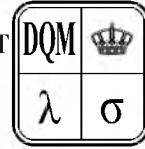


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GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF RISK MANAGEMENT RELATED TO DISASTER / ACCIDENT RISKS

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Summary: *The fact is that more women than men lose their lives and suffer other harmful effects of catastrophes/natural disasters and climate change over the last decades. In reducing the risk of disasters, women and men are conditioned by the roles and responsibilities they have already. Gender-based differences lead to gender inequality in all socio-economic processes, including different roles and opportunities to increase resilience to increasingly frequent natural disasters that are due to climate change. Due to all these differences, it is clear that women and men must participate equally in decision-making and disaster risk management at the local community level in which they live without discrimination. It is necessary to integrate gender sensitive aspects/criteria in the initiative, planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programs and projects. It is necessary that the risk management process inevitably be participatory parameters on women's needs and intents, through all four elements: prevention, preparedness, response and reconstruction. These needs are a prerequisite for supporting risk management programs against natural disasters in local self-government units. Activities and measures planned by the integrated involvement of all relevant stakeholders and officials can only result in their effective implementation.*

Key words: *Disasters/catastrophes, climate change, gender roles, gender responsibilities, risk management.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

At least 14 million people become homeless every year due to sudden natural disasters such as floods and storms, according to a United Nations Office

for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). The results of the survey forecast a continuing rise in homelessness in countries that are most prone to natural disasters if significant progress can't be achieved in disaster risk management. Data show that annually, 13.9 million people are displaced, due to sudden natural disasters, such as floods and cyclones, which do not include preventive evacuations [AlJazeera Balkans, 2017]. Over the past 30 years, the number of disasters in the world has increased multiple times, as well as the devastating effect they have on society and the environment. The experiences of the Republic of Serbia, which over the past years have faced numerous disasters that resulted in human casualties, suffering and material damage, confirm the fact that emergencies such as natural disasters and technical and technological accidents violate the security and survival of entire settlements and the region. The consequences of catastrophes can be significantly reduced if people were well informed, familiar with the method of disaster prevention and trained for it [Milosavljević, 2015: 52-84].

Although neither Serbia, nor the Balkans, nor Southern Europe are in a critical group of countries most of those from South or Southeast Asia,¹ one should not neglect the warning that in the Western Balkans by the end of the 21st century, the increased intensity of unpredictable floods can be expected, drought and thermal waves, which will have a negative impact on the GDP of all countries involved, as well as on the lives and livelihoods of the inhabitants. The main natural risks to which the Republic of Serbia is exposed are: heavy rains caused by floods, storms, hailstorms, landslides, large amounts of snowfall and the possibility of snow avalanches, extreme low or high temperatures, droughts and the possibility of outbreaks of forest and fire of open space, earthquakes, animal disease epidemics and other phenomena that can endanger the health and lives of people and cause great damage. Nevertheless, UNICEF warns that despite obvious trends in the incidence of disasters, the appropriate approach to managing these disasters caused by climate change has not been encouraged [Tanjung, 2019].

2. GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The mortality of women during emergency situations is much greater than the mortality of men [Neumayer and Plümper, 2008]. It is associated with a number of reasons, such as the lack of physical strength and necessary skills, gender roles that include limited decision making and action, limited mobility, especially women with children, pregnant women, elderly women, women and children with disabilities. In extraordinary

¹ Eight out of ten countries with the highest annual disposition or potential risk of future displacement and loss of home are located in South and South-East Asia: India (2.3 million), China (1.3 million), Bangladesh (1.2 million) Vietnam (million), Philippines (720,000), Myanmar (570,000), Pakistan (460,000), Indonesia (380,000), Russia (250,000) and the United States (230,000).

situations, the degree of vulnerability of women increases and they often become victims of family and sexual violence, victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation, especially when displaced from their homes and separated from their family [Mršević, Janković, 2018: 209-216]. A survey conducted in Serbia in 2015 confirmed that the most vulnerable groups by elementary disasters are the elderly, disabled, single mothers and women living alone in the household. Young women, single mothers, women with young children, elderly women and persons with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable. Vulnerability, in this case, means difficult access to resources vital for survival and recovery after natural disasters. The burden of various life relationships in emergencies is most commonly attributed to women and increases their responsibility and care for other family members, which further aggravates the situation of women and affects the degree of their vulnerability [Sol, Sremčev, 2015: 6,7]. Therefore, when planning prevention and management of emergencies / natural disasters, it is important to conduct gender analysis of the capacity and vulnerability of different groups of population.

