersection of gender and ageing by international non-governmental organisations and governments. It recommends that governments adopt legal and policy frameworks to ensure gender equality throughout the life course, and that funding bodies prioritise research on older age from a gender perspective. Bond (2018)'s recommendations for all stakeholders to address multiple discriminations include ensuring programmes clearly identify intersecting inequalities in order to reach the most marginalised and undertaking qualitative and contextual research to fully understand how inequalities intersect and what their impacts are on vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups. It is also recommended that donors support civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to identify and address intersecting inequalities and share that learning (ibid.).

Lenhardt and Samman (2015) present a methodological approach to the measurement of intersecting inequalities and empirical evidence on their links to human development. They demonstrate that tracking the outcomes of excluded people is both possible and necessary to ensure future progress in human development is inclusive. Smith et al. (2017) outline questions that could be used in investigating intersectionality. These should draw out existing social divisions and inequalities; how these reinforce (or otherwise influence) existing social relations; what programmes and policies are in place to bolster individual and community resilience; and what, if any, examples there are of the resilience of vulnerable and marginalised people being enhanced by these interventions. Humanity and Inclusion requires field teams to conduct disability, gender and age analysis and to explore how these three factors intersect to create exclusion or marginalisation. Other context-specific factors are also considered to evaluate the exposure to risk of an individual, group or community by taking an intersectional approach (Bond, 2018).

Operational guidance incorporating intersectional thinking is also beginning to appear. Christian Aid's inclusive programming guide (2017) recognises that achieving the goal of 'equality for all' requires that responses be driven by a deep understanding of intersecting inequalities in different contexts and at different times. The ACAP framework approaches inclusion by focusing on four areas: Access, Communication, Attitude and Participation. It then demonstrates how this framework can be applied to projects and programmes. A project or programme that fulfils the requirements (Box 4) is likely to be successful in recognising diversity, removing barriers, ensuring participation and providing tailored approaches to development (van Ek and Schot, 2017).

ADCAP's extensive good practice guide on embedding inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian policy and practice (2018a) includes the need to address intersections between social identities to embed inclusion within programmes. Three recommendations are made here: 1) identify entry points in current work that can link with or have synergy with inclusion work and promote inclusion as a cross-cutting concept;

### Box 4: Accessibility, Attitude, Communication and Participation Framework

**Accessibility:** Do project activities lead to removal of barriers?

- Do practices address causes of exclusion?
- Do they lead to relevant actions?
- Are they supportive of an enabling environment?
- Will they be sustained?

**Attitude:** Does the project recognise there are different people with different characteristics? Does it recognise

- That people face different issues?
- That they face different barriers?
- And that people have different strengths?

**Communication:** Do all people understand the messages delivered through project activities?

- Are messages accessible by all?
- Are messages conveyed properly and in acceptable language?
- Will they lead to desired actions?

**Participation:** Can (and do) all people participate in all stages of the project, including decision-making?

- Do they have a voice?
- Are they active?
- Are their decisions accepted and incorporated?

Source: Van Ek and Schot (2017).

2) highlight the intersections between social change agendas, such as gender equity, and inclusion work and integrate age and disability inclusion in social change programmes to make them more inclusive; and 3) promote the message that addressing the equality agenda requires addressing the diversity of needs and capacities. ADCAP has also recently finalised a set of nine humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities (ADCAP, 2018b) (see Box 5).

In practice, an intersectional approach may have to foreground a particular intersection as an entry point. Vulnerability and resilience are not shaped by a single identity, and some identities will be less relevant than others in determining vulnerability, depending on the context. An intersectional approach should not attempt to include as many analytical categories as possible or list all the factors that may determine vulnerability, but it should widen the perspective and reflect upon what factors may be relevant. To do so, it may be necessary to select and prioritise the most important or relevant intersections of social difference, while keeping the bigger picture in mind (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014; Osborne, 2015). Relatedly, intersectionality emphasises that individuals and groups are often simultaneously (dis)advantaged (Leap, 2018). By disputing predefined categories and positioning individuals and groups in the context of power relations, it can refine, unpack and enrich understandings of vulnerability reduction and resilience-building (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016).

### Box 5: ADCAP's Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities

ADCAP aims to strengthen the capacity of humanitarian agencies to deliver an age- and disability-inclusive emergency response using an intersectional approach. ADCAP has recently finalised a set of nine humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities.

1 Identification: Older people and people with disabilities are identified to ensure they have access to humanitarian assistance and protection that is participative, appropriate and relevant to their needs.

2 Safe and equitable access: Older people and people with disabilities have safe and equitable access to humanitarian assistance.

3 Resilience: Older people and people with disabilities are not negatively affected, are more prepared and resilient and are less at risk as a result of humanitarian action.

4 Knowledge and participation: Older people and people with disabilities know their rights and entitlements and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

5 Feedback and complaints: Older people and people with disabilities have access to safe and responsive feedback and complaints mechanisms.

6 Coordination: Older people and people with disabilities access and participate in humanitarian assistance that is coordinated and complementary.

7 Learning: Organisations collect and apply learning to deliver more inclusive assistance.

8 Human resources: Staff and volunteers have the appropriate skills and attitudes to implement inclusive humanitarian action, and older people and people with disabilities have equal opportunities for employment and volunteering in humanitarian organisations.

9 Resource management: Older people and people with disabilities can expect that humanitarian organisations are managing resources in a way that promotes inclusion.

Through ADCAP, organisations have changed their policies, practices and standard operating procedures to embed age and disability inclusion.

