

Companion Paper for Spotlight 4: Gender-Transformative Disaster Risk Reduction

The need for gender-transformative disaster risk reduction

Understanding how people's lives are impacted by gender norms, roles and relations within a given culture and society is critical to both understanding and reducing disaster risk. Women, girls, boys, men, and people of diverse gender identities have distinct needs, capacities, skills, and vulnerabilities that shape the ways that they approach, experience and recover from disaster and climate change impacts. Gender inequalities and discriminatory norms also result in gender differentiated exposure and vulnerability to hazards, which, along with women's and girls' limited access to early warning and risk information, has resulted in women dying at much higher rates than men in several recent disasters.ⁱ

Given that exposure and vulnerability to disaster risk are socially, economically, politically and culturally constructed, they can also be reduced. Yet, inadequate attention and action have been given to the ways in which gender inequalities and disaster risk exacerbate each other. Ultimately, this synergy can be utilized to improve gender equality and women's empowerment through the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in coherence with the broader Agenda 2030. Gender-transformative disaster risk reduction initiatives simultaneously advance gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership, support sustainable development, reduce disaster risk, and strengthen resilience.

Barriers to gender-transformative disaster risk reduction

1. Limited sex-, age-, disability-, and income-disaggregated disaster data, and a limited understanding of the gendered nature of disaster and climate risk undermines evidence-based decision-making and priority setting.
2. Under-representation of diverse women in disaster risk reduction decision-making, leadership, and governance processes contributes towards the lack of prioritization of the specific needs of women and girls in disaster risk management.
3. Disaster risk reduction policies and strategies that are not informed by intersectional gender analyses can inadvertently exacerbate gender inequalities.

ⁱ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Policy-brief-Gender-and-age-inequality-of-disaster-risk-en.pdf>

4. Early warning information often does not reach women, and when women's diverse voices, experiences and networks are excluded from planning, design and implementation of risk information systems the risks to lives, the environment and infrastructure increase.

5. Investments in disaster risk reduction are inadequate and leave women behind. Investments in risk-informed development need to be radically scaled-up, however the benefits of existing investments often do not reach women and other marginalized groups, and insufficient financing is available to women's organisations working to reduce disaster risk at the local level.

Recommendations to implement gender-transformative disaster risk reduction

- 1. Support the development of a gender action plan for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**, as called for in the CSW66 Agreed Conclusions, and the Co-Chairs summary from 2022 Global Platform, to facilitate a cohesive and integrated approach with other frameworks' gender action plans, while simultaneously supporting the implementation of CEDAW Recommendation 37, the SDGs, and the Sendai Framework in a structured and action-oriented way.
- 2. Ensure implementation of disaster risk reduction policies and programmes uphold the guiding principles of the Sendai Framework**, including a human rights-based approach in which a gender, age, disability, and cultural perspective is integrated in all policies and practices, and women's leadership is promoted.
- 3. Increase disaggregated data reporting in the Sendai Framework Monitor** to strengthen understanding of gender differentiated disaster impacts, and utilize custom indicators (Member States) and the Voluntary Commitments Platform (non-state actors) to improve intersectional gender analysis and reporting.
- 4. Mainstream gender analysis into assessments, tools, and templates at all levels to understand the underlying drivers of disaster risk**, and support integration of gender across post-disaster needs assessments, post-disaster recovery processes, coordination mechanisms, strategies, plans and budgets.
- 5. Promote and support diversity and gender balance in leadership, senior decision-making roles and representation** at all levels of disaster risk reduction governance and strengthen coordination between disaster agencies and national women's machineries and other gender stakeholders to support risk-informed development.
- 6. Address structural gender inequality as an underlying driver of risk in DRR laws, policies, programmes, and governance** by revising national and local level disaster risk reduction laws, policies, strategies, and plans as needed to ensure they are non-discriminatory, gender-transformative and inclusive, and specifically address sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence.

- 7. Support the implementation of gender-responsive and people-centred early-warning systems**, which disseminate risk information and early warning messages as universally accessible and implementable actions, especially for marginalized populations living in rural and remote areas.
- 8. Increase investment for gender-responsive livelihoods, infrastructure and services, and adaptive social protection**, and utilise gender budgeting guidelines and tools to prepare and implement gender-responsive national DRR/resilience budgets, and ensure that predictable and sustainable financing is provided to women’s organisations.

Frameworks that support gender-transformative disaster risk reduction

There are numerous global, regional, and national policy frameworks that support gender equality and women’s empowerment in disaster risk reduction.

1. The post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the intrinsic linkages between SDG5 on Gender Equality, the achievement of all other Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides a legal foundation to support a human rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction that supports gender equality, and CEDAW General Recommendation 37 issued by the committee in 2018 serves as guidance to State Parties to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to disaster risk management and humanitarian response.
3. At the regional level, the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (2021-2024), the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme 2021-2025, and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific 2017-2030, all recognise the specific needs and roles of those most affected by disasters, including women.
4. The Agreed Conclusions from the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), on the theme, ‘Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental, and disaster risk reduction policies’, should guide the ongoing work of Member States and of regional, national, and local DRR platforms to tackle structural gender inequalities, and support women’s full and equal participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction
5. The ongoing Midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 provides an important opportunity to identify priorities that will help accelerate progress towards the achievement of the goal, outcome and targets of Sendai, including a human rights-based and gender transformative approach to disaster risk reduction.