



WOMEN'S RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

CONCEPT NOTE



A changing disaster landscape

Disasters and climate change are on the rise, presenting significant challenges to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and national development objectives. This is attributed to a rising number of climate-related disasters as well as an increase in vulnerability to disasters, resulting for example from unplanned urban development, overdependence on certain livelihoods, and ecosystem degradation.

In 2019, 95 million people were affected by 396 disasters globally, contributing to 103 million USD in economic losses; and internally displacing 24.9 million individuals.

Climate change is recognised as a disaster threat “multiplier” and is changing the disaster landscape. It is altering the frequency and intensity of hazards, affecting vulnerability to hazards, and changing exposure patterns. Sudden-onset weather events (such as flash floods) and slow-onset climate processes (such as sea level rise) are predicted to increase under future climate change scenarios. Over 90 percent of recent disasters were hydro-meteorological in origin.

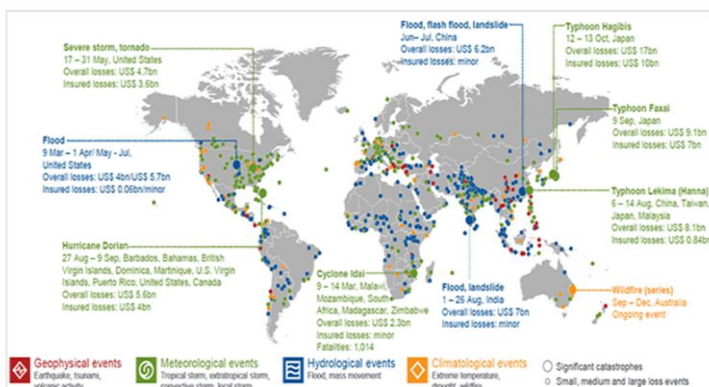
Unequal risks

Disasters affect women, girls, boys, and men differently. Across the board, from life expectancy, to education, health, violence, and nutrition, women are adversely and disproportionately impacted by disasters, including climate-related disasters and new hazards such as COVID-19.

Disaster mortality for women and girls is higher. Recent research by UN Women and UNICEF explored the gender and age inequality of disaster risk, and confirmed that women, children, and youth are among the most vulnerable and most impacted from disaster hazards, conflict, climate change, and other shocks.

Women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during disasters

Global Disasters, 2019



Source: © 2020 Munich Re, Geo Risks Research, NatCatSERVICE. As of January 2020.

Drivers of disproportionate risks

Vulnerability is a function of socio-economic, geographic, demographic, cultural, political and environmental factors. For example, age, income, health, and education play an important part. Gender gaps and barriers increase women's exposure and vulnerability to disasters and threats.

Gender inequality is one of several underlying risk drivers increasing women's vulnerability to hazards. Women and men are affected differently by disasters and climate change, which is attributed to: i) discrimination and unequal access to opportunities, natural resources and other productive assets such as land; ii) unequal access to finance, technology, knowledge, and mobility; iii) socially constructed differences in capacities and capabilities; and iv) discriminatory social, cultural, and legal norms and practices.

Gender inequality is both a driver and a consequence of disasters impacts

Women are under-represented in decision-making processes at all levels. Gender specific barriers in prevention, preparedness, and recovery impede women and girls from acquiring and accessing the means and capacities needed for resilience, and constrain the ability of women and girls to respond to, and mitigate the disproportionate impacts of disasters. Yet women are key agents of change, with unique knowledge to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of disaster risk reduction and resilience action.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential building blocks for women's leadership



Women from Kadavu, Fiji, Source: WRD

Gender implications of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the inequalities and hardships particularly for women and girls. Health pandemics have specific and severe impacts on the lives of women and girls, who face higher rates of violence and sexual abuse, decreased access to healthcare, and are more vulnerable to economic hardship.

Recognising the differentiated impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on marginalised groups will be vital to ensure effective recovery, and preparedness for future outbreaks, which do not endanger or exclude already marginal groups.