Source: ADCAP (2018b).

Methodological approaches for establishing relevant categories in particular places and at particular project scales are therefore required (Carr and Thompson, 2014). One example is DFID's 'personas' approach, which enables a better understanding of intersectionality and identifying vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals (DFID, 2017). DFID has also undertaken

work in Mozambique and Nigeria that seeks to profile target beneficiaries based on attributes such as gender and disability and then evaluate whether development and humanitarian programmes are reaching such people and what the barriers are if not (Bond, 2018).

Intersectional analyses need to grasp how relations of power are manifested at different levels, from social structures to symbolic representation and identity construction (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). Mixed approaches are also necessary. In their article on how to conceive and implement climate change adaptation projects with a gender-transformative lens, Ravera et al. (2016b) use a two-tier interdisciplinary research approach in two contrasting research cases from Bihar and Uttarakhand, India. This integrates qualitative and quantitative methods and tools in order to implement an intersectional approach. The article concludes that intersecting identities, such as caste, wealth, age and gender, influence decisions and reveal power dynamics and negotiation within the household and the community, as well as barriers to adaptation. Overall, the findings suggest an intersectional approach is useful and worth further exploration in the context of climate change adaptation.

Vulnerability assessments that examine how gender intersects with other factors are potentially valuable for understanding differing vulnerabilities and capacities, and informing effective and responsive policies and programmes that aim to build resilience. In a review of the literature on differences in how men and women experience climate change-related problems, Djoudi (2015) conclude that evidence-based and context-specific gendered vulnerability assessments are needed to specifically identify not only different needs and perceptions but also different capacities to adapt. It is not clear how well these assessments capture intersectional aspects in practice.

## 4. CHALLENGES TO INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES

Tackling intersecting inequalities and power in practice is a challenge for most development actors (Bond, 2018). While intersectionality is recognised as valuable for understanding intersecting inequalities and power, its practical applicability has been debated. For instance, how can complex power relations be studied in practice? Intersectionality is not associated with any specific methodology but attempts have been made to outline methods for applying it empirically (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). As yet, there are few intersectional tools or frameworks to identify areas of intersectionality, or indeed to measure – and address – the impact of intersectional approaches (Smith et al., 2017). Methodological issues have been described as one of the greatest remaining challenges in implementing intersectionality frameworks (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016). Facilitating the implementation of intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building will require further methodological innovations (Carr and Thompson, 2014).

Intersectional analysis has been critiqued for understanding social difference and inequality principally as identity categories and focusing on the small scale, while giving insufficient consideration to large-scale societal structures and axes of inequality (Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018). Another criticism is that the concept is too abstract for the practical analysis of societal interrelations (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014; Hackfort and Burchardt, 2018). Understanding how to respond in practice to the intersection between people's overlapping identities and experiences is a challenge. Most development actors still target their programmes at supporting certain key groups, in particular women, children and people with disabilities (Bond, 2018). It has proved difficult enough to keep the promotion of gender equality on the agenda without additionally nuancing the intersection between gender and age (Plan International, 2013).

There is also a tension between approaches that subscribe to the ethos of 'inclusion for all', such as the ACAP framework (van Ek and Schot, 2017) and the need to target specific disadvantaged groups, particularly those facing intersecting inequalities (Lenhardt and Samman, 2015). Principles of equity and inclusion are often considered an 'add-on' in practice rather than central to effective programme design; and conceptualisations of resilience and associated language tend to exclude issues of inclusion (Smith et al., 2017; Bond, 2018). For example, one reason the needs of older people with disabilities are often not well met is the disconnect between organisations and programmes focused on older people and those focused on people with disabilities. As such, older people risk being left out of efforts towards disability inclusion and vice versa (HelpAge International, 2018b).

Research on the interconnectedness between human societies and climate change encompasses a multitude of disciplines and methods. Given this, it is not feasible to provide a common intersectional methodology: the methods always need to be adapted to the specific context or case under study (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). There is currently no one approach or defined set of methods that represent best practices for seeking intersectional understandings of vulnerability and resilience relating to climate and disaster risk (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016). Broader forms of context analysis, tools and assessments that better capture intersecting risk and use that information to build long-term resilience are required. Developing a tool that is both sensitive enough to measure specificities while being used in the field is a challenge (Smith et al., 2017); however, adding an intersectional dimension to existing methods does not require new systems or approaches.

Inclusion cannot be achieved without addressing discrimination, marginalisation and exploitation experienced in disasters and at other times (Twigg et al., 2018). It is necessary to identify which vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups are being excluded, based on analysis of power dynamics as a result of social differences. Such analysis must also identify how categories of social difference and forms of disadvantage interact and intersect. Overcoming these entrenched barriers to inclusion is a major challenge for operational agencies; however, an intersectional approach can help identify the voices being heard and those being neglected (Osborne, 2015; Smith et al., 2017).

A review by Paz Arauco et al. (2014) of countries that have made significant progress in addressing intersecting

inequalities reveals four enabling factors: social movements demanding changes in the 'rules of the game'; political trajectories and processes of constitutional change that facilitate and actualise these changes; social guarantees, opportunity enhancements and developmental affirmative actions; and specific policies and programmes that show commitment to reducing intersecting inequalities over time.

