



InFocus Programme on
Crisis Response and Reconstruction



Working Paper

7

Selected issues papers

CRISES, WOMEN and other GENDER CONCERNS

Recovery and Reconstruction Department, Geneva, February 2002



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PREFACE

Women's concerns and other gender issues remain critical in all crisis and post-crisis contexts. How to effectively consider them in crisis prevention, resolution and post-crisis humanitarian, reconstruction and development processes demands indepth analysis and understanding of the issues.

This document brings together four issues papers, presented at the High Level Research Consultation on Crisis organized by the ILO InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction in May 2000.

The ILO InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction is responsible for building the ILO's crisis preparedness and timely response to the major crises around the world – armed conflicts, natural disasters, financial and economic downturns and difficult political and social transitions. The Programme's activities consist of: knowledge and tools development; country technical assistance including rapid needs' assessment, programme formulation and implementation; and advocacy on the importance of addressing the urgent decent work deficits in the crisis context. The Programme also undertakes capacity building of ILO staff and constituents – workers' and employers' organizations and Ministries of Labour – for crisis response work since such work is not "business as usual". Mainstreaming of gender considerations is viewed by the Programme as an integral component of effective crisis response including tackling crisis' adverse employment and other socio-economic challenges.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	v
CHAPTER 1: ENHANCING WOMEN’S CAPACITY TO MANAGE AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Challenges faced by women.....	1
1.3 Women’s capacities.....	2
1.4 How to enhance women’s capacity?	2
CHAPTER 2: GENDER ISSUES IN NATURAL DISASTERS:TALKING POINTS ON RESEARCH NEEDS.....	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Gender has been neglected in disaster research, planning and practice but a new paradigm is emerging	5
2.3 Gender powerfully shapes human responses to disaster, both directly and indirectly. Women are especially hard-hit by the social impacts of environmental disasters.....	6
2.4 Gender inequality is a root cause of women’s disaster vulnerability. Global forces and social changes placing more people at greater risk of disaster also disproportionately impact women.....	6
2.5 Women are not universally or identically impacted by disasters. Highly vulnerable women have specific needs and interests before, during and after disasters.....	8
2.6 Gender shapes capacity as well as vulnerability: Women are active and resourceful disaster responders but often regarded as helpless victims	9
2.7 Gender issues must be effectively integrated into disaster research, planning and organizational practice	10
CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.....	13
3.1 Introduction.....	13
3.2 Gender related issues in conflict and post-war situations	13
3.3 Research Issues	14
3.4 Concluding Remarks.....	14
CHAPTER 4: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: THE GENDER DIMENSION.....	16
4.1 Introduction.....	16
4.2 Disaster Preparedness.....	16
4.3 Disaster Preparedness Resources and Initiatives in Central America.....	18
4.4 Gender Specific Initiatives in Central America on Disaster Preparedness	20
Annex 1: Relevant ILO Materials on Crisis.....	22

CHAPTER 1: ENHANCING WOMEN'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS

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Both in normal and emergency times, the vulnerabilities of women are usually stressed in order to protect them. Women's capacities are taken for granted because these capacities are generally not known. This paper highlights the importance of documenting the capacities and coping strategies of women, especially during disasters, to be able to design strategies that can enhance those capacities, for them to be able to manage disasters better and recover from their impact faster.

1.1 Introduction

Asia, a home to 60 per cent of the world's population, has been a host to 40 per cent of the total global disaster events. Together with Oceania, it absorbs 88 per cent of the total human impact of disasters. The 1999 end-year figures of annual economic losses for the Asian Region, based on direct disaster damage assessment, is set at US\$ 5 to \$10 Billion (IFRC, 1999).

It is an accepted fact that disasters, whether triggered by human action or by nature, have increased in intensity and magnitude. As such they become more destructive and cover larger areas, touching even those places seldom visited by destructive events in the past. Unfortunately, Asia seems to be the site favoured by these calamities.

Hazards can result in disasters because poor communities are becoming more and more vulnerable; the absence of employment opportunities contributes greatly to this vulnerability. Although no global statistics exist at present, women and children are considered the most numerous among the survivors of disasters.

1.2 Challenges faced by women

In the Asian experience, unemployment is already a problem before a disaster strikes. As job opportunities are usually limited, the men have to leave their homes and families to search for employment and work in other places. Traditionally and normally, households are headed by men, but families now tend to be headed by women for reasons mostly related to employment.

To augment the income generated by the men and to help support the growing family, women are expected to earn. Women, while constantly looking for work, are also in charge of keeping the family intact and of raising the children. Mothers are expected to supervise, tend and care for them. This naturally represents a tremendous load of work and responsibility and responsibilities do not end.

When a hazard strikes the community, women's responsibility increases still further. They have to think not only of the families' day-to day subsistence, but also of their safety. They have to work harder during emergencies.

The disadvantaged status of women and children is worsened in societies, which adhere to exclusive practices based on religion, sex and age. Thus, when disasters strike such societies, women and children are placed in an even more precarious position.

A case in point is the experience in the Cyclone Shelters in Bangladesh at the beginning of the 1990s, documented by Duryog Nivaran, a South Asian network. These shelters were built to provide safe places for the impoverished families who were forced to reside near rivers or embankments. In the rush for these shelters, the women and children were elbowed out of the way and a substantial number were reported to have been crushed to death. It was also reported that some women who had to run to these shelters, without the protection of their adult male family members, were waylaid and raped (DN 1996).

In the Philippines, women's vulnerable status is a given condition even before a disaster occurs. "When men are jobless, as in the case of the victims of the Pinatubo disaster, tensions in the home occur and wife-beating ensues. Sexual demands also do not decline during disasters, specially when men have time on their hands"(Delica, 1996).

Calamities result in loss of income, loss of harvest and loss of household facilities for cooking. This holds serious consequences for women, who are expected to ensure that there is food on the table. "Women ordinarily feed their husbands and children first and live on the crumbs left over - even during breastfeeding when they need more food"(Delica, 1996).

Overcoming the challenges posed by a disaster situation is a formidable task for women. How they cope and survive during these times is generally taken for granted.

