Chapter 10

Strengthening Resilience Through Disaster Risk Reduction: A Gender-centred Perspective for Malta

Roberta Lepre and Isotta Rossoni

10.1 Introduction

In 2016, Resolution 60/23 by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) called upon states to:

> *promote a gender-responsive approach, the integration of a gender perspective and the empowerment of women and girls in environmental, climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies, financing, policies and processes, towards achieving the meaningful and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues and towards building the resilience of women and girls to the adverse of climate change* (UN 2016).

Increasingly, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy-makers have come to acknowledge the immense benefits of integrating gender analyses and gender-responsive approaches in DRR work (UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN 2009; FAO 2016; Oxfam 2010). The core notion underlying this approach is that 'nothing in disaster work is gender-neutral' (Gender and Disaster Network 2005). In other words, recognising the differential and gendered impact of natural disasters, as well as capitalising on women's skills and know-how is considered essential to design and implement DRR policies that are not only inclusive, but also effective. Introducing gender mainstreaming in DRR work holds implications for prevention of gender-based violence, a common occurrence during/in the aftermath of natural disasters (Enarson and Pearse 2018). Gender equality and climate action should thus go hand in hand, as they have the potential to be mutually reinforcing. This view comes forth strongly in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, where gender equality features alongside a range of objectives focusing on environmental protection and sustainability (UN 2018). All countries, particularly those that are vulnerable to natural disasters, such as many small states, should take into consideration gender issues when devising their responses to prospective environmental threats and ensure that the whole population is represented by those vested with decision-making.

The island of Malta, at the crossroads between Europe and Africa, is one of the EU Member States that is likely to be most affected by climate change

(Guerreiro et al. 2018; Deutsche Bank 2008). Malta is prone to floods, erosion and fresh-water shortage (European Commission n.d.). Initiatives such as the National Flood Relief Project – which involved the construction of a network of underground tunnels, canals and bridges for better storm-water drainage by 2015 (Ministry for European Affairs and Equality n.d.) – hold promise and show an inclination towards better preparedness for small- or large-scale disruptions or potential disasters. However, flash storms and flooding remain a relatively frequent occurrence in the country (*Times of Malta* 2018; *The Malta Independent* 2018), and are often responsible for damage to infrastructure, increased traffic and, on occasion, harm to or death of residents.[1]

More recently, published research suggests that in the future, Malta will be plagued by more frequent and more severe droughts (Guerreiro et al. 2018). Valletta will be one of the European cities worst hit by drought and heatwaves as a result of climate change, potentially pushing the country beyond breaking point. Guerreiro et al. (2018) analysed changes in flooding, droughts and heatwaves for 571 European cities for the years 2050 to 2100 using all available climate models. The research team showed results for three possible futures, which they called the low-, medium- and high-impact scenarios. Even in the most optimistic scenario, Malta will experience 38 per cent more heatwave days each year and maximum temperatures around four degrees Celsius higher. On this view, drought will become 1.29 times more severe. Scientists estimate that the world's temperature is set to rise to 3°C above what was normal before the industrial age began. Sea-level rise will drastically alter the shape of the Maltese coastline, with the Northern and Harbour areas being hit especially hard. These bad omens should not only act as catalysts for enhanced DRR efforts, but also give impetus for gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive research and policies.

This chapter will discuss the numerous opportunities available in the Maltese context to marry DRR with the battle for gender equality. Rather than viewing gender equality as 'given-for-granted' or 'inherently desirable', the authors will strive to justify the significance of gender equality in the context of DRR in the Maltese scenario. Moreover, they will discuss and advocate an intersectional approach to gender equality, which recognises that gender interacts with other power structures and categories in meaningful ways, thus allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the situations of vulnerability faced by individuals (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research 2015). Drawing on existing data and research, this chapter will explore gender-centred approaches to DRR, discussing their applicability in the Maltese context. To do so, it will identify the most salient gender issues in Malta, as well as shed light on the vulnerabilities generated by the complex interactions of gender with age, disability and migration status. In addition, it will stress the importance of including women and women's rights activists in DRR initiatives and decision-making, identifying gaps and opportunities within existing political and social structures and presenting suggestions for gender mainstreaming in DRR in Malta. This analysis hopes to inspire DRR research and prevention work that is attuned to gender issues and at the same time, embraces an intersectional perspective, acknowledging that there cannot be resilience without gender equality.

10.2 Gender-centred approaches to DRR

In 2012, on the International Day for Disaster Reduction, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, stated that more than 200 million people who were affected by disasters every year are female, adding that the best recovery programmes are those that engage female survivors. True resilience, in Wahlström's view, is only possible if women are proactively involved in DRR (UNISDR 2012).