## 5. DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

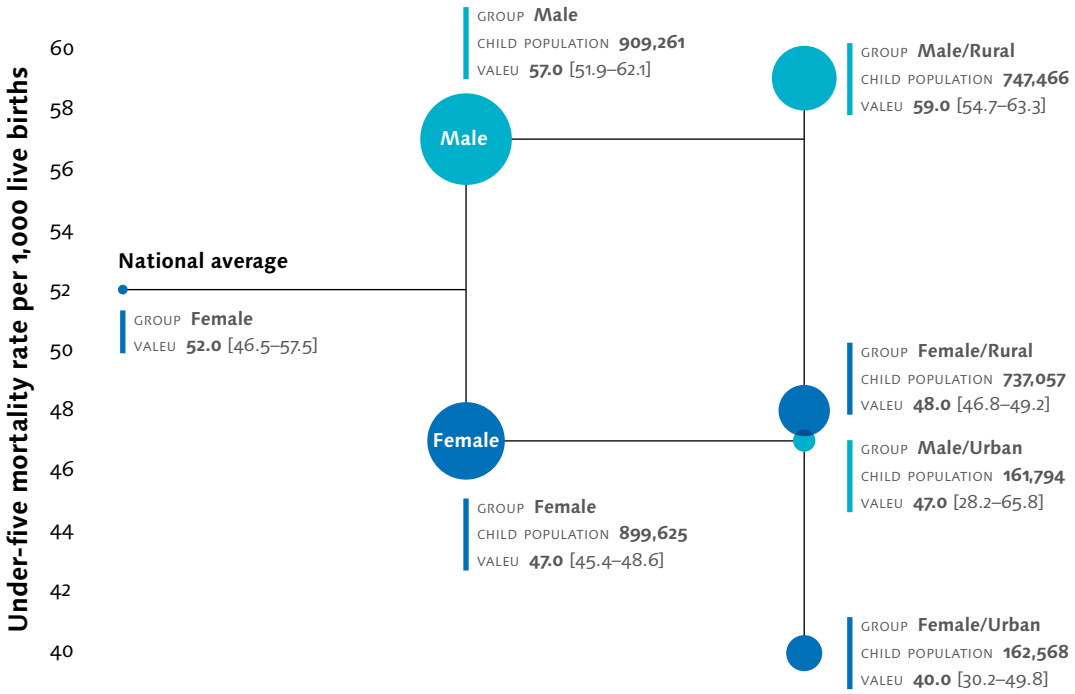
Key to understanding intersectionality is collecting the right data, including data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, which is a critical step towards making better informed decisions and allocating resources more effectively (van Ek and Schot, 2017). This helps determine differential impacts and expose hidden trends and problems that may lead to vulnerable and marginalised people being left behind (IFRC, 2018). It can help establish the scope of the problem, enable the identification of marginalised populations with specific needs and capacities and make them more visible to policy-makers (van Ek and Schot, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). However, if it is not done systematically, the complexities of at-risk communities will not be properly understood (HelpAge International, 2018b). Furthermore, limited disaggregated data may hinder the inclusion of certain vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals in programming (Barbelet and Samuels, 2018). In practice, disaggregation does not often progress beyond the gathering of sex-disaggregated data towards critical interrogation of the more complex impacts of intersecting dimensions of identity vulnerability (Thompson-Hall et al., 2016).

Donors and governments are increasing investment in the disaggregation of programme data in the areas of gender, disability, geography and age. However, this needs to be supplemented by intersectional analysis and data disaggregation that makes visible those people who may be most marginalised in specific contexts and are not included; these groups and individuals will vary from one context to the next and may also be deliberately 'uncounted' for political reasons (Bond, 2018). Monitoring of disaster impacts under the Sendai Framework does not require national governments to disaggregate data by sex, age, disability or income: disaggregation is merely 'desirable' (UNISDR, 2017b). National census data are 'generally not disaggregated by gender, age, or type of disability, resulting in a lack of reliable statistics and data' (Plan International, 2017: 9) and between countries. While the logic for collecting data disaggregated by sex, age and disability is increasingly well understood and accepted, categorisation and consistency may vary (ADCAP, 2018b). Data on different people's facets are rarely combined to create a more holistic picture of the situation and needs of particular vulnerable and marginalised people (IFRC, 2018).

A number of operational agencies, including HelpAge International (2018a, 2018b) recognise the need for more disaggregated data collection at all levels, to inform research and policy

development and enable more inclusive programming. HelpAge International (2018b) also argues for building on older people's capabilities in humanitarian response. Save the Children's Group-based Inequality Database (GRID) takes an intersectional approach. It is based on a dataset of disaggregated data on child outcomes for nearly 80 developing countries (Save the Children, 2018). The data tools provide a visual representation of the inequalities that persist between different groups of children across key SDG indicators and support the analysis of intersecting inequalities (Bond, 2018; Save the Children, 2018). Figure 3, taken from GRID, shows child mortality rates in Uganda, first by gender and then by gender and location (urban/rural). The example reveals the difference between girls' under five mortality rate in rural areas (48 per 1,000) and in urban areas (40 per 1,000), and the difference between boys' under five mortality rate in rural areas (59 per 1,000) and in urban areas (47 per 1,000).

**Figure 3: Child mortality rate in Uganda disaggregated by gender and location**




Source: Save the Children (2018).

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

Only through inclusive development that includes the most vulnerable and marginalised in society will the international community be able to deliver on the SDGs. Intersectional approaches offer a number of advantages in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building policies and practice. They help us understand the differentiated nature of vulnerability and resilience, challenging the implementation of 'one-size-fits-all' approaches, and draw attention to the

social root causes of vulnerability, creating a more nuanced picture. Policies and programmes that fail to address the root causes risk further reinforcing inequalities.

