
Scoping Study on the Use of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related Dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction in a Changing Climate


SENDAI FRAMEWORK
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030

 **UNDRR**
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

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1. Introduction

This report aims to reinforce the foundations of gender responsive approaches to disaster risk by examining the connection between women’s international human rights and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Specifically, it aims to identify opportunities to strengthen the gender responsiveness of DRR by finding synergies between the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention). It is an analysis of gaps, challenges and good practices in States parties reporting on DRR in the context of CEDAW, with specific reference to CEDAW’s 2018 General recommendation No. 37 on “Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change”. It asks how the implementation of General recommendation No. 37 may be strengthened through the CEDAW reporting process by States parties and how this could also reinforce gender responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework.

This study was undertaken on behalf of the Asia Pacific Regional Office for the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). It is based on analysis of all States parties reports under the CEDAW Convention from 2018, when CEDAW General recommendation No. 37 was published, up to April 2022. The first aim was to understand the extent and type of States parties reporting on DRR and climate change, and the second was to analyse the degree to which these mentions in the CEDAW reporting process can underpin gender responsive DRR under the Sendai Framework priorities. The overall objective was to understand how much the CEDAW Convention and the Sendai Framework are mutually reinforcing, and to make practical recommendations to make them more so.

1.1 The CEDAW Convention

The CEDAW Convention provides strong standards on equality and non-discrimination for all women and is legally binding. It is often described as an “international bill of rights for women”.¹ It consists of a preamble and 30 articles, defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The CEDAW Committee is the body of 23 independent women's rights experts elected by States parties that monitors the implementation of the CEDAW Convention. The CEDAW Convention mandates that States parties submit reports to the Committee every four years on the implementation actions they have taken. The CEDAW Committee normally issues a “List of Issues and Questions” to States parties following the submission of their reports, seeking additional information. The Committee then gives its “Concluding Observations” on each State party report to suggest future actions. It also gives guidance to States parties as a whole in the form of “general recommendations” on interpreting and implementing the CEDAW Convention, and General recommendation No. 37 is one of these.²

In General recommendation No. 37, the CEDAW Committee does not exhaustively cover the gender-related dimensions of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, nor does it differentiate between disasters relating to climate change and other disasters,³ but it gives guidance on many aspects of gender equality in the face of these risks. It was issued to provide interpretative guidance on the CEDAW Convention in light of the significance of action on climate change and reducing disaster risk to achieve gender equality. By underscoring the impact of climate change and disasters on women's human rights, General recommendation No. 37 aims to contribute to policy coherence, accountability, and mutual reinforcement of

several international frameworks on DRR and climate change adaptation. General recommendation No. 37 underscores that States parties should ensure that all DRR and climate change policies, laws, plans, strategies, budgets, and other actions are gender responsive and based on human rights principles.

1.2 General recommendation No. 37 on “Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change” through the lens of the Sendai Framework and Sustainable Development Goals

1.2.1 Policy coherence

The focus of this report is on enhancing the synergies between, on the one hand, the CEDAW Convention and General recommendation No. 37, and, on the other, gender responsive DRR under the Sendai Framework. It is also important to place this discussion in the overall context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) which sets out the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),⁴ and the Paris Agreement made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). While each of these global agreements has its own goals and review mechanisms, all include elements related to gender equality. The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also reinforce the significance of addressing human rights issues in the context of climate change.⁵

The Sendai Framework has a number of provisions relating to gender equality⁶, for example, on the inclusion of women, women’s empowerment and leadership as stakeholders in Article 36,⁷ and the guiding principles on a human rights-based approach and the right to development provided in Article 19.⁸ Under the 2030 Agenda, SDG 5 is notable as a cross-cutting goal to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, while SDG 13 is to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.⁹ The Paris Agreement itself has limited references on gender¹⁰ but the UNFCCC “Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan” were adopted by a conference of the parties to the treaty in 2019.¹¹ Both the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda are voluntary commitments, while the CEDAW Convention is a legally binding treaty, and it can potentially play a significant reinforcing role in achieving gender equality goals in DRR and action on climate change and sustainable development.

1.2.2 The guidance from General recommendation No. 37

The objective of General recommendation No. 37 is to accentuate the urgency of mitigating the adverse effects of disasters and climate change and to highlight the steps necessary to achieve gender equality, the realisation of which will reinforce the resilience of individuals and communities globally in the context of climate change and disasters.¹² It is also intended to contribute to coherence, accountability, and the mutual reinforcement of international agendas on DRR and climate change adaptation, by focusing on the impacts of climate change and disasters on women’s human rights.¹³

General recommendation No. 37 emphasizes that policy coherence is a crucial step toward attaining the goals of gender equality and gender mainstreaming and achieving a human rights-based approach in action on climate change and DRR.¹⁴ It concludes that measures must be taken to ensure that quality infrastructure and critical services are available, accessible, and culturally acceptable, for all women and girls to empower them to engage with DRR and the impacts of climate change in an effective manner. Along similar lines, the Sendai

Framework accentuates that, during the response and reconstruction stages, women should take the lead and actively support gender-equitable (and universally accessible) alternatives.¹⁵ The Sendai Framework's all-of-government and all-of-society approach also emphasizes the importance of coherence in policies, plans, strategies, and mechanisms for sustainable development and DRR across sectors, levels of government and different stakeholders. Effective implementation of General recommendation No. 37 may therefore be strengthened by greater links with Sendai Framework implementation at national and local levels.

In General recommendation No. 37, the CEDAW Committee proposes that States parties need to offer equitable opportunities for women and girls to participate, influence, and engage in decision-making in DRR and climate change efforts. It recommends to "ensure the equal representation of women in forums and mechanisms on disaster risk reduction and climate change, at the community, local, national, regional and international levels, to enable them to participate in and influence the development of policies, legislation, and plans relating to disaster risk reduction and action on climate change and their implementation".

General recommendation No. 37 highlights the need for accurate gender-disaggregated data collection. It notes that the gender dimensions of disasters and the impacts of climate change are often not well understood owing to limited technical capacity. Hence, it stresses the importance of effectively created, disaggregated, and gender-responsive indicators and monitoring methods that allow states to set baselines and track progress in areas such as women's participation in DRR and climate change programmes, as well as in other political, economic, and social institutions.

General recommendation No. 37 highlights that CEDAW general principles require States parties to adopt substantial, focused, and demonstrable actions to guarantee substantive equality for women in DRR and climate change. To achieve substantive gender equality and make sure that women are not left behind in DRR, it is crucial to focus especially on empowering women. The recommendation emphasizes that States parties must identify and remove all types of bias and initiate effective measures to ensure that women's and girls' rights are prioritised in DRR and climate change policies at the local, national, regional, and international levels. One violation of rights specifically identified is violence against women and girls, with the CEDAW Committee observing that "sexual violence is common in humanitarian crises and may become acute in the wake of a national disaster".¹⁶

Substantive equality and non-discrimination are emphasized in General recommendation No. 37 as a prerequisite for empowering women and girls through specialised policies, initiatives, and strategies and to enable them to exercise their right to obtain access to knowledge about climate change and DRR. The recommendation outlines how compliance with the CEDAW Convention necessitates enhancing women's involvement in DRR and climate change preparedness by strengthening their technical capabilities. For example, States parties are guided to implement laws, strategies, policies, and budgets to end homelessness and make adequate, disaster-resistant housing available and accessible to all women, including those with disabilities.

1.2.3 Commonalities with the Sendai Framework Priorities

The Sendai Framework includes four main priorities which are used for the purpose of thematic analysis in this report (Box 1).

Box 1: Sendai Framework Priorities

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk:

Policies and practices for disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. Such knowledge can be leveraged for the purpose of pre-disaster risk assessment, for prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disasters (para 22).

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is of great importance for an effective and efficient management of disaster risk. Clear vision, plans, competence, guidance and coordination within and across sectors, as well as participation of relevant stakeholders, are needed. Strengthening disaster risk governance for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation is therefore necessary and fosters collaboration and partnership across mechanisms and institutions for the implementation of instruments relevant to disaster risk reduction and sustainable development (para 26).