1.3 Women's capacities

But men and women find new strength during crises. Women secure their children's safety and retain whatever valued possession they can. In temporary settlements, or evacuation centres, women have to ensure that there is a semblance of a home for the family's sanity. Women have to make sure that the family have water to drink and food to eat. Women try everything to prevent sickness among the family members in the unsanitary environment of the shelters.

After a disaster, women whose husbands are away are obliged to seek ways of returning to a normal situation. They must find solutions to the problems posed by devastated crops, damaged housing and lost animals. Their priorities are to recover from the event and continue life as usual, but above all, to protect the family from future disaster.

1.4 How to enhance women's capacity?

Generally, assessments undertaken by government and donor agencies are focused on needs, and the responses are therefore designed to meet the most pressing of these needs. Little effort, if any, is given to looking at the capacities of the survivors. In an alternative approach to project design, Anderson proposes to undertake capacity assessment first, so that in the effort to assist the people, these capacities are enhanced (Anderson, 1990). It might be possible to apply this approach in cases of emergency response. A study on existing capacities

should be undertaken as a preparedness measure, so that during emergencies, these capacities are simply updated and validated. Capacity should be assessed as needs are assessed at the same time. However, the assessment should be carried out within the community-based disaster management framework.

Most often, during disasters, women's vulnerability far outweighs their capacities. But even in times of the greatest hardship, they are certainly not without some capacities. These have to be considered in formulating plans and action. Such an approach will also reduce the load of disaster response workers. It is also important to provide help not only for the emergency situation, but also for the future.

Disasters are opportunities for development. It is possible to take advantage of the opportunities provided by disasters to organize women and provide training and education for both men and women

Lack of employment is a primary factor behind the vulnerability of both men and women. By determining their capacities, employment strategies could also be designed according to their present capacity, in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude. Their current skills may be developed as the basis for future employment.

Further research is needed to establish clearly the capacities that need to be enhanced and also to determine the responses which will not undermine existing capacities. Experience of women during and after disasters should be documented and this will involve studying a wider range of cases.

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CHAPTER 2: GENDER ISSUES IN NATURAL DISASTERS: TALKING POINTS ON RESEARCH NEEDS

Elaine Enarson

2.1 Introduction

Gender relations as well as natural disasters are socially constructed under different geographic, cultural, political-economic and social conditions and have complex social consequences for women and men. For the purposes of discussion, however, this report highlights common patterns rather than difference, negative impacts rather than opportunities created by disasters, and gender and disaster issues primarily impacting women.

2.2 Gender has been neglected in disaster research, planning and practice but a new paradigm is emerging

If addressed at all, gender has been integrated into disaster research and practice as a demographic variable or personality trait and not as the basis for a complex and dynamic set of social relations. Gender is also seen as an aspect of women's lives more than men's and as derivative of social class, i.e. women are disaster victims because they are poor. Notwithstanding significant progress integrating gender analytically and in the field (e.g. Oxfam's approach to gender and emergencies), neither governmental agencies nor NGOs have as yet fully integrated gender relations as a factor in disaster vulnerability and response, nor have they engaged women as equal partners in disaster mitigation and community-based planning.

Arising in opposition to the dominant technocratic emergency management approach, vulnerability theory and feminist theory suggest an alternative approach linking social justice and gender equality to disaster mitigation through sustainable development. International researchers, based primarily in developing societies and drawing on case studies, survivor narratives, and accounts from field workers, are now analyzing the gendered political economy of disasters. Gender is less evidently a part of current disaster planning and policy, though women and children were identified as "keys to prevention" during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and women organized conferences on these issues in Central America and the Caribbean (1993), Australia (1995), Pakistan (Duryog Nivaran, 1996), Brussels (1996), Washington, D.C. (InterAction 1998), British Columbia (1998), Miami (June 2000, forthcoming), and Bangladesh (June 2000, forthcoming). Seeing disasters "through women's eyes" raises new issues for planners, identifies critical system gaps, and brings gender centrally into development and disaster work. Questions for researchers and policy makers include:

- Can or should a cross-cultural research agenda on gender and natural disasters be developed?
- What effective models exist for effectively integrating gender analysis in disaster planning at the grassroots and institutional levels?
- How can gendered perspectives and empirical knowledge about gender and disaster best be transferred to practitioners (policy-makers, planners, field workers, community responders)?

2.3 Gender powerfully shapes human responses to disaster, both directly and indirectly. Women are especially hard-hit by the social impacts of environmental disasters

While natural disasters often impact human communities very broadly, residents are not equally at risk of loss and harm nor equally able to recover. Poor households are well-known to be especially vulnerable but gender-specific effects are also suggested, for example by such indicators as:

- *Post-disaster mortality, injury, and illness rates* which are often (but not universally) higher for girls and women.
- *Economic losses* which disproportionately impact economically insecure women (e.g. agricultural losses of women farmers, the destruction of women's home-based businesses, limited access to post-disaster economic aid).
- *Work load changes* which suggest that disasters increase women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere, paid workplace, and community through the disaster cycle of preparation, relief, reconstruction, and mitigation.
- *Post-disaster stress* symptoms which are often (but not universally) reported more frequently by women.
- *Increased rates of sexual and domestic violence* against girls and women in disaster contexts.

Additionally, a wide range of gender differences have been documented regarding emergency communication; household disaster decisions about preparedness, evacuation, mitigation, and use of relief assets; voluntary relief and recovery work (e.g. search and rescue, emotional and material care of survivors); access to evacuation shelter and relief goods; employment in disaster planning, relief and recovery programs; and other areas relevant to disaster practitioners.

Disaster practitioners and planners knowledgeable about these and other gender patterns in disasters can target scarce resources more effectively. Questions for researchers and policy makers include:

- What social indicators best predict the relative impact of natural disasters on women and men, girls and boys? Are sex-specific data on these points available to institutional and community planners?
- In diverse environmental, political-economic, social, and cultural contexts, how do gender relations differently shape the impacts of natural disasters and the (often) varying responses of women and men to them? What cross-hazard and cross-cultural patterns can be identified?

2.4 Gender inequality is a root cause of women's disaster vulnerability. Global forces and social changes placing more people at greater risk of disaster also disproportionately impact women

Far from unmediated 'natural' *events* arising from human settlement in an inherently uncertain environment, natural disasters are social *processes* precipitated by environmental events but grounded in social relations and historical development patterns. Gender inequality is a significant contributing factor in the social construction of risk.

