

POLICY BRIEF

GENDER AND AGE INEQUALITY OF DISASTER RISK



Summary and policy
recommendations

OCTOBER 2019
UN WOMEN AND UNICEF

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UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the sustainable development goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; all women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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As the world's largest provider of vaccines, we support child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality education and skill building, hiv prevention and treatment for mothers and babies, and the protection of children and adolescents from violence and exploitation.

Before, during and after humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF is on the ground, bringing lifesaving help and hope to children and families. Non-political and impartial, we are never neutral when it comes to defending children's rights and safeguarding their lives and futures.

And we never give up.

UNICEF / for every child

UN Women

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POLICY BRIEF

GENDER AND AGE
INEQUALITY AND
DISASTER RISK



UN WOMEN AND UNICEF

Geneva, October 2019

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REPORT SUMMARY

Overview

Women, children and youth are often recognized to be among the most vulnerable to natural hazards. To understand disaster risk better, and tackle it effectively and in a gender- and age responsive manner, it is important to delve into the complexities and inequalities in a given location, the differences within and between broad categories of people, taking a context specific and intersectional approach.

This study explored the connection between gender and age inequality and disaster risk, examining evidence at a global level (reviewing existing literature and datasets) and in three case study countries considering earthquake (2015) in Nepal,

flood (2015), cyclone (2019) and drought in Malawi, and hurricane (2017) in Dominica. The case studies considered context specific evidence of differential impact in areas including mortality, healthcare, WASH, livelihoods, education, housing and migration.

Key Findings

- Examples of differential impact are context and event specific, often driven by differential exposure and context specific inequalities.
- There are huge gaps in disaggregated quantitative data at a global level.
- Analysis based on disaggregated quantitative impact data alone is insufficient to meaningfully understand and take action to reduce differential impact.
- Minority, vulnerable and marginalized groups are not visible in mainstream data.

Recommendations

In order to reduce gender and age inequalities in disaster, we need a better understanding of differential impact, which **needs to be underpinned by gender and age inequality informed data**. This shift will require:

- Strengthened systems for sex and age disaggregated quantitative data.
- Going beyond disaggregated quantitative data, to include qualitative and inequality focused data.
- Proactive efforts to identify, build trust, engage with, and listen to the experiences of those most at risk of being left behind.
- Mechanisms to enable the experiences of marginalized people to inform gender and age-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) actions.

Gender and Age Inequality Informed Data

The study proposes a 6-step approach to understanding differential impact. This combines a variety of primary data sources, providing insight into differential vulnerability at scale and between women and men, old and young, as well as other sub-groups. This data is supplemented by additional insights drawn from listening to the experiences, priorities and needs of 'missing voices'.