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment. These can be drivers of innovation, growth and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses and ensure effective recovery and rehabilitation (para 29).

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The steady growth of disaster risk, including the increase of people and assets exposure, combined with the lessons learned from past disasters, indicates the need to further strengthen disaster preparedness for response, take action in anticipation of events, integrate disaster risk reduction in response preparedness and ensure that capacities are in place for effective response and recovery at all levels. Empowering women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches is key. Disasters have demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of a disaster, is a critical opportunity to “Build Back Better”, including through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures, making nations and communities resilient to disasters.

Priority 1 is focused on understanding disaster risk. Disaster risk reduction and management is predicated on an understanding disaster risk in all of its facets, including vulnerability, capability, exposure of people and assets, hazard characteristics, risk indicators, and environmental variables. This needs to include the gender dimensions of risk and to recognize the importance of disaggregated data, as highlighted in General recommendation No. 37.

Priority 2 discusses improving disaster risk governance to mitigate disaster risk. Disaster risk governance at the local, national, regional, and international levels is critical to ensuring the coherence of national and local frameworks of laws, regulations, and public policies that guide, encourage and incentivise the public and private sectors to take action and address disaster risk by defining roles and responsibilities.¹⁷ As set out broadly in the CEDAW Convention and highlighted in the General recommendation No. 37, the effective participation of women in decision-making at local, national, and international levels is central to gender responsive DRR and action on climate change.

Priority 3 emphasizes DRR investments for resilience. Individuals, communities, countries, and their assets, as well as the environment, all benefit from public and private investment in

disaster risk reduction through structural and non-structural methods, including financing and insurance. These investments can serve as drivers of innovation, growth, and job development. They are cost-effective and advantageous in terms of saving lives, avoiding and lowering losses, and assuring proper recovery and rehabilitation. It is important that the gender dimensions of the technical areas of finance and infrastructure are recognized, as well as investing in social protection, critical health and social services and in human capacity, including women's capacity and leadership. These are all reinforced by the CEDAW Convention and General recommendation No. 37.

Priority 4 is about improving disaster readiness to respond effectively and "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Disaster preparedness, based on prior experience, must be strengthened to ensure a more effective response and recovery capacity. Disasters have also revealed that the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction phase, which must be planned, offers an opportunity to "Build Back Better" by applying DRR approaches. It further emphasizes that women and individuals with disabilities should publicly lead and promote gender equality and universally accessible options during the response and reconstruction stages.

2. Methodology and Scope

This report is based on an analysis of States parties reporting and the CEDAW Committee guidance to them from 2018, when General recommendation No. 37 was issued, to April 2022. The research analyses the extent to which States parties reported on DRR and action on climate change, especially any references to General recommendation No. 37. It also considers how the CEDAW Committee provided guidance through its questions, conclusions and observations. The findings are then analysed in light of the Sendai Framework goal and priorities, looking for ways in which these two international frameworks can mutually reinforce the achievement of gender equality in the context of disasters and climate change. Some practical recommendations are made on ways to achieve greater synergies between States parties implementation and reporting under the CEDAW Convention, especially implementation of General recommendation No. 37, and their DRR efforts under the Sendai Framework.

2.1 Research Methodology

The research was undertaken as a desk review. Its initial purpose was to identify steps reported by the States parties under the CEDAW Convention to ensure compliance and mainstreaming of gender equality in DRR, and specifically on implementation of General recommendation No. 37. This included an analysis of the feedback given by the CEDAW Committee, to shed further light on gaps and good practices.

A word/terminology search was conducted on the official website of the OHCHR on all the States parties' reports, the CEDAW Committee's List of Issues and Questions, and the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations for each State party from March 2018 to April 2022. These were searched and segregated based on whether there was any mention of the search terms given below. A qualitative analysis of the research results for those reporting on DRR was then done around the four priorities of the Sendai Framework.

The search terms used were the following, grouped into four categories:

1. **The General recommendation No. 37 search term:** “General Recommendation No. 37”.
2. **Disaster-related search terms:** “disaster”, “disaster risk”, “disaster risk reduction”, “disaster management”, “disaster risk management”, and “emergency”.
3. **Climate change search term:** “Climate change”.
4. **International agreements search terms:** “Sendai Framework”, “Beijing declaration”, and the “Sustainable Development Goals” were also used as search criteria, as it was noted in a preliminary analysis that States parties have reported disaster-related policy coherence in the context of these international frameworks as well.

States parties reports:

The first stage of analysis was to ascertain whether the States parties reported on action taken specifically on General recommendation No. 37, or on disasters or climate change.

A total of 73 countries submitted reports from 2018 until April 2022. Of these, only 29 reports included any of the above search terms, and of these, a limited number could be classified as substantive mentions reporting on policy or practice initiatives. A snapshot of the 29 States party reports which mentioned the search terms is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Snapshot of the 29 States Parties reports that mention General recommendation No. 37 or key related terms

Key	Mention of General recommendation No 37 (2)	Substantive mention with related actions
	Mentions of disaster-related terms (12)	Substantive mention with related actions
	Mentions of climate change (22)	Substantive mention with related actions

S N O	Country Name	Periodic Report No., Year	Mention GR37	Substantive	Mention disaster	Substantive	Mention climate change	Substantive
1	Armenia	7th, 2021						
2	Venezuela	7th, 2021						
3	Cabo Verde	9th, 2021						
4	Cambodia	9th, 2018						
5	Costa Rica	6th, 2019						
6	China	8th 2021						
7	D R Congo	9th 2021						
8	El Salvador	8th 2018						
9	Eritrea	10th 2021						
10	Honduras	6th, 2021						
11	Iceland	9 th , 2021						
12	Jamaica	9th, 2021						
13	Latvia	8th, 2020						
14	Malawi	8th, 2021						
15	Maldives	4th, 2019						
16	Montenegro	6th, 2019						
17	Morocco	3rd, 2021						
18	Mozambique	6th, 2020						
19	Nicaragua	3rd-5 th 2018						
20	Pakistan	7th-10 th , 2020						
21	Philippines	5th, 2018						
22	Peru	9th, 2021						
23	Qatar	9th, 2020						
24	Russian Federation	2nd, 2018						
25	Slovenia	7th, 2021						
26	Singapore	9th, 2020						
27	Seychelles	6th, 2021						
28	South Sudan	6th, 2018						
29	Sri Lanka	9th, 2022						

List of Issues and Questions: The analysis reviewed the Lists of Issues and Questions where these were issued by the CEDAW Committee following their review of the States party reports. This analysis focused on instances where the List of Issues and Questions highlighted gaps in States party reports on actions taken to implement General recommendation No. 37 or gender responsive DRR more broadly.

Concluding Observations: The CEDAW Committee delivers Concluding Observations on States parties reports in the form of suggestions for future actions to fulfil obligations under the CEDAW Convention. Analysis of the Concluding Observations was undertaken to identify any guidance from the CEDAW Committee where States parties have not reported steps taken on General recommendation No. 37 or DRR more broadly.

The analysis of General recommendation No. 37 and DRR reporting was carried out through the lens of the Sendai Framework to understand how the CEDAW Convention processes contribute to the Sendai Framework goal of “a significant reduction of disaster risk, losses to lives, livelihoods, and health, as well as to the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental resources of individuals, enterprises, communities, and nations”. Based on the data collected, the report considers gaps and constraints, as well as positive synergies and potential, in how States parties reporting under the CEDAW Convention can support gender responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework.

2.2 Scope and limitations

The research focused on the documents available from March 2018, when General recommendation No. 37 was issued, up to reports published until April 2022.

The use of pre-defined search terms was a potentially limiting factor if some countries used different terminology, but the researchers have a high degree of confidence that these terms were sufficiently comprehensive to catch any substantive mentions of the subjects. Each mention was then read in context to classify whether it was a substantive mention reporting on actual initiatives or a general mention of the topic, and this required a degree of subjectivity. Due to the desk-based research, there was also not an opportunity to ask for more information where a mention in a State party report was very brief.

