

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF WOMEN MEMBERS IN UNION DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES IN BANGLADESH



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“Women are no longer meant to sit at home and do the chores. If they do not go out and participate in things such as the UDMC, they will never be able to break the shackles they have been put in. I feel I have learned so much from my time in the UDMC and I could not have gained this knowledge sitting at home”

**- Meherunnisa, UDMC member
Chaugram, Natore**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh is a country that faces a variety of natural disasters, overpopulation, poverty and other adversities that challenge the lives and livelihoods of its people. Women face the brunt of these hardships, because of the socio-economic differences and inequalities that are prevalent, alongside the impacts of disasters and climate change, especially in drought, flood, and coastal areas. Over the last 30 years, many more women have died in natural disasters than men, due to their lower economic status, lack of social capital, and lack of disaster preparedness. As climate change impacts continue to rise, greater numbers of women in Bangladesh will be affected, more frequently. With these considerations, the government of Bangladesh established the Union Disaster Management Committee, based on the Standing Order of Disasters, in 2010, established to carry out disaster management activities as preventative actions, mitigation measures, and preparedness activities. As automatic members of the UDMC from the Union Parishad, women play complex roles in the activities of the committee, ensuring that there are representatives of women in the community within a disaster management body in each area of Bangladesh.

This study aimed to understand the participation, perceptions, and knowledge of differentiated impacts of disasters and disaster risk reduction on women and men. It found that women's socio-economic status, their understanding of their own capabilities, gender biases, and cultural and religious barriers in society restrict opportunities for women to participate and contribute in positive ways to the activities, especially field-based ones, of the UDMC. The study was conducted in ten upazillas of ten districts in Bangladesh, with two UDMCs studied in each upazilla. Out of the 140 targeted personnel, 134 personnel were interviewed, of which 53 were male, including chairmen, government officers and NGO workers, and 81 were female members. One of these women was the chairman of her UDMC, two were government officials and three were NGO workers. The rest of the female respondents were general members and vulnerable women representatives.

A majority of the interviewed respondents agreed that men and women are impacted differentially and that it was vitally important that women take active roles in the UDMCs. Women, especially in the more conservative areas of Bangladesh need an outlet and supportive body where they can share their health, hygiene and reproductive problems, and it is imperative to provide them such outlets through active participation in the UDMCs. Women members can also assist other women in their unions to share their issues and concerns without hesitation.

Respondents also noted the need for women members to become more aware of climate change and disaster impacts, and how they can impact women differently than men. Awareness is critical for women in the community so that they can be prepared to face disaster situations without

compromising themselves or their families and households. This awareness, respondents claimed, could only be provided to them by knowledgeable and active female members of a UDMC, through structured and highly experienced means.

Yet the study also found that there is a significant gap in the perceptions of the roles and responsibilities that women play in the UDMCs between male and female respondents. While a little more than half the women respondents mentioned that they play a role in distributing relief after disasters, a significant number of the chairmen and government officials said that women are involved in this process. This discrepancy can contribute to ideas that women are more involved than they really are, and that there is no need to empower female members further in playing more active roles and increasing their responsibilities in delivering support to their communities. It is also possible that women are likely less active in these tasks delivery as the leadership and more responsibilities are assigned to men.

The study further suggests that male counterparts seldom encourage women members to get actively involved in activities, although the larger portion of the male members interviewed expressed strong views in supporting women members. All female respondents iterated the importance of women members participating in activities such as disaster risk reduction planning, raising awareness, helping and aiding women, children, and the disabled, and in damage assessment activities post-disaster.

Conclusive data from the field findings show that the female members of the UDMCs across the study areas are, in most cases, not participating in the activities of the committee as the guideline prescribe. Participation for most women has come down to mere presence in the meetings, and most women do not voice their opinions in the proceedings of the meetings. The women who do raise suggestions and opinions explained that their words are seldom heeded, and eventually they stop raising their voices altogether. In addition, researchers in the field have witnessed and reported cases of intimidation from male members toward female members, and noted instances of misadministration in the participation of women members.

Yet, the study has also uncovered positive potential for future exploration, where women reported having active and comprehensive participation. There were UDMCs found in the field where women's opinions were not only heeded but actively put into action, and male members encouraged further dynamic participation of their female counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world due to its geographical location between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal. It faces continuing threats from various types of natural disasters, population density, socio-economic status, and other challenging livelihoods-related factors (Huq 2001; Huq and Ayers 2008; Shovo et al 2013). In recent times, climate change has intensified this vulnerability as the frequency, strength and diversity of disasters has increased, affecting the development process and sustainable livelihood generation (Huq and Ayers 2008; First National Communication 2002; Second National Communication 2012). Around 70 percent of the country's population is living in rural areas (Worldometers 2014) and majority of them are involved in farming and fishing sectors that are exposed to natural disasters and climate change impacts (Huq and Ayers 2008). Though the human mortality rate from disasters such as cyclones has decreased significantly since the establishment and implementation of disaster risk reduction and management initiatives (Adger et al. 2003; Haque et al. 2012), the level of vulnerability among the communities, particularly in coastal, and agriculture-based rural locations, has not decreased due to continued and increasing disasters, and impacts induced by climate change (Shovo et al. 2013). This vulnerability can be associated with, for example, increasing health hazards, decreasing access to safe water and sanitation systems, impacts on sustainable cropping practices and food security, or dependency on services and livelihoods deriving from ecosystems (Mallick and Mohsin 2012; Cash et al. 2014; Parvin et al. 2015; Akhter et al. 2015).

Women are disproportionately affected compared to men by the impacts of climatic disasters due to socio-economic differences, discriminatory actions and gender inequality, as well as due to varied climatic impacts specially affecting them in coastal, floods and drought eco-zones in Bangladesh (Huq and Ayers 2008; Climate Change and Gender Action Plan 2013). It is identified in the Second National Communication of Bangladesh (2012) that patriarchal systems predetermine the roles women can play, and the levels of responsibilities and mobility they may have within their society. The Climate Change and Gender Action Plan 2013, also identifies that women tend to suffer more than men during and after climatic disasters. A study by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (2008) notes that women are the most vulnerable section of the population in Bangladesh. From the 171 disasters that occurred between 1971 and 2005, more women died than men from these disasters due to their lower economic status and lack of social capital. With an increase in frequency and intensity of disasters, women are predicted to be the worst affected population in Bangladesh as climate change impacts continue to increase (Rahman, S. 2013).

Another study identifies that in Bangladesh, women form 49 percent of the population and are more vulnerable than men generally to all kinds of disasters and climate-related impacts due to gender inequalities in various social, economic, and political institutions (Huq and Ayers 2008). Men tend to control income distribution, property, access to credit, decision-making processes, and sources of food. Women have limited access to, and control over, natural resources, finances, and more importantly, are less mobile and have limited access to information. For example, when the massive cyclone hit Bangladesh in 1991; the death rate for women was almost five times higher than for men (Huq and Ayers 2008). Men were able to warn each other as they met in public spaces, but they rarely communicated information to the rest of the family (Bangladesh Development Research Centre 2013). Disasters that did not exist few decades ago, such as extreme rainfall, have emerged in many eco-zones in Bangladesh, and communities, especially women, are struggling to endure the impacts (Huq and Ayers 2008; Shahid 2011).

In 2010, to address these challenges, the Government of Bangladesh established the Standing Orders on Disaster, also known as SOD 2010. This standing order aims to ensure the adverse impacts of climatic disaster-related risks are reduced and resilience building processes are mainstreamed in all development sectors of the government. Within the most local governing system, the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) was established from SOD to carry out disaster management activities such as preventative actions, mitigating measures, preparedness in communities, responding to needs, and distribution of relief during a disaster. Women are part of this UDMC system as the female members of Union Parishad of each union become the

members of UDMC automatically. These women are designated with the same rank and responsibilities as all other members. Though the Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (2013) identifies inclusive leadership practices in climate disaster management through empowering women should be mainstreamed through policies, due to social structures and existing gender inequalities their leadership roles are often not effectively utilized at local level (Alam and Rahman 2014).

This study, conducted by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) for UN Women Bangladesh, explores and analyzes the perceptions of women members in UDMCs, and assesses the roles they play, taking into account the various challenges that act as barriers to women's empowerment in these communities. The study also identifies what their empowered and engaging roles can involve to reduce vulnerability and gender inequality, as well as enhance disaster management and risk reduction processes in local communities.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The study focuses on understanding the participation of women members in UDMCs, their levels of knowledge on the differentiated impacts of disaster risk reduction on women and men, and how their participation and knowledge influences decisions that address gender issues within UDMC activities.

Research Questions

- a. What is the current level of participation of women members' within UDMCs?
- b. What level of knowledge do UMC women members have on the differentiated impacts of disaster risk reduction on women and men in the community?
- c. How do women use their local knowledge to engage with UDMC activities?

1.2 Literature review

This section contains an analysis of various relevant literature to understand the role of UDMC members and explore relevant specifics to this research. There has been a number of studies conducted on the capacity development of various stakeholders and enhancing local level engagement with communities to increase resilience, the roles of local leadership to address disasters, and the importance to have gender inclusive disaster management action-plans (CCC 2009; Ginige et al. 2009; Ikeda 2009; CDMP 2012, Shaw et al. 2013). There are also a number of reports, case studies and success stories from various national governmental and non-governmental coordinated efforts to reducing disasters risks and building resilience in communities across Bangladesh that are reflecting optimistic outcomes (DIPECHO VII; NARRI Consortium; Second National Communication 2012). Severe cyclones, particularly in 1970 and 1991, led to immense loss of lives and livelihoods (Ouderm 2007; NOAA 2012). However, since disaster risk reduction and capacity building programmes development and implementation, human mortality from cyclones, has been reduced (Adger et al. 2003; Haque et al. 2012; Shaw et al. 2013).

As there is a continued demand to minimize livelihoods and infrastructural loss, as well as reducing vulnerability from disasters and climate change, continued efforts and research initiatives are needed to address the disaster-related challenges, particularly those induced by climate change (Haque et al. 2012; Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030). However, the distinctiveness of this research on women's role in UDMCs is that it provides an understanding of how gender-balanced and enhanced women leadership can contribute strongly and effectively for better management and reduction of disasters risks.

The Department of Disaster Management of the Government of Bangladesh has recently developed a Community Based Disaster Preparedness Institutionalization Model to ensure the development and implementation of a synergized system that will strengthen the capacities of local and national institutions working on disaster risk reduction and management across the nation (NARRI 2013). The report from this

initiative identifies the role of UDMCs as a coordinating, reviewing, and implementing body on disaster management, initiating activities on behalf of unions, including keeping children, the elderly, women, persons with disability, and other vulnerable individuals under special consideration. The report elaborates the role of UDMC members and their responsibilities in broad context, without indicating the specific role of women members of the committee.

In the National Plan of Disaster Management 2010-2015 and the Climate Change and National Gender Action Plan (2013), concerns on gender-biased actions were recognized and specific emphasis was given to ensuring effective promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster risk reduction initiatives. This understanding at policy level has been translated into the inclusion of women's representation in UDMCs. Whether they can play an effective role and practice leadership with freedom is explored through this study.