The current COVID-19 context also highlights the critical role played by women's networks in sharing key messages and information on the pandemic, and in helping communities with risk informed recovery, and preparedness for future pandemics.

The policy context

Cohesive action across the separate frameworks that guide discussions at the global level (for disaster risk reduction, climate change, gender, and resilience) is needed. Building resilience to risks and addressing underlying vulnerability is a unifying goal for gender, climate change, disaster management, and resilient development practitioners at all levels.

Global dialogues and frameworks increasingly recognise the importance of integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) for effective and sustainable disaster risk reduction and resilience; but these have not yet been translated into concrete actions. The Sendai Framework (SF) for disaster risk reduction notably highlights women's disproportionate risk, and calls for a people-centered preventative approach to disaster risk, which engages all groups.

The Sendai Framework therefore sets the stage for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and implementation of its four priorities in an inclusive and integrated manner.

Addressing the gaps

There are significant governance and system-level gaps at global, regional, and country levels that act as a barrier to building the climate and disaster resilience of women and girls. These include the following.

- **Disaggregated data and analysis.** A recent UN Women and UNICEF study found critical gaps in the availability, quality, and comparability of sex, age, and disability disaggregated data (SADDD). This represents a barrier to understanding and analysing the granularity and differential impact between different groups. This is needed to inform gender, age, and disability-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience decision making, policy formulation, and practice.
- **Gaps in knowledge management, evaluation, and communication.** Existing information on women’s resilience is spread amongst different custodian agencies, programmes, and platforms, limiting opportunities for peer learning, and sharing stories, women’s voice, good practice, lessons, and tools across regions to support replication and upscaling.
- **Enabling governance environment.** The building blocks or “enablers” for building women’s resilience (including political will, leadership, capacity, knowledge, coordination mechanisms, partnerships, policy commitments, institutional arrangements, and funding) need to be put in place at all levels to secure gender-responsive prevention, preparedness, and recovery systems.



- **Removing barriers and tackling risk drivers.** Gender inequalities in access to finance, technology, natural resources and other productive assets need to be addressed alongside tackling other root causes of women’s disproportionate risk including gender norms.
- **Coordinated action.** Promoting coordinated and cohesive action across traditional silos (disaster management, gender, climate change, sustainable development) is needed to ensure that women’s organisations, government agencies, the private sector, and other key stakeholders work together to reduce the impact of disasters including climate related disasters on women.



Addressing the need

Global, regional, and national stakeholders have identified the need for a programme, which fulfils the following.

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- **Builds an enabling environment** for women’s resilience.
 - **Supports country ownership, flexibility, and local relevance.**
 - **Leverages local partners’ expertise** and existing initiatives.
 - **Simplifies disaster risk reduction and makes it relevant** and understandable for everyone.
 - **Secures programmatic coherence** to generate global impact and economies of scale.
 - **Promotes coordinated action across sectors and levels** e.g. disaster management, climate change, gender, and resilience.
 - **Engenders action across the humanitarian-development divide.**
 - **Helps women and communities recover from COVID-19** and prepare for future pandemics.
 - **Provides a platform for women’s voices and needs** to increase resilience to disasters.
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The Women’s Resilience to Disasters Programme

In response to these challenges, UN Women has established the **Women’s Resilience to Disasters programme (WRD)**. The aim of the programme is to render the lives and livelihoods of women and girls resilient to disasters, including climate related disasters and pandemics, in order to contribute to sustainable, secure, and thriving communities.

WRD provides a comprehensive but flexible package, which can be tailored to unique regional and country circumstances. The WRD programme recognises the importance of country driven and locally owned action focused on local priorities, but supported by regional and global elements, which create an enabling environment for women’s agency, leadership, coordination, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. Key WRD principles are localisation, local ownership and flexibility.

WRD adopts a transformative approach, which focuses on structural and systems change at all levels as a basis for building an enabling environment for reducing women’s risk and leveraging women as agents of change. Similarly, it seeks to tackle the underlying root causes and drivers of women’s risk including inequality and social norms by: i) challenging the deeply entrenched and unequal power imbalances; and ii) addressing the root causes of women’s vulnerability.