The public sphere is dominantly and permanently available to men, while most women are expected to be engaged only in family life. Gender roles, stereotypes, and identities in practice affect the principle of gender equality and, in general, the implementation of human rights. That is why equal participation of women in public life is one of the key issues. Gender component in emergency situations is seen as of a multifaceted importance. In the line with the adopted documents at the Second and Third World Disaster Risk Reduction Conferences (Hjogo Framework for Action of 2005 and the Sendai Framework for Action of 2015), the concept of inclusive security has been developed which enables women to play the role of actors [Mršević, Janković, 2018]. The mainstreaming of women in risk management policies is primarily to improve the general position of women within communities in which they live by engaging their capacities and skills before, during and after the threat. Natural disasters produce negative consequences for the entire community, but their reach in terms of women and vulnerable categories of the population is much higher [Sol, Sremčev, 2015: 6].

In the context of gender inequalities, women now have limited impact and control, regardless of the fact that they possess skills and capacities for responding to crisis and recovery. Therefore, the protection of human rights and the promotion of gender equality must be at the heart of reducing the risk of disasters and building a society's resilience to disasters [Čović, 2015: 8]. One response comes from civil society organizations dealing with gender equality issues that underline the necessity of understanding disaster risk, strengthening the disaster risk management system, investing in disaster risk reduction in order to strengthen resilience, improving readiness for effective response, and building "better than it was" [Đukić, Petronijević, 2019: 7].

Attention is drawn to the fact that Art. 7. Disaster Risk Reduction Law allows equal participation of women in disaster risk reduction, and Art. 34 of the

same Law envisaged the role and the right of CSOs to consider issues of significance for reducing disaster risk and to partner with authorities in creating and implementing policies for disaster risk reduction, based on the Law, the National Program Action Plan and the Methodology for risk assessment. It remains, however, unclear how citizens' associations will participate specifically in policy-making at the local level. Capacity building of women's civil society organizations and the promotion of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination in the process of reducing disaster risk in the work of responsible entities has become an urgent issue in the Republic of Serbia [Čović, 2015: 26].

3. RISK MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS

This text has been completed during the fifth anniversary of the large floods that took place in May 2014 in Serbia, estimated by 81 local self-government units as high as 75 percent of the damage. Bearing in mind the possible repeat of the spring scenario, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Chief of Republic Emergency Situations Office Nebojsa Stefanovic pointed out in February 2019 that all entities must be ready to react and defend against possible floods. He was told that during the development of the document, the Plan of Rescue and Protection and Disaster Risk Assessment Plan is the most important strategic document in the area of disaster risk reduction, the adoption of which will be of great importance for the identification, determination and treatment of risks coming from natural and technical and technological hazards that can endanger our country (Politika, 2019). Subsequently, in May 2019, the Republic Emergency Situations Office ordered that all necessary preventive and operational measures, as well as preparedness, be undertaken in order to reduce the risk of possible floods that may arise from the announced precipitation [RTS, 2019].

It can be said that the responsibilities and responsibilities of local self-government units for environmental protection in the context of emergency response are very large and numerous, regulated by a series of laws, but still better institutional, technical, personnel and financial capacities are needed to fulfill these obligations. Also, the role of women in environmental protection activities is significant. Women in local governments are very interested for preserving natural resources as the necessary conditions for the life and health of the local community, but for now women make only 19% while men make 81% of municipal / city council members. That means that only one woman to every four men has the chance to become a member of the municipal / city council. Women are leaders of public companies, whose founder is the city / city in 15.5% of cases, and men in 84.5% of cases. This means that in Serbia, in the leadership of public companies whose founders are local self-government, approximately one woman come to five men [Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 2017: 7]. In the municipalities of the Republic of Serbia, the Commissioner for protection of equality recommended to take all measures and activities within its competence to ensure inclusion and encouragement of equal representation of women and men in

all spheres of political and public decision-making in the exercise of public office in local self-government units, institutions and public companies whose founder is local self-government. Also, to cities and municipalities is recommended to take all measures and activities within their jurisdiction in order to promote equal representation of women and men from different communities (urban and rural) and marginalized groups in all spheres of political and public decision-making in the exercise of public functions in local government bodies self-governments, institutions and public enterprises founded by local self-government [Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, 2017: 3].