The National Alliance for Risk Reduction and Response Initiative (NARRI) Consortium of international NGOs in their Disaster Preparedness programme (DIPECHO VII), sponsored by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department, reported that there had been training and workshop sessions arranged for UDMCs along disaster management committees at district, upazilla and ward levels that addressed importance of gender inclusive action plans and activities (DIPECHO VII Quarterly 2013). While women members of the committees also participated in these sessions, the majority of the participants were male. An effective way of addressing gender issues and women's empowerment is through engaging with male community leaders where men can play a significant role in addressing gender inequalities and discrimination such as UN Women's HeForShe campaign. Nevertheless, direct engagement with women for equal participation of both genders in addressing disasters and reducing risks is particularly important to ensure active engagement of women in decision-making and leadership.

1.3

Context for the study: structure of a UDMC

Standing Order on Disaster (SOD) was first published in 1997 and was later revised in 2010; it details the roles and responsibilities of committees, ministries, departments, and other organizations involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency response management. It establishes the necessary actions required for successful implementation of Bangladesh's Disaster Management Model. The standing orders aim to give clarity to stakeholders of their duties and responsibilities regarding disaster management at all levels, and how their objectives can be met.

All ministries, divisions, departments, and agencies are required to prepare their own action plans in response to their responsibilities under the standing orders for efficient implementation. At the most local level of government, the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) should be established in unions to carry out disaster risk reduction and disaster management activities .

As per the revised SOD, a UDMC consists of 36 members, headed by the Union Parishad Chairman. The chairperson of the committee can co-opt a maximum of three additional members and form groups and sub-groups considering the local situation and special circumstances. The Chairman of the Union, members of the Union Parishad, teacher representative, government official, or non-government organization's personnel can be either men or women, and are mandated to participate in the UDMC. A Union Disaster Management Committee's meeting calendar is designed thus:

- During normal time, the committee will meet once a month.
- During warning phase and pre-disaster period, the committee shall meet more than once a week.
- During the disaster period, the committee shall meet as and when needed, at least once in a week.
- During the recovery phase, the committee will meet once a week.

The UDMC is entrusted with disaster risk reduction, emergency response and long-term recovery activities in their communities. The membership of a UDMC committee is outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Structure of a Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC)

Source: Department of Disaster Management, 2013

(i) Union Parishad Chairman 1 Chairperson
(ii) Members of the Union Parishad 12 Members
(iii) Teacher Representative (nominated by Chairman) 1 Member
(iv) Government officials working at Union Level (Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer, Union Health and Family Planning Centre in-charge, Union Tax Collector (Tahshildar), BRDB Field Worker, Representative of Social welfare department) 7 Members
(v) Representative of Vulnerable Women (nominated by Chairman) 1 Member
(vi) Representative fo the Cyclone Preparedness Program (in appropriate case) 1 Member
(vii) Representative of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (in appropriate case) 1 Member
(viii) Representatives of NGOs (one representative each from each local, national and international NGOs nominated by the Chairman) 3 Members
(ix) Representative of the Peasant and Fisherman Society (If no society, person will be nominated by Chairman) 2 Members
(x) Socially Reputed Persons or Civil Society Representatives (Nominated by the Chairman) 2 Members
(xi) Representative of Freedom Fighter (Nominated by Upazila Freedom Fighters Command Council) 1 Member
(xii) Imam/Priest/Other religious leader (Nominated by Chairman) 2 Members
(xiii) Representativie of Ansar and Village Defense Party (VDP) (Nominated by Upazila Ansar VDP Officer) 1 Member
(xiv) Secretary, Union Parishad 1 Member Secretary

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted by collecting both primary and secondary data to answer the research questions. Primary data and field observations have been collected from the targeted participants through in-depth interviews. The secondary data has been collected through literature reviews and document analysis to enrich the research.

2.1

Data collection

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVIEW CHECKLIST: The checklists for in-depth interviews have been developed based on the key research questions (see Annex 1). The checklists contain open-ended questions to capture detailed information from the interviewees and are intended to assist the enumerator to cover the main issues, while still allowing the interviewees ample space to discuss the issues they felt were most important. The enumerators were trained to allow the respondents to talk deeply on issues without feeling influenced. Along with the field notes and observations, all interviews were recorded with permission of the interviewees to assist in writing the report. The interview checklist is the primary data source for this research and designed as a common qualitative method of data collection.

GUIDELINES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND TRAINING THE FIELD TEAMS: Guidelines were formulated for the field teams to enable them to efficiently and successfully capture the data required for the study. The guidelines included rapport-building tips, processes of in-depth interviews, ethical issues in the field (for example, obtaining consent for interviews, photos and recordings), and procedures of field report preparation.

A one-day training was organized for the field teams at BCAS before departing for the field. The objectives of the study, approach and methodology, especially the interview checklists and guidelines, were discussed in detail. The training also included role plays for developing confidence and understanding of the field staff.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH UDMC MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES: For consultation with each UDMC member, a field research team consisting of three researchers conducted each field visit (two men, and one woman). One person was responsible for facilitating the interview and the other person took notes. Note takers also tried to capture interesting and relevant comments along with statements with quotation marks. In each union, the following interviews were conducted:

1 key informant interview with the UDMC chairman (1 out of 20 was a female)

1 key informant interview with a government UDMC representative (2 out of 20 officials were female)

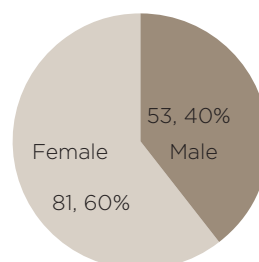
1 key informant interview with non-government organization (NGO) or civil society organization (CSO) who is also a UDMC representative (3 out of 20 personnel were female)

3 in-depth interviews with female Union Parisad and UDMC members

1 in-depth interview with 'vulnerable' female member of UDMC

The in-depth interviews with both female and male respondents brought forth issues concerning the levels of women's participation and understanding in UDMC.

FIGURE 1
UDMC members interviewed



The responses were compared to gather knowledge and generate sex-disaggregated data on issues and perceptions regarding women’s participation in the committee, as well as the levels of understanding on gendered issues of disaster risk reduction.

The male to female ratio of interviews is 40:60. Each team sent to the field comprised at least one female member who also participated in conducting the interviews with the four female members of the UDMCs. The interviews were conducted in locations convenient for the interviewees, and where they felt comfortable to talk. The following table shows the number of interviews conducted in different locations.

TABLE 2
Research areas, number of UDMC members interviewed

Eco-zone	District	Upazilla	Union	Male Interviews	Female Interviews	Total Interviews
Drought	Chapainawabganj	Nachole	Nachole & Fotepur	6	8	14
Drought	Natore	Singra	Kalam & Chaugram	4	10	14
Flood	Sirajgani	Kazipur	Shovogacha & Majj Bari	6	8	14
Flood	Shariatpur	Bhederganj	Arosh Nagar & Char Kumaria	5	6	11
Flood	Sunamgonj	Jamalganj	Baily & Phenarbag	5	9	14
Coastal	Khulna	Koyra	Uttar Bedkashi & Maharjpur	6	7	13
Coastal	Shatkhira	Shaymnagar	Munshigonj Gabura	5	9	14
Coastal	Bagerhat	Mongla	Chandpai & Chila	4	10	14
Coastal	Cox’s Bazar	Teknaf	Sabrang & Teknaf Sadar	6	8	14
Coastal	Patuakhali	Kalapara	Lata Chapli & Dhulishar	6	6	12
	10 Districts	10 Upazilla	20 Union Parishads	53	81	134

2.2

Data analysis

Although the study originally targeted 140 respondents, due to the unavailability of some of the respondents during field visits, 134 interviews were conducted. The study teams were able to interview 81 women and 53 men from UDMCs in the study areas (Fig 1). Six female UDMC members were unavailable for interviews during the field visits.

The interviews have been analyzed for both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative responses on women's participation and understanding in the UDMCs and disaster risk reduction generally, are presented in the section discussing the key findings of the research. A qualitative analysis was also conducted. Referring to the Denzin and Lincoln Handbook of Qualitative Research (2011), in this study, the researchers' observations and interpretations of the findings from field study are also included in the analysis. These reflections are supplemented with the knowledge and understanding of the researchers on the power relations and dynamics that are historically established in the societal, economic, and political system in Bangladesh.

During the analysis, participants' answers were analysed according to direct questions and percentages were calculated. This was done for the different categories of participants from the different areas of the study. This form of analysis for a qualitative study does not attempt to hold significant statistical strength.

In-house discussion with the team members, including a statistician, was held to translate the gathered data from the field in to research findings. The responses from direct and short questions were coded to generate quantitative findings and presented through graphs and charts. A comparative analysis was conducted to grasp similar and varied responses from all respondents to understand their perception and understanding of gender issues in disaster risk reduction process and their roles in UDMC. Patterns of the answers were also analyzed and inferences were made, keeping in mind some of the other factors such as disaster types, impacts, intensities and frequencies.



UDMC member speaks in a UDMC Meeting

KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Increasing climatic variability and disasters have impacted Bangladesh immensely, but it is particularly influential in coastal areas, flood plains and drought-prone zones. The study team for this research visited some of the most-affected villages in 10 districts across these three eco-zones. The team met with local public representatives, the Chairman, NGO and civil society representatives, government officials performing disaster management committee duties, vulnerable women representatives, and other relevant members of the UDMCs. The primary findings from this research identifies the key perceptions, understanding and knowledge of the UDMC members, the impacts of climatic disasters on women; women's socio-economic situation and how these are influencing their disaster risk reduction processes; the importance of gender-inclusive membership and participation in UDMCs, benefits of the activities presented by UDMCs from gender balanced perspective, and the roles, responsibilities and leadership of women in UDMCs. This chapter firstly presents the knowledge and perception of the women members, and secondly analyzes the knowledge and perception of female members of the UDMCs.

3.1

Knowledge and perception of women UDMC members

Women's socio-economic position, perception of their capability, gender biases, and cultural and religious influences limit opportunities for women to contribute to field-based activities, hardship duties, financial management and decision making processes in disaster risk reduction. Women's roles are often limited to household work, cooking, and managing clean water, and taking care of children and elderly members of the family. Male family members rarely play a role in supporting women in this work. Women who want to contribute in labour-intensive work, for example, development of infrastructure, may be denied the opportunity because of gender bias. Women in Bangladesh from all walks of life face these challenges of gender perceptions and discrimination. The situation in vulnerable communities in remote locations of the country is more acute where women's lives can be jeopardized because of lack to access to information and other resources required to address disaster risks. While the Government of Bangladesh and non-government organizations have helped change perceptions, and policies have been developed to ensure gender inclusive disaster management activities, more work needs to be done to ensure women are empowered in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, management, and relief.