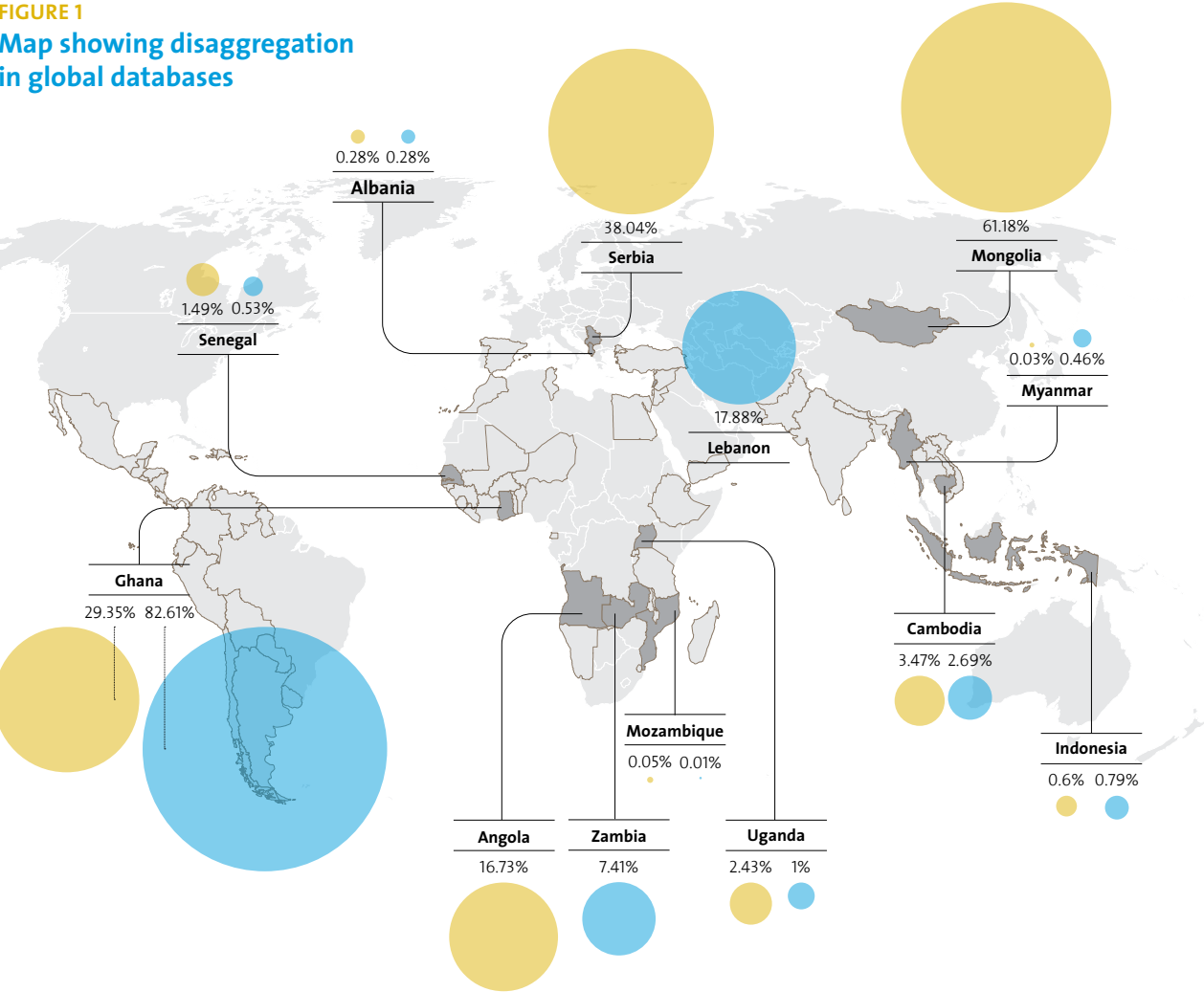
This 6-step approach can provide a deeper, richer understanding of differential risk, underpinned by better, more inclusive data.

Better data can help ensure DRR efforts do not exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. It can provide an intersectional understanding of disaster risk, enabling a shift from gender and age inequality unaware action on disaster risk, to a transformative approach. It can provide a foundation for action to reduce differential impact, ensuring no one is left behind.

GAPS IN THE DATA

The data review found **huge gaps in disaggregated quantitative data at a global level**, with a near total absence of sex and age disaggregated impact data in global disaster impact databases, and in global analyses of differential impact. A review of the DesInventar database revealed that only 11 out of 85 countries disaggregated by sex for mortality, and out of those 11 only 0.65% of recorded deaths were disaggregated.

FIGURE 1
Map showing disaggregation in global databases

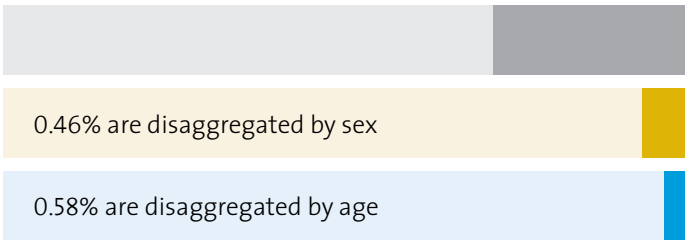
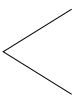


- Percentage of mortality data disaggregated by sex
- Percentage of mortality data disaggregated by age
- Countries in DesInventar
- Countries with any disaggregated impact data

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Out of the 85 countries in DesInventar, only 15% (13 countries) disaggregate data by gender or age

Of the total deaths recorded by those 13 countries above in DesInventar:



INSIGHTS INTO DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS

There is insufficient data (see main report) upon which to draw globally generalizable findings on differential impacts per hazard; vulnerability is known to be shaped by factors that are context specific (and can change over time) and in any case large dataset driven analyses obscure the granularity within and between groups.

Even in the absence of quantitative data on disaggregated disaster impacts, actions can be taken to examine existing quantitative, qualitative, and contextual data to understand differential impacts in a given context.