Women's subordination is a root cause of disaster vulnerability. *Women's economic insecurity* (e.g. high poverty rates, contingent labour, homework, lack of credit and savings) increases their need for post-disaster financial assistance. *Ideological constraints* on female mobility may limit access to lifesaving information, shelter, or relief goods. *Male dominance* in disaster decision-making undermines women's greater willingness to mitigate the effects of known hazards (e.g. moving livestock, tools, or household goods to safer locations, making evacuation plans), may misdirect disaster relief from family needs to personal interests, and often leads to gender-biased relief and reconstruction programs (e.g. targeting funds to male heads of household, limiting women's paid disaster recovery work). *Sexual and domestic violence* magnifies the demands women face during crisis but is not integrated into post-disaster housing policies or disaster public health initiatives. *Extensive care-giving responsibilities* throughout the disaster cycle substantially increase women's emotional and material work load and, when care-givers put the well-being of others first, may endanger women's lives. *Heterosexist practices and kinship relations* place women outside the norm (e.g. widows, single women, lesbians, single mothers) at greater risk when relief programs are designed to reach women through male-headed households.

Women are also at greater risk due to power relations intersecting with gender (e.g. social inequalities based on race/ethnicity, social class, age) and to global patterns of development. *Economic globalization* increases women's economic insecurity (e.g. through contingent labour, job loss in restructuring industries, increased informal-sector work) and expands their unpaid work (e.g. through structural adjustment cutbacks in social services disproportionately used by women). *Urban migration and hyper-urbanization* brings women to unsafe living conditions and informal sector work in huge urban centers, where they are increasingly exposed to urban environmental pollution and disasters such as mudslides and earthquakes. *Environmental degradation* clearly endangers women as the primary users and managers of natural resources (e.g. drought effects on women farmers, deforestation effects on fuel wood gathering).

Demographic trends also increase women's relative risk. *Increased longevity* results in an older and more feminized population more likely to be living with significant physical and/or mental limitations. The global *rise in women heading households* overloads women during crises, generally increases their economic insecurity, and may exclude single mothers and their children when disaster relief is geared to male-headed households. *Changing household structure* also puts more women at risk. Rising rates of women living alone increases social isolation and hence reduces access to disaster warnings or recovery information; at the same time, more older and frail women will reside in group homes or nursing homes where they may have acute needs for assistance during natural disasters.

Gender relations also increase men's vulnerability, for example through risky but "heroic" search and rescue activities, self-destructive 'coping strategies' involving interpersonal violence and substance abuse, and masculinity norms which may limit their ability to ask for needed help.

Understanding the root causes of gendered vulnerability is essential if relief and reconstruction programs are to reduce rather than reconstruct people's risk in future natural events. Questions for researchers and policy makers include:

- How and to what extent to gender relations, development patterns, or demographic shifts affect women's and men's exposure to disaster impacts and losses and their relative ability to recover?
- How can these large patterns be assessed in specific contexts? What sex-specific data are available to institutional and community planners (e.g. on economic insecurity as a factor in disaster vulnerability, or gender patterns in post-disaster economic recovery)?
- To what degree have gender patterns increasing disaster vulnerability been included in the design and implementation of emergency response, relief, and reconstruction policies? With what effects?

2.5 Women are not universally or identically impacted by disasters. Highly vulnerable women have specific needs and interests before, during and after disasters

Taking gender relations into account suggests that those most likely to be hard-hit and to need long-term assistance recovering from environmental disasters, include:

- destitute, low-income, and economically insecure women; women who are contingent workers or unemployed; homeworkers and others in the informal sector; small-scale farmers; women in care-giving jobs and professions;
- women in subordinated racial/ethnic/cultural groups; recent immigrants and undocumented women; women migrant workers;
- women heading households, those in large complex households, and women caring for many dependents;
- frail senior women, undernourished women and those with chronic health problems or disabling physical and mental conditions, and women whose mobility is restricted due to pregnancy or childbearing;
- widows and single women; socially isolated women; rural women;
- women subject to domestic and sexual violence, and those insecurely housed in shelters
- functionally illiterate women; women not fluent in majority languages.

Highly vulnerable girls and women may not be socially visible or included in disaster plans but they have urgent needs, for example for: safe and accessible evacuation space and temporary housing; equitable access to food, clothing, and other relief goods; transportation assistance and emergency communication in community languages; child care and other services supporting women's long-term care of surviving dependents; reproductive health care and gender-sensitive mental health services during evacuation, relocation, and resettlement; provision for mitigating violence against women in disaster contexts; long-term economic recovery assistance and access to paid disaster relief and recovery work.

Disaster interventions must be informed by knowledge about context-specific patterns of preparedness, impact, response, and recovery. Questions for researchers and policy-makers include:

- In case studies of disaster events, what social indicators best predict the vulnerabilities of which women and men? Are sex-specific data on these patterns available to institutional and community planners?

- What models exist for the successful integration of gender analysis into pre-disaster vulnerability assessments, and for collaboration between disaster planners and women's organizations knowledgeable about local power structures and highly vulnerable girls and women?
- What are the specific short-term needs of highly vulnerable girls and women in specific contexts? What are women's long-term interests in reconstruction?

2.6 Gender shapes capacity as well as vulnerability: Women are active and resourceful disaster responders but often regarded as helpless victims

Media images of weeping women passively awaiting rescue by strong-armed men influence, reflect and reinforce deeply imbedded notions of gender which shape responses to disaster by organizations, political leaders, and local residents. In fact, gender relations and the gendered division of labour situate women at the centre, not the margins, of disasters, as active responders as well as likely victims.

Women's reproductive disaster work includes:

- mitigating the effects of hazards on residences and possessions;
- organizing the activities of family, kin, neighbours, and community members to prepare for an anticipated disaster (e.g. cyclone, flood);
- securing relief (food, water, clothing, medical care, emergency shelter and temporary accommodation, economic aid, rebuilding materials, information) from emergency authorities and in other ways;
- meeting the immediate survival needs of family members;
- providing comprehensive and long-term care for children, ill and disabled family members, and seniors;
- managing temporary household evacuation and temporary or permanent relocation;
- making or managing household repairs and reconstructing residences.