The nature of the CEDAW Convention means that States parties reporting is orientated towards legal compliance with the treaty obligations, so that laws and formal policies are likely to be reported more than less formal strategies, plans or actions. Not surprisingly, most of the reporting on DRR or climate change by States parties concerns the framing of laws and policies, which fit under Priority 2 of the Sendai Framework on risk governance.

It is also important to recall that, although the analysis is useful for the purposes of identifying synergies between the CEDAW Convention and the Sendai Framework, the States parties reports under the CEDAW Convention are based on that treaty’s provisions and were never intended to fit under the Sendai Framework. Both factors mean there are gaps in the examples from States parties reports.

Finally, there is likely to be a degree of under-reporting of DRR and action on climate change in the States parties reports to the CEDAW Committee, as they are generally prepared by the national women’s machinery, such as a Ministry for Women, and there may not be the capacity or mechanism to include very comprehensive information on DRR or action on climate undertaken by other ministries. The reports to CEDAW are therefore not considered to be

comprehensive or definitive statements on what the State party is planning or implementing to promote gender equality in DRR and action on climate change.

3. CEDAW Process and the Sendai Framework Priorities

The Sendai Framework emphasizes the importance of women's participation in developing, implementing, and funding gender responsive DRR policies, strategies, plans, and programmes. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that necessitates mainstreaming across domains and activities, as is DRR. General recommendation No. 37 focuses on the importance of women's participation in all aspects of DRR and specifically focuses on the gender dimension of DRR and climate change. The Sendai Framework and General recommendation No. 37 both highlight that women's participation is critical for effectively managing disaster risk. Strict implementation of the CEDAW Convention by States parties, especially using the guidance of General recommendation No. 37, will help achieve the goals of the Sendai Framework with a special focus on women's contribution.

3.1 Consideration of Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

Priority 1 of the Sendai Framework focuses on understanding disaster risk in all its dimensions – vulnerability, capability, exposure of people and assets, hazard characteristics, and the environment – and should function as the foundation for policies and procedures for disaster risk management.¹⁸ Such information may be used for pre-disaster risk assessment, disaster prevention and mitigation, as well as the creation and use of effective disaster preparedness measures. The Sendai Framework specifically mentions data collection and dissemination for better coordination and collaboration for preparedness to deal with DRR. General recommendation No. 37 also highlights the need for accurate gender-disaggregated data collection. Gender dimensions of disasters and the impacts of climate change are often not well understood owing to limited technical data. This underlines the importance of effectively created, disaggregated, and gender-responsive indicators and monitoring methods that allow states to set baselines and track progress in areas such as women's participation in DRR and climate change programmes, as well as in political, economic, and social institutions.

3.1.1 States parties reporting

Gender analysis to inform DRR policies and programmes

Of the 29 States parties reports in which relevant search terms were found, only five mention aspects of DRR related to Sendai Framework Priority 1. These discuss the efforts they have made to gather and analyse data to better understand how disasters affect women in general, and particularly rural, indigenous, and women with disabilities, and how they use that information when taking steps toward DRR and combatting climate change. The other States parties reports made since General recommendation No. 37 have not explicitly reported on any aspects of disasters or climate change, including understanding risk.

Examples of relevant reporting to CEDAW include:

- a. **Armenia's** report indicates that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs examined data mapping while developing a proposed law on disaster, and that it has taken initiatives to map the obstacles faced by women, particularly those with disabilities, in border areas and disaster zones;¹⁹

- b. **Nicaragua** reports using data to understand disaster risk, and also reports that women account for 62% of the beneficiaries of a water harvesting approach for agriculture in Nicaragua. At the time of reporting, the Support Program had provided loans to 13,974 women to boost production and enhance food and nutrition security. A distinct programme being implemented by the Nicaragua States party was a programme for sustainable development in the “dry corridor” that works proactively with women.²⁰ The States party report describes the programme as targeting rural families, especially rural female-headed households, to promote resilience among rural families and indigenous peoples by encouraging linkages between economic diversification, productive transformation, environmental preservation, and family nutrition. Women made up 2,998 of the 4,839 people who participated in the creation of family plans, who gained access to capital and organised themselves in associations.²¹
- c. **Cambodia’s** report mentions women’s participation in climate change adaptation projects. It reports that the Climate Change Adaptation Development Plan has been implemented in 16 districts, and vulnerability reduction analysis assessments have been conducted with 1,500 participants, 20% of whom were women. Out of all those who participated in a variety of various agriculture extension activities, the States party reports that roughly 50% of them were women;²²
- d. **Jamaica** reports that, while framing the policies and programmes related to disaster risk management, emergency management, and response, the concerns of rural women were taken into consideration;²³ and
- e. The **Maldives** reports that the critical stage of stock-taking was carried out to examine the impact of disasters on women and the role of women in emergencies. Women’s participation in Community Emergency Response Teams ranges from 21% to 74%, depending on the island.²⁴

Importantly, the five States parties’ reports noted above discuss the use of data and information gained through consultations about women and DRR or climate change adaptation, but none of them focuses on the challenges or processes of sex-disaggregated data collection as such.

This research reveals that, despite the Sendai Framework’s Priority 1 and General recommendation No. 37, which considered disaggregated data collection, analysis, and monitoring as critical to understanding disaster risk in the national and international context, this aspect has received little attention in CEDAW reporting.

3.1.2 CEDAW Committee questions and observations relevant to Priority 1

The CEDAW Committee Lists of Issues and Questions focused on clarifying matters already included in the States parties reports, and only rarely raised other issues. For example, although the majority of States parties have not reported in terms of data collection or analysis, an issue highlighted in General recommendation 37, this was not raised in any of the Lists of Issues and Questions. Similarly, there are no Concluding Observations related to sex-disaggregated data collection, as the Concluding Observations followed a similar pattern of responding to the issues covered in the reports rather than raising considerations not included in the State party report.

3.1.3 Overview of themes and gaps

The Sendai Framework Priority 1 and General recommendation No. 37 both place emphasis on the gathering and evaluation of gender-disaggregated data to understand disaster risk and

better enable preparedness. Both stress the need to use gender-disaggregated data for pre-disaster risk assessment, disaster prevention and mitigation, as well as the development and implementation of efficient disaster preparedness strategies. Understanding disaster risk in all its facets – vulnerability, capability, exposure of people and assets, hazard characteristics, and the environment – can be aided by gender data. It also serves as the foundation for disaster risk management procedures and policies.

The priority given to sex-disaggregated data collection by General recommendation No. 37 has not been reflected in country reporting for this period. A small number of States parties mentioned utilizing data to understand disaster risk, mapping activities to identify barriers encountered by women, evaluating data before drafting laws and regulations, and taking stock of the impacts of disasters on women and the role of women during crises. However, there is no discernible theme in the reporting or CEDAW Committee feedback on risk data or information, or the need to better understand and address gender inequality as a factor increasing women’s vulnerability to disaster risk and the effects of climate change. To encourage greater understanding of the gender elements of disaster risk knowledge, the CEDAW Committee could potentially use a List of Issues and Questions to encourage reporting on this issue. Further, Concluding Observations in the form of recommendations may encourage States parties to look for assistance and financing for data gathering, inclusion, and analysis. In the long term, this could enable closer coordination between CEDAW reporting and tracking implementation of Sendai Framework Priority 1.

3.2 Consideration of Priority 2 issues: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

The Sendai Framework Priority 2 focuses on disaster risk governance which, as outlined above, is based on national and local frameworks of laws, regulations and public policies that guide, encourage, and incentivise the public and private sectors to take action and address disaster risk by defining roles and responsibilities at the national, regional, and international levels.²⁵ Priority 2 entails substantial coordination and collaboration across procedures and institutions to implement DRR and sustainable development strategies. General recommendation No. 37 emphasizes that States parties need to ensure that all DRR and climate change policies, laws, plans, strategies, budgets, and other actions are gender responsive and based on human rights principles. It recommends that States parties provide equal opportunities for women and girls to participate, influence, and engage in decision-making in DRR and climate change efforts.