Intersectional approaches offer a framework for integrating social heterogeneity into considerations of vulnerability and resilience by assisting in unveiling explicit and implicit assumptions about predefined social categories. They also offer an analytical tool for understanding and responding to the way gender intersects with other identities. Power is also a defining feature of intersectional analysis. Intersectional approaches illuminate how different vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups relate differently to climate and disaster risk, given their situatedness in power structures based on context-specific and dynamic categorisations. Furthermore, instead of viewing individuals and groups as either privileged or oppressed, intersectional analysis emphasises how they can experience both power and oppression simultaneously.

Intersectionality provides a more refined way of reflecting these complexities and in doing so prevents the overgeneralisation or simplification of local realities that may misinform policy and practice. Highlighting complexities is essential to understanding the contexts of inequality and marginalisation. However, the practical applicability of such approaches has been debated, and few tools or frameworks exist. Examples of intersectional approaches in practice include the ACAP framework (van Ek and Schot, 2017) and the ADCAP good practice guide on embedding inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian policy and practice (ADCAP, 2018a).

Intersectional approaches can refine, unpack and enrich the understanding of vulnerability and resilience, enabling policies and programmes to be more inclusive and ensure no one is left behind.

This requires some methodological innovations. There is no one approach or defined set of methods that represent best practice for obtaining intersectional understandings of vulnerability and resilience relating to climate and disaster risk: methods will always need to be adapted to the specific context or case. Although experience has shown that adding an intersectional approach to existing approaches is beneficial, developing a tool that is both sensitive enough to measure specificities while being used in the field is a challenge, given the lack of data and standard methodological approaches, in a context of limited resources and limited local capacities. Some trade-offs may be necessary.

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Policy-makers and operational agencies working on vulnerability reduction and resilience-building should make more use of intersectional approaches to better account for inequalities and power in policy formulation and implementation. This can reduce the risk of producing and reinforcing unequal power relations relating to access to resources and decision-making structures. The first step towards achieving

inclusive development is identifying who are the excluded or marginalised groups or individuals in each context so that no one is left behind (Bond, 2018).

- For more effective and inclusive development, organisations should consider the wider context beyond their target groups and how interventions could benefit everyone, as intersectional approaches can support multiple vulnerable or marginalised groups and individuals.

- Policies and programmes should start by identifying the reasons why some people are more at risk and how their social identities influence their vulnerabilities.

- Establishing consortia of organisations that represent different vulnerable and marginalised groups can bring together like-minded actors and influence donors to create space and promote an enabling environment to support intersectional approaches in wider vulnerability and resilience research, policies and programmes.

- More collaboration between organisations is needed to operationalise intersectional approaches. In doing so, expertise on different elements of intersectionality can be shared and invisible groups and individuals identified, with their needs and priorities promoted in programme design and implementation. Programmes should be designed in an overlapping way to target intersectional inequalities.

- Empowerment of local actors is an important way to ensure greater inclusion and more effective context analysis, programme design and implementation. The rollout of the ACAP framework involved civil society and community-based organisations representing Dalit groups, disabled people's organisations and women's groups in the process, and this was a major factor in its success

- There is a need to raise awareness of intersectionality and intersectional approaches in research, policy and programmes targeting vulnerable and marginalised people. Intersectionality is beginning to be more widely recognised; however, leadership is required from donors and organisations to bring intersectionality into focus in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building. More research on intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building is required to inform and influence governments, United Nations agencies and development stakeholders – in particular qualitative and contextual research to fully understand how inequalities intersect and affect people in different contexts.

- Better data are essential. The disaggregation of data must be strengthened and go beyond the gathering of sex, disability, geography and age data towards supporting analysis of more complex intersecting dimensions of vulnerability and make visible those people who are most marginalised in specific contexts. Better collection and use of disaggregated data is essential, both for understanding intersecting inequalities and for targeting interventions that build resilience for all.

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# ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

The approach of this report was exploratory in nature and relied upon qualitative research methods. Evidence was gathered in three phases. First, academic databases were searched using a scoping method so as to provide a comprehensive overview of the scientific literature on intersectionality and intersectional approaches specifically in relation to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building. Grey literature was then acquired from the websites of development and humanitarian organisations. Finally, additional grey literature was gathered by sending requests through the research team's network of contacts working on vulnerability and marginalisation in climate and disaster risk contexts.

**Scoping study:** The aim of scoping studies is to map the literature on a particular topic or research area and to provide an opportunity to identify key concepts, gaps in the research and types and sources of evidence to inform research, policy and practice (Daudt et al., 2013; Beerens and Tehler, 2016). As the aim of this paper is both to advance understanding and to encourage improved policy and practice, the use of a scoping study is well justified. The scoping study was conducted in August 2018 using an adapted version of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework as a guideline.

**Step 1. Identifying the research question:** The broad and open research question: *'what is known in the scientific literature about intersectionality, vulnerability and resilience?'* was chosen in order to generate breadth of coverage (decisions on how to set parameters can be made once some sense of the volume and general scope of the field has been gained). Before starting the systematic search, quick-scan searches were conducted in academic databases in order to develop a broad understanding of the literature, where it might be found and the terminology used (Beerens and Tehler, 2016).