Women's productive disaster work includes:

- mitigating the effects of hazards on land, livestock, tools, and other economic resources;
- provisioning households for crisis (e.g. planting drought-resistant crops; organizing emergency food supplies);
- preparing, cleaning up, and repairing job sites and home-based work spaces;
- responding to disaster survivors through skilled jobs and professions in the human and social services (e.g. child care providers, crisis workers and counselors, teachers, social workers)
- waged disaster relief positions (e.g. food-for-work programs, emergency relief jobs, 'front-line' medical responders)
- responding to changed economic conditions (e.g. through migration, retraining, new jobs)

Women's community disaster work includes:

- identifying and assisting highly vulnerable girls and women (e.g. single mothers, isolated rural women, foreign domestic workers, women and children in battered women's shelters);
- voluntary neighbourhood/community emergency preparedness, evacuation, search and rescue, emergency relief, and recovery work;

- formal and informal political leadership through crisis and reconstruction, e.g. making women's needs known, organizing politically against gender or racial bias in the relief process.

Women's local community knowledge, strong social networks, key roles in families, and active work roles make them resourceful social actors in crisis, yet they are rarely recognized as 'front-line' responders. Questions for researchers and policy-makers include:

- What models can be documented of the effective integration of community-based women's groups and organizations into disaster planning, response, and mitigation projects?
- What are women's short- and long-term needs as primary household preparers, long-term care-givers, employees and volunteers in disasters?
- What organizational or other barriers limit response to these needs, under what circumstances, and with what effects?
- How have women historically and in specific contexts been involved in political decisions regarding disaster issues, irrespective of their class and cultures?
- Are women (which women?) involved in discussions for the development of disaster-resistant communities?

2.7 Gender issues must be effectively integrated into disaster research, planning and organizational practice

These observations suggest the need to fully incorporate gender analysis into disaster planning and practice by:

- materially supporting a comprehensive gendered research agenda to identify in specific contexts the immediate needs and long-term interests of disaster-vulnerable women;
- generating sex-disaggregated data for community vulnerability and capacity assessments;
- supporting action research projects, programme evaluations, and case studies designed and conducted with at-risk women in vulnerable communities;
- engaging women from vulnerable social groups as full and equal partners in community-based disaster planning and 'nonstructural' mitigation initiatives;
- developing gender and disaster materials for use in cross-training representatives from women's organizations and disaster organizations;
- increasing awareness about gender bias in disaster practice, e.g. through training, planning guidelines, recruitment and retention of gender-aware staff, and mechanisms for professional accountability to gender issues;
- supporting regular gender audits to identify factors increasing and decreasing gender bias in the culture, policy, and practice of institutions and organizations with disaster response missions.

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CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

Lillian Kimani

3.1 Introduction

War and civil strife are widespread, and work in conflict situations and post-war absorbs a significant and increasing proportion of the resources of local, international and non-governmental organizations. In the last few years, the world has witnessed ongoing full-scale war in many countries, in Africa, Asia, Latin America and some parts of Europe.

In situations of war or civil conflicts, all civilians suffer. However, there are many gender-specific human rights issues which organizations involved in development, relief, and emergency work need to be aware of and address in their interventions. War and conflict create specific gender-related difficulties for women, which can be explored further through gender-sensitive research.

Women experience conflict crisis in several ways related explicitly to the gender divisions of rights and responsibility. Class and ethnic differences overlay this gender-related experience. The violence suffered by some women during conflict situations may be linked to class and ethnic grouping and differences in their societies. Most reports on women and conflict place emphasis on the psychological and social impact of conflict situations. However, there is a need to focus more attention on the gender related socio-economic impact of war and conflict on women and their long-term effects on society in general.

3.2 Gender related issues in conflict and post-war situations

The displacement of millions of women, men and children from their homes because of military conflict causes social, economic and emotional disruption. The specific needs of women for protection, food, health care, education and income to provide for their families, are now being researched and documented.

A number of important areas call for action. For example, in agencies' staffing and training, in research and policy, in the involvement of refugees and displaced women in designing programmes and intervention that will ensure groups likely to be affected by crisis are protected and that their means of livelihood are reinstated in a sustainable manner.

The emotional and financial burden which may be placed on women in situations of conflict and post-war are noted by many writers. When men are absent, the full weight of family survival falls on women who are compelled to take on roles from which they have been excluded in times of peace.

Many women became heads of households following the loss of adult male family members. This often brings new economic demands and hardship. Although many women find ways of coping, they continue to feel overwhelmed and worry about the future of their children.

Although the personal costs to women are high in terms of physical and emotional stress, the gain in confidence, self-worth and power can be enormous. The challenge is for women themselves and for NGOs working with them, to ensure these gains survive the

conflict times. The process of empowerment, of women's self-education and organization, need to begin immediately in conflict situations and receive all available support.

In developing strategies for effective gender work in conflict and post-war situations, agencies must give attention to the questions of how they can build relationships with local non-governmental organizations which will enable gender to be addressed jointly in a constructive way.

3.3 Research Issues

Humanitarian organizations only possess a limited body of research and evaluations including socio-economic data on the impact of crises on households and women in conflict and post-war situations. There is still very little known about displaced women, especially in new political crises. This is not a problem that can be quickly resolved, but it is essential that research institutions and aid agencies start collecting more data on women's issues in conflict and post-war situations.

Research into the conflict and post-war area is highly sensitive, particularly when dealing with refugees' issues, where the fears of refugees themselves and of the host government may be aroused, together with concerns about how the data may be used. This is a field where collaborative work with refugee organizations in some cases, and with universities in the host country in others, could fruitfully be developed.

Closer links between existing research institutions, and aid agencies could also help in providing information and understanding about all people in conflict and post-war situations, including women. Research activities required in crisis response and reconstruction would include the following:

- investigation of the nature of current and potential crises in countries that are directly and indirectly involved in civil conflicts or wars;
- research activities to assist in mapping out the key incidence of vulnerability among various social groups in crisis situations;
- assessment of the impact of crises and their future effect on the socio-economic conditions of various groups; and
- identification of policy interventions.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

War and conflicts causes massive destruction of a country's physical and economic infrastructure. The difficulties of restructuring the economic and labour systems in the aftermath of war are extreme. Research on aid planning in emergency situations has shown that a community's ability to survive disasters depends on the extent to which it has minimised 'vulnerabilities' and maximised 'capacities'. Strengthening women's status and capacities contributes to the community's ability to withstand the effect of disasters.