3.1.1

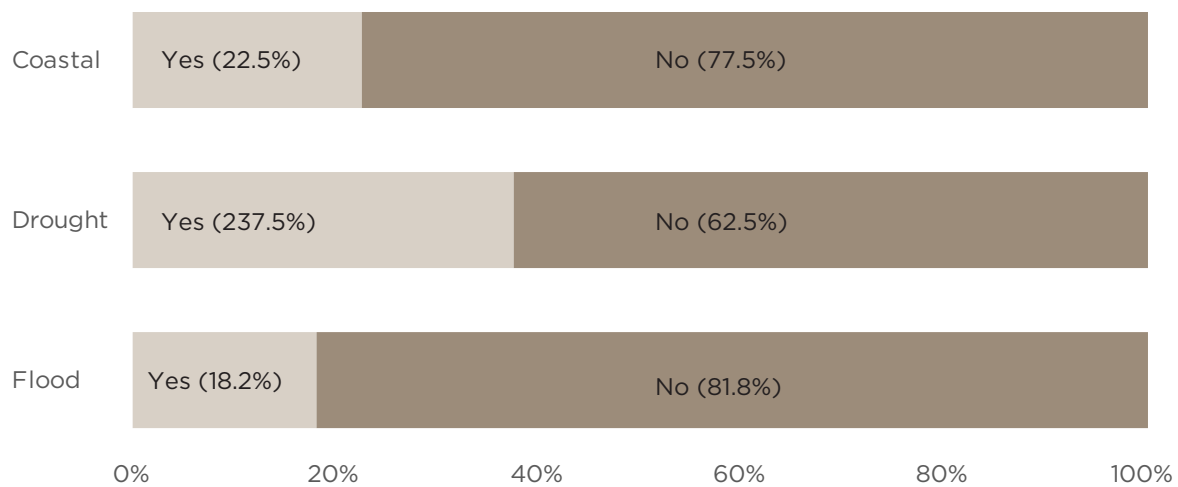
Impacts of climatic disasters on women

Women are more affected by climatic disasters than men in all three eco-zones. Disasters can affect their health, access to safe water and sanitation, socio-economic wellbeing, shelters, and increase their family and household responsibilities. Figure 2 shows that of the women respondents, a majority think men and women are not similarly affected by the impacts of climatic disasters in all three eco-zones. Nearly 82 percent of female respondents in flood-prone unions and nearly 78 percent in coastal unions expressed that women are impacted differently. In drought-prone zones, nearly 63 percent think they are more affected by climatic disasters than men in their areas.

The study found women and adolescent girls in coastal and flood-prone areas face additional challenges in accessing clean water and sanitation during and after disasters. Lack of access to water and sanitation can lead to long-term health issues for women, including affecting their reproductive and sexual health. These issues have been noted in previous studies (Rahman, S. 2013; Alston 2015). Pregnant and elderly women suffer significantly more due to additional limitations in their mobility and health. Female respondents who identified that male members of their communities are affected differently, based their response on their perceptions of men’s influence, and socio-economic safety as they felt, for example, destruction of crops or being unemployed, may affect men more than women.

FIGURE 2
Are both men and women similarly affected by climatic disasters?

Female respondents only



This is reflected in Meherunnisa’s perspective. She is from the drought-prone Chaugram union in Natore district. She believes the “impacts are more on men as droughts destroy crops that affects primary income sources for farmers. They have to find other means of work to support their families which can create a huge burden for them in times of disaster”. However, women’s socio-economic security is also affected. Many poor women in Bangladesh are dependent on men in their families for financial support, food security, social security, and shelter. Other studies show that female-headed households, in absence of men, are more vulnerable to food insecurity and adequate income generation (Climate Change Cell 2008; Mallick and Rafi 2009; Chars Livelihood Programme 2011).

While it appears that women UDMC members have knowledge of climate change, disasters and related impacts on lives and livelihoods, they are not fully aware of women’s increased risks and vulnerability which are associated with gender stereotyped roles and responsibilities. This lack of awareness affects their perception on climatic disasters’ impacts on women.

For instance, Najma Parveen, a female UDMC member in the Gabura union, of Shamnagar upazilla, in the coastal Shatkhira district, expressed that women are more affected by disasters. “Women cannot run very fast, and more often than not, most women have children to take along with them. In times of disasters these factors cause more female fatalities than men. On the other hand, men, who do not have these hindrances are only impacted financially because their businesses shut down, or their crops are destroyed.”

Another female UDMC member, Rabeya Begum in the Chadpai union in Bagerhat, a coastal district, made a similar comment, emphasizing that it is the physical aspect of women, the traditional clothes that women wear, and the fact that most have children to care for are what render them more vulnerable to disaster impacts.

Mina Khatun, a UDMC member from the Maijbari union in flood-prone Sirajganj district, identified women take responsibility for household asset management. “Women face challenges to move all the furniture in the house when flood waters enter. They have the most problem with communication because of the situations that floods create, and their latrines are inundated with water, and they cannot use them. Collecting water also becomes a huge problem.” She felt, “Men have different problems. Their crops get ruined, and sometimes they have to move from place to place to find work.”

The impacts from climate change and disasters on women residing in drought-prone regions are quite different as flood-prone and coastal zones have impacts associated with inundation of unsafe water, drought areas, have affects associated with severe scarcity of water.

Srimat Taposhi Rani Ghosh, a UDMC member representing vulnerable women, from the Chaugram union in drought-prone Natore explained: “Our biggest problem in this area is the lack of water for domestic and sanitation purposes during droughts. The women have to walk long distances to collect the water. This is almost never done by men, and the women have to bear the burden of travelling and standing for long durations in the sun to fetch water for their homes.”



Mozammel Hoaque, Chairman, Charkumariya, Shariatpur

Memjan Khatun, a UDMC member from the Fotepurunion of the drought-prone Chapainawabganj district, shared a different perspective. She reasoned that, “If women are not getting enough water for cooking, then men are also not getting enough water for their crops. They both have to travel long distances to get water. If houses are damaged in storms, then men and women both work to fix it.” This understanding reflects the importance of ensuring both men and women in vulnerable communities receive adequate support to overcome the impacts of disasters and build resilience in their families and communities together. Financial hardship and livelihood generation is much more serious for women than men in disaster prone

locations in Bangladesh. Access to aid assistance, communication and transportation services, social networks, education and information, economic security, and social security, along with established unequal power relations between men and women in a patriarchal system where gender stereotype perceptions persist affect women disproportionately in disaster affected locations (Rahman, S. 2013; Alston 2015). Shikha Rani Mistri, a female member of the Chila Union UDMC in Bagerhat explained, “Women do not want to leave their houses and belongings behind during disasters. Even if they are warned of oncoming danger, they do not leave their houses.” Sufia Begum, from the Arosh Nagar Union UDMC in Shariatpur identified that a lack of financial resources often influences women’s decisions during disaster. As many women do not earn an income, they do not want to leave their homes in fear of losing their possessions - some of their only assets. “Their husbands are usually out, or migrate to other places for work, and disasters can worsen the situation for these women,” she observed.

3.1.2

Importance of women’s inclusion in UDMC activities

Understanding the need to be included to address challenges is a stepping stone for advancement and empowerment of women in Bangladeshi society. From this research, it was found that nearly all female respondents expressed that it is important for women to be a part of UDMC activities. Sakina Kabir, a female UDMC member of the coastal Maharajpur union in Khulna said that one of the most important reasons to include women in UDMC activities is because women need to be made more aware and actively involved in social roles to raise awareness among others in their communities. She stated that, “If they can do this properly, women of the community who do not want to leave their houses and belongings behind during disasters can also be made aware that life comes first, and property can be recovered after the disaster.”



Women’s focus group in Khulna.

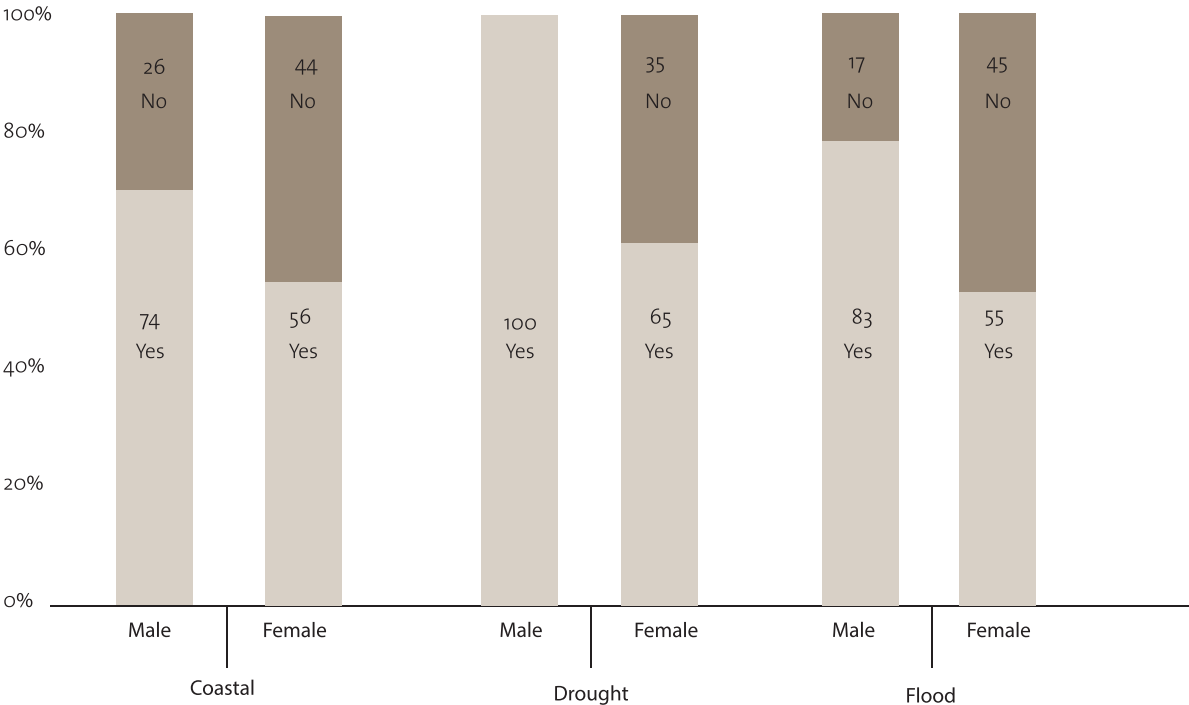
Mina Khatun of flood-prone Sirajganj also noted that, “Women can learn a lot if we are exposed to such official activities and then we can spread the knowledge amongst other women of our community.” Ambia Khatun from the Shubhogacha union said that not only can women spread knowledge amongst other women in their community, they can also bring the problems that these women are facing and present these issues to UDMC meetings for resolution and planning purposes. This message was backed up by Diba Rani Talukdar from the Phenarbagh union in flood prone Sunamganj: “Men cannot do this job, because most women do not want to talk to men about their problems, especially the sensitive ones.” In a conservative society, women feel safer sharing their personal issues, including concerns regarding their health, hygiene, and reproductive systems, with other women. In this regard, women members playing an active role in UDMCs can assist other women in their unions to share their issues and concerns without hesitation.