**Step 2. Identifying relevant articles:** The academic databases Academic Search, Scopus and Web of Science were chosen. All three are large databases of peer-reviewed scientific literature and cover a wide range of research fields. The search string was developed from the research question's three key words (intersectionality, vulnerability and resilience) and based on a Boolean approach. As these key words have synonyms, searching these words alone would be insufficient. Therefore, a list of synonyms was compiled by searching thesauruses and reflecting on the results of the quick-scan searches of Step 1. The synonyms were systematically combined, and the various combinations of search terms were used to search the academic databases and the number of results was noted for each query. Synonyms that generated irrelevant results were removed from the list. Additionally, 'inequality' was paired with intersectionality, given the close relationship to intersecting inequalities. Relatedly, because of the wider research context of equity and inclusion to this report, 'inclusion' was also paired with intersectionality. Finally, the search terms 'climate' and 'disaster' were added to restrict the results to contexts of climate and disaster risk.

Search terms:
intersect* OR inequal* OR inclus*;
vulnerab* OR marginal*;
resilien* OR adapt*;
disaster OR climate.

**Figure A1: The scoping study process**

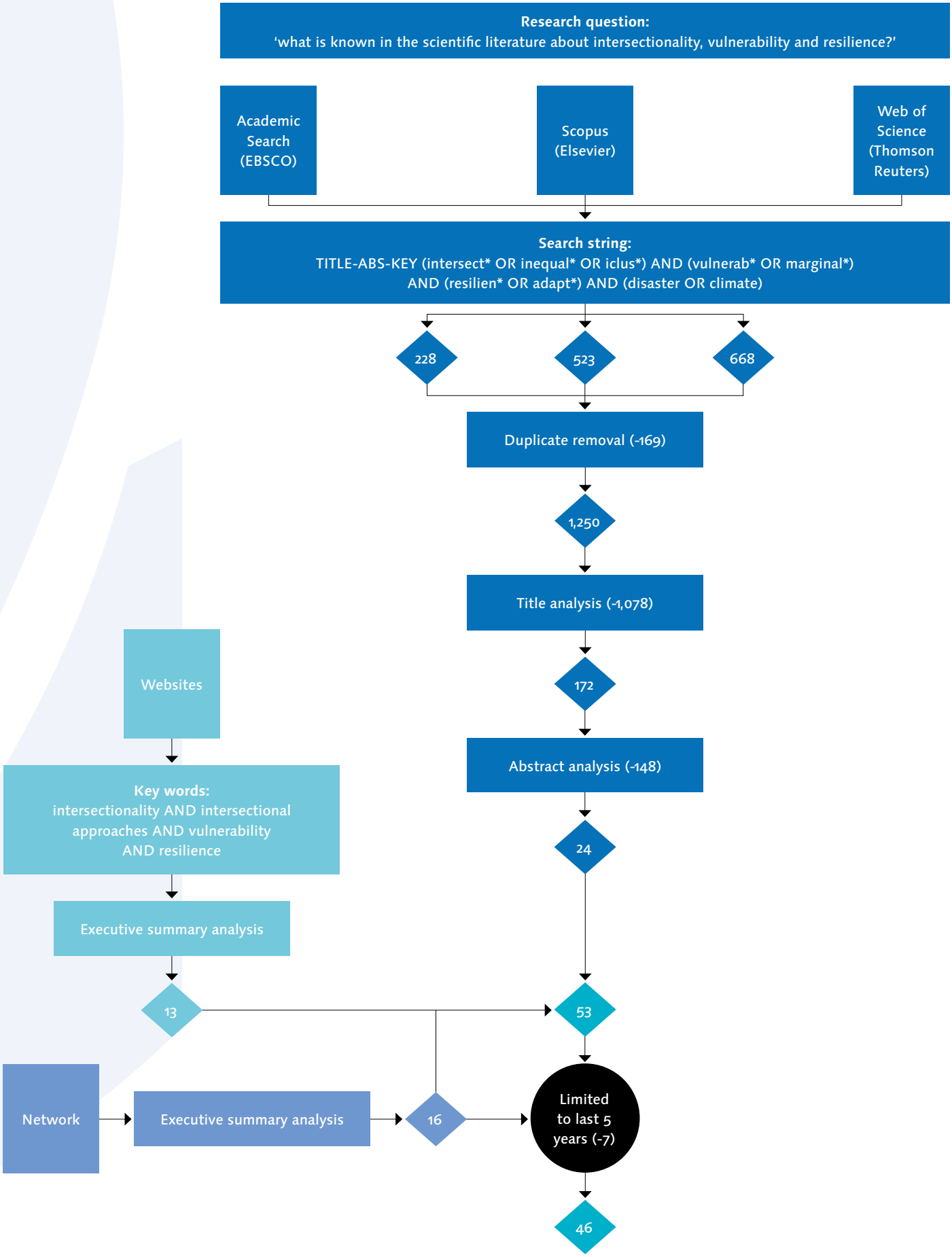

Figure A1 shows the search string and the initial number of results 228, 523 and 668 (total 1,419). The results were exported to Excel and 169 duplicates were removed. This left 1,250 articles for the study selection.

**Step 3. Study selection:** Articles that were clearly irrelevant as determined through the analysis of their titles were removed and borderline cases were retained for further analysis. This led to the removal of 1,078 articles. The abstracts of the remaining 172 articles were read and assessed against the inclusion criteria described below, which was devised *ad hoc*, based on increasing familiarity with the literature. This led to the removal of 148 articles. The research team decided to limit the articles to within the past five years. Nineteen articles were selected for the scoping study from the scientific literature.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Article describes intersectionality, intersectional approaches and/or intersecting inequalities;
2. Article focuses on vulnerable and/or marginal groups;
3. Article examines vulnerability reduction, resilience-building and/or adaptation;
4. Article is set in the wider context of disaster and/or climate risk.