The importance of women's role in war and other crises is generally overlooked in relief and rehabilitation projects. The potential effectiveness of women as managers of relief and rehabilitation projects and supplies is rarely incorporated into emergency planning. Not only do relief and emergency projects frequently undermine women's crisis –management role, but

also their potential contribution in post-emergency stages is often ignored, reducing them to permanent dependency on food aid and other material assistance.

In conclusion it is important to note that addressing gender issues in crises and post-conflict situation requires many specific measures in a range of fields, but essentially involves paying equal attention to the well-being and livelihoods of both men and women in all developmental activities. The only lasting solution is to reduce women's political and socio-economic vulnerability, raising their social status and strengthening their ability to gain control over their lives.

In addressing women's issues in conflict and post-war situation, relief and development, agencies should take action to:

- develop a methodology to systematically address socio-economic issues in crisis and reconstruction programmes;
- monitor and evaluate development and emergency projects, introduce gender specific monitoring points at all stages of the projects cycle;
- assess critically the gender and crisis impact of relief and rehabilitation projects and the involvement of women in all the project activities;
- build the capacity of documentation and research work on socio-economic issues in conflict and post-war situations;
- mainstream/integrate gender in socio-economic policies and reconstruction programmes;
- ensure that Planning for crisis and reconstruction socio-economic projects should not simply cover women's social role but also women's economic role as income-earner for herself and family provider;
- should include education and economic empowerment activities in post-war and crises programmes;
- carry out the research required to determine the barriers to economic empowerment and difficulties preventing access to information and technology faced by women in crises and post-war situation;
- design policies to create equal economic opportunities and choices for men and women in crises and post-war situations;
- design approaches to increase women's economic empowerment activities in disaster and post-war situations; and
- investigate the degree of preparedness and nature of household, public sector, organization NGO, donor agency, and community response to crises.

CHAPTER 4: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: THE GENDER DIMENSION

Monica Trujillo

4.1 Introduction

This brief paper focuses on the topic of disaster preparedness, including its gender dimension, and simply aims at highlighting some of the knowledge and experience available, and the gaps that still require attention. A list of institutions and initiatives already operating in Central America in the area of disaster preparedness is given at the end of this paper, as examples and reference points for future research and networking.

4.2 Disaster Preparedness

Crises result from calamities such as conflict or natural disasters, but they are also determined by the level of vulnerability of the affected population and by the national or local capacity to cope or respond effectively. Levels of food insecurity, of indebtedness, poverty, the type of employment, access to productive resources, etc., can increase or decrease the impact of a crisis.

Disaster preparedness (DP) measures generally aim at reducing the level of vulnerability of people and strengthening their coping capacity, thereby helping to address some of the root causes of emergencies. As such DP plays a critical role and requires separate mention, as it does not neatly fall into the categories of relief, reconstruction or development. Like gender, it cuts across the boundaries of these.

Most DP activities can be built into ongoing development work, especially to promote sustainable practices and to mainstream preparedness. In the same way that skills or employment training can be demand-driven, DP can also be focused on economic activities that are less prone to disasters (economic, natural or environmental). Other measures such as savings and credit schemes, seed banks, community emergency funds, contingency plans, and so on, also serve to strengthen coping capacities.

Many national and international organizations have substantial experience in DP, though it is still a vastly unexploited field of international cooperation. The gender dimension of DP is still even less explored though some experience and documentation is available, and this could form the basis of further research and programming.

In Central America, for example, regional initiatives to improve gender related responses to emergencies have been promoted since 1996 under the coordination of CEPREDENAC, whose strategic plan includes ensuring a focus on gender in all its work. Its aim is to promote women's participation in the prevention and mitigation of disasters. One of the first tasks of its Gender Coordination Unit was to consult with women throughout the region who were involved in disaster related work, and to establish new mechanisms for mutual learning and for participation. This consultation process led to the First Constructive Central American Meeting on 'Gender and Disaster Culture', held in November 1996.

Most countries in the region have an established group of women, each consisting of women specializing in disasters or gender and representing civil organizations and various

ministries in each country. The initiative is unusual: there are few, if any, other countries with a national women's group specifically focused on gender and disasters with such broad-based representation. This is an area that could be much strengthened by creative international cooperation.

There is also some experience highlighting the added value gained from integrating gender and DP, such as strengthening women's agricultural production. Between 60% and 84% of women in Central America contribute to the production of basic grains through their work on rural small holdings. They are often also responsible for poultry farming and for homestead crop production. Experience has shown that the income deriving from such economies is more stable because it is diversified and less affected by national or international markets. In times of crisis, or when there are severe production shortages, the very survival of the family depends on the homestead economy. It is precisely the vegetables and fruit grown at home and the poultry raised in the yard that make continued survival possible in times of crises. In Nicaragua, some women cultivate crops that have proved to be more resistant to drought, and farm animals such as pigs are raised more as a protective measure and are sold or traded in times of hardship. Supporting the homestead economy can be an excellent measure of disaster preparedness.

Saving schemes for women have also proven to be effective in reducing vulnerability to crises. In South Asia, Oxfam's preparedness projects showed that women's access to mutual savings during period of acute food insecurity was key to protecting livelihoods by reducing loan taking and indebtedness. Thus, fostering the formation of women's savings groups can go a long way to strengthening their capacity to cope with external shocks. The emphasis could be on small amounts of cash or food savings that can be rapidly mobilized when required.

Early Warning Systems represent another component of DP where gender plays an important role. Monitoring key indicators such as shifts in employment patterns or local market prices for food and livestock, levels of indebtedness, depletion of assets or savings, migration or demographic changes, etc., enables organizations and communities to detect early signs of crises and to take measures to protect livelihoods and therefore arrest or lessen the impact of emergencies.

In Chiapas, southern Mexico, early signs of crises resulting from low-intensity conflict include the reduction in the number of meals prepared on a daily basis by women and therefore the reduced intake of food. Another early sign observed was women's reduced freedom of movement, as a result of insecurity and violence against them, having a detrimental effect on the economy and food security of the family. For example, female shepherds stopped taking their lambs and goats to graze in the fields. The same situation limits women's access to employment, markets, crops, water and firewood, thereby jeopardizing the livelihood of their families. In Bangladesh, obtaining food on credit from local shops and taking loans from moneylenders at high interest rates are key signs of ensuing crisis, followed by the sale of assets by women, including household items.