3.1.3

Benefits of men and women from UDMC activities

Figure 3 indicates that while 100 percent of male respondents from drought-prone unions, 80 percent in flood affected unions and 70 percent in coastal unions felt women and men equally benefit from UDMC activities, fewer women supported this notion. Only 55 percent of women in both flood-affected and coastal unions as well as only a little more than 60 percent of women in drought prone unions felt women and men equally benefit from UDMC activities. This shows a strong inconsistency on the level of understanding about how much UDMCs are equally responsive in addressing men and women’s needs in disasters-prone areas. If disaster risk reduction activities and plans are not benefitting women comprehensively and equally, and such a large group of women are feeling that they are not benefitting enough, revisiting the ways activities are planned and implemented is needed to make UDMCs activities inclusive of both men and women to maximize disaster risk reduction processes.

FIGURE 3
Do men and women equally benefit from UDMC activities?



Nadira Parvin, a female UDMC member of the Maharajpur union in coastal Khulna said the disaster risk reduction plan in her UDMC pays very little attention to women's issues separately. "Women have different risks than men. Most women do not want to leave their homes during disasters because they fear losing everything, and so the approach towards risk reduction plans for them have to be different as well."

Khaleda Begum from the coastal Teknaf Sadar union felt positive about UDMC's activities in her area as she believed that women benefit greatly. "Women and children are taken to the cyclone shelter before men, and they are given top priority during disasters." Foyzunnahar, a UDMC member from the Phenarbagh union as well as Salma Khatun from the Majbari union of flood-affected Sunamganj district also reflected similar thoughts. According to Salma Khatun, "Women, especially pregnant women and the elderly, get priority during disasters. Furthermore, women receive a lot of training like knowledge on storing dry food, portable stoves, and medicine." She added that the activities of the UDMC in her area always ensure the safety and security of women and children first during disaster periods. Ayesha Begum from the same UDMC noted that the government had taken a lot of steps to reduce the vulnerability of women and the activities of the UDMC reflected this.

Yet in the Maharajpur Union of Khulna, Rashida Begum said that as women are busy with housework and do not have enough time to come to UDMC meetings or attend workshops, they usually lag behind in awareness of the disaster risk reduction process. A female UDMC member, Farida Parvin from the Gabura union in Shatkhira stated that she was never asked to take part in such female-centric activities in UDMC, and she feels that such activities do not benefit women, especially during disaster periods when it is very hard for women to take part in such activities.

It is also assumed that if a family is included in an activity, this will automatically benefit both men and women equally in that family. However, this perception is problematic since contemporary studies have identified gender-based discrimination exists within families and if gender neutrality is not equally and effectively demonstrated, equal benefits cannot be provided in family-based activities (Neumayer and Plumper 2007; Rahman, S. 2013).

Noorjahan Khanom from the Latachapli union in coastal Patuakhali district stated that during disasters men usually receive food first in the shelters. Due to religious barriers, women in her area cannot or do not go to shelters as they should, and this limits the benefits they receive from UDMC activities. This discriminatory issue was also previously noted in several research findings where religious and cultural barriers, as well as the prioritization of men during relief distribution means women suffer even more (Mallick and Rafi 2009).

Women in rural areas of the country have many family responsibilities, including looking after their family, and livestock at home. When early warnings are issued, most remain unaware. By the time they are informed, it may be too late for them to reach shelter or safe ground, but staying in their own houses increases women's chances of being impacted by a natural disaster. All women respondents said that it is crucial that early warning systems are also directed towards women. UDMC female members can take on this role to inform others in their community. The majority of the UDMC leaders, who are mostly men, also supported this idea.

All respondents also agreed that the UDMC disaster risk reduction plan needed to have a special section for pregnant women and disabled people. "Pregnant women need special attention, especially in droughts and during the winter," said Eeti Rani from Chaugram in Natore district. Pregnant women's mobility in flood-prone and coastal locations is affected drastically during disasters, and special warnings and evacuation methods are needed for them to ensure safety and security of these women.

3.1.4

Roles, responsibilities and leadership of female UDMC members

Though a number of initiatives have been taken by both government and non-government organizations to design and implement gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction processes, establishing gender-unbiased roles, this has not been implemented yet in the vulnerable locations. This research study found the patriarchal system continues to dominate in various sectors, including distribution of roles, responsibilities and leadership in disaster risk reduction activities.

Mainstreaming gender-inclusive disaster risk reduction has helped reduce women and girls mortality and risks in the last few years, but the responsibilities assigned to women to address the risks are predominantly based on gender-segregated roles. For instance, women are expected to be the primary care giver of children and elderly members of the family, manage drinking water, and cook meals. These roles are similarly expected during disaster. In addition, many women have limited or no access to financial resources and rely on men in their families. This situation also persists in preparation for disaster in the UDMCs where a number of women pointed out that financial loss and employment are primarily associated with men.

Parul Begum from the extremely drought-prone Nachole union of Chapainawabganj expressed that women particularly face problems with cooking. "During disasters like storms and droughts, women find it very hard to cook. Water is scarce during droughts, and not enough for all cooking purposes. With all these problems on them, women have to suffer further because they are also responsible for looking after children and the elderly at home".

Studies previously identified that women, particularly, female-headed households (where men are not alive, away for work, separated, or divorced), are extremely vulnerable due to patriarchal system during post-disaster conditions as their already endangered socio-economic security in pre-disaster time further degrades them. From this situation, they continue to suffer from long-term financial insecurity and unending poverty, food insecurity, social stigma and insecurity, unemployment, shelter, and are deprived from basic needs such as early-warning during disaster time as well as receiving relief after a disaster (Chars Livelihood Programme 2011; Rahman 2013; Alston 2015). These issues were reflected through interviews with the female UDMC members. Although UDMCs are set up to have gender-inclusive roles and responsibilities, in reality this not implemented due to lack of leadership opportunities for female members available in the committees.

A number of women in coastal unions believe that in order to be able to lead the way for women in their communities, female members of UDMCs need to make themselves aware of the situations under disaster conditions first. Umme Aimon Moli from the Teknaf union said that, "awareness is vital for women to be able to be ready for disaster situations. If necessary they have to keep food, water and medicine stored beforehand. During disasters they have to be on the field, guiding women to the shelters and while in the shelters, they are responsible for serving the women there with food, medicine and other requirements."

Women members were also asked what kinds of responsibilities they thought women could and should carry out in the UDMC activities before, during, and after disasters. Salma Khatun from the Maijbari Union UDMC in Sirajganj said, "Women have to be made more aware of what they need to do during all these times. Before a disaster a woman can do many things to ensure that during a disaster she and her family can be safe. These include keeping the shelter's phone number, preparing stocks of food and medicine beforehand, and knowing where to go immediately after a warning has been issued." Taslima Begum from the Char Kumaria Union UDMC said one of the most important things that women need to be taught is how to raise their houses, so that flood waters do not get in. Her response identified a need for women to be trained on technical aspects of protecting their homes during floods.

Foyzunnahar from the Phenarbagh UDMC stated that discussion was the biggest responsibility of the UDMC female members. "They have to be very active, especially in going region to region in their wards and discussing with groups of women about the do's and don'ts of disasters. Discussing and talking are the only ways that women in the community can be made aware."

When talking about the responsibilities of women members during disasters, 75 percent of female respondents said they thought it was the responsibility of the women to be on the field and guiding women, children and the disabled to safety. 25 percent though said they thought it was not the responsibility of women to be out on the field during a disaster, since some situations can get very dangerous. Sufia Begum from the the Arosh Nagar UDMC in Shariatpur said that since women usually wear sarees, and that most women on the UDMC committee were around 30 to 45 years old, asking them to be on the field during a disaster was a tall ask. “It would be too risky,” she stated, “and the women members would end up causing more harm than good.”

Memjan Khatun from the Fotepur UDMC said that women can go to the homes of the women in the community, “since most women do not leave their homes because of their responsibilities”, and “spread the knowledge about what to do during disasters and how to handle the aftermaths”. Ritufa Begum from the same UDMC added, “a holistic approach to development can never be made without women being involved”.

The following table showcases female UDMC members’ roles and responsibilities in UDMC’s activities in their communities. Female participants’ responses are compared with the responses received from the chairman, NGO and government personnel serving in UDMCs.

TABLE 3
Are women members involved in different roles and responsibilities of UDMC?

Roles & Responsibilities	Female UDMC Member (74)	Chairman (20)	NGO (20)	Government (20)
Percentage “Yes”				
Rescue measures	64	65	65	84
Relief collection	44	55	60	58
Relief distribution	61	80	75	89
Rehabilitation	47	75	60	79
Disaster risk reduction plan	59	75	75	63
Improving awareness of people, volunteers and relevant stakeholders on coping measures to reduce risks	69	75	70	79
Ensuring security for women, children and disabled during disasters	48	65	65	58
Post-disaster damage assesment	47	60	55	58



From the table 3 , female UDMC members' responses are very different from UDMC chairmen as well as members from NGO and government officials. The highest number - 69 per cent of female members - said that they contribute in improving awareness among various stakeholders including community members and other volunteers, closer to the estimation from chairmen, government and non-government personnel involved in the UDMC. However, in all other sectors, the gap in agreements on the roles and responsibilities that women play in the committee is significantly different. For example, while only 61 per cent women mentioned that they play a role in distributing relief after disasters, at least 80 per cent of Chairmen and 89 per cent of government officials said that women are involved in this process. Also, only 44 per cent of female members said they play a role or have a responsibility in relief collection processes. This shows clear difference between men and women's perception on the roles women are actually playing as UDMC members. It can be deduced that this discrepancy contributes in developing a perception on whether there is any need in UDMCs to empower female members further in playing more active roles and increasing their responsibilities in delivering support to their communities. It is also possible that women are likely less active in these tasks delivery listed in Table 3 as the leadership and more responsibilities are assigned to men.

About 60 per cent of the women from coastal unions mentioned that they are not encouraged by their male counterparts to get involved in activities that will ensure security for women, children and the disabled during the disaster period, or damage assessment during and post disaster period. The majority of the women respondents from the coastal zone thought it was important for women to participate in activities such as disaster risk reduction planning, awareness raising, helping and aiding women, children and the disabled and finally in damage assessment activities after disasters.

Minara Begum from the Latachapli Union UDMC said she thinks that women can participate in awareness-raising programmes such as showing videos, arranging short dramas, and cultural functions around the community, regarding disasters and what to do when it occurs. Umme Aimon Moli from the Teknaf Sadar Union said that one thing women members must ensure is that all women of the community are preparing for disasters which can strike at any time. “If necessary, they can go from house to house to remind the women to prepare clothes, food, and water for disaster situations.”