**Grey literature:** 24 websites of development and humanitarian organisations were searched for grey literature using the key words: intersectionality, intersectional approaches, vulnerability and resilience. The papers were shortlisted using a similar method to the academic literature. Twelve papers were selected. Requests were also sent through the research team's network of contacts working on vulnerability and marginalisation in climate and disaster risk contexts (including individuals who took part in an ODI informal workshop on intersectionality, vulnerability and resilience in June 2018 (Annex 2). Fifteen papers were shared and incorporated into the literature review.

**Step 4: Analysis:** Articles were analysed in-depth to identify intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building. Through reviewing the articles and placing their key findings into categories, themes were identified. The articles were also assessed using the Ctrl-F function to identify any explicit or implicit references to keywords of the search string and the emerging themes.

# ANNEX 2: WORKSHOP NOTES ON INTERSECTIONALITY, VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

ODI's Risk and Resilience Programme invited selected experts to an informal workshop on Thursday 7 June 2018 to explore intersecting inequalities and intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building in the context of climate and disaster risk, with a view to advancing understanding of this issue and encouraging improved

practice and policy. The core question discussed was:

*How can effective intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building be developed and integrated into policy and programming?*

ODI's Risk and Resilience Programme's new strategy on 'Equity and Inclusion in a Multi-Hazard Context' seeks to promote equitable and inclusive access to all systems, processes and policies that support people's escape from poverty and longer-term development outcomes in the contexts of environmental shocks and stresses, in a way that leaves no one behind. This is also a core strand of the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Knowledge Management work under the Gender and Social Inclusion Theme. This work will consider intersectionality in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building across practice, exploring the value of intersectional approaches, the opportunities and challenges these present to operational agencies and strategies for adopting them in their policies and programming.

Ten participants working on vulnerability and marginalisation in climate and disaster risk contexts from academic institutions and operational organisations attended the workshop. Expertise on gender, age (older persons, children and young people), disability and poverty were brought in, while recognising other intersecting factors. Participants shared their experiences and ideas through discussions and explored opportunities for future work on this issue. The meeting was planned and facilitated by John Twigg and Emma Lovell (ODI) and written up by Daniel Chaplin. The following key issues and ideas were discussed.

## 1. Intersectionality and intersectional approaches: Meanings and understandings

- Participants agreed that the relevance and importance of intersectionality and intersectional approaches could be framed within the 'leave no one behind agenda', a commitment central to the SDGs. 'Leave no one behind' means ending extreme poverty in all its forms and reducing inequalities among groups and individuals (Samman and Stuart, 2017). Key to this is the prioritisation and fast-tracking of actions for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups (ibid.) – groups that will often be exposed to intersecting inequalities. For this agenda to be successfully implemented, policies and programmes must recognise that certain groups are deliberately excluded, which can exacerbate their vulnerability and exposure to climate and disaster risks.

- Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building take historical, social, cultural and political contexts into account, recognising that vulnerable and marginalised groups are neither homogenous nor static. Different identities, conditions, contexts and forms of oppression, discrimination and marginalisation intersect and people will experience these exclusionary processes in various ways at different stages of their lives.

- Intersectional analysis cuts across simple categorisation to unpack vulnerabilities and resilience. However, disaster risk reduction and climate research policy and programming continue to focus on 'vulnerable groups' as a collective category, or on specific vulnerable and marginalised groups.

- Participants acknowledged that, while there is general recognition that different vulnerability factors intersect, few interventions specifically target groups at risk to intersecting inequalities in policy and practice. There is a tendency to 'list' vulnerabilities rather than examining intersectionality.

- Intersectional approaches require going beyond inclusivity to examine interactions between the different vulnerability factors that vulnerable and marginalised groups are exposed to in order to understand the context and inform interventions so that no-one is left behind.

## 2. Lessons from experience of addressing vulnerability and marginalisation in disaster contexts

- As highlighted in the section above, many organisational attempts to be inclusive simply list vulnerable and marginalised groups or target broad groups, without examining how vulnerability factors affecting those groups interact. As a result, some vulnerable and marginalised groups are 'invisible'. Ultimately, if interventions fail to be inclusive and fail to recognise that marginalised groups are not homogenous or static, they will not be effective. By examining the interactions of vulnerabilities, the 'ultra-vulnerable' can be targeted. Understanding intersectionality and utilising intersectional approaches can enable policies and programmes to be more inclusive and ensure they are reaching those who are most at risk.

- Participants agreed there was a tendency by individuals and organisations to 'box' people based on identities perceived and ascribed to them, with subsequent impacts on policies and programming. This ignores the hidden and multiple identities people have. Dealing with the complexity of identity is a challenge; however, it must be recognised. It was suggested that, rather than attempting to capture all the identities, drivers of exclusion should be identified to understand the barriers facing vulnerable and marginalised groups.

- Participants acknowledged that addressing vulnerability and marginalisation was inherently complex and programming must be 'chaotic and messy'[5] to be real. It was also recognised that it was not pragmatic for programmes to attempt to cover everything and there would always be limitations. Instead, the focus should be on the process of attempting to capture the complexity of a context rather than the end result: 'It is not about trying to do everything at the same time but rather recognising that to do what you want to do, you have to have clarity of vision.'