Combining different types of data provides insight into the scale, the impact and the underlying driver of differential impacts, which can be used to inform gender and age transformative action.

FIGURE 2
A 6-Step Approach to Gender and Age Inequality Informed Data



A 6-STEP APPROACH TO GENDER AND AGE INEQUALITY INFORMED DATA

This study proposes a 6-step approach to understanding differential impact (Figure 2). This involves the combination of different data sources, including disaggregated quantitative disaster impact data, census data, qualitative studies of the hazard event, and contextual information on underlying inequalities, supplemented with perspectives drawn from Key Informants and from proactively listening to the experiences, priorities and needs of ‘missing voices’.

Step 1 (Quantitative data) considers any disaggregated quantitative data on disaster impacts. Where disaster specific impact data is unavailable, estimates of the number of women, children, or elderly affected can be drawn from census data. This quantitative data gives a sense of the scale of the potential impact of the disaster on vulnerable groups.

Step 2 (Qualitative data) reviews any qualitative in the form of large or small-scale qualitative surveys, Key Informant interviews, and Focus Group Discussions. This can provide insights into what impacts have been felt by different groups, why these impacts occurred, and what their differential challenges and needs are. This data is often disaggregated by gender and age, providing insight on the majority experiences of (presumed) homogenous groups of the population (e.g. women, men, children, elderly).

Step 3 (Inequality data) considers evidence of existing areas of inequality in a given context (for example gender inequality indices, differential rates of maternal health of indigenous populations). This can provide a better sense of the underlying inequalities that make certain groups more vulnerable to disasters. This information can be quantitative (e.g. number of people with disabilities in the country) or qualitative (e.g. culture of men making decisions). This information is important as areas of existing inequality are likely to be exacerbated during a disaster.

Step 4 (Critical questions) involves reviewing the data gathered in steps 1 to 3, with a critical eye, unpacking

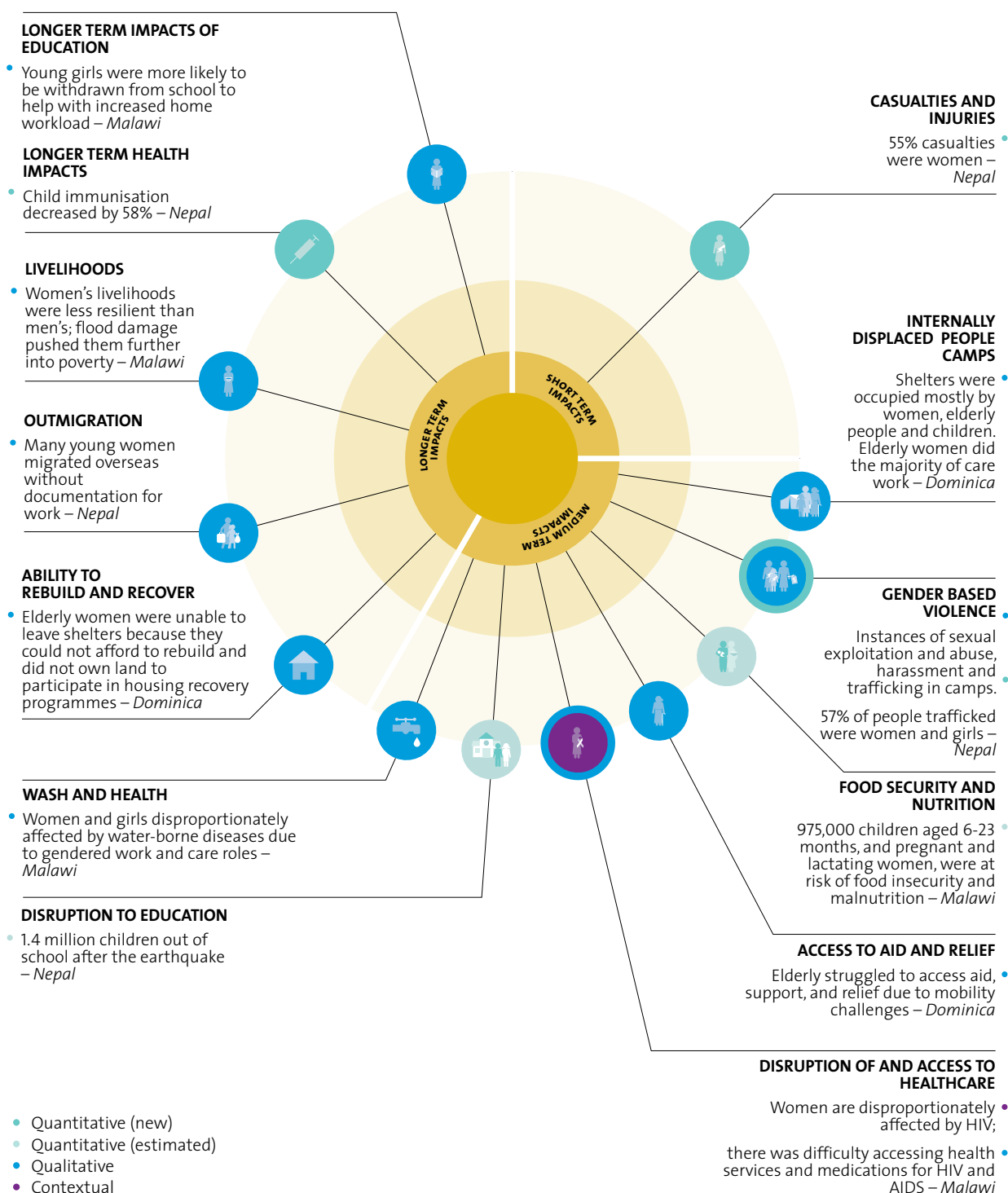
assumptions, stereotyping, sexism, heteronormativity or cisnormativity within the existing analysis of differential vulnerability. It also involves considering which groups are legally or socially marginalised in a given context (e.g. widows are especially marginalized in some contexts), and considering which marginalized groups are missing from the existing data or analysis.