As previously identified, most States parties reports that deal with disaster or climate discuss these issues in relation to governance, as the CEDAW Convention itself has a focus on legislative implementation of government obligations. Hence, most States parties report on the formulation of different laws and policies and emphasize the engagement of women in the development of legal frameworks and efforts to mainstream gender. These tend to focus on the laws and policies themselves, with less information given on implementation, in particular how they may have increased women’s disaster and climate change resilience. Potentially, some structured guidance on using General Recommendation 37 to report in more detail on disaster risk governance and climate resilience measures could be useful if the CEDAW Committee was interested in collaboration in this area. For example, a checklist or similar tool might be useful for States parties, including for the purposes of intra-governmental collaboration between the national women’s machinery and the national disaster management agencies in national reporting to CEDAW. Such collaboration could also

enhance understanding of the CEDAW Convention and gender equality within the ministries with primary responsibility for disaster risk reduction and action on climate change.

3.2.1 States parties reporting relevant to risk governance

Rural/indigenous women and substantive equality

Most of the States parties reports mention actions related to DRR or climate change while reporting about rural women or indigenous women. These report efforts to strengthen the position of rural and indigenous women, and to empower women in disaster prone areas, as indicated in the following examples:

- a. **Cambodia** reports that gender has been mainstreamed into the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014–2023 and the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2014–2019.²⁶ The report mentions major policy decisions of the Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014–2023 and the Gender and Climate change Action Plan. The Agriculture Services Programme for Innovation Resilience and Extension 2015–2022 was designed with the purpose of providing smallholder farmers with access to quality information services, including supporting climate-resilient agriculture;
- b. **Costa Rica** reports that the process of including gender in the country’s sixth report to the Convention on Biological Diversity led to the establishment of the Gender and Environment Network led by the Planning Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture and Energy, and subsequently to the setting up of the Gender, Environment and Biodiversity Programme, through which a Ministerial Directive “Reduction of gender gaps in the biodiversity sector – water, protected areas and forests – to ensure equality and the contribution of women in that sector” is being promoted.
- c. **El Salvador** reports that the National Policy for Rural, Indigenous, and Campesina women is in line with Article 36 of the Law of Equality, Fairness and the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and contains guidelines and measures to promote climate change action;²⁷
- d. **Jamaica** mentions its efforts to ensure that policies and programmes focusing on climate change readiness and response are gender responsive. It reports that gender perspectives have been incorporated into several emerging policies and programmes for sustainable development;²⁸
- e. **Malawi** reports that the National Disaster Risk Management Policy 2015 is aligned with other existing gender policies and rural women were involved in the process of implementing this policy at the district and community levels;²⁹ and
- f. **Morocco** reports that the institutionalization of results-based planning and gender approach in setting targets and indicators for national reproductive health strategy was launched in rural areas.³⁰

Gender mainstreaming in law and policy formulation

Another set of countries reported steps taken to include women’s perspectives in climate change and disaster risk-related policies and laws, for example:

- a. **Costa Rica** encourages gender equality and climate change action through a number of policies and strategies including the national biodiversity strategy, the national wetlands policy and the national climate change adaptation policy. The national climate change governance project encourages women’s advancement.³¹ With the support of UNDP, the water and sewerage agency drafted the gender equality policy for 2018 to 2033 with an

- aligned gender action plan. The REDD+ Strategy Action Plan also recognizes the critical role that women can play in the country's forest protection and rural development;³²
- b. **Honduras** reports that there is active inclusion of women in the design and implementation of climate change policies and plans;³³
 - c. **Iceland** states that two parliamentary resolutions were adopted from 2016 to 2019 to ensure a gender equality perspective to combat climate change;³⁴
 - d. **Montenegro** has taken initiatives to incorporate gender characteristics into measuring, reporting, and verification procedures for its UNFCCC Gender Action Plan. This "Action Plan on Gender Equality and Climate Change" intends to strengthen climate change regulations and public policies by mainstreaming gender and climate change perspectives;³⁵
 - e. In 2016, **Peru** launched the "Gender and Climate Change Action Plan" to mainstream gender in environmental policies, programmes, and actions. The Action Plan has eight priority areas: forests, water resources, food security, energy, solid waste, education, health and welfare, and risk management. It is aimed at mainstreaming gender in public policies through the National Climate Change Strategy;³⁶ and
 - f. The **Philippines'** report mentions that National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan is being enhanced to make it more gender-responsive and rights-based. The Climate Change Commission ensures that gender mainstreaming initiatives are integrated into the country's National Strategic Framework and Climate Change Program.³⁷

Risk governance and women's participation in decision making

Examples of States parties reporting on risk governance and women's participation in decision-making include:

- a. **Armenia** advises that draft legislation on "disaster risk management and population protection" has been developed to address social protection issues in disaster circumstances focusing on the most vulnerable population segment of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities;³⁸
- b. The **Maldives'** report highlights women's engagement in disaster management decision-making processes. According to the report, steps are being taken through Women Development Committees to engage women in disaster mitigation and disaster management initiatives;³⁹
- c. **Mozambique's** actions mentioned in the report were ongoing before the issuance of General recommendation No. 37 in 2018. In 2010 the country developed the Environment and Climate Change Gender Strategy and women were mobilised to participate in natural resource management committees;⁴⁰
- d. The National Climate Change Committee of **Seychelles** aims to ensure that men and women participate equally in all climate change decision-making processes. A Disaster Risk Management Act was drafted with the participation of female decision-makers from all sectors, including the private sector and foreign partners;⁴¹
- e. **Slovenia** notes that the existing system for natural and other disaster protection does not envision targeted communication with women's organizations because this entails administration procedures that encompass many stakeholders in terms of role and position in the process of natural and other disaster protection and elimination of the ramifications, as well as gender;⁴² and
- f. **Venezuela's** report concentrated on the energy sector, which is critical for women's access to services and employment opportunities. Gender transformational initiatives, policies, and programmes focusing on women or gender were mentioned. It reported that

areas where the action is being taken to encourage women's participation have yet to be considered important in terms of DRR and climate change.⁴³

This analysis of the reporting concerning risk governance themes related to Priority 2 of the Sendai Framework indicates that, during the CEDAW reporting period, several State Parties had drafted laws, policies, and strategies to deal with disaster risk and climate change. Most of these laws were dedicated to establishing bodies and drafting laws under the disaster management framework and the reports mention that gender considerations were taken into account when developing the policies and strategies. While these are positive, they do not indicate a specific connection being made between the mechanisms for disaster risk governance and the provisions of the CEDAW Convention. They also do not indicate direct use of General recommendation 37 within the DRR and climate change law and policy formulation. This is an aspect that could potentially be strengthened if the relevant sectoral ministries had more familiarity with the CEDAW Convention requirements, and especially with the guidance from General recommendation No. 37.

3.2.2 CEDAW questions and observations relevant to risk governance

As discussed in the previous section, the CEDAW Committee primarily raised questions and sought information on gender mainstreaming and the active participation of women in the decision-making process. This may be in response to many States parties' reports that focused on gender mainstreaming and participation of women in policy formulation and implementation.

The CEDAW Committee's Lists of Issues and Questions primarily engaged with the material presented in the reports and rarely sought additional information on topics not addressed. This approach meant that, where States parties reports did not address disasters or climate change, or mention General recommendation No. 37, there was not a specific process to ask them for further information on these subjects. However, where the States parties reports did mention these issues, the CEDAW Committee often followed up with requests for further information. For example, the CEDAW Committee requested more data on women's input into decision-making, the inclusion of a gender perspective, and attempts at gender mainstreaming in legislation, policies, and initiatives of Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Mozambique, Senegal Cambodia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Maldives, Namibia and Saint Kitts and Nevis. All of these States parties were asked to provide more information when they reported on the adoption of laws, policies, and strategies related to disaster risk and climate change.