- There is a conflict between the ability of organisations to remain impartial and abide by humanitarian standards while targeting specific vulnerable and marginalised groups as guided by their mandates. Organisations that target specific groups are at risk of excluding other groups, thus not fulfilling humanitarian commitments. Participants questioned the need for vulnerability-specific organisations in the current system; however, they acknowledged that historically these organisations were formed as they sought to include vulnerable and marginalised groups that were often excluded in policies and programming.

5 All quotations from here in relation to the workshop are anonymised quotations from participants who attended.

● Lack of understanding of the capabilities that people who are in need of assistance have often leads to discriminatory interventions. Participants agreed that interventions, policies and programming must treat vulnerable people with dignity and recognise their existing capabilities, and the fact that they have the right to be consulted and to participate in decision-making over issues that affect them. Relatedly, vulnerability reduction and resilience-building approaches can remain disempowering: 'It is more complicated than viewing vulnerable groups as being passive and in need of assistance.'

● It was discussed that, while empowering and devolving responsibility to local actors in humanitarian contexts will strengthen their capacity and will likely make interventions more context-specific and relevant, it is important also to recognise that power dynamics still exist and discrimination and exclusion often play out at the local level. As such, there is a role for external actors in promoting impartiality and ensuring the most marginalised or at risk in society are not left behind.

● Organisations are increasingly understanding the need to use intersectional approaches when targeting vulnerable and marginalised groups. Some organisations are starting to change their policies as a result. For instance, HelpAge's humanitarian model is based on pillars of protection, inclusion and advocacy. Others are deprioritising areas not within their expertise and collaborating with other organisations that have expertise in those areas. However, intersectionality and intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building remains a new area for the majority of organisations and is a challenge for organisations that are trying to respond to multiple donor requirements, within short timelines and with limited funding.

## 3. Experiences of intersectional approaches and lessons learned

● Participants agreed that, in order to be able to design programmes that account for intersectionality, the local context must be adequately understood, and that working across different contexts was a challenge in terms of replicating approaches. For intersectional approaches to be operational, they must be context-specific and recognise the different political, economic, social, cultural and environmental contexts within which people live that constrain or enable people living there in different ways and at different times. Context analysis should be one of the first steps in designing policies and programmes, and this can be achieved through tools such as community vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCAs). While the need for VCAs is not new, participants acknowledged that understanding the intersecting inequalities that people can face was necessary for effectively targeting the most vulnerable and marginalised, and must be considered in every context.

● Intersectionality and intersectional approaches can assist in bringing attention to power and oppression in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building. Participants noted that addressing power dynamics through policies and programmes would always be political, 'both with a big P and a little p'. Participatory approaches can help us understand power dynamics and design equitable and inclusive interventions.

● Capturing contextual discrimination should be the first step for inclusive resilience programming. While some vulnerable and marginalised groups will exist everywhere and others will not, 'there will always be contextually discriminated people'. By using

intersectional approaches to understand this discrimination, programmes can be made more effective. Not doing so risks bringing about collateral damage, doing more harm than good and deepening the gap between groups. Participants agreed that discrimination could be used as a lens to understand intersectionality.

- Relatedly, intersectional approaches help us address the blanket exclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Certain groups may be 'invisible' as dimensions of a person's experiences are hidden. Using generic labels masks important invisibilities. Intersectional approaches 'help to make the invisible visible'. They can also promote a 'process of discovery' as recognition and inclusion of a vulnerable or marginalised group may reveal additional, previously invisible, groups.

- Attention was drawn to how often data collection tools are not designed to capture intersectional inequalities effectively. An example of age ranges ending at 60+, which can be an issue in middle- and high-income countries, was shared. There was also an example of a gender-based violence data collection tool that ended at 49, thus ignoring the intersection of gender and old age. Participants also agreed that the collection of disaggregated data (e.g. by sex, age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status) was often encouraged but not mandatory. This often results in only the bare minimum being collected, meaning that different identities and aspects of social vulnerabilities are not captured. Furthermore, when data are disaggregated, the interactions are rarely examined or used to inform policies and programmes.

- Intersectional tools for analysis (along with relevant skills) are critical for putting intersectionality into practice. They would give actors 'a frame of reference, a checklist to ensure that at least at a minimum level, vulnerability factors are taken into consideration'. However, participants raised a concern related to adding more to the toolkits of actors who are already struggling to use a range of tools to be inclusive, and reinventing the wheel.

- The intersectional tool, ACAP, presented in the practitioner guide 'Towards inclusion' (Van Ek and Schot, 2017) was highlighted as a useful tool, which examines four key drivers of exclusion (attitude, communication, access and participation) in order to be able to understand the situation rather than attempting to capture all the identities of vulnerable individuals.

- It was discussed how the use of broad categories like 'men' and 'women' was insufficient to understand the complexity of gender. This was linked to the issue of identity and who defines and applies the categories. Relatedly, using 'sex' in data collection tools reduces disaggregation to simply 'male' and 'female'.

- Participants noted that gender could be considered an entry point for intersectionality. Intersectionality has its roots in gender, thus it should continue to be a big part of the debate and moving the agenda forward.

- It was agreed that, for programming to be more inclusive and effective, systemic change is needed to ensure intersecting equalities are considered and that no one is left behind.

- Participants suggested that agencies must be more propositional to donors to ensure these approaches are taken into account in a meaningful and realistic way; the length of existing funding streams was highlighted as a critical barrier to achieving such change.