Step 5 (Intermediary outreach) prioritizes connecting with hard-to-reach groups, groups who may be hidden. Interviews with Key Informants at national and sub-national level can help identify potential intermediary organisations or individuals with expertise, connections and importantly trust with marginalized individuals (e.g. a widows’ community group, a HIV+ support group).

Step 6 (Missing Voices) involves proactive effort to listen to the experiences of marginalized individuals. One approach includes undertaking a series of 1-1 telephone calls (see methodology in Annex 4 of the main report), with individuals identified and accessed through snowball sampling, initially via trusted intermediaries. Anonymity and confidentiality were prioritized. The interviews were loosely structured, aiming to build understanding of differential impacts, but with open questions and active listening, to understanding the issues, challenges and opportunities that each individual wanted to talk about.

FIGURE 3

Insights into differential impacts from Nepal, Malawi and Dominica case studies



MISSING VOICES: AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The combination of existing primary data enabled a broad understanding of areas of differential impact. The available data provided insights into differential vulnerability at scale and between women and men, old and young.

There were minority, vulnerable and marginalized groups who were not appearing, or only mentioned in passing, amidst the mainstream data.

However, this data **tended to treat groups as homogenous, focusing on singular identities** (children as a uniform group for example), not capturing the ways in which women or children with multiple vulnerabilities or areas of marginalization are differentially impacted.

Missing Voices approach

To add nuance to the analysis and gain insights into the experiences of those facing additional areas of marginalization, we undertook what we call 'Missing Voices interviews'¹.

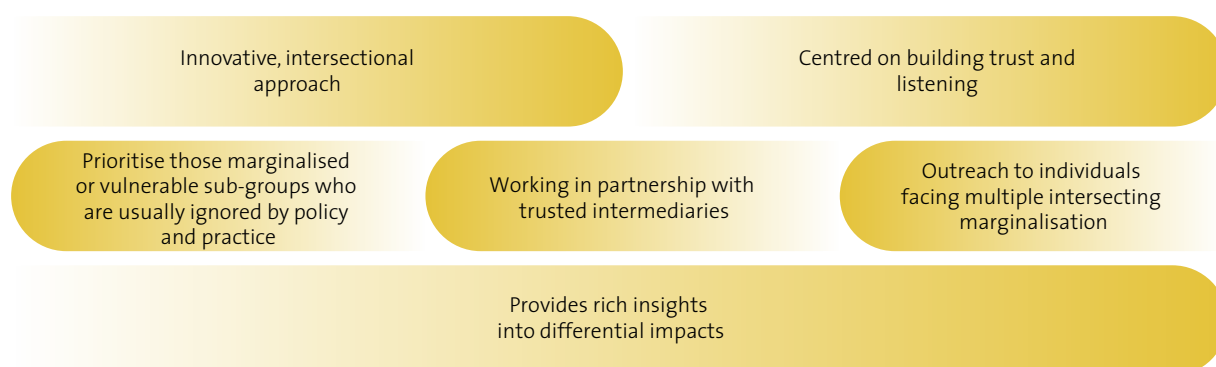
The 'Missing Voices' methodology, which requires approaches of building trust, listening, and working in partnership with intermediary organizations, provided **a rich intersectional and context-specific perspective on the impacts of disasters on marginalized groups.**