The CEDAW Committee also asked about the methods employed to include a gender viewpoint and the way gender-mainstreaming is implemented in certain situations. Three more prominent themes for which the CEDAW Committee prompted States parties for further information included women from rural areas, women from indigenous communities, and women who are vulnerable due to disability. The committee asked countries including Indonesia, Namibia, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, South Africa, and Zimbabwe to provide more information on the measures implemented to assist rural women.

Rural women's participation in policy formulation

The role that the CEDAW Committee's questions and observations played in the following examples highlight the potential to use General recommendation No. 37 proactively to strengthen initial reporting on gender equality in relation to disaster and climate risk governance. This is an area where States parties' obligations under CEDAW could be used to strengthen implementation of Sendai Framework Priority 2 by ensuring meaningful

participation of women, use of gender analysis and gender mainstreaming to underpin gender responsive disaster risk governance.

Examples of where the CEDAW Committee inquired further on rural women's participation in policy formulation included seeking information from:

- a. **Bolivia** on steps taken to mainstream a gender perspective in the special context of women engaging in agriculture, as well as information on how national disaster risk management, relief and recovery strategies are in line with General recommendation No. 37;⁴⁴
- b. **Indonesia**, on steps taken to guarantee indigenous, rural, and underprivileged women's participation in climate change, land and resource management decision-making processes, and on the settlement of land ownership in forest areas by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry;⁴⁵
- c. **Namibia** on the participation of women with disabilities, rural and older women in the formation, adoption, and execution of programmes on climate change and DRR;⁴⁶
- d. **Pakistan** on its gender sensitive DRR and climate change policies, strategies, and programmes, and on women's engagement in the development, funding, and implementation of such policies;⁴⁷
- e. **South Africa** on the impact of disasters on women and girls;⁴⁸ questions aimed to determine what initiatives were being taken to ensure equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making in DRR policymaking;
- f. **Zimbabwe** on financial resource allocation and the status of women's participation in decision-making, in the context of the impact of Cyclone Idai, as well as on the participation of women in the design, adoption, and implementation of action on climate change.⁴⁹

Energy policies: gender mainstreaming and capacity development

Reporting by several States parties included the oil and gas sector and the differential gender impacts in the context of action on climate change and DRR in that industry. The reports detailed actions taken to address funding in the sector, and to remedy the lack of legal accountability of corporations invested in the energy sector. States like Guyana, Mauritius, Qatar and the Maldives reported that policies were framed to make companies accountable within the legal system for the adverse impacts of carbon emissions and extraction, specifically on vulnerable communities which include rural and indigenous women and women living in low-lying areas vulnerable to sea level rise caused by climate change.

The CEDAW Committee requested information from States parties who reported on the energy and extraction sectors on the steps taken to empower women to deal with the adverse effects of oil and gas extraction. For example, it sought information from:

- a. **Saint Kitts and Nevis** on the execution of the 2013 National Disaster Plan, as well as strategies that are in place to ensure that women are not at risk of sexual or gender-based violence after a disaster; and on the allocation of shelters for women in the event of a disaster; and
- b. **Uganda** on oil and gas extraction, its impact on women, and how a gender perspective has been integrated into the national climate change policy of 2015.⁵⁰

Climate Change Laws and Policies and Risk Governance

The CEDAW Committee made several recommendations in its Concluding Observations specific to gender equality in managing the risk of climate change. For example, it recommended that:

- a. **Denmark** conducts gender-specific research on the impact of climate change on indigenous women dependent on traditional livelihoods in Greenland; and ensure equal participation of women in the decision-making process related to climate crises and to mainstream gender in climate finance by joining the climate fund established under the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC;⁵¹
- b. **Guyana** reviews its energy and climate change policies, particularly those that deal with the extraction of oil and gas;
- c. **Mauritius** actively involves women in the creation of laws, national policies, and initiatives dealing with climate change, such as the upcoming climate change bill and the project for low carbon island development strategy that calls for locally appropriate mitigation measures;⁵²
- d. **Maldives** reconsiders its climate change and energy policies, particularly those about oil and gas exploitation, and the impact of climate change on gender equality and the lives of women and their families, particularly those living in low-lying regions;⁵³
- e. **Mozambique** ensures that a gender perspective is incorporated into the development and implementation of climate change policies and programmes. Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth should be considered as well as the impact of foreign debt on the full enjoyment of women's rights;
- f. **Qatar** steps up efforts to cut carbon emissions and include details in its next periodic report on the involvement of women in initiatives to combat climate change. Concluding Observations on Qatar's second periodic report indicated steps were taken to incorporate a gender perspective into action on climate change;
- g. The **Russian Federation** reconsiders its climate change and energy policies, taking into account the harmful consequences of climate change on women's livelihoods, particularly rural and indigenous women;⁵⁴ and
- h. **Senegal** ensures and supervises the effectiveness of the quotas stated in CEDAW Circular No. 09-89 of 5 June 2018, expands women's access to low-interest credit, and strengthen capacity-building programmes for women and women's empowerment.⁵⁵

There was less emphasis in the Concluding Observations on disaster risk governance in this general sense, although both **Guyana** and **the Maldives** were urged to adopt DRR strategies that recognize gender inequality and assess the impact on the lives of women and their families, particularly those who reside in places below sea level.⁵⁶

3.2.3 Overview of themes and gaps relevant to risk governance

Priority 2 of the Sendai Framework and General recommendation No. 37 complement one another. Both promote policy coherence and capacity building, participation and recognition of the rights of women, from the initial stages of policy formation through the last stages of implementation and monitoring.

General recommendation No. 37 also emphasizes that States parties must ensure equality and non-discrimination for women and girls from underrepresented groups, particularly indigenous communities. The States parties reports and the CEDAW Committee Lists of Issues and Questions and Concluding Observations, promote the empowerment of rural and

indigenous women through gender mainstreaming and women's involvement in decision-making. There is also frequent mention in the reports of energy policies and their effects on rural and indigenous women, and a strong focus on gender mainstreaming of laws and policies for disaster risk governance.

In identifying the current interrelationship between General recommendation No. 37 and the Sendai Framework, based on the States parties' reports to CEDAW analysed in this study, it is evident that Sendai Framework Priority 2 issues are being considered in many States parties' reports and in the related Lists of Issues and Questions and the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee. The State parties reports indicate progress on gender equality in disaster risk governance and scope for increasing integration of General recommendation No. 37 into DRR laws, policies and practices. States parties could consider General recommendation No. 37 as an important source of guidance on gender responsive disaster risk governance and thus strengthen their implementation of Sendai Framework Priority 2.

3.3 Consideration of Priority 3 issues: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

The Sendai Framework emphasizes the importance of public and private sector investment in DRR, both structural and non-structural, to improve the economic, social, health, and cultural resilience of individuals, communities, countries, and their assets, as well as the environment. General recommendation No. 37 also underscores the requirement of maintaining excellent infrastructure and ensuring critical services are available, accessible, and culturally acceptable to all women and girls to empower them to deal effectively with DRR and climate change. General recommendation No. 37 encourages States parties to implement policies that promote gender equality in access, use and control of science and technology access, as well as providing training and opportunities.

