



Village life in Laos. Khammouane Province, Laos, 2015 © Bart Verweij/IFRC

# International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies Focus on gender and diversity in disaster risk reduction

The Asia Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Each year, the region experiences a full range of disasters, from earthquakes and volcanic eruptions to extreme weather events such as typhoons, floods and drought. Central to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent's (IFRC) humanitarian mandate, and in line with the Red Cross Red Crescent's Fundamental Principles, the IFRC is committed to ensure that all women, men, girls and boys, irrespective of age, disability, health status, social, religious, migrant or ethnic group are protected before, during and after disasters.

## Guiding our approach are the following key frameworks:

- [IFRC Strategic Framework on gender and diversity issues 2013-2020](#) (Strategic level)
- [IFRC Minimum Standard Commitments to gender and diversity in emergency programming](#) (Operational level)
- Resolution on 'Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response' (non-binding commitment by states and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Through the implementation of these frameworks, our member National Societies strive to ensure that disaster risk reduction and humanitarian programmes and services are conducted in a non-discriminatory way.

Together with the support of partners such as the Canadian Red Cross and the Government of Canada, our focus is to reach those made most vulnerable, and disproportionately affected by disasters in a way that promotes gender equality, protection, inclusion, and respect for diversity. Through the Resolution on prevention of sexual and gender based violence in disasters and crisis, the IFRC and its member's commit, together with States, to mitigate sexual and gender based violence in times of disaster as a priority. We achieve this through operational research, application of minimum standards and working in partnerships to determine root causes of sexual and gender based violence in disasters in each context.



Village member tests mega phone to make announcements during a Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction simulation. Khammouane Province, Laos, 2015 © Bart Verweij/IFRC

## Aligning with the Sendai Framework

In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction's Priorities for Action, IFRC works with National Societies on a people-centred approach. This ensures our work is relevant and effective within the local context. To achieve this, we focus on:

- gender and diversity sensitive policies, plans, assessments and tools across all disaster risk reduction activities
- ensuring full participation of women, men, girls, boys and diverse groups in risk assessments and in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes
- promoting all people to volunteer or become members of the Red Cross Red Crescent, irrespective of gender, race, religion, legal status in any given country.
- emphasizing the necessity for women in leadership and decision making roles in all areas of risk reduction work and ensuring women take leadership roles in the branches of the Red Cross Red Crescent throughout Asia Pacific and convey community voices at international fora.

## Networks and partnerships

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction commits to an 'all-of-society engagement and partnership approach'. The IFRC regards its partnerships as fundamental to achieving both the participation and the protection of communities to disaster risk. Regional and sub-regional gender and diversity net-

works have been established in Asia Pacific, with focal points positioned in Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies.

These networks facilitate collaborative peer-to-peer learning to build capacity in the region and translate this into local-level actions. Through the National Societies' role as auxiliary to public authorities we work to raise awareness of decision makers and opinion leaders in government on the importance of targeted and mainstreamed gender and diversity approaches to disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, we are strengthening co-operation with local partners, civil society organisations and the United Nations to ensure we work towards a common agenda.

At the regional level, IFRC is working with bodies such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and is engaging in regional platforms such as the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), as well as aligning with global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.'

To further affirm our commitment to ensuring gender equality and an inclusive approach to risk reduction, IFRC through its '[One Billion Coalition](#)' initiative, will ensure that from the local to global level, resilience of all women, men, girls and boys in our communities remains a priority.



Myanmar Red Cross staff assist an elderly community affected by flooding, Kalay, Sagaing 2015 © Kyaw San Win/Myanmar Red Cross





Timor-Leste Red Cross Disaster Management staff member speaks with young Timorese students, November 2015 © Bernardino Soares/IFRC

## Disaster law, risk governance and gender

The IFRC has an internationally recognized mandate to support National Societies and public authorities in reviewing and strengthening their disaster risk management laws. The most recent of several resolutions adopted at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent pertaining to disaster law was in 2015, Resolution 6 on 'Strengthening legal frameworks for disaster response risk reduction and first aid'. This resolution outlines IFRC's mandate and is closely linked with the Sendai Framework Priority 2 on 'strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk', both of which encourage States to improve the substance and implementation of their domestic laws, regulations and policies related to disaster risk reduction. These should also clearly define roles and responsibilities, including a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective.

The IFRC has been collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 2012 to highlight the role of law and regulation in disaster risk reduction, with substantial research undertaken and produced in a 2014 multi-country report on 'Effective law and regulation for disaster risk reduction'. The report highlights that, while many national disaster laws contain provisions for representation of vulnerable groups, including women, they are generally aspirational statements without specific mechanisms for implementation. They also tend to focus on the importance of addressing the needs of these groups, but without ensuring they have a 'seat at the table' or are able to take part in decision-making processes.

To improve gender and diversity considerations in legal frameworks for disaster risk management, the IFRC advocates that:

- 1) Disaster risk management and related laws include provisions for the active participation of women and other marginalised groups in decision-making;
- 2) The engagement of communities and vulnerable groups in the drafting of laws and policies pertaining to disaster risk management is clearly mandated;
- 3) Existing laws protecting women and other vulnerable groups should be enforced during disasters, including providing adequate funding for health and social services;
- 4) Relevant laws should include enforceable incentives and disincentives for the protection of women and other vulnerable groups. This is in line with Sendai Framework Priority 2 which promotes the use of incentives to ensure high levels of compliance with existing safety-enhancing provisions of sectoral laws and regulations (27(d)).

## Country-level examples

**Thailand:** Since 2005, the Thai Red Cross Society has successfully led an inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction programme. The programme emphasizes the inclusion of the elderly, with senior citizens playing key roles in early warning, evacuation, security, first aid and rescue. Women and men have equal opportunities to participate, which results in early warning and disaster risk information being accessible to, and inclusive for, all members of the community. Thai Red Cross have also been trained on the operational use of the Minimum Standard Commitments to gender and diversity in emergency programming and are prioritising integration of these into community vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCAs).

**Myanmar:** Myanmar Red Cross Society has been promoting women's participation by training women in firefighting. Following a fire in South Dagon Township, Yangon, Myanmar Red Cross Society realised there were not enough people with the right knowledge in the community to respond to such an emergency. In response to this, Myanmar Red Cross Society delivered a training on disaster knowledge. Women from the community were actively involved and left equipped with knowledge and skills to respond to a fire emergency; able to truly play a key part in building the safety and resilience of their communities. In March 2016, Myanmar Red Cross Society conducted a training of trainers to ensure gender and diversity-sensitive climate change considerations are cross cutting in the implementation of community-based disaster risk reduction activities.



Thai Red Cross Society conduct a simulation exercise as part of their community-based disaster risk reduction programme. © Thai Red Cross Society

**Philippines:** The Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 recognises that vulnerable and marginalized groups face higher exposure to disaster risk and poverty, including women, children, elderly, the disabled, and ethnic minorities. The Law emphasises a whole of society approach to all aspects of disaster risk reduction and management, and outlines climate change measures that are gender responsive and sensitive to indigenous knowledge systems. It ensures that women, social welfare representatives, as well as The Philippine Red Cross have a seat at the table and can take an active part in decision-making within the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. The Law requires that gender analysis is also part of early recovery and post-disaster needs assessments, and ensures allocation of responsibilities at local level for efficient provisions of food, shelter, medical supplies and safe spaces for women and children during disasters.



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