



NOTE 15

# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo: UN Women

## Why is women's leadership critical for DRR?

**Women are powerful agents of change.** The far-reaching benefits of diversity and gender parity in leadership and decision-making are increasingly recognised in all spheres including disaster risk reduction and disaster and climate resilience. Women's equal and meaningful participation and leadership is both an important goal in itself and essential for reducing risks and achieving a broad range of sustainable development goals.

**Gender inequalities often increase the vulnerability of women and girls due to their limited access to information and resources.** Gender-responsive DRR requires analysing the needs, opportunities, roles, and relationship between genders. The active engagement of empowered female leaders is essential because when women are at the center of decision-making and implementation, the approach is more likely to be gender neutral, effective and transformative for resilience to disaster risks. Still, women continue to be vastly under-represented in decision-making in politics, businesses, and communities.

[CEDAW recommendation 37](#), ratified by approximately 100 countries and acceded by more, highlights the participation and development of leadership capacities among diverse groups of women and girls at different levels of government and within local communities, as essential to ensure that prevention and responses to disasters and the adverse effects of climate change are effective and incorporate perspectives from all sectors of society.

## What is women's leadership in DRR?

**Ideally, 50-50 percent equal quotas for representation of women and men should be made mandatory.** Although as a starting point, the two thirds rule (i.e.30 percent women) is sometimes applied. Women's leadership should be promoted at all levels from the highest in parliament through senior national and subnational positions, to within the community and household units.

In the context of DRR, these structures include:

DRR Platforms	Disaster Management Committee /teams	Other senior and leadership positions
	National Disaster Management Committee/Team	Women parliamentarians
African Regional Platform for DRR	Provincial Disaster Management Committee/Team	National focal point for DRR
National platforms for DRR	District Disaster or Development Management Committee/Team	Gender focal points within line ministries and agencies
Local platforms for DRR	Village/Community Disaster or Development Management Committee/Team	Leadership of Women Rights Organisations and women's groups
	Women's leadership and decision making for DRR and resilience with households	Within the UN and other international and national NGOs working on DRR

## How to ensure women's leadership in DRR?

income, improved access to education and healthcare for their families.

- **The government and other stakeholders for DRR should commit** through enactment of new or revision of existing laws and regulations to ensure the gender parity (50-50) quota is mandatory in leadership across DRR machinery.
- **Implement laws and regulations** that guarantee a safe and open environment for women's participation and leadership.
- **Ensure that country delegations** for global and Africa Regional Platform for DRR are gender-balanced including women leaders and women at senior levels.
- **Support the women and men parliamentarians to develop a Gender Action Plan** for the Parliament including DRR and resilience aspects.
- **Capacity development and investments** for women across DRR machinery and at all levels on leadership and managerial skills for DRR including through women leaders mentoring schemes.
- **Change the narrative on women in leadership** and confront socio-cultural drivers of gender inequality.
- **Support women's leadership for DRR and resilience within households**, including their active participation in local disaster risk management committees, decision-making over land, livelihoods and household

## Resources:

[Toolkit for assessing women's leadership in disaster and climate resilience](#). This UN Women toolkit provides a framework and tools for assessing women's leadership at the country, sector, subnational or organisational level. It can either be applied as a holistic assessment – for collecting a national baseline or stocktake on the women's leadership, or the two standalone self assessment tools can be used by organisations to assess their support internally for women's leadership or their support to women's organisations for DRR/resilience. The assessment framework and tool was [piloted in Vanuatu](#).

[Women's leadership in disaster preparedness](#)

[Handbook: Women's leadership in disaster management](#)



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East and Southern Africa Regional Office  
UN Gigiri Complex, UN Avenue;  
Block M, Ground Floor  
P.O. Box 30218- 00100 Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: +254 20 762 4778

[africa.unwomen.org](http://africa.unwomen.org)

Email: [esaro.publications@unwomen.org](mailto:esaro.publications@unwomen.org)

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