Wahlström's outlook resonates with a wide majority of gender-centred DRR research and policy work (FAO 2016; UNDP 2017; UN Women n.d.). Literature focusing on disaster and disaster preparedness in developing countries generally explores the gendered embodied experiences of disasters (Luft 2016). An example of this is Röhr's (2005) analysis of the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, which saw the death of five times the number of Bengali women compared to local men. Röhr pointed out that the root cause of this imbalance lay with the use of public spaces to issue warnings, in a context where women cannot leave the house unchaperoned. In the lead-up to the 1991 cyclone, warnings were issued to men in public spaces, whereas women, confined to the domestic sphere, remained unaware of the impending danger and perished at home while waiting for the return of their male relatives. Women's inability to swim also contributed to their victimisation. Similarly, research conducted by Oxfam (2005) found that the tsunami that hit India in 2004 struck down many more Indian women than men. While men were out at sea fishing, women were on the shore, waiting for them to bring in their catch to process, and thus perished while fulfilling their daily duties prescribed by traditional gender roles.[2] In other disaster scenarios, due to gendered processes of marginalisation, women and girls have lost their lives because they could not swim or climb trees, or because they stayed behind to look after children and the elderly Ear (n.d.).

Beyond death, direct harm or damage to property, women are also susceptible to the indirect effects of disasters. This includes an increase in reproductive work (care giving, domestic roles) in the aftermath of a natural disaster (United Nations/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2003), often coupled with loss of productive employment. Many women worldwide are engaged in the informal sector, which is commonly hit the hardest in the event of a disaster (Demetriades and Esplen 2008). In addition, systemic sexism and discrimination can also act as barriers to women and girls accessing healthcare and other services, with severe impacts on their health and well-being (ibid). Another worrisome indirect effect of natural disasters concerns violence and victimisation. After a disaster and in particular in situations of displacement, women and girls often become the targets of domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment (Demetriades and Esplen 2008; Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2006). In many cases, violence stems from men's loss of control in the face of loss and deprivation, and is further fuelled by society's unrealistic expectations towards men in post-disaster reconstruction (Zara and Parkinson 2013). Thus, disaster scenarios can transform and aggravate gender inequality, as well as engender novel situations of vulnerability.

Within scholarship examining gender issues in DRR, there is also growing acknowledgement that men and women hold different sets of skills and expertise that

are not only complementary, but also pivotal to effective DRR. Regrettably, women are often excluded from decision-making and prevention initiatives. Le Masson's (2013) research in the Indian context reveals that men and women often perceive existing resources and challenges differently; hence opening up space for women's voices in DRR can contribute to building better informed and more holistic preparedness. Similarly, at the 2015 UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, Kairangi (2015) referred to Fiji to illustrate the differences between men and women's reactions to disasters; while men in danger situations will attempt to make the house safer, women will often stock up on food and other essentials. She further discussed the vital role played by nurses in the course and aftermath of natural disasters. The support offered to disaster victims by nurses, who are predominantly female, was acknowledged by Cook Islands following the cyclone of 2011. Given the paucity of nurses on its territory, the government brought in foreign nurses to support and work with victims of the cyclone (ibid).

The recognition of differential impacts and skills across genders has given rise to advocacy work and research supporting the notion that DRR initiatives can and must act as a platform for gender empowerment. *Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction* (2014), a publication drafted by the United Nations in the lead-up to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Japan, makes an appeal to ensure that DRR policies are sensitive to gender differentiation and promote the inclusion of both men and women in DRR efforts across sectors. This should be done to ensure that DRR initiatives serve to combat gender inequalities rather than strengthen them, and contribute to furthering human rights and development (UN 2014). International research would seem to indicate that DRR has the potential to help tackle existing forms of gender inequality. Nielsen and Reenberg's (2010) research in Burkina Faso found that adaptation projects aided women in negotiating their gender roles in the domestic sphere. Other researchers working in Mali argue that environmental changes engendering male outward migration allowed for the creation of new paid jobs for women, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Djoudi and Brockhaus 2011). Making gender equality and empowerment integral elements of DRR is one of the key objectives of the UN Post-2015 Framework for DRR, which seeks to ensure that women's rights and the strengthened resilience of communities, and of women and girls, are at the core of disaster risk reduction efforts.