Gender component in local communities is recognized as necessary in many segments of life. In the area of disaster risk reduction with regard to the development of the protection and rescue sector and its constant change in order to improve safety, gender sensitivity in emergency situations has not been adequately implemented. What is the task of all stakeholders is the continuous work on the incorporation of a gender sensitive component into all planning documents from the municipality, city to the level of republic. In fact, without any hesitation, it can be confirmed that the situation in Serbia is identical to that observed at the global level, if two parallel processes are considered: the inclusion of a gender perspective in the process of implementing the concept of sustainable development (realization of the Millennium Development Goals) and efforts in the construction of the framework to reduce the risk of disasters in the world [Čović, 2015: 40-41].

Recommendations for public administration are complex and the most important is to support the implementation of scientific research in smaller areas on disaster risk exposure and readiness to respond, support the preparation and implementation of information campaigns for familiarizing the population with the laws, public administration obligations, citizens' obligations, functioning the Civil Protection Department and others, to support or organize first aid exercises, to present/exhibit the illustrated posters about the first aid procedure as a reminder, to support the preparation and implementation of promotional campaigns for increasing women's participation in traffic, preparing the driving licence exams and actively using different means of transportation and construction building machines [Đukić and Petronijević, 2019: 54].

4. REQUIRED MEASURES

As the purpose of developing a map of hazard, and reducing the risk, first of all, through the application of modern building codes for the design and construction of buildings resistant to earthquakes, which is the most effective protection of the people lives and material goods [mondo.ba, 2018], so in the field of social relations it is necessary to apply modern, gender equality organizational models of women's involvement as decision makers and actors in all phases of response to disaster, prevention, preparedness, response and reconstruction.

In particular, it is necessary to establish a system of mandatory involvement of women in institutions and bodies in charge of emergency management (crisis

headquarters at the local level), civil protection units at the local level and structures within the Emergency Situations Department. At national, but also local level, it is necessary to define measures for achieving gender equality during the recovery of the natural disasters consequences and to define indicators to monitor the vulnerability of women and men, as well as the impact of recovery and reconstruction measures on women and men. Accordingly, all data on the vulnerability of the population and damage caused by natural disasters need to be sorted by gender and analyzed in order to identify gender aspects of the impact. It is necessary to work more effectively on inclusion, information and motivation of the population, especially women in decision making and management of natural resources, environmental protection and risk prevention from natural disasters [Baćanović, 2015: 32].

Also, it is necessary to implement the planned measures in practice, for example, 83.4%, the local self-government unit has stated that it plans to undertake certain measures for the promotion of gender equality at the local level, or act in accordance with the recommendation of the Commissioner for Equality. The most frequent answers of municipalities / cities that plan to undertake measures for achieving gender equality are: making decision on gender equality, implementation of projects in the field of gender equality, establishment of working bodies, strengthening the capacity of formed working bodies, greater inclusion of women in decision makers, education of employees and citizens and adoption of local action plan. Also, examples of good practice, collected from the responses provided, include measures such as: formation at the local level the women's representatives networks, increased efforts to include women from rural areas and women with disabilities, and the fight against gender-based violence.

In the meantime, before local institutions become gender egalitarian, gender equality is to be achieved by warning protests to the climate organized by pupils and students every Friday from April 5. They are organized in Belgrade on Friday, under the slogan "Let's Act Now" [Bulletin Box, 2019].² It is said that the planet Earth is in crisis, that the human race will face an ecological disaster and a climate crisis in the very near future if those who decide do not respond urgently and radically to our path.

² Scientists have been giving more and more serious warnings about the state of our planet for years, and the urgency and seriousness of their message have recently escalated. It's clear: action is needed now! The requirements are: - We want facts! We do not have information about the state of our environment today. - We demand immediate climate action! We want Serbia to adopt a plan to combat climate change that will include measures to reduce emissions, reforestation plan and other non-formal measures. - We are looking for the introduction of ecological education at all levels of education! Our ignorance has led us here and education does not save us for the future. The generations to come must have knowledge of the environment. *Bulletin Box 2019, Friday for the future - students organize a climate protest in Belgrade.*

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