



Learning from COVID-19 to strengthen gender-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction

23 April 2021

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“Women need to be trusted. We are drivers of change, drivers of resilience building in our communities”

Josephine Castillo, GROOTS Philippines and Huairou Commission

DRR CHALLENGE

Women, girls, boys, men, and people of diverse gender identities have distinct vulnerabilities in each context that shape the way that they experience and recover from disaster impacts. Disasters exacerbate many of the prevailing gender inequalities that exist in societies, which can be seen in the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women and girls.

Women's over-representation in sectors severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, including tourism, hospitality, and informal work, has resulted in women bearing the brunt of the economic fallout from COVID-19. The social impact for women is high, with limited social safety nets and fiscal stimulus, a higher burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and higher rates of domestic and intimate partner violence

The pandemic has resulted in a reallocation of resources and priorities that have adversely impacted on women's health care and protection, with contraceptive use disrupted for 12 million women and intimate partner violence up 700% in some countries. At least 11 million girls are at high risk of never returning to school as a result of the pandemic, signaling future generations of girls who have fewer opportunities, are less-educated, and are more likely to marry early and be subjected to intimate partner violence. Yet data from the UN Women and UNDP COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker show that out of 225 COVID-19 task forces in 137 countries only 4% had gender parity and 84% were dominated by men. Ensuring that women are not only participating but leading disaster risk reduction efforts is vital to ensure they reduce the impact of disaster for everyone.

WEBINAR OBJECTIVE

The event:

1. Highlighted the need for and effectiveness of gender-responsive disaster risk reduction in COVID-19 recovery.
2. Identified challenges and good practices in developing and implementing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies, policies and plans at the country level.

3. Discussed the specific challenges of compounded disasters and how a gender-transformative approach can help reduce multi-hazard disaster risk.

PANELISTS

- Ms. Josephine Castillo, GROOTS Philippines and Huairou Commission
- Ms. Sari Lehtiranta, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN, Geneva
- Ms. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Ms. Tine Mørch Smith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva, Norway
- Ms. Ha Nguyen, Research Fellow, Gender, Environment and Development Research Cluster, Asia Centre, Stockholm Environment Institute
- Mr. Ib Petersen, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund
- Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women
- Mr. Jeff Roach, Deputy Permanent Representative, Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva
- Mr. Bård Vegar Solhjell, Director General, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Government of Norway

The webinar was moderated by Ms. Stephanie Speck.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Deepen understanding of the root causes of vulnerability and the gendered nature of risk

- Improve the collection and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated disaster data.
- Invest in examining the root causes of disaster risks and vulnerability as statistical data on disaster impacts does not directly address deeper questions such as, who are vulnerable, why and what are they vulnerable to?
- Analyse gender norms, roles, responsibilities and relations to develop safeguards for disaster response and recovery that will appropriately respond to the vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of girls, boys and women in the particular context.
- Recognise the ways in which multiple and intersecting identities overlap to create an individual's unique risk and vulnerability profile. Too often women

and girls, people living with a disability, children, elderly and other marginalized groups are regarded as a homogenous group of 'vulnerable people'.

2. Broaden partnerships and strengthen coordination through an inclusive all-of-society approach

- Invest resources to build capacities in gender responsive disaster risk reduction and enhance collaboration among diverse stakeholders across the sectors at the national and local level.
- Empower and give space to women and girls, in all their diversity, to participate fully across every stage of the disaster planning and decision-making process.
- Increase funding to address both inequalities and the structural causes of disaster risk and vulnerability, as well as gender-responsive efforts in DRR governance and resilience building to sufficient and sustainable levels.
- Make a greater proportion of resources available directly to grassroots women's organisations in support of women as agents of change.
- Recognise and support the role that women and women's organisations play in building resilience in their communities.
- Create space for diversity at decision-making tables, particularly for women's organisations, organisations for persons with disability, LGBTQI+ groups, youth and others who have historically been excluded. This may require changing the existing patriarchal and colonial norms and approaches to decision-making.

3. Promote and support women's leadership in disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery at all levels to create more inclusive and resilient societies

- Strengthen women's political capabilities and influence in disaster risk reduction decision-making and planning processes to promote their leadership and participation.
- Institutionalise the equitable participation of women and other marginalised groups in disaster risk reduction, including through quotas and other initiatives.
- Support the Women's Resilience to Disasters programme by [joining its network](#) to leverage women as agents of change in disaster risk reduction and enable them to meaningfully contribute to an inclusive and equitable COVID-19 recovery process to build forward better together, leaving no one behind.
- Join UNDRR's Women's International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction, which has been established to promote and support women's leadership. Women in all their diversity, as well as male champions, are encouraged [to join](#).

4. Develop and implement inclusive and gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies and action plans

- Establish and improve national and sub-national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure country performance on gender-responsive efforts in the implementation of the Sendai Framework.
- Improve access to multi-hazard early warning systems and risk information, through inclusive consultation and improved accessibility efforts

- Ensure an intersectional and inclusive approach to disaster risk reduction policies and plans that helps to redress the tendency to victimise people from marginalised groups.
- Building on lessons learnt from COVID-19 prioritise gender equality in disaster risk assessments, planning, implementation and monitoring activities through governance policies, formal and informal protocols and programmes. Include actions that ensure the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and the continuity of sexual and reproductive health services.

Acknowledgements

This webinar was co-hosted by the Governments of **Norway, Australia, Kenya and Finland**, as well as **UNDRR, UN Women, UNFPA, Huairou Commission, and Stockholm Environment Institute**.

References for further reading

Publications

- [Framework and Tools for Measuring Women's Leadership and Meaningful Participation in COVID-19 Responses](#)
- [Review of gender-responsiveness and disability-inclusion in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [Action brief: Gender and disaster risk reduction and response in the context of COVID-19: The Asia-Pacific Region](#)
- [Gender and age inequality of disaster risk](#)
- [A framework for transforming the relationship between development and disaster risk](#)
- [Women's International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction](#)

Websites

- <https://www.undrr.org/gender>
- <https://www.undrr.org/womens-leadership>
- <https://wrd.preventionweb.net/>
- <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/disaster-risk-reduction>
- <https://www.unfpa.org/covid19>
- <https://www.unfpa.org/emergencies>

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