10.3 What's missing?

Gender analyses represent an important contribution to research on disasters and disaster preparedness; nevertheless, they occasionally fall prey to generalisations and over-simplifications (Demetriades and Esplen 2008). More specifically, analyses that fail to identify the complex interactions between gender and other forms of domination such as race, class, age, migration status or others, fall short of accounting for the multitude of human experiences of suffering. An intersectional approach can help conceptualise multiple and intersecting subjugations, challenging the assumption that patriarchy, racism and class privilege operate in isolation and with distinct outcomes. Intersectionality is a tool to grasp the multidimensional dynamics

of power and inequality (Dhamoon 2011) before, during and after a disaster. Such intersectional analyses should span the micro, meso and macro levels (Luft 2016) and be contextual, namely grounded in a well-rounded understanding of the specific circumstances and the particular location in time and space of women and girls. In fact, research conducted internationally provides invaluable insights; yet findings from one country or locality cannot be extrapolated and applied indiscriminately to other contexts (Demetriades and Esplen 2008). The battles and challenges of women in Malta will differ substantially from those of women in India; as will those of Maltese women from migrant women living in Malta; or those of young migrant women and the older generation. Moreover, within the very same group of 'migrant women' in any country, narratives may vary based on the type of migration status (or lack thereof), religious belief, age or other factors. Intersectionality therefore implies heightened awareness of intragroup differences.

Finally, gender analyses shouldn't focus exclusively on 'women'; although women are often the target of discrimination, the challenges faced by men – and for that matter, migrant men, gay men, young men, older men – vis-à-vis natural disasters should also be taken into account. Furthermore, including men as a focus of research can not only aid in identifying the vulnerabilities confronted by men, but also provide insight into how these vulnerabilities interact with and generate new vulnerabilities for women. An example of a gender-centred analysis exploring the issue of domestic violence on women, which encompasses men, is research undertaken in Australia following the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009. To make sense of the increased rates of intimate partner violence, researchers explored the colossal expectations placed on men who survived the fires and the ensuing feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy. Frustrated masculinity, often combined with alcohol and drug use, are pinpointed as chief causes of domestic violence (Zara and Parkinson 2013). The next sections of this chapter discuss gender inequality issues in Malta and articulate an intersectional gender analysis in DRR for Malta.

10.4 Gender inequality in Malta – gender and its intersections

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) regularly assesses the state of gender equality across Europe, ranking member states in a Gender Equality Index. The Index measures equality in the areas of employment, finances, knowledge, time, power and wealth, assigning to each country the score of 1 for full inequality and 100 for full equality. In 2015, Malta scored 46.8 out of 100, ranking 16th out of 28 in Europe. While Malta scored high with regards to access to health for both men and women, it gained low scores in the domains of power and time. EIGE's assessment noted the paucity of women in economic and political decision-making; and highlighted the disproportionate amount of time spent by women on care and domestic tasks (EIGE 2016).

According to a recent article published by the Malta Chamber of Commerce, although women in Malta pursue and complete post-secondary and tertiary education, they tend to work fewer hours than their men, with employed women working an average

of 35 hours per week, six hours less than their male counterparts. In addition, the unemployment rate for women is higher by almost one percentage point than for men (Malta Chamber of Commerce 2018). Although Malta's gender pay gap in 2017 stood at 12.2 per cent, lower than the European average of 16 per cent (Eurostat 2019), Eurostat data shows a widening gap from 2011 onwards, when the pay gap was 7.7 per cent (Eurostat 2018). In practice, this means that nowadays women doing the same job as men in Malta were getting paid 11 times less (Malta Chamber of Commerce 2018). The gap grows bigger within the 65+ age group, a finding symptomatic of the increased challenges faced by older women in Malta (ibid).

Migrant women from outside the EU, and in particular asylum-seeking women, are confronted with additional barriers vis-à-vis employment. A large majority of female asylum seekers living in Malta are out of employment, in spite of their high qualifications and work experience. The main obstacle to accessing and securing employment is discrimination on the basis of age, religion or nationality, colour and the hijab (Camilleri-Cassar 2011; Chana Merino 2017).

Women living with a disability in Malta grapple with specific difficulties vis-à-vis both education and employment. Although rates of education and employment for people with a disability are generally lower than those of the general population, disabled women tend to be more at a disadvantage than their male counterparts. Women with a disability generally do not further their studies past primary education; are 34 times more likely than men to take care of the household; and 3 times less likely to gain employment. Women with a disability are also twice more likely than men to live in an institution or in private accommodation that is old and/or in need of renovation (Spiteri Gingell 2011).