Building gender sensitive mechanisms at the community level for monitoring these trends can be a crucial component of Disaster Preparedness. It can prove to be especially effective when combined with measures that promote sustainable employment or that support the wide range of women's income generating activities that are less vulnerable to external shocks.

Key to the implementation of DP strategies, including gender, is research that can generate relevant local knowledge to include in programming. Localized or national studies can provide valuable data on the type of crises people face (conflict, environmental, drought, floods, etc), their main livelihood system, their coping strategies, skills and capacities and so on, all crucial for informing DP strategies.

Vulnerability Mapping, for instance, can help determine which specific population groups are most vulnerable to crises (i.e. the landless, off-farm wage labourers, farmers, women, specific casts, etc), and which therefore need to be targeted for specific types of preparedness assistance. It can help to identify why specific population groups are vulnerable and in what ways.

Capacity Mapping, for example, can be instrumental in identifying the range of skills and economic activities that are sustainable in the face of crises, and which can therefore be promoted through development projects. Depending on the emphasis, it can also serve to identify local, national and international organizations involved in Disaster Preparedness, for networking and collaboration.

Since linking with other agencies and institutions already doing work on disaster preparedness is vital, and considering the objectives of this ILO High Level Research Consultation, the following is a brief summary of some of the institutions involved in DP in Central America, including those addressing gender within this framework.

4.3 Disaster Preparedness Resources and Initiatives in Central America

Below is a sample of initiatives already underway in Central America on Disaster Preparedness. It provides a glimpse of the wealth of resources and may provide a starting point for networking and for linking with other agencies and institutions in the region. Further information is available from the Oxfam GB publication *Risk Mapping and Local Capacity: Lessons from Mexico and Central America* (1999).

It should be noted, however, that in spite of all these initiatives and the very rich body of empirical and technical knowledge, this has not been sufficiently exploited. Local communities, which ought to be the main recipients of information, training and assistance, are not being reached. Furthermore, there are very few direct projects for communities at risk, such as skills and employment training, savings or credit schemes and similar initiatives that help to reduce people's vulnerability to crises.

Furthermore, there is very little information or expertise in the social vulnerability of populations potentially at risk. Analyses tend to focus on technical and monetary issues, rather than on social vulnerability. Only one organization, The Network of Social Studies for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Latin America (LA RED), has been concerned with generating knowledge and proposals for a study of social vulnerability; it has promoted some very valuable new concepts. This has influenced organizations such as the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) (regional), CEPRODE (El Salvador), UNAM (Mexico), Oxfam GB and the German organization GTZ (regional), to consider human factors of vulnerability in their analyses and studies, inter alia. Apart from these isolated instances, there are no serious studies of social vulnerability. As a result, there is a lack of real tools for decision making – tools which could influence decision-makers and direct their policies, and which might help to solve the underlying problems.

Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO): PAHO is one of the pioneering organizations in health related work on natural disasters. It is currently working on a project to provide university level training on disaster preparedness in Central America, and on an Internet project to ensure better communication among the organizations involved in risk – management. PAHO's Disaster Documentation Centre (DDC) in Costa Rica was set up to disseminate material to public as well as private organizations and to concerned individuals. Demands on the Centre are currently outstripping its capacity to respond, and thought is being given to converting the existing DDC into a Regional Centre for Information on Disasters as a multi-agency centre. PAHO, WHO, IDRND, CEPREDENAC, IFRCS, and MSF are in favour of this move.

International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (IFRCS): although the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is charged with working in situations of armed conflict and the Federation with natural disasters and development, the National Societies do not make this distinction. The Federation is currently working on strengthening the National Societies, training staff, and setting up its own communication system, both between the National Societies and within each country. Since 1995, it has been supporting community level disaster preparedness work in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, with plans to extend to Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras.

CEPREDNAC: The Coordinating Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDNAC) is a relatively young institution (part of SICA, a body that was established by the various Ministers of Foreign Affairs). CEPREDENAC is based in Panama and has already achieved regional and international recognition. It seeks to provide regional coordination for national initiatives in the context of natural disasters. It mainly links the monitoring work carried out by similar institutions with the emergency committees and with other important actors such as universities and other institutions, which play an important part in prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. It acts as a broker or channel for funding for specific programmes, though it is not itself operational.

International Decade for the Reduction of Natural Disasters (IDRND) 1990-2000: With its headquarters in Costa Rica, the IDRND has encouraged activities aimed at reducing the number of disasters in the region. It focuses on information and is coordinating a project to create a Regional Centre for Information on Disasters (CRID), which will combine the efforts of PAHO/WHO, IFRCS, MSF, and the CNE in Costa Rica and also CEPREDENAC.

Organization of American States (OAS): The OAS has undertaken a lot of disaster reduction work in Mexico and Central America and has experience ranging from local work to region-wide initiatives. For example, the Programme for the Reduction of Vulnerability in the Education Sector to Natural Hazards promotes the development and implementation of policies, plans, projects, and preparedness for the reduction of natural disasters, focusing on physical infrastructure. The activities include technical assistance, training, and the transfer of technology. Pilot projects began in El Salvador and Nicaragua and have since 1995 extended to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama.

The Network of Social Studies for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Latin America (LA RED): This is a network of institutions and researchers working in the field of disaster vulnerability from a social perspective. Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala belong to it, and its regional headquarters are based in the FLACSO office in Costa Rica.

Since 1994, LA RED has been implementing a programme of research and information exchange, geared to strengthening the local and regional capacity of organizations that work in disaster reduction (partly funded by ECHO). This programme also serves to disseminate relevant concepts, and to inform and influence the policies of the national governments and of regional and international organizations.

Other initiatives include **Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)**, whose regional office in Costa Rica plans to draw up an 'Emergency Preparedness Plan', and has sought to combine development and emergency project management skills.