Five themes emerged strongly in the Missing Voices interviews carried out for this study:

1. Entrenched discrimination impacted vulnerability pre and post disaster.

2. Multiple areas of marginalization exacerbated and multiplied vulnerability pre and post event.
3. Marginalized groups faced heightened vulnerability to Gender Based Violence, and additional barriers to getting support.
4. Exclusion of marginalized groups from datasets reinforces and perpetuates exclusion from DRR, response and recovery.
5. Minority groups reported feeling invisible, un-noticed, misunderstood and un-prioritized post disaster and in efforts to reduce disaster risk.

FIGURE 4
Features of the Missing Voices approach



¹ Following a methodology piloted when looking at Gender Transformative Early Warning Systems (Brown et al, 2019)

FIGURE 5
Extracts from Missing Voices Interviews

“I was very reluctant to move my children (without me) to Barbados because I have not separated myself from my kids other than for work. But I had no means of taking care of them, no means of income, so I had to make that decision”.

Single mother, Dominica



“At camp one man tried to get friendly with me ... that I should go with him ... he knew that my parents were not around. His friendliness quickly turned into pestering and when I told my uncle about it in the hope he would stand up for me, he instead shouted at me for not accepting the man’s offer”.

Young woman, living without her parents, Malawi



“It was hard to find another place to rent...people normally don’t like to rent their space to people like us. This really disrupted my son’s schooling.”

Dalit, disabled and poor single mum, Nepal



“It is very, very difficult for me because of my daughter. You have to be on alert and take the measures where and when necessary. I cannot just hold my daughter’s hand and run”.

Mother and carer of disabled children, Dominica



“It was my father who went to all the planning meetings and trainings as we didn’t think anybody would allow us without official documents”.

Young girl, without ID, Nepal



“Very few (disaster management committees) actively seek the participation of disabled people”.

Disabled person, Nepal



Everywhere we go, we are not welcome. This only worsens during times of disasters”.

Gay man, Malawi



“For somebody with albinism, vulnerability increases many folds during a disaster. There are practical challenges risk of skin damage, ... not being able to walk long distances to a shelter ... Then there is the social risks of being attacked, being abused, even killed. Of children being separated and stolen ... being displaced is a huge risk ... which keeps people from evacuating early”.

Man with albinism, Malawi



“The most vulnerable are still vulnerable – I mean people with cancer, those who have come out of prison, those with mental (health) challenges”.

Social worker, Dominica



“I had to be with my mother to meet her every needs, so could not remain in hiding”.

Transgender woman, who is a carer for her disabled mum, Nepal



“Widows are easily identifiable...and therefore become an easy target... At the receiving end of unwanted sexual attention and violence from both extended family members and strangers. We have found time and again this worsens during precarious times such as earthquakes, flooding and conflict”.

Widow, Nepal



“I live alone and do not have land to grow my own food. During the droughts in 2016, I went hungry for many days ... I was not always given food because of my situation ... most people in the community still like to keep a distance ... I have never attended any meetings ... people don't treat like a human”.

Transgender woman, South Malawi



“LGBTQI people are invisible in DRM processes.”

Gay man, Dominica



“I have acquired a lot of debt. My children need to go to school and I have to pay their fees”.

Single mother, Dominica



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WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE OFTEN RECOGNISED TO BE AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE TO NATURAL HAZARDS.

To understand disaster risk better, and tackle it effectively and in a gender- and age responsive manner, it is important to delve into the complexities and inequalities in a given location, the differences within and between broad categories of women, men, boys and girls, taking a context specific and intersectional approach.

This study explored the connection between gender and age inequality and disaster risk, examining evidence at a global level, and in three case study countries.

The study found that taking a gender and age -aware, -sensitive, or preferably -transformative approach is vital; analysing, acknowledging, and understanding how gender and age impacts the effectiveness of DRR, and taking proactive steps to ensure DRR is delivered for all.

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