National Statistics Office (NSO) data for 2014–2016 shows that women remain at greater risk of poverty than men (NSO 2018). Single parent families – which have registered an increase in Malta in recent years and are generally headed by women (Cutajar 2006) – are at particular risk of experiencing poverty. Data show that the rates of single mothers' access to full-time employment are considerably lower than those of single fathers, and they often engage in part-time work or low-paid employment (Deguara n.d.; Government of Malta and European Commission 2003; Cutajar 2006). Teenage mothers wishing to access employment are likely to experience increased complications. Many teenage mothers would have interrupted their studies due to pregnancy; their lack of qualifications combined with their mothering role render securing a well-paid job problematic (Cutajar 2006).

There is also a covert dimension to women's poverty, which might not be captured by statistics measuring income by household. In Malta, it is often men who control the finances, even if women are commonly in charge of family expenses. Women belonging to low-income families may thus sacrifice food and clothing for themselves, in order to attend to their children's needs (Deguara n.d.). Moreover, in situations of domestic violence, perpetrators often restrict access to finances as a tactic to control their victims. Qualitative research conducted in Malta shows that financial dependence is an important dimension of gender-based violence on the island (Naudi et al. 2018).

Malta has registered an increase in reported domestic violence offences in recent years (Formosa 2017). This is in part due to changes in legislation, which allowed for specific data on domestic violence to become available from 2007 onwards (ibid) and, arguably, on increased awareness as a result of civil society activism (see: Dimitrijevic 2018). Regrettably, due to fear, shame, disillusionment and lack of trust in the authorities, many domestic violence crimes remain unreported (Gerada 2017 quoted in Saliba 2017; Micallef Straface 2013 quoted in Calleja 2013).

Women are the main targets of domestic violence with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) research showing that women in Europe grapple with discrimination in the workplace, harassment and sexual harassment, (cyber) hate speech and violence of a physical, psychological and sexual nature (FRA 2014); based on a 2014 FRA Survey, 15 per cent of women in Malta had experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15. Vakili Zad (2013) points to a direct link between discrimination, low socioeconomic and political status, and women's higher rates of victimisation in Malta. Due to discrimination and hampered access to employment, women become increasingly dependent on their male partners and, consequently, more vulnerable to violence. Women from disadvantaged backgrounds may become homeless after fleeing the domestic home. Violence is often present throughout the life span: it generally begins between the 20s and the 30s and continues for 30 to 40 years. Forms of abuse include emotional and financial abuse, and neglect by male spouses, children or partners (NCPE 2015).

Migration status and cultural beliefs problematise reporting – many migrant women who are victims of domestic violence and may experience other forms of gender-based violence – such as female genital mutilation (FGM), rape and harassment – during their migration journey do not report crimes to the authorities for fear of deportation, cultural and language barriers (Rossoni et al. 2018). Due to traditional beliefs, older women may also be reluctant to seek help (NCPE 2015; Naudi et al. 2018); women with a disability experiencing violence face the additional challenge that professionals supporting victims of violence do not fully grasp the problematics inherent to their target group (Naudi et al. 2018). Although violence in same-sex couples has gained increased scrutiny abroad (see, for instance, Jolly 2014), there is still limited awareness in Malta about violence in the context of gay and bisexual male couples or in the queer, transgender and bisexual communities.[3]

10.5 Gender and DRR

As previously argued, there is a direct relationship between gender equality, women's empowerment and climate change. First, women appear to be disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which could, in turn, exacerbate existing gender disparities. Second, women have unique knowledge and skills that can help make the response to climate change more effective and sustainable. Third, climate change policies that take account of gender-based vulnerability and the unique contribution that women can make, could help advance gender equality and women's empowerment while fighting climate change.

10.6 Differential impacts

Given the dearth of gender-centred analyses in DRR in the Maltese context, assessing the differential impacts of climate change and natural disasters on the island is problematic. Research focusing on floods and landslides between 1965 and 2014, conducted in the Italian context, would seem to indicate that in Italy, higher numbers of men – particularly older men – perish in natural disasters, compared to lower percentages of women. While victims of floods generally perish outdoors (e.g. while driving), being indoors is more dangerous in the event of a landslide. The researchers justify the higher rates of male victims, by pointing to the prevalence of risk-taking attitudes among men and the differential exposure of the genders to geo-hydrological hazards in Italy (Salvati et al. 2018). Nevertheless, they also note that women over 70 are more vulnerable to floods than men in the same age group, thus highlighting the importance of considering additional variables besides gender (ibid). Referring to the similar findings stemming from international research (see Jonkman and Kelman 2005; Coates 2010), the authors conclude that: 'In developed countries, flood mortality is larger for males, and particularly drivers of motor-vehicles, whereas in low-income countries flood mortality is higher for females' (Salvati et al. 2018, 868, 869).