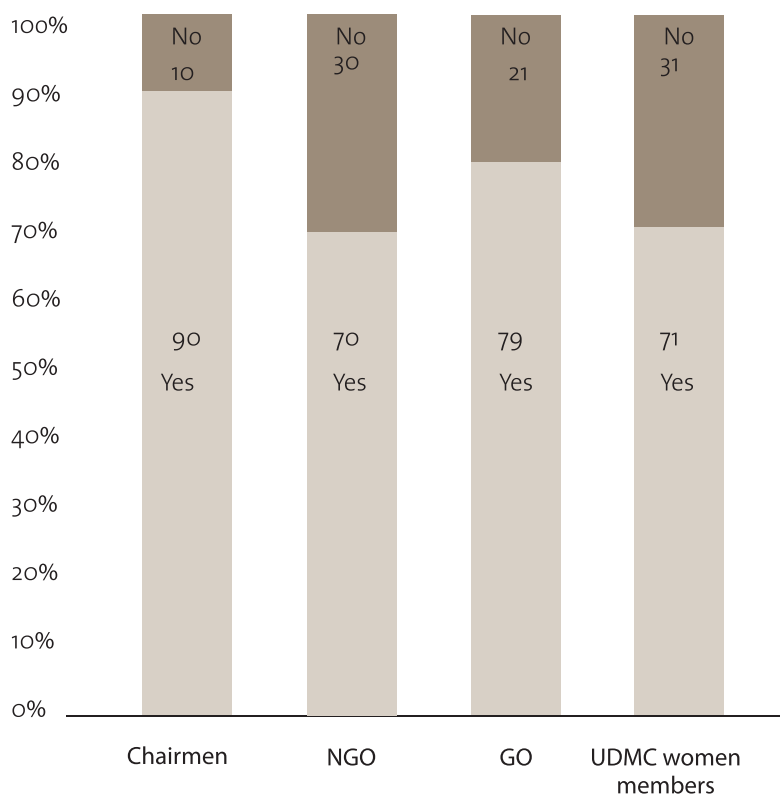
Though overall fewer women took part in relief collection process, in the flood-prone zone a different picture emerged. Eighty-two percent of women said they took part in relief collection and 77 percent volunteered in risk reduction activities. However, only 40 percent of them said that they were involved during disasters, including getting women and children to a safe location (shelters or higher grounds). Around 37 percent said that they participated in post-disaster activities such as damage assessments, while 59 percent said they took part in rehabilitation activities. Though a high number of women, 75 percent, from the flood-prone areas felt that it is the responsibility of the women to be on the field and guide women, children and the disabled to safety, the remaining 25 percent of them thought it was not the responsibility of women to be out in the field during a disaster is because sometimes situations can get very dangerous.

3.2

Participation and expression by females members

One of the most important responsibilities for the women UDMC members is to attend, participate and present issues concerning women in their communities at UDMC meetings. Without attending the meetings, they cannot convey the messages from vulnerable women about their needs and concerns. Women members can also miss opportunities to be trained or receive knowledge on certain aspects of disaster risk reduction and management if they are unable to attend the meetings.

FIGURE 4
Do women members of the UP regularly attend meetings?

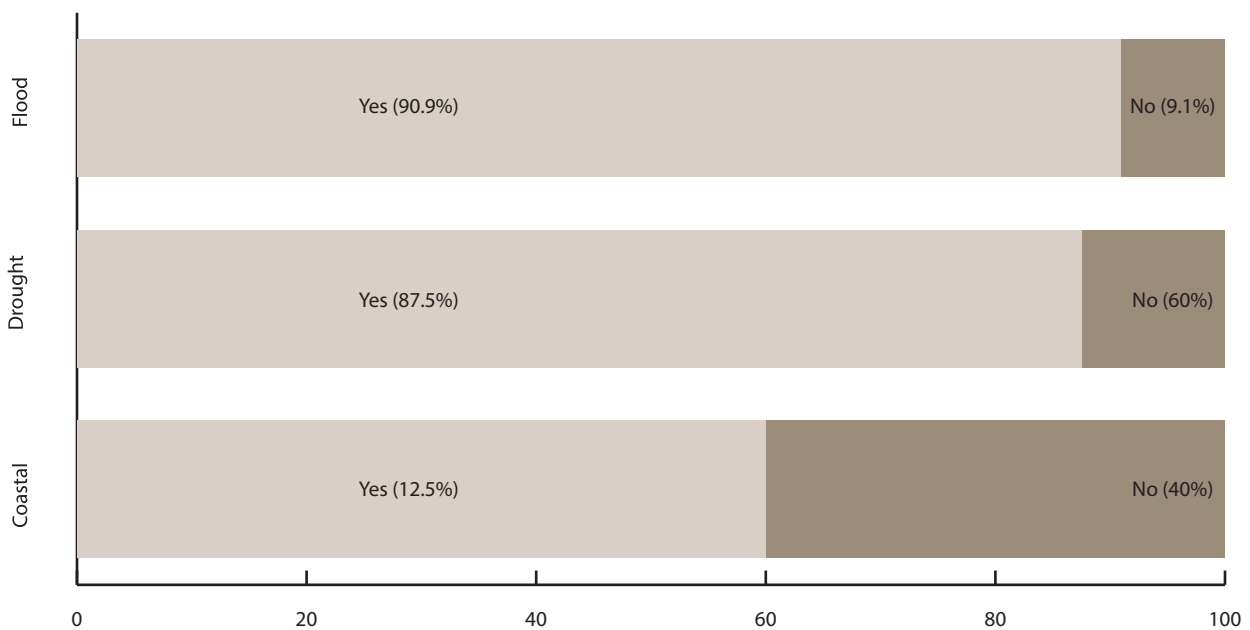


The figure (left) indicates and compares the responses female members and the chairmen of the UDMCs in terms of women's attendance in UDMC meetings. The discrepancy in their answers demonstrates lack of engagement from the leadership in the committee to seriously account for women's participation in meetings.

Out of the 29 percent of women who said they do not attend the meetings regularly, several women said that they have taught their husbands how to give their signatures and their husbands go to the UDMC meetings to give attendance in place of their wives. One member from Patuakhali district said, “Because of my responsibilities at home, I cannot go to the meetings. So I have taught my husband my signature and he goes in my place.”

Some of the female members of UDMCs feel that to increase their participation in different UDMC activities the number of female members in UDMCs has to be increased. Currently on an average the number of female members per UDMC is 4 out of total 36 members. Thus, if a ratio of female to male members of UDMC is considered, it is about 1 is to 9 (F: M=1:9) which is very low. For this reason, when it comes to decision-making, the proposals that come from female members sometimes do not get enough support from their male counterparts. This is likely due to male members inability to understand women's perspective, issues, or they may not possess gender sensitivity. Ritufa Begum from ChapaiNawabganj says that since her UDMC has only four female members out of 36, she feels that any issue she raises get little or no importance, as majority of the members are male. Her appeal is lost to majority. She says if her UDMC had more female members, this situation may change.

FIGURE 5
Do you feel that women have their opinions heard?

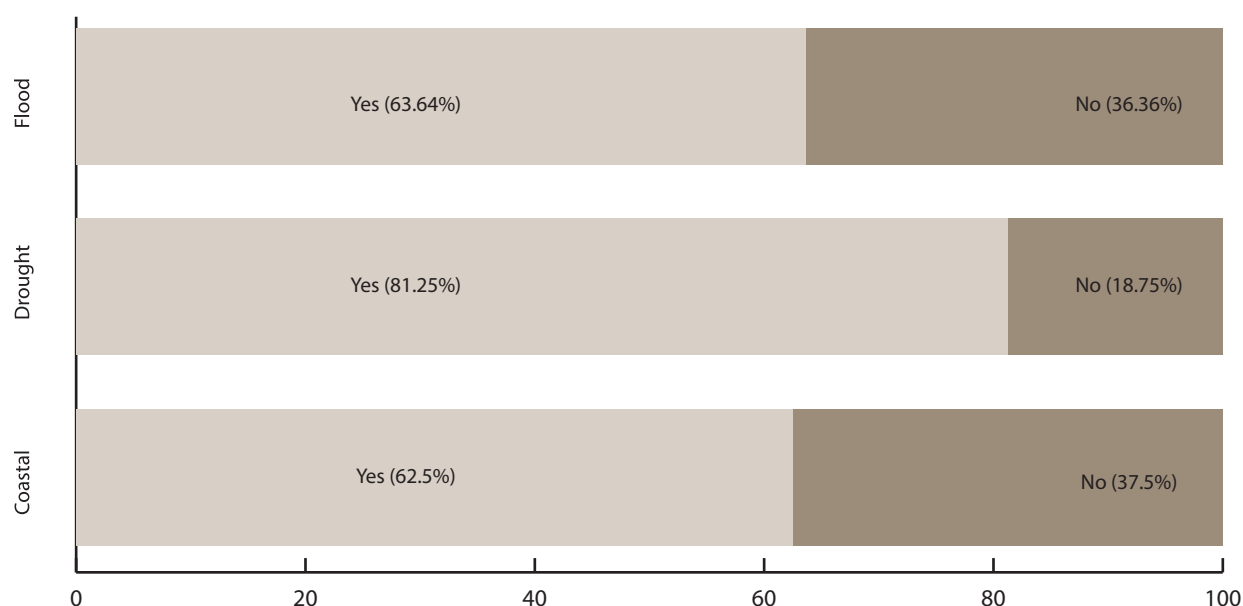


The figures above show UDMC women members' perception on whether their opinions are considered in their committees. It appears that women in coastal unions struggle more to have their opinions heard by male-dominated UDMCs as only 60 percent said that they are heard while 40 percent said that they were not. Najma Akhter from Patuakhali said that in a society run by men, it is hard to get programmes and plans to be sensitive to women and their needs. "Men do not listen to what we have to say," she stated, "and so nothing we say is ever implemented." Among the respondents in coastal area, at least 70 percent mentioned that they could raise their opinions during the meetings even though they were not given priority regarding their opinions. This reinforces earlier observations and references from other research findings where it was found that in a historically patriarchal society, women's priorities and needs are often overlooked which increases the level of vulnerability among women across communities. There were many others mostly from flood and drought-prone areas, who mentioned that they did raise their opinions and in many cases, were heard.

Minara Begum, from the Latachapli Union UDMC in coastal Patuakhali said she not only raised issues about women of the community during the meetings, but she also raised issues regarding strengthening the position of the female members in the UDMC so that their opinions were better heard and evaluated. Minara explained that issues regarding women's vulnerability and disaster risks were not given much priority in the UDMC meetings, and that she has been fighting to change this for a while.

FIGURE 6

Do women raise issues that specifically address the impacts of women?



From the figure above, it is noted that women members in drought-prone unions are more active in raising issues concerning the impacts of climatic disasters and related activities on women. While more than 81 percent of drought prone areas' women UDMC members said they raise the issues in UDMC meetings, only around 64 percent of female members rsaid they raise issues in flood-prone zones and about 63 percent of them in coastal areas.