3.3.1 States parties reporting relevant to investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Funding for disaster risk reduction and resilience

Funding is crucial to empower women in DRR through activities like training, loans, and social protection schemes as reported by States parties:

- a. **Cabo Verde** reports a range of initiatives focusing on social protection, economic opportunities for women, food and nutrition, which relate to the impacts of climate change on sustainable development. Initiatives include social pensions to access food for underprivileged and vulnerable groups; exploration of the potential of income-generating activities for female-headed households; extension of microcredit to guarantee adequate food; funding to ensure the supply of nutrition for pregnant women;⁵⁷
- b. **Honduras** reports that the Ministry of Natural Resources supported a training and knowledge forum that contributes to the comprehensive development of rural women and enhances their social, cultural and political participation. Action plans were drawn up by the National Institute for Women and the Honduran Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment;⁵⁸
- c. **Iceland** reports the allocation of funding to projects to combat climate-related issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment. It emphasizes the fact that wherever the state is funding the project it must ensure the mainstreaming of gender-

responsive and gender equality considerations in the allocation of funding to projects to combat climate-related issues gender equality and women's empowerment;⁵⁹ and

- d. **South Sudan** mentions a government funded project for women and girls in rural communities to develop new skills and resources to adapt, anticipate, and absorb climate change-related shocks and stresses. The project includes improved agriculture and diversified livelihoods, social protection mechanisms (rural-level microfinance), adaptation, and disaster management planning.⁶⁰

The synchronisation between disaster risk management, climate change and healthcare

Some States parties reported on funding in various sectors such as health, food and agriculture, as well as steps taken to improve the conditions of women's reproductive health in emergencies. For example:

- a. **Armenia** informed that the World Health Organization and the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Fund are working together to improve the reproductive health of women and girls in Armenia. With financial support from the UN Population Fund training has been conducted on how to protect reproductive health, particularly in emergencies, and how to provide assistance to women giving birth during disasters; how to prevent sexually transmitted infections/HIV and sexual violence, and to organize and provide medical care in these cases;⁶¹
- b. **Costa Rica's** report mentions substantive gender-responsiveness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶² The State party included gender perspectives in the framing of mental health guidelines which, given the increase in gender-based violence reported throughout the world during the pandemic, is a policy step that is gender-transformative; and
- c. **Morocco** reported that a gender perspective has been incorporated into civil society climate change projects and initiatives. A national reproductive health strategy and a rural health plan have been implemented. A mobile health coverage strategy was launched for climate-change-affected communities, particularly those experiencing severe rainfall.⁶³

Capacity development and access to technology

States parties reported on efforts to encourage women entrepreneurs and to promote women in non-traditional areas like science and technology as key elements of women's resilience to disasters and climate change. For example:

- a. **Cambodia's** report mentions mainstreaming climate resilience into its development planning project 2016–2018. The purpose was to enhance institutional and technical capacity to integrate gender concerns in climate change initiatives. For mainstreaming gender issues into investments in climate change adaptation and mitigation, they include developing a strategy, guiding principles, and implementation plans;⁶⁴
- b. **Nicaragua** has introduced strategies and programmes to promote the entrepreneurial and productive ability of Nicaraguan women. A programme to help the agriculture sector adapt to climate change and increase agricultural and fishery productivity was launched and women-headed households and indigenous women were among the recipients;⁶⁵
- c. **Pakistan's** report mentions that gender and child centres were established by each Provincial Disaster Management Authority, and training workshops are conducted on gender mainstreaming and awareness programmes. The Pakistan Government, in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, provides

vocational training for women affected by a disaster. Their products are showcased in craft exhibitions to provide economic stability.⁶⁶ Pakistan launched the “Let Girls Learn” project which aims to ensure access to education for displaced girls and women in disaster-hit areas across the country, and 70 million dollars has been invested in projects activated to ensure education for girls and children in temporarily displaced communities;⁶⁷ and

- d. **Venezuela** reports that in the national electricity industry there has been a rise in female leadership. The Sowing Light Programme and the Energy Panels Program reverse the feminization of poverty by giving free photovoltaic systems. Women are leading technical cooperation initiatives with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has created a handbook on incorporating a gender perspective during the diagnosis, design, implementation, and monitoring phases of alternative energy projects. These initiatives constitute a step forward in terms of structural and non-structural measures, as well as career development.⁶⁸

These are some good practice examples that could be useful models for other States parties in efforts to ensure the availability of electricity in remote and isolated areas of indigenous and frontier communities. This is a direct benefit passed onto women by giving them access to electricity and in turn access to the mainstream technology which will have a direct impact on the way they respond to disaster and climate change scenarios and act in times of crisis, thus empowering them. Having electricity will directly connect women to the media and technology and this, in turn, will help in getting all disaster-related information and early warning messages from the government bodies in a disaster situation.

Analysis of the reporting under Priority 3 indicates that States parties are working to provide funds for structural and non-structural measures, and women's participation and involvement in these areas is encouraged. The Sendai Framework's guiding principles and priorities, read in conjunction with General recommendation No. 37, are further encouraging the trend of investment in the science and technology sectors with women's engagement. Some reports demonstrate that funds are disbursed at the national level and via international organizations, however, few States parties reported funding capacity building, or gender responsive structural and non-structural infrastructure, suggesting that this is an area where there is room for much greater investment.

3.3.2 CEDAW Committee questions and observations relevant to investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

The CEDAW Committee did not raise specific questions about funding or investment in DRR to strengthen the structural and non-structural sectors for prevention and risk reduction in its Lists of Issues and Questions and Concluding Observations. However, it did seek further information from **Namibia** on the engagement of women with disabilities, rural women, and elderly women in the design, adoption, and implementation of climate change programmes; and on measures taken to ensure that climate change and energy policies, particularly those governing the drilling, production and export of oil and gas, consider the differentiated and unequal impact of climate change on women, particularly rural and indigenous women.⁶⁹

Regarding **Pakistan**, the CEDAW Committee refers positively to the establishment of gender and child cells and guidelines in disaster situations to address the needs and concerns of women, and requested information on women's engagement in the development, funding, and implementation of gender-responsive DRR and climate change policies, strategies, and programmes.⁷⁰

The **Saint Kitts and Nevis** List of Issues and Questions seeks information on very specific issues related to the mention in its report on implementation of the 2013 National Disaster Plan, as well as strategies put in place to guarantee that the allocation of shelters in the event of a disaster does not put women in danger of sexual or other gender-based violence. Further, it sought information on steps taken to guarantee that women working in tourism are eligible for social protection in the case of a natural disaster that threatens their job security, an issue reported by the State Party.⁷¹

3.3.3 Overview of themes and gaps relevant to investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

The analysis shows that reporting on actions aligned with Priority 3 is relatively low, and it appears to be an area with less specific overlap between General recommendation 37 and the Sendai Framework Priority 3. However, there is potential for States parties to use the guidance from CEDAW and General recommendation 37 to better understand the gender dimensions of investment in DRR, including by broadening the understanding of investment to include capacity development and critical health and social services.

3.4 Consideration of Priority 4 issues: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and Build Back Better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The Sendai Framework Priority 4 focuses on the planning aspects of DRR, so that through better preparedness there will also be more effective response and the capacity to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Women need to be empowered to publicly lead and promote planning for gender-responsive approaches in response and reconstruction phases.⁷² Only four States parties reported actions aligned to Priority 4, and it is another area where the relationship between the CEDAW Convention and DRR could be usefully explored.

3.4.1 States parties reporting relevant to enhancing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

Training and support

One of the themes that emerged in the limited number of country reports identified as raising issues related to Sendai Framework Priority 4, was training and support. For example:

- a. The **Maldives** reports that the United Nations Country Team with the Maldives Government initiated a pilot programme with the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services and Island councils to ensure 50% of rural women in the total population have been trained in disaster response and recovery. The States party reported that the National Disaster Management Centre has been supporting women to participate in Community Emergency Responses Teams;
- b. **Pakistan’s** report mentions that the National Disaster Management Authority prepared comprehensive Policy Guidelines for women and other vulnerable groups. Important elements include the establishment by each Provincial Disaster Management Authority of the women and child centres, and training workshops on gender mainstreaming and awareness programmes on problems faced by women, particularly in post-disaster scenarios;⁷³ and

- c. The **Philippines** report states that the Philippine Commission on Women was made a member of the Council for International Development in 2015. In 2016, through a formal submission to the UNFCCC, it proposed elements and guiding principles for the advancement of the Lima Work Program on Gender and Climate change. It also reported the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in DRR and climate change measures.

