

INCLUSION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS, GENDER IDENTITIES, EXPRESSIONS, AND SEX CHARACTERISTICS (SOGIESC) IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE

Photo: UN Women

What is SOGIESC?

SOGIESC stands for diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics. Diverse SOGIESC is preferred to LGBTIQ+ as it includes people whose lives do not fall into the categories of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, intersex, or queer, including cultural non-binary people who use non-English terms that convey distinct experiences of gender and sexuality, and people who may view their diversity as a practice rather than identity.

Why should SOGIESC be included in DRR?

People with diverse SOGIESC suffer multiple forms of discrimination in many regions including Africa during normal times and in humanitarian settings. The documented human rights violations include lack of appropriate legal recognition in administrative processes (including amending identity documents), and unfair discrimination in almost all the spheres of life such as in schools, health care facilities, competitive sports, and work.¹

Many countries in Africa retain archaic criminal codes that criminalise homosexuality.² In relation to disaster and climate risk, people with diverse SOGIESC experience discriminatory practices including social taboo and negative attitudes, lack of leadership and participation opportunities in DRR processes, absence of ID cards, exclusion from humanitarian aid and services, gender-based violence and harassment, exclusion from disaster assessments in all phases etc.

Discrimination and marginalisation experienced by sexual and gender minorities often undermines their attempts to secure LIVELIHOODS, increasing vulnerability to shocks and stresses, and reducing capacity for recovery. The inclusion of sexual and gender minorities provides an opportunity for international organisations to practice localisation.

¹ University of Pretoria (2021). "About the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit" <https://www.chr.up.ac.za/units/sogiesc-unit>

² Human Dignity Trust (2019). "Criminalizing Homosexuality and LGBT Rights in Times of Conflict, Violence and Natural Disasters" <https://wrds.unwomen.org/practice/resources/criminalising-homosexuality-and-lgbt-rights-times-conflict-violence-and-natural>

BOX 1

Discrimination against SOGIESC throughout the disaster risk management cycle

Evidence from major disasters can reflect the entrenched discriminatory policies and practices against the diverse genders. In India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Nepal, transgender communities were harassed, mocked, and ridiculed or excluded entirely from aid distribution.

During the Indian Ocean Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, India, in 2004, the third gender aravani community faced exclusion from humanitarian relief, including food, shelter, and cash, due to lack of possession of government-issued ration cards by third-gender persons.

As aravanis are a third-gender group who identify as neither women nor men, officials had unintentionally excluded aravanis from ration cards. People in same-gender relationships during **typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda** in the Philippines in 2015 were discriminated against and de-prioritised during relief and early recovery programmes that sought to rebuild the livelihoods of disaster-affected people.¹

Similarly, people of diverse SOGIESC faced numerous challenges during **the 2015 earthquake in Nepal** as they were 'outed' because of close and informal living conditions in camps. **2016 Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji** highlighted the invisibility of people of diverse SOGIESC during the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and in other assessments, response and recovery designs and funding calls.²

1 Oxfam (2016) Leaving No-one Behind: LGBT Rights Post-Haiyan

2 Pride in the Humanitarian System - Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation Report, Bangkok, Thailand
<https://vrd.unwomen.org/practice/resources/pride-humanitarian-system-consultation-report>

Barriers to inclusion

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction tends to use generally inclusive language, recommending “*a more people-centred preventive approach*” that is inclusive and accessible and that “*requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership*” involving “*empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest.*” When lists of such stakeholders are provided “*including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older person,*” sexual and gender minorities are not mentioned.

While it is possible to read sexual and gender minorities into frameworks by relying on non-exhaustive lists and generally inclusive language, there is a risk that sexual and gender minorities **will remain invisible**. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people’s experiences in crises are also often under-researched and misunderstood, which can lead to protection gaps.

Enablers to inclusion

- **Carry out** research with sexual and gender minorities and engage people across the whole-of-communities to build awareness of barriers and opportunities for inclusion.
- **Raise awareness and sensitisation** of people with diverse SOGIESC, particularly among senior decision makers. Incorporating gender within a human rights framework can facilitate buy-in in a context where gender is often a taboo subject.
- **Dedicate time, resources, and expertise** for effective implementation of the gender policy and other gender work.
- **Provide systematic training or guidance** for the gender focal points, helping elevate and deliver on the intended outcome of that work.
- **Incorporate SOGIESC rights under the umbrella of human rights** to foster greater tolerance for the issue.

How to include SOGIESC in DRR?

Resources:

See Guidance Note: [Diverse SOGIESC Rapid Assessment Tool to Assess Diverse SOGIESC Inclusion](#)

This provides detailed information on how and when to use the Diverse SOGIESC Rapid Assessment Tool package to facilitate the assessment of diverse SOGIESC inclusion of programmes/projects implemented by humanitarian organisations. The tool requires using a Survey instrument for collecting data from people with diverse SOGIESC, spreadsheet-based Questionnaires and a Dashboard for deriving a diverse SOGIESC inclusion score. The tool focuses on five key areas:

- i. pre-emergency marginalisation and gender analysis;*
- ii. inclusion, partnership, and leadership;*
- iii. safety and protection;*
- iv. shelter and housing; and*
- v. livelihoods and early recovery.*

For more information, please visit the [Intersectionality](#) page on the Women's Resilience to Disasters Knowledge Hub (see wrd.unwomen.org).



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