4.4 Gender Specific Initiatives in Central America on Disaster Preparedness

Since 1996, regional initiatives to improve gender related responses to emergencies have been promoted under the coordination of CEPREDENAC, whose strategic plan includes ensuring a focus on gender in all its work, with the aim of promoting women's participation in the prevention and mitigation of disasters. One of the first tasks of its Gender Coordination Unit was to consult with women throughout the region who were involved in disaster related work, and to establish new mechanisms for mutual learning and for participation. This consultation process led to the First Constructive Central American Meeting on 'Gender and Disaster Culture', held in November 1996.

Most countries in the region have an established group of women, consisting mainly of women who specialize in disasters or gender and represent various civil organizations, but they also include representatives of various ministries in each country. The initiative is unusual: there are few if any other countries with a national women's group specifically focused on gender and disasters with such broad-based representation. This is an area that could be much strengthened by creative international cooperation.

There is a group of Nicaraguan women working on CEPREDENAC's gender and emergency programme. It includes women from various organizations, including the Ministry of Education, the Nicaraguan Women's Institute (INIM), and NGOs such as the Augusto Cesar Sandino Foundation (FACS) and the Companions of the Americas. Some of the activities include encouraging women's participation in the training in prevention that is carried out with students, teachers, education brigades, rescue teams, and others. They share the concern that the courses organized by EMNDC (with the support of the US Office for Disaster Assistance) to train trainers in the management of disasters and the assessment of the damage and needs are almost totally aimed at men

INIM in Nicaragua supports sustainable vegetable gardens that are low-cost, simple, and economic in their use of water, as well as enhancing food security. However, the group is well aware of its own need to learn more about gender and disasters: its current members tend to specialize either in emergencies or in gender, and there is a need to integrate the two areas, both in theory and in practice.

Through the Guatemalan Social Prevention Department, CONKED aims to encourage various social sectors to train up in the prevention of natural disasters, and is beginning to prioritize the role of women. Thus, a workshop was held in October 1995 with leading women from eight departments, representatives of the National Women's Office, and 10 special guests from the capital, in the hope that their participation in the departmental

organization and decision making would encourage the participation of other women and men in society. In particular, the workshop took note of the increased visibility of and scope for Guatemalan women to participate in the reduction of disasters through various groups, and urged their inclusion in all levels of emergency organizations. Among the proposals are capacity building and awareness raising for women on gender analysis, in order to encourage the active participation of women in the prevention of disasters and in setting up local emergency committees.

Annex 1: Relevant ILO Materials on Crisis

A. SELECTED OUTPUTS OF ILO'S INFOCUS PROGRAMME ON CRISIS RESPONSE AND RECONSTRUCTION SINCE SEPTEMBER 1999

- Barakat, S and Wardell G.: Capitalizing on Capacities of Afghan Women (Geneva, December 2001).
- Date-Bah, E.: Crises and Decent Work: A collection of Essays (Turin, August 2001)
- Date-Bah, E.: Gender in Crisis Response and Reconstruction (Mar. 2000).
- Date-Bah, E.: "Economic Aspects of post-conflict rehabilitation: the challenges of transformation", OSCE's Eighth Economic Forum (Prague, 11-14 April 2000).
- Date-Bah, E.: InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction and its Research Needs (May 2000).
- Enarson, Elaine: Gender and Natural Disasters, IFP/CRISIS Working Paper No. 1 (Geneva, Sept. 2000).
- ILO: Crises, Women and other Gender Concerns (Geneva, Feb. 2002)
- ILO: Crisis-Affected Peoples and Countries: ILO's operational activities Mid 1997-March 2001 (Geneva, 2001).
- ILO: Tackling the Employment Challenges of Armed Conflict: Key ILO Tools (Geneva, Sept. 1999).
- ILO: Crisis Response and Reconstruction: An ILO InFocus Programme (Geneva, Nov. 1999).
- ILO: Employment for Peace in Sierra Leone (Dec. 1999).
- ILO: ILO Strategy and activities on employment and social concerns in crisis situations, Second Item on the Agenda, Committee on Employment and Social Policy, GB.277/ESP/2 (Geneva, Mar. 2000).
- ILO: Programme for Employment Recovery and Reduction of Economic Vulnerability – A Response to the Floods of Mozambique (Maputo, Mar.-Apr. 2000).
- ILO: Generic Modules on ILO's Response to Crises (2001).
- ILO: Rapid Needs Assessment Manual (2001).
- ILO: ILO Programme Proposals in Response to East Timor's Employment and Reconstruction Challenges (Geneva, June 2000).
- ILO: Report on Consultation with Workers and Employers Delegates (Jun. 2000).
- ILO: Framework for Post-Conflict Employment Promotion and Socio-economic Integration in South Lebanon (IFP/CRISIS and ROAS, Beirut, Jul. 2000).
- ILO: Report on High Level Research Consultation on Crisis (Geneva, Aug. 2000).
- Krishnamurty, J.: ILO Presentation to the Humanitarian Segment of ECOSOC (19-20 Jul. 2000).
- OIT: Programa de Recuperación de Empleos y de Reducción de la Vulnerabilidad Socioeconómica en Venezuela, (Caracas, Abril del 2000).
- Pain, A. and Goodhand, J: Afghanistan: Current Employment and socio-economic situation and prospects (Geneva, March 2002).

B. ACTION PROGRAMME ON SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING FOR COUNTRIES EMERGING FROM ARMED CONFLICT

Key products

- ILO: Towards a framework for ILO policy and action in the conflict-affected context: Training and employment promotion for sustainable peace (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- ILO: ILO policy on conflict-affected countries, draft statement adopted by the ILO Interregional Seminar on the Reintegration of Conflict-Affected Groups (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- ILO: Guidelines for employment and skills training in conflict-affected countries (Geneva, ILO, 1997). Also available in French and Spanish.
- ILO: Gender guidelines for employment and skills training in conflict-affected countries (Geneva, ILO 1998). Also available in French and Spanish.
- ILO: Employment for peace: The ILO's comprehensive programme of technical assistance to conflict-affected countries (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- ILO: Compendium of employment promotion initiatives in the conflict-affected countries (Draft, Geneva, ILO).
- ILO: Capacity building of employment promoters in conflict-affected countries: A training package (Draft, Geneva, ILO).
- ILO: Quick access to recommendations and findings of the "Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict" (Geneva, 1998).