While significant effort has been made by several States parties, there remains important work to be done in the direction of gender mainstreaming and substantive equality for preparedness in response, recovery and to build back better. As the international community is witnessing an increase in climate-induced disasters, greater emphasis by States parties on the synergies between Priority 4 and General recommendation No. 37 can strengthen local, national, and global level capacity to build the resilience of women and better prepare for response and recovery.

3.4.2 CEDAW questions and observations relevant to enhancing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

The CEDAW Committee asks questions that are categorised under the relief, recovery and funding efforts by States parties. Particular examples of where further information has been sought by the CEDAW Committee are Pakistan, Bolivia, Senegal, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua and Uganda relating Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework. For example, the CEDAW Committee asked:

- a. **Nicaragua** about steps to include a gender perspective in national DRR, relief, and recovery efforts and on how women are involved in the development and implementation of DRR policies and programmes, as well as in post-disaster management and climate change policies and programmes;⁷⁴
- b. **Kazakhstan** how the government intends to mitigate the differential and unequal effects of fossil fuel production and use, particularly coal and oil, on women in Kazakhstan. This is considered in terms of a transition to renewable energy and barriers faced by women to access decent employment, and how this impacts their capacity to respond to and recover from a disaster;⁷⁵
- c. **Pakistan** to provide information on women's engagement in the development, funding, and implementation of gender-responsive DRR and climate change policies, strategies, and programmes. Information is also sought on national disaster risk management and relief and recovery strategies by the Council for International Development Committee;
- d. **Peru** for details of the action taken to include a gender perspective in national DRR management, as well as relief and recovery programmes and information on how women are involved in the development and implementation of DRR policies and programmes, as well as post-disaster management and climate change policies and programmes; and
- e. **Uganda** how disaster risk management, relief, and recovery programmes have included a gender perspective.

Another aspect of Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework is capacity development to build back better. Nicaragua, the Maldives, Honduras and Timor-Leste were asked specific questions in relation to capacity development. For example, the CEDAW Committee requested further information from:

- a. **Honduras** on steps taken to help in providing relief and extend help in recovery for women affected by natural disasters such as Hurricanes Eta and Iota.⁷⁶

- b. The **Maldives** regarding General recommendation No. 37 and SDG 13, for awareness and education on climate change mitigation and adaptation, early warning, and climate change planning and management. Specifically, how the least developed islands and their women, youth, and local and marginalized communities are being included and considered.
- c. **Timor-Leste** regarding the “assistance offered to women victims of Cyclone Seroja's floods and landslides in April 2021 and how displaced women’s land rights are being handled, and what long-term solutions are being suggested to them.”⁷⁷

The analysis of the CEDAW Committee Lists of Issues and Questions in relation to Priority 4 highlights that there is room for more targeted investigation of efforts aimed at strengthening States parties’ recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction in a post-disaster scenario to build back better. This component of DRR was not reported on by States parties and was not a focal point in the questions asked by the CEDAW Committee in response to the States parties reports. To support actions to meet the goals of Priority 4 further guidance may be useful to assist States parties strengthen their planning and preparedness for gender responsive post-disaster capacity, drawing from General recommendation No. 37.

3.4.3 Overview of themes and gaps relevant to enhancing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

States parties’ reports emphasized training and capacity development in post-disaster recovery. The CEDAW Committee Lists of Issues and Questions and Concluding Observations were mostly related to relief and recovery, and women’s participation from the policy framing level, with little reporting from States parties on building back better.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

This scoping study has explored the extent to which country reporting under the CEDAW Convention considers disasters and climate change, particularly in light of the guidance provided by General recommendation No. 37. In turn, it has explored potential synergies between these and the Sendai Framework, with a view to increasing the extent to which they can inform each other at country level.

Although the States party reports to CEDAW did not specifically use General recommendation No. 37, many did report on disaster and climate change issues. Based on this reporting, gender inclusive DRR frameworks are being actively adopted by States parties, indicating there is a strong relationship between the objectives of Priority 2 of the Sendai Framework and General recommendation No. 37. Most observations provided by the CEDAW Committee were also aimed at gender mainstreaming of laws and policies and women's participation in the decision-making process, reflecting the priorities of the CEDAW Convention which focus on law and policy frameworks for gender equality.

This report has also demonstrated, through several examples from States parties’ reports, that there is also significant convergence in the criteria for CEDAW reporting and Priorities 1, 3 and 4 of the Sendai Framework, and that more explicit and extensive use of General recommendation No. 37 could draw these out. Making these connections at country level, between DRR and gender institutions, could significantly add to knowledge and capacity for gender responsive DRR.

Through the reporting process the CEDAW Committee can play a positive role in promoting gender responsive DRR, which can demonstrate the ways that action on gender equality can contribute to achieving the goal and priorities of the Sendai Framework.

4.2 Recommendations

This report makes recommendations to support more robust linkages between the CEDAW reporting mechanism and efforts to achieve substantive equality in the context of DRR in a changing climate. General recommendation No. 37 has all the necessary content to guide this integration, but its potential is yet to be realised. The following recommendations propose some practical ways in which States parties, the CEDAW Committee, the United Nations System and International Cooperation could enhance this important interaction between country obligations under the CEDAW Convention and efforts to implement the Sendai Framework.

4.2.1 Recommendations for States parties

An overarching recommendation arising from the observations outlined in this report is for States parties to take actions to increase gender responsive DRR. The three principles of the CEDAW Convention highlighted in General recommendation No. 37 are equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment, and accountability and access to justice. The first three of these items are also reflected in the Sendai Framework. The following recommendations align elements of General recommendation No. 37 with corresponding priorities of the Sendai Framework.

Priority 1 and General recommendation No. 37

State parties may wish to consider:

a. Enhancing methods of collecting and using gender-disaggregated data

Consider enhancing methods and systems of collecting and maintaining records of gender-disaggregated data for the purpose of integrating Part V (A) of General recommendation No. 37 into national DRR efforts.⁷⁸ Use this data in decision-making to promote understanding of the gender dimensions of DRR and climate change.

b. Assessing DRR frameworks to identify unintended adverse outcomes for women and girls

When revising DRR frameworks, using gender assessment of existing and new mechanisms to identify and prevent unintended negative outcomes for women and girls, including highly vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities. Also assess whether DRR frameworks target the needs of women and girls and promote prosperity post-disaster.

c. Identifying risks from forced marriage and exploitation of women and girls

To reduce the risk faced by women and girls in crisis situations of forced or early marriage and exploitation, taking active steps to empower women and strengthen the observation of women's rights in the disaster and post-disaster context through increasing awareness and education regarding forced marriage and exploitation of girls and women; and strengthening avenues of recourse for victims of forced marriage and exploitation.

d. Incorporating knowledge on food security and nutrition

Strengthening DRR frameworks to integrate information on food security and access to nutrition based on the national and regional context. Women make up the majority of small holder and subsistence farming and agriculture globally and feel the impacts of climate change sharply.