While one could hypothesise that similar consequences would apply to Malta, this research does not take into account other forms of direct impact, such as damage to property, which may also concern women. Moreover, the researchers fail to discuss the indirect damages documented by international research, most notably the increase in women's reproductive work following a natural disaster (Unites Nations/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2003). In light of evidence pointing to the large discrepancies between time dedicated to household chores and care by women and men in Malta (EIGE 2016), one could argue that climate change and natural disasters would likely broaden the gap. Furthermore, one should also consider the indirect impacts of disasters in terms of access to employment and other services, such as health. While it is possible that disaster scenarios open up new opportunities for employment (see Kairangi 2015), arguably, women's already hampered access to employment is likely to worsen as a result of such events. This is particularly true of women who are doubly or triply marginalised due to migration status, religion, age, disability or other factors, as previously argued.

When it comes to access to health and mental health support, this may prove particularly problematic for migrant women due to language and cultural barriers (Kopin and Integra Foundation 2016), but also for men, both local and foreign. Mental illnesses are still surrounded by stigma in Malta (Agius et al. 2016) and, very often, men are reluctant to seek help (Calleja 2018; Times of Malta 2018), a finding validated by international research (Demetriades and Esplen 2008). Moreover, mental health issues and expectations towards men in a post-disaster scenario may also result in an increase in domestic violence and violence against women (Enarson and Pearse 2018), exacerbating existing issues and inequalities.

10.7 Improving today for a better tomorrow: resilience through gender-responsive approaches to DRR

In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, which hit Miami in 1992, women's knowledge and their role as primary actors in both the local community and the care economy aided them in responding more effectively to the effects of the disaster. Their community-based links ensured that even the more marginalised, such as victims of crime, single mothers and youths, received adequate support (Blomstrom et al. 2014). Women are essential to true resilience and should be proactively involved in DRR efforts. A quick glance at activism in the area of women's rights in Malta in recent years,[4]. proves that there are numerous organisations whose members are talented, invested and passionate about their cause. Additionally, and more importantly, they foster links with the most marginalised within the Maltese community, namely with those who are likely to be most affected by climate change and natural disasters. Civil society actors working in the areas of disability, mental health and LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) rights should also be involved in prevention efforts.

Engaging civil society actors that work with marginalised communities can help identify existing signs of resilience; it would be a mistake to assume that resilience should be built from scratch. Many individuals, including individuals in situations of vulnerability, have already faced a range of life-changing challenges. A woman who has managed to cope with violence, recover and look to the future is a resilient woman, and can likely provide valuable input to those working on gender-responsive DRR. The next section will present the authors' suggestions for gender-responsive policies in DRR.

10.8 Suggestions for gender-responsive policies

Malta has developed a national climate change adaptation strategy, which was approved in May 2012, following the review of the work submitted to it by the Climate Change Committee appointed in August 2009, which committee consisted of nine men and one woman (Climate Committee for Adaption Change, Malta 2010).

In 2016, following the setting up of a new risk assessment process and the finalisation of the first national risk assessment (NRA), Malta also participated in a thematic peer review on risk assessment (European Commission 2016). One of the main recommendations emanating from this peer review outlined the need for Malta to 'institutionalise the involvement and co-operation of the government and other stakeholders in a national platform for disaster risk reduction that includes all sectors of society (governmental, private, civil society, experts, academics, industry etc.)', with another recommendation to 'consider having the NRA address more in-depth the risks related to, inter alia, rises in sea level and climate change'. It was pointed out that 'Malta, as an island and a small country, is more vulnerable to climate change than inland and bigger countries' (European Commission 2016, 28).

The Sustainable Development Goals, developed with the aim of having a set of universal goals to guide leaders across the globe in addressing the world's urgent

environmental and economic challenges, are built on the success of the Millennium Development Goals, albeit including new areas of priority, including climate change, economic inequality and innovation. Goal 11, which deals with 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', requires that by 2020, governments should 'substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels'(UNDP n.d.).

The Sendai Framework provides that:

> *Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. In this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organised voluntary work of citizens.*

Gender mainstreaming entails integrating a gender perspective into every stage of the policy process, assessing the impact of policies on men and women and redressing inequalities.

'This is the way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men, creating space for everyone within the organisations as well as in communities – to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality' (European Commission n.d.).

As such, gender mainstreaming is a tool through which to contribute towards effective and inclusive policy-making and programme implementation, while contributing to sustainable development. 'In practice, this requires a proactive approach, the need to identify those areas where a degree of inequality could potentially arise, assess the underlying causes for such inequalities, and take the necessary steps to bring about change' (ibid).

