Global Insight Brown Bag Summary

Equity in Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for Women, LGBTQIA+, and People with Disabilities by Dr. Corrie Hannah

August 10th, 2022

Dr. Corrie Hannah shares preliminary review findings from her team at the University of Arizona that explore the role of equity in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Specifically, the team studied three marginalized groups: Women, LGBTQIA+ (gender minorities), and People with Disabilities. These groups and several others are differentially impacted by natural disasters, often due to various societal influences. Some examples include positionality in the society, previous conflict, history of poverty, exclusionary practice, lack of representation in planning roles, and limited access to disaster resources.

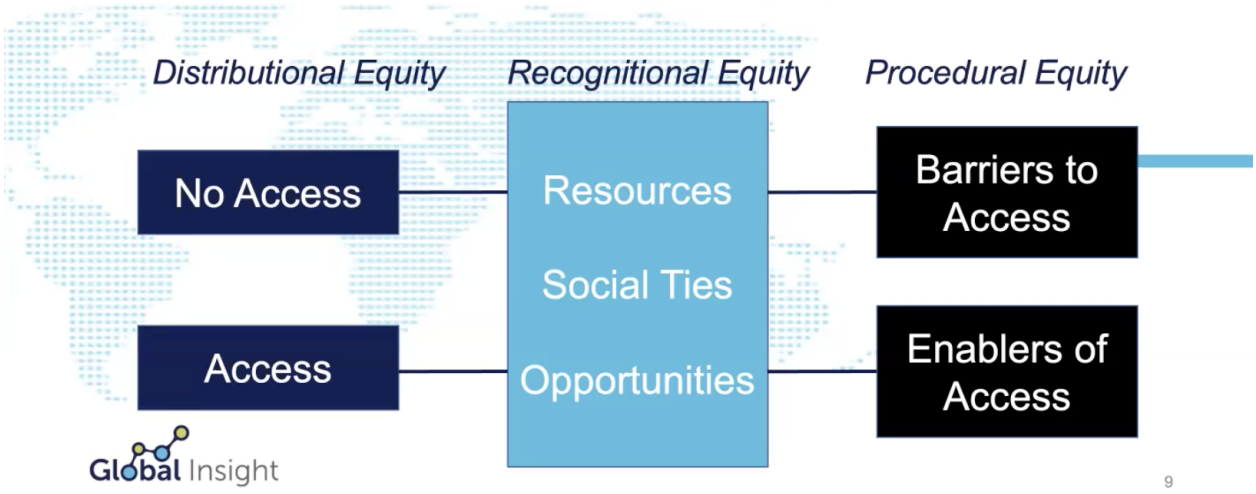
The review is guided by the SENDAI Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This provides the international framework for disaster response, emphasizing that marginalized communities must be brought to the table and included in disaster planning.

Two key research questions are explored in the review:

1. What resources and opportunities are available to women, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities that allow them to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters?
2. What are the barriers that prevent these populations from accessing available resources and opportunities?

To guide the research questions, equity is defined in three manners, explaining the accessibility of resources.

- Distributional equity – How are resources distributed among individuals or groups? How many are available? What types of resources are allocated?
- Recognitional equity – How are individuals or groups recognized at an institutional level? Are they involved in decision-making processes?
- Procedural equity – If individuals and groups are involved in the decision-making process, how are they involved, and what roles do they hold?



Screengrab from the presentation by Dr. Corrie Hannah (2022). Explains how resources, social ties, and opportunities could present as a barrier or an enabler to further access. The three forms of equity are used as the framework.

Dr. Hannah and her team indicated three essential understandings after the review of the literature.

- A targeted approach in policies and institutions must be implemented to reduce the negative impact of disasters. Socio-cultural norms gradually shifting are direct enablers of access for marginalized groups.
- A skew in the scope and narrative of the research. Marginalized communities are still labeled as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘victims’ of natural disasters. When in exchange, they should be holding a more progressive role as ‘leaders’ by being involved in the decision-making process.
- A significant lack of data at the intersection of disasters and marginalized communities, especially gender minorities and People with Disabilities. Without a complete picture of the barriers experienced in marginalized communities before, during, and after a disaster strikes, planning will continue to miss the needs of these individuals.

Dr. Sarah Jansen, a principal investigator at Global Insight and discussant for the talk, reiterates that disaster response, at its core, must be diverse. Recipients of humanitarian disaster aid are diverse in their experiences and needs; therefore, the response must mirror this need.

Dr. Jansen furthers the discussion by questioning what each step (preparedness, response, and recovery) looks like for marginalized populations impacted by disaster. Dr. Hannah responds by

explaining that each step uncovers the barriers or enablers of access. However, if access is prioritized earlier in the planning process, these effects will trickle down among the phases. As reviewers of the research, the research team must consider that access itself may not be black-or-white but rather a spectrum. Some marginalized groups may have access to some resources or opportunities yet still lack equitable access to other populations.

In recent years, marginalized groups have been given more attention by being directly targeted in policies and included in the decision-making. However, these groups are often still labeled as the 'victim' in disaster literature. To progress further with equitable access, more data and gender disaggregated data must be collected, and researchers must shift away from a vulnerability mindset and instead enable and empower marginalized groups. Though the review is not yet complete, one thing is clear: equitable access for women, gender minorities, and People with Disabilities needs greater attention in disaster contexts.

This is a summary of an event "Equity in Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for Women, LGBTQIA+, and People with Disabilities" by Dr. Corrie Hannah hosted by Global Insight in collaboration with ConnexUs and Search for Common Ground.