The issues they raise are mainly related to women's vulnerability to disasters and its impacts. Ranu Akhter, a female member of the Teknaf Sadar Union UDMC in Cox's Bazaar said, "I raise issues concerning the vulnerability of women in this area. Women are not safe during disasters and I feel this is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. I have raised such issues twice during the meetings I have attended". Rashida Begum from the Maharajpur Union UDMC in Khulna said that she has raised issues regarding the sanitation problems that women face during disasters. "Sanitation becomes a big issue for women and children during disasters, and so I raise this issue whenever I can during the meetings."

Memjan Khatun said that she had raised the issue of distributing winter clothing and blankets amongst the extreme poor women of the community. "Winter gets extremely cold and bitter in these areas, and the extreme poor families suffer the most," she explained. Memjan Khàtun also raised the issue of relief tin roofs for the women and families whose houses had been damaged during violent storms. "My suggestion was taken quite well, and in response good work was done to ensure that these families could get back on their feet." Parul Begum similarly said that her suggestion of installing deep tube wells in the area was heeded strongly and was put into action.

Ritufa Khatun said she regularly raised the issue of illnesses in the community women because of the drought conditions and extreme cold during winters. Shahnaz Parvin from the Kalam UDMC said that she raised the issue of relief for the women and children whose houses had been damaged during storms recently. "Their roofs are blown away sometimes because of intensive seasonal storms, and I have raised the issue with the chairman and vice-chair for distributing tin sheets for them, otherwise they have to sleep under the open sky." Similarly Karima Begum from the Fotepur Union UDMC in Chapainawabganj said that she raised the issue of the women suffering because of damage to their crops from a recent hailstorm, and she made sure that the chairman of the UDMC arranged for small-scale loans for these women. "We also made sure that these women would be able to pay back their loans by telling them how best to invest them and get returns," she

elaborated. Taslima Begum from Charkumariya UDMC said, “I usually raise the issue of health before and after floods of women, since disease outbreaks and birth-related problems happen a lot during these times.” Parul Begum from the Nachole Union UDMC in Chapainawabganj said she had suggested a similar thing to her UDMC chairman mostly regarding deep tube wells so that water was more readily available for women.

Most of the accounts of the respondents demonstrate that women have actively put forth their suggestion in their respective UDMC and some of them have been heard and acted upon. There are some promising stories that show women who have a lot of knowledge on disaster, its impacts and what needs to be done to adapt to the changes induced by disaster are articulating it. Yet incidences were also found where some women were hesitant to put forth their opinions, let alone speak for the issues addressing women. One such incident was observed when a UDMC female member from Satkhira changed her response to provide positive feedback on her UDMC during an interview, after the chairman in her committee interfered with her original response. This observation from such a situation indicates the influence chairman of the committees have on the other members, especially on the women participants that hinders them raising their opinions authentically and freely.

3.3

Women’s awareness in attending UDMC meetings

A majority of the UDMC female members feel that awareness is key for them to participate actively and willingly in UDMC and its activities. Many women in the coastal zones believe that in order to be able to lead the way for women in the community, they need to make themselves aware of the situations under disaster conditions. Najmunnahar from the Munshiganj Union UDMC in Shatkhira says, “Women have to be regular in the meetings. In these meetings, they have to talk about disasters and what to do during them, especially about the disaster risk reduction of women in the community”.

Mina Khatun of Sirajganj stated, “Women can learn a lot if they are exposed to such official activities and can then spread the knowledge amongst the women of her community”. Ambia Khatun from the Shubhogacha Union UDMC said that not only can women spread the knowledge amongst the community women, but also they can bring the problems that these women are facing and present it to the UDMC committee for resolution and planning purposes. Kohinoor Begum from the Shuvogacha Union UDMC in Sirajganj said she thinks that the participation of women is essential or the establishment of women’s rights in the community. She stated that if women cannot come forward and be assertive about the rights that women deserve in all walks of the society, then such a thing may never happen. “They have to talk at both government and non-governmental levels,” she said.

Umme Aimon Moli of Teknaf stated, when women UDMC members are active, they can go visit houses and raise awareness among women in the community on the importance of reaching safe ground once the early warning signal is transmitted. Sakina Kabir, a female member of the Maharajpur Union UDMC in Khulna, said that due to social and religious barriers, men cannot go to individual houses and create that awareness.

3.4

Knowledge and perceptions of male UDMC members

In a patriarchal system where male membership and engagement outnumbers women’s participation in any initiative, it is important to capture not only women’s thoughts and experiences but men’s views, perceptions and understanding. They are vital to capture the levels of understanding and knowledge one has on the women’s contribution in the functioning of a committee. The research team interviewed chairmen of the unions, government and non-government personnel serving at UDMCs, a majority of whom were men. While many of them are strongly supportive of women’s engagement in UDMCs activities to reduce disaster risks and improve the conditions of women’s issues in their communities, they also reflected on the gender-sensitive roles women can play in their committees. There is a wide gap between men and women members’ knowledge and perception on the roles and responsibilities women play in their communities.

At least 87 percent of the male respondents from the coastal zones reported that UDMC meetings were taking place on a regular basis. Patuakhali was an exception. The vice-chair of the Latachapli Union UDMC, Abdur Rajjak said that the meetings were usually integrated into other meetings such as the Union Parishad meetings. “We take 20 minutes aside in that meeting to talk about disaster preparedness and other disaster related issues.” The vice-chair of the Dhulishar Union UDMC, Mizanur Rahman said the same thing. “Our meetings are held along with the Standing Committee meetings, and we mainly talk about sanitation problems.”

At least 61 percent of the male respondents in the flood-prone zones said that regular meetings took place for the UDMC. Twenty-nine percent said that meetings were either very irregular, or took place along with other meetings such as the Union Parishad meetings. Hafizur Rahman, the vice-chair from the Shuvogacha Union UDMC said that there had been only five meetings so far that were for the UDMC. No other meetings had taken place, and discussions had not been held in other meetings. Nurul Amin, the government representative of the Phenarbagh Union UDMC said that the meetings had been regular since 2014, but before that meetings had been rare. Abdus Sattar, the NGO representative of the Shuvogacha Union UDMC in Sirajganj said, “Meetings do not take place regularly, only during disasters. Sometimes we are simply asked to sign the register, without the meeting even taking place, so that everything looks good on paper.”

All chairmen of the UDMC said that in their areas, the UDMC meetings did not take place on a regular basis. Enayetullah, the chairman of the Nachole Union UDMC in Chapainawabganj said that meetings took place every four to five months, which is in conflict of the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) of 2010, which clearly states that a separate meeting has to take place for the UDMC every month. Sadir Ahmed, the chairman of the Fotepur Union UDMC in Chapainawabganj said that meetings take place only during disaster periods, when all members are called in on an emergency basis. The chairman of the Kalam Union UDMC in Natore said the same thing. Mukul Pramanik, the NGO representative of the Chaugram Union UDMC in Natore said that meetings of the UDMC were irregular and took place in the middle of other meetings, such as the Union Parishad meeting. “Issues are raised if they need to be, but no other separate meetings are held for the UDMC.” Didarul Islam, another NGO representative from the NGO Shacheton, of the Nachole Union UDMC in Chapainawabganj said the same thing.

3.4.1

The importance of women’s participation in UDMCs: men’s perspectives

The respondents were asked if they thought the participation of women was important in the UDMC activities, and 98 percent replied positively. “Women do not accept help from men,” said Munirujjaman, the chairman of the Maharajpur Union UDMC in Khulna, “and so it is important that the help they require is provided by trained and learned women. Having such women in the UDMC is vital in maintaining a balanced disaster management system in the Union.”

This was also reflected in the words of Tarikul Islam, the chairman of the Chadpai Union UDMC in Bagerhat who added that women are the ones who can go into houses where other women live, which men cannot do, and make them aware of what to do during disasters. “Lives are now being saved,” he stated, “but because most of the women in the society were previously unaware, lives have been lost”.

The government representative of the Chadpai Union, Gazi Nazmul Haque said that in his experience, many women did not want to leave their possessions behind in times of disaster. “This is tragic, and many lives have been lost in this way. But women in the UDMC can go to these women and persuade them to come to shelters.” He also mentioned the spread of knowledge in the community because of women’s involvement in the UDMC.

In Teknaf, the Chairman of the Sabrang Union UDMC said that women were the most affected during disasters, and so paying attention to their needs was vital. He said that women in the UDMC this brings in the dynamics to the society, and he now feels that the problems of women in the society, regarding disasters, are being addressed.

Jillur Rahman, the government representative of the Gabura UDMC in Shatkhira said that women are neglected in society. “Although they have become more aware now, most of what they have to say is not taken notice of, as much as it should be. They have to be trained in order to make them understand and more aware of how to come forth with their suggestions and make themselves heard.”

When asked if female participation in the UDMC was important though, all respondents answered positively. Abdus Sattar said that their participation was mandatory. “If we are to empower women, then they have to participate, there is no other way,” he explained. “They must do the work that is not possible to do by men, like knowing the intricate problems of women in the society during disasters.”

Nurul Amin said that since women were half the population, they needed to assist in the work that the UDMC has to do. Shakhawat Hossain, the NGO representative of the Arosh Nagar UDMC in Shariatpur said, “When women fall into bad situations, especially during floods, the women members have to be there to help them out. This cannot be done by men, and so their participation is of vital importance in the UDMC.”

Talukdar Jahangir Alam, the chairman of the Majibari UDMC in Sirajganj said that if Bangladesh is to reach the Global Goals, then it is vital that women participate in achieving that goal. “We must aim to reduce infant mortality and increase safe motherhood, and women are a fundamental part in reaching these goals.” Sirajul Haque, the chairman of the Baily Union UDMC in Sunamganj echoed his thoughts, saying, “We need their help in order to keep the community safe and happy.”

The vice-chair and NGO representative of the Char Kumaria UDMC in Shariatpur both said that women are more aware of rights, and so, if women are not present in the UDMC committee, there will be no one to uphold the rights of women in the community. “Women are more familiar with the domestic scenario, and know what other women need, especially during disasters,” said Sabbir Ahmed the NGO representative. Besides this, everyone mentioned that it was important for women to become more aware, and thus their participation in the UDMC would ensure that.

When asked whether female members were given importance in the UDMC meetings and whether their suggestions were heeded, 95 percent said they were. Talukdar Jahangir Alam said that women were given priority in all aspects of the UDMC, including meetings and their suggestions. “I believe that women work more during disaster periods, and thus their suggestions are of the utmost importance.” Sabbir Ahmed said that whenever meetings took place, the women were listened to carefully, and time was allotted for them separately to give their suggestions and opinions.

Shakhawat Hossain said, “A lot of work has been done for the women in our area, and we are quite advanced in this regard. Thus the women in our area have gained importance, and their suggestions are definitely of importance.” Mozammel Haque, the chairman of the Char Kumaria UDMC in Shariatpur said, “Women are the least prioritized section of our community. So it is important that they are given the opportunity to raise their voice. In our UDMC we encourage the members to speak up and express their opinions.”