Priority 2 and General recommendation No. 37

States parties may wish to consider:

a. Facilitating women's meaningful participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction institutions

Increasing women's representation, leadership and empowerment in national and local disaster risk governance institutions by ensuring that DRR laws, policies, strategies and plans incorporate gender equality principles. Providing for and enabling the active participation and leadership of women in national and local institutions developing and implementing policy. Formally recognizing the existing leadership and contributions of women's organizations in building resilience and reducing risk, and supporting their work in risk governance through resource allocations.

b. Increasing horizontal engagement between national and local institutions for DRR and the national women's machinery

Ensuring that women's ministries, commissions, departments and national women's rights organizations are represented on platforms and standing committees for DRR and are engaged actively in the DRR law and policy making process. Creating mechanisms to increase knowledge sharing between the national and local implementing institutions for the CEDAW Convention and the Sendai Framework, for example, focal point networks, joint capacity building and sharing of information and reports.

c. Ensuring gender responsive risk governance tools and planning

Using gender situational analysis and gender budgeting to review key tools and planning processes for disaster risk governance to ensure gender responsive risk mapping and risk assessments, early warning systems, emergency response plans and standard operating procedures, inclusive emergency shelter, post disaster needs assessments, and planning and implementation for structural, social and economic recovery and reconstruction.

d. Establishing an oversight group on integration of General recommendation No. 37 in DRR

Developing a national CEDAW/DRR focus group with regular gatherings to assess the progress of integrating General recommendation No. 37 into national and regional DRR frameworks. Women's ministries could engage with DRR and climate change ministries during their CEDAW reporting to ensure thorough access to the DRR and climate change data, and to gather their inputs recent policies, programmes and actions on gender and DRR and climate change that can be included in the national report to the CEDAW Committee.

e. Taking a policy coherence approach to the CEDAW Convention and other global and regional instruments

Taking a policy coherence approach to global and regional instruments that may inform effective implementation of the CEDAW Convention and General recommendation No. 37 and ensure more gender responsive DRR. Complementary international instruments targeting climate change and DRR, including the Sendai Framework, Agenda 2030 and the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement provide consideration of women's rights in DRR and climate change. Greater synthesis of these frameworks at national level may provide mutual support for implementation of CEDAW and gender responsive DRR.

f. Addressing the ongoing effects of climate change on women

As part of building resilience to climate change, developing policies and networks to ensure that women are not disproportionately forced to relocate or rebuild in areas that are more heavily impacted by the effects of climate change, where food and water insecurity may

increase vulnerability to gender-based violence and exploitation. Adapting and strengthening legislation to protect the rights and livelihoods of women and girls to support access to resources during and post-disasters, and as the impacts of climate change adversely affect their means of food production.

Priority 3 and General recommendation No. 37

State parties may wish to consider:

a. Investing in education and training to promote the rights of women and girls

Educating women and girls and strengthening women's technological capacities so they have the knowledge and ability to better prepare, respond, and rebuild in the contexts of disaster and climate change. Investing and actively including women in sustainable employment opportunities and target funding for civil society organisations to lead the education, training, and empowerment of women at the local level.

b. Capacity development for gender responsive DRR

Investing in gender responsive training for women and men working in DRR at the national and local level, including government officials and community organizations; and supporting women's organizations, by ensuring they can promote their work and findings, and have access to technical training and sustainable financing.

c. Social protections and support targeting women and girls in post-disaster contexts

Increasing investment in paid protections and support targeting women and girls in post-disaster settings to reduce vulnerabilities that increase risk of abuse and exploitation that is culturally sensitive and appropriate. Invest in social protection services to make sure women are not left behind or disproportionately adversely affected. Maintain education for girls during and post-disaster and raise awareness about the risks of forced marriage and exploitation of women and girls who are highly vulnerable during crises.

d. Strengthening access to justice and continuity of legal services

Establishing or strengthening civil society organisations and legal services dedicated to advancing women's rights and justice, so that women are empowered to report and seek restitution for abuse and/or discrimination that arise from disaster contexts and the increasing strains experienced through climate change.

Priority 4 and General recommendation No. 37

State parties may wish to consider:

a. Preparing for gender responsive and inclusive early warning systems.

Using gender responsive and inclusive approaches, ensure the meaningful participation and leadership of women, and mainstream gender and intersectional issues throughout the development of multi-hazard early warning systems, including plans, training, and standard operating procedures.

b. Planning for continuity and enhancement of healthcare for women

To ensure dignity and wellbeing of women and girls in disaster and post-disaster contexts, States parties might strengthen national healthcare frameworks from a DRR perspective to ensure a gender responsive health framework that prioritises protecting women and girls to prevent avoidable suffering and long-term health impacts arising from disasters and climate change. Gender responsive DRR healthcare frameworks may include ensuring continuity and resourcing of: psychological services; sexual and reproductive health services; emergency

obstetrics and antenatal care; and oncology and autoimmune services. To be consistent with General recommendation No. 37, such healthcare needs to prioritize informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and autonomy of women in medical and health related matters in the disaster and post-disaster context.

c. Recognizing work performed by women as part of planning for response and recovery

To reduce the economic disadvantages women face in disaster response and recovery, strengthen social frameworks to prevent the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by women through unpaid domestic labour, which increases when their communities are impacted by disasters, and may not be recognised or compensable in the disaster and post-disaster context; ensure that the tools and methods used for needs assessments and economic recovery planning recognize existing gender differences in economic roles and enhance women's opportunities for decent work and greater remuneration without reinforcing gender stereotypes; and plan for recovery and building back better for women farmers and agricultural workers by providing support and training to help rebuild farms and understand ways to adapt to a changing environment to mitigate the future impacts of climate change and disasters.

4.2.2 Recommendations for the CEDAW Committee

The CEDAW Committee may wish to consider:

a. Resources to support implementation of CEDAW in the context of disasters and climate change

Simplified resources based on General recommendation No. 37 to assist States parties to integrate the CEDAW Convention into DRR efforts and to strengthen their DRR frameworks and guide their reporting.

b. Checklist on General recommendation No. 37.

A specific checklist and questions to be utilized by States parties and the CEDAW Committee when reviewing progress on implementation of CEDAW in light of General recommendation No. 37.

c. Prompting the use of General recommendation No.37 in States parties' reports

Through more extensive use of the mechanisms of Lists of Issue and Questions and Concluding Observations to bring the attention of States parties to the ways that action on gender equality contributes to achieving the goal and priorities of the Sendai Framework.

4.3.3 Recommendations for the United Nations System

The United Nations system and specific agencies may wish to consider:

a. Targeted support

Directing support towards developing national and regional capacities for gender responsive DRR and the advancement of women's rights, including through support for mechanisms such as a Sendai Framework Gender Action Plan recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in March 2022.

b. Gender equality in United Nations development initiatives

Adopting system-wide and coordinated strategies to promote incorporation of gender-responsive DRR and climate change adaptation into United Nations development initiatives. The United Nations system and specific agencies might play a role in driving necessary

investment in women's leadership in DRR, and in strategic areas such as improving capacity to generate and use gender and age disaggregated data.

4.3.4 Recommendations for International Cooperation

States parties, intergovernmental organizations, development banks and other international non-state actors may wish to consider:

a. Targeted support for gender initiatives in DRR

Increasing their contributions to DRR through official development assistance and other project and programme funding, as a means to strengthen broader international efforts in DRR. Funding and technical support may target gender responsive DRR at country level as well as regional programmes such as transboundary early warning systems and specific priorities identified in regional or sub-regional plans.

b. Localization of gender initiatives

Support civil society organisations, especially women-led organizations and women in DRR, to share knowledge and capabilities at a local level on improving gender equality and gender responsiveness in DRR. Actors may consider sustainable funding and specific tailoring and targeting of initiatives to empower women and girls in DRR.

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² Note: The CEDAW Committee has now made 39 such General recommendations, including the most recent one in 2022, general recommendation No. 39 on Indigenous women and girls. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/general-recommendations>.

³ *General recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate. Part II Objective and Scope*. Para 13, p. 5. 13 March CEDAW/C/GC/37. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no37-2018-gender-related> (hereinafter, "CEDAW General recommendation No. 37")

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⁶ For a full analysis see UNDRR's "A Review of Gender and the Sendai Framework" <https://www.undrr.org/publication/review-gender-and-sendai-framework>

⁷ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Article 36. Available at <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>.

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¹² CEDAW General recommendation No. 37. Para 12.

¹³ CEDAW General recommendation No. 37

¹⁴ CEDAW General recommendation No. 37. Para 41.

¹⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Para 37.

¹⁶ CEDAW General recommendation No. 37, Para 36 (c).

¹⁷ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015). *Chart of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Available at <https://www.undrr.org/publication/chart-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>.

¹⁸ United Nations, General Assembly (2015). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 3 June 2015, 69/283. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_69_283.pdf.

¹⁹United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women (2021). *Seventh periodic report submitted by Armenia under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2020*. P. 32. 1 April. CEDAW/C/ARM/7. Available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fARM%2f7&Lang=en.

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