Malta has recently launched its 'Sustainable Development Vision for 2050' – a document which sets out a long-term framework for 'advancing sustainable development in Malta while taking into consideration past shortcomings and achievements'.

The document aims to identify 'existing gaps where further development is required and setting out realistic goals to address these challenges. It also takes into account developments at international and EU level' (Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change 2018). The document is intended to pave the way for a new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands for 2050, described in the document as 'one of the priorities of the Maltese Government' and which is set to guide all future policies and policy implementation, with the aim of addressing the current national and global challenges.

It is argued that:

> *Gender mainstreaming should form the integral basis of policy formulation from the initial stage of policy development. Planners cannot assume that women and men, girls and boys will automatically benefit equally from a policy. This will ensure that the development of the policy takes account of and is responsive to gender requirements and that any inequalities are anticipated and addressed. Effective policies, programmes and projects that meet the needs of all citizens and benefit them equally can only be achieved if attention to gender issues is taken systematically at all stages in the planning process* (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality 2013, 10).

The adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach into the new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese islands therefore presents a unique opportunity which would, on the one hand, ensure that the said strategy itself is effective in the widest and most inclusive manner possible, in that it takes due consideration of its potential impact on men and women, and removing the assumption that people will be impacted in the same way despite criteria that differentiate them; while on the other, serve as a platform for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in Malta – a country which, despite its relative economic success, still ranks a miserable 91st place in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* (World Economic Forum 2018).

The development of the new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands for 2050 will require inclusive foresight. Foresight methodology is 'an operational framework within which…data are placed so that their meaning may be seen more clearly' (Leedy 1997, 204). 'Foresight methodologies then, may be viewed as frameworks for making sense of data generated by structured processes to think about the future. In organisations, foresight methodologies have a particular role in the strategy development process. Foresight informs the thinking that occurs before strategic decisions are made by expanding the perceptions of the strategic options or choices available…' (Conway n.d)

The *Global Gender Gap Report* states that:

> *the equal contribution of women and men in this process of deep economic and societal transformation is critical. More than ever, societies cannot afford to lose out on the skills, ideas and perspectives of half of humanity to realise the promise of a more prosperous and human-centric future that well-governed innovation and technology can bring* (World Economic Forum 2018).

Understood as 'the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making' (Council of Europe 2004) gender mainstreaming is therefore a tool which can make policies and programmes more efficient and, in turn, a nation more resilient.

When it comes to the implementation of gender mainstreaming, various methods and approaches have been developed. One of such notable approach is the '4R'

method, described as 'an effective instrument for analysing and implementing a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes and activities' as 'it provides a gender analysis on how the operation is run and financed' (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality 2013, 16).

The first 'R' stands for 'representation' and seeks to determine who the decision-makers of a particular initiative are, and who implements such decisions, with the aim of having a healthy gender balance in decision-making structures. Looking back at the Climate Change Committee which presented the recommendations for the 2012 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, for instance, one sees that that committee consisted on nine men and one woman. It is imperative that the same mistake is not repeated in the development of new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands for 2050, by ensuring, among other things, that both male and female genders are equal participants in the foresight methodology process that should inform the development of the strategy.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE 2009) Ministerial Council's Decision 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life underlines that participating states need to take effective measures to ensure women's equal participation and representation at all levels of life. This is because the OSCE believes that the promotion of equality between men and women and the protection of human rights 'are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region' (OSCE 14/04, 1). Furthermore, research indicates that adequate diversity paves the way for generating more comprehensive solutions, leading to higher-quality decisions (Wiersema and Bantel 1992).

When it comes to women and leadership, however, the situation in Malta is rather bleak. Malta's percentage of women parliamentarians has only risen by five percentage points in more than 60 years (Dalli 2018 cited in the *Times of Malta* 2018). This figure is not surprising, in the context of a country in which 45.7 per cent of the electorate perceive men to be more suitable than women for parliamentary representation (National Statistics Office Malta 2007).

Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention requires state parties to 'take the necessary measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men' (Council of Europe 2011). Despite various efforts to change perceptions,[5] progress remains slow for a variety of reasons, including the lack of family-friendly measures and lack of spousal support (Cutajar 2014). This notwithstanding, the fact that a salient feature of the new proposed Sustainable Development Vision 2050 is to mainly focus on prevention, rather than mitigation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion 2018), presents a further timely opportunity.