Implementation levels

WRD programme implementation is driven at the country level and supported by regional and global components.

The country component provides targeted action to strengthen women's resilience and build gender-responsive systems. It advances different elements of the WRD depending on the national context, policy priorities, existing initiatives, needs, and capacities.

The regional component focuses on knowledge management, advocacy, gender, and disability support for regional mechanisms, movements and coalitions including the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR).

The global component advances gender-responsiveness in global disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation processes, and ensures global knowledge sharing and advocacy on women’s leadership for disaster resilience. It provides a platform (the WRD Knowledge Hub – linked to PreventionWeb and the UN Women website) for sharing good practice and voices across the globe.

WRD PROGRAMME SET UP



WRD Outcomes

The WRD programme supports two main outcomes and a menu of outputs. This allows country actors to select the most appropriate interventions for their country.

OUTCOME 1: BUILDING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT. Prevention, preparedness, and recovery systems, plans, processes, and tools are gender-responsive.

Indicative outputs:

- Increase and consolidate the knowledge and evidence base for the gender dimensions of risk.
- Build women’s leadership in disaster risk reduction and resilience building including the capacity of women’s organisations to advocate, lead, and engage
- Develop capacities for gender-responsive policies, strategies, plans, and institutional, budget, and financial frameworks and processes.
- Build a community of practice for women’s strategic networking on women’s resilience to disasters.

- Strengthen disaster risk reduction, recovery, and resilience coordination mechanisms and partnerships to integrate the gender dimensions of risk.

OUTCOME 2: TARGETED ACTION. Women and girls are prepared to withstand multiple hazards, recover from disasters, and increase their resilience to future disasters and threats.

Indicative outputs:

- Support inclusive and gender-responsive preparedness and early warning systems.
- Increase women’s access to finance, infrastructure, and services including gender targeted services (e.g. maternal health) and gender mainstreamed services (e.g. telecommunications).
- Identify innovative climate and disaster resilient livelihood and business opportunities for women.
- Enhance capacity and partnerships for women on climate and disaster resilient businesses and



Figure 1: WRD Thematic Framework

Achieving gender-responsive DRR and resilience

Ultimately, the WRD aims to secure gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience decision making and action, which goes beyond “adding” gender as an afterthought, or simply increasing sensitivity and awareness of women’s needs, to actually addressing the underlying causes of women’s vulnerability to disasters including gender inequality, gender relationship, and power structures. It seeks to secure women’s leadership, empowerment, and address women’s specific needs.

In conclusion, the WRD builds gender-responsive prevention, preparedness, and recovery systems that: i) consider gender norms, roles, relations, and access to resources; ii) accommodate the specific needs and capacities of women and girls; iii) address the underlying causes of disproportionate risk; iv) identify ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles, and relations; v) promote gender equality; and v) incorporate strategies to foster changes in power relations, empowerment, and leadership.



The WRD Knowledge Hub

The Women’s Resilience to Disasters Knowledge Hub (the Hub) is an integral part of the WRD programme. It is the first online platform of its kind and is a “one-stop-shop” providing consolidated access to comprehensive gender-related disaster risk reduction and resilience knowledge, data, research, expertise, and tools.

The WRD Hub is supported by the global component of the programme. It helps disaster risk reduction, gender, climate change adaptation, and resilience practitioners and organisations around the world build gender-responsive systems and implement actions that ensure women and girls are more resilient.

The WRD Hub is linked to both the Prevention Web site (UNDRR) and the UN Women sites thus ensuring inclusion of the latest gender and DRR knowledge and access to diverse audiences.

See: <http://www.wrd.unwomen.org>

Replicating the WRD in new regions

The WRD program is ready for replication and upscaling. It makes multi-million dollar co-financing, technical support, the WRD knowledge hub, and the WRD network of experts and practitioners available free of charge to all its partners.

To replicate the Women’s Resilience to Disasters approach in your region or country; or if you would like to contribute to the WRD programme please contact:

wrd@unwomen.org