## 4. Opportunities for intersectional approaches

- Participants discussed the opportunity for intersectionality to encourage interdisciplinary research that 'examines the spaces in-between, through multiple lenses, to generate something new'. Such research would help us understand intersecting inequalities. Relatedly, intersectionality can help promote a more social element in resilience policies and programmes, presenting an opportunity to change the narrative, as resilience is often treated as a technical issue.

- Intersectionality was recognised as becoming increasingly important for influencing governments and donors, especially with respect to inclusion, as 'it allows you to demonstrate the relevance of your issue in relation to other issues', resulting in more effective influencing. Nevertheless, participants felt there was still a lack of awareness among government actors when it came to intersectional issues.

- Intersectional approaches that address the needs of one vulnerable or marginalised group can support other marginalised or at-risk groups. Organisations should therefore consider the wider context beyond their target groups and how interventions could benefit everyone. This would result in more effective and inclusive development. Participants agreed that intersectionality was useful as 'it allows people to understand that you are not just talking about your own issues. It allows you to demonstrate how your issue affects their issue'.

- Establishing consortia is necessary in order to work on intersectionality, as it is to work effectively on resilience. Consortia should be supported by organisational partnerships to influence donors and should include organisations that represent different vulnerable and marginalised groups.

- Intersectional approaches are useful in understanding and supporting life course approaches. Different intersecting factors will influence individuals at different periods in their lifetime and will recognise the different needs and the kind of approaches required. This demonstrates the common ground of organisations' target groups. Participants noted that many organisations were implicitly using intersectional approaches in their programmes and policies.

- Organisations should link with local organisations such as disabled people's organisations and older people's associations in communities to ensure inclusivity and more effective context analysis, programme design and implementation. If organisations do not have expertise in working with specific vulnerable and marginalised groups, they should partner with local organisations that do. Participants questioned why organisations should have to be a 'jack of all trades'.

## 5. Barriers to intersectional approaches

- Organisations target specific vulnerable and marginalised groups as outlined in their mandates. Participants gave examples of organisations that, even when supposedly collaborating on programmes, focused on specific vulnerability factors and did not consider how they intersected with vulnerability factors targeted by the partner organisations – the result of an 'organisational mind-set problem'.

- Participants discussed how the humanitarian system was not set up to support intersectional approaches

in humanitarian crises, as organisations that target specific groups are influential in the cluster system. Organisations are therefore at risk of excluding other vulnerable and marginalised groups.

- Space for organisations to utilise intersectional approaches in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building is limited owing to donor structures. Donors have their own mandates and interests and, if these are not aligned with what organisations identify as necessary for a programme to be equitable and inclusive, they will not receive funding or they will not be able to give as much prominence to the identified needs or priorities in order to meet donor demands. Participants described how some donors were also not socially progressive and did not recognise the importance of intersectionality.

- Identifying where intersectionality fits within organisations is a challenge. Relatedly, determining who from the organisation would take the lead in policies and programmes related to intersectionality remains difficult to clarify. Participants outlined the risk that only the individual designated as the lead on intersectionality would focus on intersectionality. Conversely, participants agreed that, in reality, the assumption 'everyone can do it' never works.

- Time is a constraint in both humanitarian and development contexts and represents a barrier to intersectional approaches, which require time to understand the complexity of different contexts. Especially in humanitarian responses, there is often a 'trade-off between speed and complexity'. Participants also criticised the length of vulnerability reduction and resilience-building funding streams and programmes as often being too short in term.

- Participants discussed how cost was often cited as a barrier to addressing intersectionality; however, there is a lack of data and evidence to support the claim that tackling intersecting inequalities is too expensive: 'It is an easy excuse'. Ultimately, 'if poverty is to be eradicated it will probably be expensive'.

- Participants highlighted that the language of intersectionality was too academic and often regarded as jargon – that is, it is not an operative term. Fundamentally, it is also a term that does not come from the vulnerable and marginalised groups it is seeking to assist.

## 6. Conclusions and next steps

- There is a need to raise awareness of intersectionality and intersectional approaches in research, policy and programmes targeting vulnerable and marginalised groups. Intersectionality is beginning to be more widely recognised; however, leadership is required from donors and organisations to bring intersectionality into focus in vulnerability reduction and resilience-building.

- More collaboration between organisations that target vulnerable and marginalised groups is needed in order to operationalise intersectional approaches. In doing so, expertise on different elements of intersectionality can be shared and invisible groups identified and their needs and priorities promoted in programme design and implementation. Programmes should be designed in an overlapping way to target intersectional inequalities. Currently, this is inhibited by the rigidity of donor funding, organisational mandates and existing politics.

- Consortia can bring together likeminded organisations and influence donors to

create space and promote an enabling environment in which intersectional approaches can be supported in wider vulnerability and resilience research, policies and programmes.

- Universal design – that is, interventions that are accessible by all and benefit broader society – should be emphasised. This is especially relevant with regard to influencing donors. Universal design approaches that benefit a specific vulnerable group are not exclusive to that group and can in fact benefit everyone in society – meaning they can be more inclusive and cost-effective.

- The growing attention being given to disability in international development (e.g. the DFID-hosted Global Disability Summit in 2018) is an opportunity to bring intersectionality into the discussion on equity and inclusion. It should be highlighted that effective disability programmes need to emphasise that 'no one is just someone with a disability'; there will always be other intersecting inequalities to consider.

- Ultimately, if intersectionality is not considered, objectives and goals are at risk of not being achieved as vulnerable and marginalised groups will be left behind.

## REFERENCES FOR ANNEX 2


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