The second 'R' in the 4R method mentioned above stands for 'resources'. Being 'the most comprehensive statement of a government's social and economic plans and

priorities' (United Women National Committee Australia n.d.), a budget is one of the main resources that should be addressed in the assessment.

> *Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is about ensuring that Government budgets and the policies and programs that underlie them address the needs and interests of individuals that belong to different social groups. Thus, GRB looks at biases that can arise because a person is male or female, but at the same time considers disadvantage suffered as a result of ethnicity, caste, class or poverty status, location and age. GRB is not about separate budgets for women or men nor about budgets divided equally. It is about determining where the needs of men and women are the same, and where they differ. Where the needs are different, allocations should be different* (Budlender 2006, cited in National Commission for the Promotion of Equality 2009).

It is worthy to mention, for instance, that without adequate gender representation and gender sensitive budgets, the social costs which result from a natural disaster can be overlooked or remain insufficiently resourced. The social costs of a natural disaster can far outweigh the direct financial costs. Such social costs can arise from, *inter alia*, mental health issues arising as a consequence of the disaster, higher rates of alcohol abuse, the spreading of chronic diseases and family violence (Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities 2016). With regards to family violence, the Istanbul Convention obliges Malta, as a signatory to the convention, to 'take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention by any natural or legal person' (Council of Europe 2011), and hence this perspective needs to be integrated into the development of Malta's new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands for 2050.

> *Emergency situations can be an incredibly stressful, disruptive and traumatic time for those affected. Whole communities can be uprooted, friends and family divided, homes, livelihoods and, of course, lives can be lost. In the aftermath of such a disaster, people may experience a range of physical, psychological, emotional or behavioural reactions that, while perfectly natural, can significantly impact their ability to cope with the situation* (Australian Red Cross 2015, cited in Tehan 2016).

The third and fourth 'R's in the 4R method stand for 'realia' (analysing conditions) and 'realisation' (formulating new objectives and measures). These are the steps which, when applied to the development of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands for 2050, would require analysis of current data to be projected onto a future scenario, and developing measures and initiatives aimed at, on the one hand, preventing the escalation of the negative consequences brought about by climate change; while on the other hand, developing measures aimed at mitigating such consequences – in other words, building resilience.

10.9 Final considerations for Malta and other small states

- Like Malta, many small states are in a privileged position to devise and implement DRR policies that are gender sensitive and gender responsive. Small size is

synonymous with increased opportunities for networking and establishing strategic partnerships among different professionals, thereby creating truly multidisciplinary task forces, jointly working towards the achievement of various SDGs.

- In a scenario where citizens are increasingly disillusioned with politics and prime ministers, presidents and policy-makers are often perceived to be detached from the people, small states can really 'turn the tide' by involving members of the polity in DRR efforts. This involvement should not serve to impose the desires of the majority over those of minorities, but rather provide a platform for empowerment for all individuals within society, including the most marginalised.
- As highlighted in the discussion of the Miami hurricane (see Section 6), social society is crucial to DRR efforts. Multisectoral collaboration on DRR and gender issues can help bolster the know-how of the non-profit sector in small states, promoting social innovation and capacity building. Although various forms of multisectoral collaboration may already be in place, the objective should be that of broadening the scope through more harmonious practices and concerted efforts.
- The collection of gender-disaggregated data goes hand in hand with the need to gather 'intersectional data', namely data that is disaggregated by age, race, religion, sex, gender, gender identity/expression, migration status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, disability and any other factor that is of relevance. Gathering and analysing this kind of data can help small states orchestrate more effective DRR policies, setting an example for many countries worldwide.

10.10 Conclusions

Given Malta's status as one of the fastest-growing economies in the EU, enjoying a general government surplus (Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion 2018), the country is in a privileged position to be able to invest resources and efforts into developing a strategic plan which would benefit generations to come. Malta's renewed commitment to mainstream the principle of gender equality in all spheres of life (Dalli 2018 cited in the *Times of Malta* 2018), coupled with the new Sustainable Development Vision 2050 which is intended to inform all policy development going forward, presents a unique opportunity to enhance resilience through gender mainstreaming, while creating a platform through which to improve the country's performance vis-à-vis gender equality.