Working papers, reports and other materials

- Baden, S.: Post-conflict Mozambique: Women's special situation, population issues and gender perspectives to be integrated into skills training and employment promotion (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Bryant, C.A.: Training and employment programmes for war-affected populations: Lessons from experience in Mozambique (ILO, Geneva, May 1997).
- Cramer, C.; Weeks, J.: Analytical foundations of employment and training programmes in conflict-affected countries (Geneva, ILO, Dec. 1997).
- Date-Bah, E.: Sustainable peace after war: Arguing the need for major integration of gender perspectives in post-conflict programming (ILO, Geneva, May 1996).
- .: ILO experiences in rebuilding conflict-affected communities through employment promotion, paper presented at Round Table on Rebuilding Communities Affected by Armed Conflict (Philippines, June 1997).
- Dilli, D.: Handbook - Accessibility and tool adaptations for disabled workers in post-conflict and developing countries (Geneva, ILO, 1997).

- Gassama, M.: Role of the Ministry of Labour and other labour institutions in reintegration, reconstruction and peace-building processes: The case of Sierra Leone (Draft, Geneva, ILO, 1998).
- Hakemulder, R.: Promoting local economic development in a war-affected country: The ILO experience in Cambodia (Geneva, ILO, 1997). Also available in French and Spanish.
- ILO: ILO and conflict-affected peoples and countries: Promoting lasting peace through employment promotion (Turin, ILO, 1997).
- : Towards a model for dynamic training support of ILO constituents: Promoting employment in conflict-affected countries (Geneva, ILO 1997).
- : Trade unions in conflict-affected countries: Experiences and roles in peace negotiation, social healing, reconstruction and development, Report on a meeting for workers' delegates (Geneva, June 1997).
- : Report of the ILO Interregional Seminar on Reintegration of Conflict-affected Groups through Skills Training and Employment Promotion (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- : "From war to work: Giving peace - and people - a chance", in *World of Work*, No. 20 (Geneva, ILO, June 1997).
- : "Employment generation," chapter in Role of the UN system in post-conflict recovery (Geneva, ILO, 1997)
- : Challenges for skills training and employment promotion in a country emerging from armed conflict, Report on an ILO Seminar, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 1997 (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- : The role of the ILO in reconstruction of conflict-affected countries, in Proposal for the agenda of the 88th Session (2000) of the International Labour Conference, GB. 270/P (Rev.2) (Geneva, ILO, November 1997). Also available in French and Spanish.
- Lobner, S.: Life skills for the world of work: Experiences in South Africa (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Loughna, S.; Vicente, G.: Population issues and the situation of women in post-conflict Guatemala (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Maslen, S.: The reintegration of war-affected youth: The experience of Mozambique (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Medi, E.: Mozambique: Study of vocational rehabilitation, training and employment programmes for persons disabled by the conflict, experiences and issues (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- : Angola: Study of vocational rehabilitation, training and employment programmes for persons disabled by the conflict: Experiences and issues (Geneva, ILO, 1997, after revision).
- Muhumuza, R. (with Poole, J.): Guns into ox ploughs: A study on the situation of conflict-affected youth in Uganda and their reintegration into society through training, employment and life skills programmes (Geneva, ILO, 1997).

- Nagarajan, G.: Developing financial institutions in conflict-affected countries: Emerging issues, first lessons learnt and challenges ahead (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Nauphal, N.: Post-war Lebanon: Women and other war-affected groups (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Smith, N.: ILO's technical assistance projects in conflict-affected countries: A sample (Geneva, ILO, 1997).
- Specht, I.; Van Empel, C.: Programme enlargement: The Liberian experience (Draft, Geneva, ILO, 1998)
- Walsh, M.: Post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: Integrating women's special situation and gender perspectives in skills training and employment promotion programmes (Geneva, ILO, 1997).

C. EX-COMBATANTS

- ILO: Manual on training and employment options for ex-combatants (Geneva, ILO, forthcoming).
- ILO: Reintegration of demobilized combatants through (self-) employment and training: An issues paper (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Labour market assessments for the reintegration of ex-combatants in war-affected sub-Saharan African countries. Practical guidelines (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Reintegrating demobilized combatants: The role of small enterprise development (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Reintegration of young ex-combatants into civilian life (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Reintegrating demobilized combatants: Experiences from four African countries (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Relevance and potential of employment-intensive works programmes in the reintegration of demobilized combatants (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Rehabilitation and reintegration of disabled ex-combatants (Geneva, ILO, 1995).
- ILO: Framework of guidelines for reintegration of demobilized combatants through training and employment (draft) (Geneva, ILO, 1996).
- ILO: Report of the Expert Meeting on the Design of Guidelines for Training and Employment of Ex-combatants (Africa region), Harare, Zimbabwe, 11-14 July 1995 (Geneva, ILO, 1996).
- Srivastava, Ramesh: Reintegrating demobilized combatants: A report exploring options and strategies for training-related interventions (Geneva, ILO, 1994).

D. OTHER RELEVANT MATERIALS

Lazarte, Alfredo: "Desarrollo Economico Local: Promoviendo el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible a nivel local en el marco de la Consolidacion de la Paz", 41pp. (Ginebra, 1996).

Lazarte, Alfredo: "Developement Economique Local: Promotion du Developement Humain Durable a niveaux local dans le cadre de la Consolidation de la Paix", idem., 41pp. (Ginebra, 1996).

Lazarte, Alfredo: "Las Agencias de Desarrollo Economico Local: Promoviendo la Empresarialidad en el marco del Desarrollo Humano Sostenible - El Caso de Centroamerica-", 13pp. (1995).

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Martinez, Daniel: "Apoyo a la reinsercion economica de los ex-combatientes en la Republica de El Salvador" (1992).

Peri Paredes/UNOPS: "El Conflicto Centroamericano y la Experiencia del PRODERE", 37 pp. (1997).

Revilla, Victor: "Examen critico de la Partipacion de la OIT en el Programa de Desarrollo para Desplazados, Refugiados y Repatriados en Centroamerica -PRODERE-". 38pp. (San Jose, 1993).

World Summit on Social Development: "PRODERE" in: Building a consensus on International Cooperation For Social Development: A focus on Societies in Crisis, pp. 11-14 (Copenhagen 1995).

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