Eighty nine percent of the male respondents thought it was vital for women to be a part of the UDMC. Sadir Alam from Fotepur said, “Women are more aware about disasters than men.” He iterated that women were also very aware of their rights and so, to aid in the empowerment of women, they have to be an intricate part of the UDMC ongoing.

Mainul Islam Chunu, the chairman of the Kalam Union UDMC said that women need to know about disasters and climate change just as much as men do. “They also need to know about all the things that need to be done during disasters so that they can aid in making the whole community aware, especially regarding water shortages during droughts.” Enayetullah from Nachole added to this by saying that half the population of the country is female, and so their workforce is of great importance to all activities for the welfare of the people.

3.4.2

Male member perceptions on the roles, responsibilities and leadership of women in UDMC

The chairman of the Gabura Union UDMC in Satkhira stated that women need to be the leaders of women in the society, and in doing so, the leadership qualities of women will increase. “We also need women to be a part of the UDMC since they are the ones who need to take care of pregnant women, children and old people during disasters. These women need to be made aware of their responsibilities and their roles in society.” This perception is associated with earlier observations on gender biasness.

Mizanur Rahman, in Patuakhali, who is the NGO representative of the Dhulishar Union UDMC said that for the empowerment of women, it is vital to put them in leadership roles. “This way, not only will the members be empowered, but other women can take their example and follow in their footsteps.” He elaborated with an example where a female member of his UDMC suggested a rally procession to raise awareness about what to do during a cyclone. “The suggestion was taken and the rally was very successful.” Similarly, Akhil Chandra Dhali, the government representative from the Maharajpur UDMC in Khulna said that women in his UDMC were active and suggested interesting ideas. “One member suggested having only women FGDs in the area, and we liked the idea very much. The idea has been put into motion already,” he elaborated.

Tarikul Islam mentioned that a woman from his UDMC suggested raising houses in the area because most of the houses were low. “When the tide comes in, some houses have started to become inundated, and storm surges can cause even more damage,” he said. “So we actioned the idea and it has been successful.” An NGO named Karitar aided in the process. Gazi Nazmul Haque mentioned the sanitation situation in some of the cyclone shelters is being improved in his area, after a female member brought the issue up in a meeting. This is also occurring in the Gabura UDMC in Satkhira, noted Masudul Alam. Mizanur Rahman said that the opinions of women were given good priority in the UDMC meetings. “They are given opportunities to speak, and their suggestions are heeded well.”

Eighty nine percent of the respondents said that women were in regular attendance in the meetings, and 87percent said that women usually raised issues. Women usually raised issues about early warnings for floods, special attention (including medical care) for pregnant women, more raised ground for women to take their cattle to during floods, increased and easier loans for women and building separate shelters for women for disaster periods.

“What is required,” said Mozammel Haque, “is more training for the women in the UDMC.” All male respondents from the flood prone zones believed that this particular step was vital to improve female participation and performance in the UDMC. “Since they are the ones who work with women in the community,” said Talukdar Jahangir, “they must be trained up properly in order to be able to deal with all kinds of situations.” Hafizur Rahman said that since women are the only ones that can aid in helping the women of the community, “especially regarding pregnancy and child related issues,” they have to be given special training on these sorts of things.”

In response to the question of whether female members were regular in their attendance of the meetings of the UDMC, the unanimous answer was ‘no’ in drought-prone locations. Most of the chairmen explained that women had a lot of responsibilities at home, and were not always available to come to the meetings.

“They sometimes send their husbands to sign their names for the meetings, but they do not come on a regular basis,” said Sadir Ahmed. This discrepancy was heard from a lot of the UDMCs, where women sometimes sent their husbands to sign their names and collect any paperwork that was required, under the excuse that they had to stay at home for domestic purposes. “This does not always happen,” said Mainul Islam, “but sometimes it is an issue, especially when disasters are not occurring, and the meetings are irregular and sudden.”

Abdus Sobhan was asked if he thought that women were given priority in the UDMC and if their suggestions were heeded, and in reply he said that they were not. He believes that there need to be more female members in the UDMC, and only then will their opinions be heard. Mainul Islam Chunu said on the contrary, that women were given priority in his UDMC, with their suggestions being put into action if they were plausible.

3.5

Suggestions from the women members on how to increase their capacity for more participation in UDMC activities

The female members of the UDMCs, who were interviewed were asked what they thought needed to be done in order to ensure that they can participate more and increase their awareness and perceptions on their roles and responsibilities as female UDMC members. The following table presents some of the most significant suggestions given by the members in response to this:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the most significant suggestions by female members:

- Awareness and knowledge buildup are vital to the development of women in the UDMC. More training and awareness programmes need to be targeted to them including:
 - Leadership and communication skills training
 - Training on creative strategies to handle disaster situations
 - Training on creative forms of agriculture, and livelihood options
 - Advocacy training so that women can also represent the UDMCs outside the Unions, especially at the Upazilla levels
 - Pregnancy, and childcare during disaster
- Chairman other leadership positions need to be given to women as well, rather than just have a certain percentage of women in the UDMC
- More female members need to be allotted to the UDMC
- Male members of the UDMC should be given gender training
- UDMC management needs to be more organized and structured; UDMC management body should ensure that their activities are taking place as per SOD guideline
- Transparency needs to be ensured, especially regarding relief collection measures that are handled by the chairmen and vice-chairs
- Transportation arrangements need to be made for the female members to attend meetings.
- Male members need to be more sensitive to the issues of the female members and encourage them to participate more. They need to be made to feel more important in the activities of the UDMC
- Meetings need to be more regular, and separately from other meetings.

The issues that have emerged is that the women feel that they lack of training they receive in regards to the work they do, or are expected to do. The coastal, flood and drought areas revealed 93 percent, 100 percent and 100 percent respectively, of women thought that their performance, perceptions and abilities to do something for their community will only meet the standards that are being expected of them when they receive viable, organized and intensive training on these subjects.

3.6

Suggestions given by the male members on increasing participation of women

The male members of the UDMCs were asked their opinions on how to increase the participation of women in the UDMCs. The following table presents the most significant of these suggestions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the most significant suggestions by chairmen, government official representatives, and NGO representatives:

- More training for women regarding climate change and disasters including:
 - Training on the roles and responsibilities in the UDMC
 - First Aid training
 - Rescue training, rehabilitation training
- Increasing the awareness of the female members about their responsibilities towards the community
- Increasing the number of women in the UDMC.
- Increasing the number of community meetings with the community women, with women FGDs
- Increasing the number of female specialists for pregnancy and childcare related issues
- Ensuring transparency of funds
- Allocating money for small scale loans
- Allowing females to participate in more UDMC activities such as relief collection
- Allocating more responsibilities to female members, involving them in rescue operation and relief distribution
- Making it obligatory for female members to participate in the meetings

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Union Disaster Management Committee was formed with the intention of having a separate body at the lowest level of the government with the capacity to tackle and overcome the issues that arise from disasters that are the impacts of climate change. Yet, being a body that is a derivative of the Union Parishad puts that intention in conflict, and in many places the study found the two bodies colliding into one and forming a body that does not deal with its separate issues as effectively as it should. Furthermore, another default application of the UDMC seems to be having about 11 percent female presence within it, suggesting this to be a formality rather than functionality.

The findings of the study suggest that women are not participating in the UDMC activities as the guidelines direct. Participation, in most cases, means presence in the meetings and it was found that many women do not voice their opinions. For the ones who do, a portion say that their opinions are not heeded and so they back out from giving suggestions altogether. The researchers from the field have reported cases of intimidation from male members and cases of misadministration regarding women's participation. There were cases where women reported of not being informed about the meetings at all. Yet there were also positive pictures that emerged from the field, and women reported of having full participation where not only are they heard but also their suggestions put into action. These cases were backed up by the male counterparts who encouraged female participation to the fullest.

The levels of knowledge and perception on subjects like DDR and women empowerment were especially encouraging, with a majority of the women in the UDMCs displaying a wide range of knowledge and good understanding of the issues they deal with. In the cases where women were found to be participating as per the SODs, these women were using their knowledge and experience to the fullest and were benefiting from it.

Women members need to be encouraged to feel that they are a part of a default system in the UDMCs to serve practically rather than helping fulfil paper-based requirements and be present theoretically. Increased functionality and empowerment of women will help overcome barriers and improve the body's purposes to serve their communities efficiently. Anything otherwise will lose the purpose of inclusive UDMCs activities and their efficiency will be hampered.

This was noted from the field study, a number of women stated that they felt insignificant in the UDMCs that they are assigned with, while the same female members actually possessing solid and profound perceptions on the issues of disasters and aftermaths. Therefore, there is a need to have these female members' knowledge and purpose of being in the UDMCs utilized.

The empowerment of women, more precisely, women taking control of the roles and responsibilities that the UDMC asks, will help them break free of the barrier that their society, financial status, religion, family members and their male counterparts set for them. Research needs to be done on what the roles of women should actually be in the UDMC, and appropriate training to those ends need to be provided to the women being included. They then acquire a level playing field where they can exercise such knowledge and bring effective results, not only changing their situation, but also those of the community women who require female leaders at their homes to guide them through. This will require long term changes in how women are seen and heard at the community level.

4.1

Specific and issue-based recommendations

Based on the issues that have been raised by the women from the UDMCs, several recommendations to work towards an increase of women's participation of women in the UDMCs are given below:

STRUCTURE OF THE UDMCs

The ratio of male to female members in the UDMC is 9:1. This inequality in membership, as expressed by numerous female members from the study, poses a barrier to express their opinions. A mandate to move towards a more balanced ratio within the committee needs to be made to ensure a platform upon which female members can express their opinions and participate more effectively.

LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN IN THE UDMCs

Women need to be given more leadership roles. It is recommended that electing women members as chairmen will give women of the UDMC encouragement to not only to give opinions but to participate with all their efforts, with incentives for good performance and completion of projects and activities.

FUNCTIONALITY OF UDMCs

Many of the male members interviewed mentioned that most of the UDMC meetings take place after a Union Parishad meeting is held. These meetings are allotted a short period of time just after the UP meeting is done. It is recommended that the UDMC needs to be made a separate functioning body from the Union Parishad, and if necessary, consist of different members than that of the Union Parishad, so as to not mix up or create confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the members. Regular meetings should be held in accordance with Standing Orders on Disaster. The chair of the UDMCs needs to actively encourage and facilitate participation of female members in the meetings.

ESTABLISHING GENDER-SENSITIVE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

There should be a mechanism developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including women in the communities, to establish a gender-sensitive early warning system. This system should ensure all women in local communities receive the early warning messages to be able to safely evacuate to shelters.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Female members selected for the UDMC need to be supported in training and capacity building. Potential members, who have been trained, should be chosen to be a member of the UDMC. The training needs to include building leadership, communication, and advocacy skills, conflict management skills, and first aid.

FACILITIES FOR THE UDMC FEMALE MEMBERS

Incentives should be be allotted to the female UDMC members; the lack of encouragement they face from their families due to domestic duties may be lessened due to the provision of incentives. Incentives will also encourage them to participate more actively. Transportation can be arranged for the women members, since long distances and travelling at untimely hours can put attendance off for the female members.