The Maltese government's commitment to extend its efforts in relation to gender mainstreaming, *inter alia*, through the introduction of an 'equality duty' on government, and an obligation to have a minimum of 40 per cent of the under-represented sex on its boards (Dalli 2018 cited in the *Times of Malta* 2018), implies that there is the necessary political will to take this agenda forward. Specific gender equality policy, expressed through recently introduced legal amendments and the adoption of a national strategy (ibid), strengthen this position. Current relevant data is also available and, in this regard, it is imperative to ensure that all such data is compiled in a gender-disaggregated manner in order to enable the required analysis, and that this data is made public to inform adequate consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including academia,

civil society organisations and the business community. Further research might be required to inform the development of future policies and programmes. The relevant administrative systems, such as the Focal Point Network falling under the organisation of the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC), which is tasked with the exchange of information on matters pertaining to sustainable development in Malta, appears to be a system which could be pivotal in spearheading this approach – assuming that there is sufficient awareness concerning the value of introducing a gender mainstreaming approach and expertise in the manner in which this should be carried out. The Malta Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit, whose function is to co-ordinate all critical infrastructure protection and emergency and disaster management issues at the national level, is another system which could be pivotal in adopting this approach.

However, it is important to ensure that for this and other administrative systems to function properly and effectively, and to meet the ambitious goals set in relation to sustainable development and gender parity, adequate financial and human resources are made available. Last but not least, a drive to empower more women to enter political and public life and to be active participants in decision-making processes needs to be aggressively sustained. This will require a systemic shift to transform systems and structures and make them more gender inclusive, on the one hand, while on the other hand actively working to change prevalent cultural and social attitudes towards the perceived roles of men and women.

This is an ambitious task which will require the highest political commitment, as well as co-operation and coherence among various policy dimensions. Positively, there is already acknowledgement of the need to raise further awareness of the need to break silos and harmonise efforts towards long-term sustainable development (Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion 2018). If Malta chooses to adequately implement the legal and policy frameworks which it has already committed itself to, it can truly become a global pioneer in leveraging gender mainstreaming to bring about positive, sustainable transformation.

Definitions

Disaster: 'A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts' (UNISDR 2017).

Gender mainstreaming: 'Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination' (EIGE 2016)

Resilience: This paper draws on the definition of resilience articulated by Le Masson et al. (2011), namely as 'the ability of individuals, their homes and their communities to anticipate, avoid, confront, recover from and adapt to natural hazards and

environmental changes so that impacts are the least destructive possible' (Le Masson et al. 2011, 13). The notion of resilience is not only crucial to research and policy work in the field of climate change and DRR, but also to work in the area of gender-based violence and mental health. Numerous studies – see, for instance, Anderson et al. (2012); Shanthakumari et al. (2013); and Lopez-Fuentes and Calvete (2015) – focusing on female victims/survivors of domestic violence, have identified elements promoting resilience, which include individuals' personal traits, their surrounds (e.g. social networks) and societal factors. Future research should strive to integrate these two bodies of research to further develop the notion of resilience within gender-sensitive approaches to disaster risk reduction (DRR).

DRR and CCA: There are ongoing debates on the differences between DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA), which concern the identification of hazards (mostly hydro-meteorological in the case of CCA; hydro- meteorological, human and technological for DRR), the time scale and the measures envisaged (Tearfund 2008). This chapter will refrain from delving into the synergies and areas of conflict between the two fields, referring exclusively to DRR. This choice is motivated by DRR's tendency to focus on vulnerabilities which extend beyond an exclusive focus on disaster preparedness (ibid). This approach is better suited to the discussion on gender-based vulnerabilities presented in this chapter.

Notes

1 A case in point was the death of a Romanian man residing in Malta, who passed away as a result of a tree falling on his car during a storm. See: https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKBN1FU0GM

2 If a boat is far from the shore, it is likely to be limitedly affected from the destructive power of a tsunami; this, on the other hand, will hit the shallow waters by the shore the hardest. See: https://earthobservatory.sg/faq-on-earth-sciences/why-does-boat-sea-experience-tsunami-differently-boat-near-shore

3 For this reason, these issues were highlighted in a joint document by the Commission on Domestic Violence and the University of Malta as relevant research topics, requiring investigation. See: https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/347642/ResearchBookletonDomesticViolenceprovidedbytheCommisiononDomesticViolence.pdf

4 See, for instance: https://lovinmalta.com/news/local/maltese-women-to-rally-in-valletta-this-weekend-after-domestic-abuse-murder-that-shocked-nation; https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/72919/2016_was_the_year_the_maltese_stood_up_for_womens_rights_and_gender_equality#.XCis4BNKjrk; and http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-03-08/local-news/Watch-Yes-means-yes-no-means-no-The-Women-s-Day-March-6736185948. There are a range of organisations involved in the area of women's rights, gender and gender-based violence including The Women's Rights Foundation, Victim Support Malta, the Migrant Women Association, GEM, Soar and many more.

5 See for instance the project: 'Gender Balance in Decision Making' (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality 2013).

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