Fiji Gender, Disability and Inclusion Analysis

COVID-19, TC Yasa and TC Ana

April 2021

Fiji is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the compounded effects of COVID-19, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa and TC Ana. TC Yasa was a category five cyclone with winds up to 345 kilometers per hour which made landfall over Fiji's second largest island, Vanua Levu on 17 December 2020. TC Yasa was not the only major cyclone in 2020 as TC Harold had hit Viti Levu and the islands to the east as a Category Four cyclone on 8 April 2020. In the midst of response and recovery efforts for these cyclones, coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiji was hit again by another tropical cyclone, TC Ana, on 31 January 2021.

OBJECTIVES

Inform the program activities of response partners to ensure that all activities are inclusive of concerns related to gender, protection, people with disability and people of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and/or Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC).

Be a publicly available document which can be used as an advocacy tool to highlight specific gender and protection issues and the needs of affected populations.

METHODOLOGY

This Gender, Disability and Inclusion Analysis builds upon CARE's global *Rapid Gender Analysis* process and methodology. As an abridged version of the '*CARE Good Practices Framework: Gender Analysis*' as its analytical framework it identifies the different needs of people of all genders, ages, and abilities during a crisis, and explores the impact of a crisis on gender roles and relations both in the public and private spheres.

The methods for this assessment include the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data. Primary data collection (through interviews) was undertaken between January-February 2021 by assessment teams from Live and Learn Environmental Education (LLEE), Rainbow Pride Foundation (RPF), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Fiji Disabled People's Federation (FDPF) and CARE in the Pacific. The primary data collection focused on six core areas of inquiry; (1) roles and responsibilities; (2) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; (3) Food Security and Livelihoods; (4) Shelter; (5) Safety and Protection (including health) and (6) Coping Mechanisms.

Secondary data collection involved a review of background documentation, including lessons learned from previous cyclones as well as incoming assessment data from Government, RPF, FDPF, NDMO and Cluster situation reports as well as media reports from COVID-19, TC Yasa and TC Ana. A data analysis workshop with all partners was held on 12 February 2021 to review all primary and secondary data collected, discuss findings, determine key themes and formulate recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

Response and recovery efforts exist in a context of high levels of gender inequality and social exclusion. Women, people living in poverty, elderly populations, people with a disability, persons of diverse SOGIESC and any combination of these groups are bearing the brunt of the impacts. These inequities are the root causes of social vulnerability to disasters as they affect people's ability to anticipate, prepare for, survive, cope with, and recover from disasters.

The need to address inequality and exclusion is particularly crucial in light of the long-term impacts of negative coping strategies as well as the new normal of extreme weather due to climate change.

The unprecedented challenges of the compounded effects of COVID-19, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Yasa and TC Ana illustrate that there is no gap between humanitarian response and development, and organisations working in both areas need to be supported to take a wider perspective.

The compounded effects of the repeated disasters will leave intergenerational consequences of entrenched inequality unless strategic support and investment are also used to continue to build community resilience and leave no one behind as envisioned by Fiji's National Development Plan 2017-2036.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Through consultations and partnerships with women, people living in poverty, elderly populations, people with a disability, people of diverse SOGIESC, response agencies should design interventions that recognise the different ways in which disasters impact different groups in order to target activities to meet the specific needs of marginalised groups and reach the most vulnerable. This includes the collection, analysis and availability of gender, age and disability disaggregated data.

2. Consider and review interventions in light of the Sphere standards and standards set locally through the Fiji national cluster system and support the development of a Fiji specific minimum standard for gender, disability and inclusion in emergencies. Consider expanding partnerships in protection and inclusion to support organisations that are not humanitarian agencies, e.g., WAF, EFL, development organisations to meet these standards.

3. Build awareness of responding agencies and local leadership that understanding gender, disability and inclusion issues is central to meeting needs. In particular, leaders need to recognise cases of extreme vulnerability in which specific people cannot cope and the increased burdens of care on women and girls after disasters.

4. Through leadership and coordination mechanisms, strengthen the capacity of community disaster committees to integrate gender equality, disability and inclusion in promotion of community self-reliance, development of preparedness and response capabilities and facilitation of community awareness activities.

5. Coordinate and collaborate as humanitarian responders and development partners to counter negative coping mechanisms that have long term implications for marginalised groups particularly those living in poverty e.g., gaps in nutrition which will affect health, child development and so on.

6. Advocate for increased investment in durable and accessible shelter for the most vulnerable in order to build resilience to repeated natural disasters.

Demographics

According to the 2017 Population and Housing Census, Fiji's population stands at 884,887. Men make up 50.7% of the population while women make up 49.3%. While the proportion of males was higher below the age of 59 years, the female population was higher in the age groups above 60, indicating greater female longevity. 13.7% of the population aged three and above reported at least one functioning challenge (disability). The international benchmark is 15%.The figure was not disaggregated by sex. Fiji counted people with a disability for the first time in 2017 but does not yet enumerate people of diverse SOGIESC.

7. Support the establishment of community nurseries and seed banks to strengthen the agricultural safety net for subsistence farming families, many of whom are particularly vulnerable as they are at risk of food insecurity.

8. Assist communities to develop durable, accessible and sustainable water solutions that provide long term WASH to reduce burdens on women, people with disability, people of diverse SOGIESC after repeated disasters.

9. Collect and share good practices e.g. traditional methods of food preservation, stories of '*solesolevaki*' to support marginalised groups - to inspire others to follow suit.

10. Increase awareness of the Guide for Case Referrals of GBV survivors during Emergencies and the Community Response and Referral Guidelines for Responding to Cases of GBV and Child Welfare Reports during COVID-19, in particular, the details of counselling services in order to counter the potential for conflict due to increased stress on numerous levels.

11. Recognise and address gender issues involving men as well as women, as the impacts on men can have significant consequences for women, people of diverse SOGIESC and all other family members if they are not addressed e.g. increased levels of violence.