IMPROVED AWARENESS OF MALE UDMC MEMBERS

Male members of the UDMCs need to be trained to be gender sensitive and improve their perception on gender-stereotyped roles to enable a more equal share of responsibilities. Shared responsibilities to protect children, elderly, the disabled and household resources, including safe water management, will reduce the risks women face during disaster. Similar to UN Women's global solidarity movement, HeForShe, UDMC male champions can be identified and encouraged to change perceptions of men in their unions to be more supportive. As assets, finances and livelihoods are systematically entrusted with men in an historically patriarchal system Bangladesh, men need to be provided with communication and knowledge resources in interactive, awareness raising workshops. As many in the unions are not literate, the training needs to be done through non-formal and interactive education.

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ANNEX 1

CHECKLIST FOR FEMALE MEMBER OF UDMC

Designation	UP Chairman	UP Secretary	UP Female Member	UP Male Member	Other Female Members of UDMC	UDMC NGO Representative	Others
Name of the Union			Upazila		Zila		
Name of the respondents				Designation in UDMC			
Mobile No.				Date			

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF FEMALE MEMBERS:

1. Do you think women and men are affected the same when disasters hit?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, in what ways are the affects different for women and men? If NO to the above question, how does the committee address the different impacts of disasters on men and women?

If YES, in what ways do you think these affects are the same?

2. Do you think it is important for women to participate in the UDMCs?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, why do you think this is so?

If NO, why not?

3. Can you give an example where the UDMC addressed any of the gender need/issues, if any, in their activities (planning, implementation)?

4.. Do you raise issues that are specifically addressing the impacts of women?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what kinds of issues have you raised?

5. Do you think women and men benefit equally from the activities in the local risk reduction action plan?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, how so? If NO, why not?

6. Do you think women and men benefit equally from other activities that the UDMC are responsible for?

Yes	No
-----	----

In your perception, what roles should women play or be able to play in the UDMC?

Time Period	Specific Responsibilities for female members	Code
Before disaster		
Just before disaster		
During disaster		
After disaster		

8. What roles do you think women should play as a member of the UDMC, in formulating and managing Union Volunteer Committees?

9. Do you think that your Union Disaster Management Plan should include a “Convey early warning messages for the women” in emergency situations?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, how do you think women members of the UDMC can help this come into formulation?

10. Do you think that the Union Disaster Management Plan should include “Ensuring facilities for women (especially pregnant) in flood/cyclone shelters”?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what kind of facilities would you like to see being implemented for women in shelters?

11. Do you feel that women have their opinions heard?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, what would you like to see changed about the way the opinions of women in the UDMC are responded to?

12. What issues would you like to raise, but maybe do not feel so comfortable discussing in meetings? Why are these issues important? Why do you not feel comfortable talking about them?

13. How do you think getting your suggestions across in meetings could be made easier for you? Do you have any particular suggestions that would make women participation smoother and effective?

14. (If the interviewee has not already mentioned training and awareness) Do you think training and awareness building amongst women members of the UDMC can help to enhance the roles they play in the UDMC?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what kind of trainings would you like to see implemented?

15. Which steps should be taken to enhance the capacity of UDMC female members?

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN MEMBERS

(SAY TO THE INTERVIEWEE: I AM NOW GOING TO ASK YOU A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE PARTICIPATING IN THE UDMC MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES)

16. Do you regularly attend UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, why is this not possible for you? (For both) (Collect meeting minutes and attendance list if available)

Information of Presence of Female UDMC members (Should be collected from the female member)				
UDMC meeting held in last 6th month	No. of notice received by the female members	Percent of notice receive by the female members	No. of meeting attended by the female members	Percent of meeting attended by the female member

17. Did you attend any of the UDMC meetings in last one year?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, how many did you attend?

If YES, could you inform me about some issues that were discussed in the meetings?

18. Did you have any opinions or suggestions to raise in the meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what were they? What response did you get to your suggestions and opinions? Do you feel the responses were adequate?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, what do you feel was lacking from the respnse?

19. Did you raise any women related issues to be considered for disaster risk reduction plan?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what are they? How much of your suggestions were integrated into the disaster management plan?

20. Do you receive regular notices for attending UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, do you know why not ?

21. Are you able to express your opinions in the UDMC meeting without difficulty?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, why?

22. Do you feel that your opinion gets equal importance in the UDMC meeting alongside men?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, how (any example)? If NO, why (any example)?

23. Are there any factors/reasons that limit your active participation in UDMC meetings and relevant activities?

Yes	No
-----	----

If Yes, what are they?

24. Do you face any difficulties while attending/participating in the UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, please explain why?

25. In your opinion, what things would make your participation in the UDMC meetings easier for effective disaster management plan?

26. In your opinion, do you think you do adequately contribute to following UDMC related roles and responsibilities?

Roles and Responsibilities	Yes	If yes, how?	No	If no, why?
Rescue Measures				
Relief Collection				
Relief Distribution				
Disaster Risk Reduction Plan				

Roles and Responsibilities	Yes	If yes, how?	No	If no, why?
Improve awareness of people, volunteers and relevant stakeholders on hazards/ disaster, early warning, rapid preparedness/coping measures to reduce risks				
Esuring security for women, children and disabled during disaster period				
Damage assesment during post disaster period				

If you have not done any of these activities, why is this so?

27. In your opinion, what do you think can be done to increase your participation in the above-mentioned activites?

28. What types of awareness, training or capacity building would you like to help build your skills and knowledge to participate more effectiviely?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME

CHECKLIST FOR CHAIRMAN OF UDMC

Designation	UP Chairman		
Name of the Union		Upazila	
Name of the respondents			
Mobile No.		Date	Zila

29. Do UDMC meetings take place regularly in your Union?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, are there any other meetings that talk about disasters and their related activities in teh Union Parishad?

30. Do you think it is important for women to participate in the UDMCs?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, why do you think this is so?

If NO, why not?

31. Can you give an example where the UDMC addressed any of the need/issues of women, if any, in their activities (planning, implementation)?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, please elaborate.

32. Do you think women and men benefit equally from other activities that the UDMC are responsible for?

Yes	No
-----	----

33. In your perception, what roles should women play to be able to participate effectively in the UDMC?

Time Period	Specific Responsibilities for female members
Before Disaster	
Just Before Disaster	
During Disaster	
After Disaster	

34. What roles do you think women should play as a member of the UDMC, in formulating and managing Union Volunteer Committees?

35. What kind of improvements do you think should be brought to the Union Disaster Management Plan to make it more sensitive to women?

36. Do you think that your Union Disaster Management Plan should include a “Convey early warning messages for the women” in emergency situations?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, how do you think women members of the UDMC can help this come into formulation?

37. Do you think that the Union Disaster Management Plan should include “Ensuring facilities for women (especially pregnant/handicapped) in flood/cyclone shelters”?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what kind of facilities do you think should be implemented for women in shelters?

38. Do you feel that women members have their opinions heard in the UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, why do you think this is so and what do you think needs to be changed so that the opinions of women in the UDMC are responded to?

39. Have you received any training (Capacity Building or otherwise) from GOs/NGOs for the UDMC functioning?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, from...

Go	NGO
----	-----

If YES, did the training consist of the context of women in regards to disaster management?

40. (If the interviewee has not already mentioned training and awareness) Do you think training and awareness building amongst women members of the UDMC can help to enhance the roles they play in the UDMC?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what kind of trainings would you like to see implemented?

41. Which steps should be taken, especially from the UP,, to enhance the capacity of UDMC female members?

42. Do women members of the UDMC regularly attend UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

43. If they do, do they usually have any opinions or suggestions to raise in the meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what were they? Were they good suggestions? What response did they get to their suggestions and opinions? Do you feel the responses were adequate?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, what do you feel was lacking from the response?

44. Are women able to express their opinions in the UDMC meeting without difficulty?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, why?

45. In your opinion, do you think you do adequately contribute to following UDMC related roles and responsibilities?

Roles and Responsibilities	Yes	If yes, how?	No	If no, why?
Rescue Measures				
Relief Collection				
Relief Distribution				
Disaster Risk Reduction Plan				
Improve awareness of people, volunteers and relevant stakeholders on hazards/ disaster, early warning, rapid preparedness/coping measures to reduce risks				
Ensuring security for women, children and disabled during disaster period				
Damage assessment during post disaster period				

If not, why is this so?

46. In your opinion, what do you think can be done to increase the participation of women members in the above mentioned activities/ What can the UP do to increase participation of women members in the UDMC?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME

CHECKLIST FOR NGO REPRESENTATIVE OF UDMC

Designation	NGO Representative		
Name of the Union		Upazila	
Name of the respondents			
Mobile No.		Date	Zila

1. Do UDMC meetings take place regularly in your Union?

Yes	No
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If NO, are there any other meetings that talk about disasters and their related activities in the Union Parishad?

2. In your perception, what roles should women play to be able to participate effectively in the UDMC?

Time Period	Specific responsibilities for female members
Before disaster	
Just before disaster	
During disaster	
After disaster	

3. What roles do you think women should play as a member of the UDMC, in formulating and managing Union Volunteer Committees?

4. What kind of improvements do you think should be brought to the Union Disaster Management Plan to make it more sensitive to women?

5. Do you think that your Union Disaster Management Plan should include a “Convey early warning messages for the women” in emergency situations?

Yes	No
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If YES, how do you think women members of the UDMC can help this come into formulation?

6. Do you feel that women members have their opinions heard in the UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If NO, why do you think this is so and what do you think needs to be changed so that the opinions of women in the UDMC are responded to?

7. (If the interviewee has not already mentioned training and awareness) Do you think training and awareness building amongst women members of the UDMC can help to enhance the roles they play in the UDMC?

Yes	No
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If YES, what kind of trainings would you like to see implemented? What kinds of trainings are the local NGOs implementing (if any) in this regards?

8. If there are no trainings taking place, what steps can NGOs take to start implementing trainings for women members in the Union?

9. Do women members of the UDMC regularly attend UDMC meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. If they do, do they usually have any opinions or suggestions to raise in the meetings?

Yes	No
-----	----

If YES, what were they? Were they good suggestions? What response did they get to their suggestions and opinions? Do you feel the responses were adequate?

Yes	No
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If NO, what do you feel was lacking from the response?

11. Are women able to express their opinions in the UDMC meeting without difficulty?

Yes	No
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If NO, why?

12. In your opinion, do women members adequately contribute to following UDMC related roles and responsibilities?

Roles and Responsibilities	Yes	If yes, how?	No	If no, why?
Rescue Measures				
Relief Collection				
Relief Distribution				
Disaster Risk Reduction Plan				
Improve awareness of people, volunteers and relevant stakeholders on hazards/ disaster, early warning, rapid preparedness/coping measures to reduce risks				
Ensuring security for women, children and disabled during disaster period				
Damage assessment during post disaster period				

If not, why is this so?

13. In your opinion, what do you think can be done to increase the participation of women members in the above mentioned activities?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME



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