

act:onaid

TRANSFORMING DISASTER RESPONSE: WOMEN-LED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



Cicik is an earthquake survivor and a leader in the Tamanjaya Women's Forum, where she is empowering women in her community to improve their economic security and respond to gender-based violence.

Photo: Bima Artoko/Indonesia



Acknowledgements

Author: Rowan Harvey

Acknowledgements: Tanzia Anjum, Tamazer Ahmed, Mohammed Abdul Alim, Nguyen Anh Minh, Hoang Phuong Thao, Putthy San, Sothearith Siyonn, Mahesh Badal, Indira Hapsari, Rokhmad Munawir, Flora Vano, Tanjir Hossain, Sophie Hardefeldt, Kieu Gavin, Sally Henderson, Michelle Higelin.

Published: October 2024

Editor: Sophie Raynor

Cover Image: After living through the 2018 tsunami, Ade is leading her community in the disaster-prone Pandeglang district of Indonesia to be better prepared for future disasters. Photo: Bima Artoko/Indonesia

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. The Gendered Impacts of Climate Disasters | 6 |
| Case Study: Women Leading the Charge Against Floods in Nepal | 7 |
| 2.1 ActionAid's Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Disasters | 8 |
| 3. The Power of Women-led Disaster Risk Reduction and Response | 10 |
| Case Study: Planning for Resilience in Cambodia | 11 |
| Case Study: Women's Leadership in Climate Resilience and Disaster Preparedness in Vanuatu | 12 |
| 4. Setting the Framework for Gender-responsive Action Across the Climate-Disaster Nexus | 14 |
| 4.1 The Role of NDCs and NAPs in Driving Gender-responsive Approaches | 15 |
| 4.2 Designing updated NDCs and NAPs that Catalyse Gender-responsive Action across the Climate-Disaster Nexus | 17 |
| Case Study: Addressing Gaps in Australian Climate Plans and Strategies | 18 |
| Case Study: Khmer Women and Climate Adaptation in the Mekong Delta | 19 |
| 5. Integrated Approaches to Gender Equality, Climate Change and DRR | 20 |
| 5.1 A Framework for Gender-responsive Climate Finance | 23 |
| Case Study: Winning the Argument for Gender-responsive Climate Finance in Bangladesh | 24 |
| 5.2 Key Components of Gender-Responsive DRR and Disaster Response plans | 25 |
| Case Study: Women Building Lifelines in Indonesia | 27 |
| 6. Conclusion and Recommendations | 28 |

1 INTRODUCTION

As we near the halfway mark in a critical decade for climate action, women and girls across Asia and the Pacific are bearing the brunt of escalating climate disasters.

In the past two years alone, Typhoon Yagi has wreaked havoc across the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar, flash flooding has engulfed Nepal's capital of Kathmandu, more than half a million people were displaced by the worst flood to hit Bangladesh in decades, and two category four tropical cyclones hit Vanuatu in just 48 hours.

The Asia and Pacific region is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, and as global heating hurtles towards 1.5°C, women and their communities are grappling with increasingly extreme climate events. More frequent and intense floods, tropical cyclones, heatwaves, and droughts have led to a loss of lives and livelihoods, destruction of homes, schools and crops, displaced communities, and pushed millions into poverty.ⁱ The impact has been devastating and unequal – women and their children are 14 times more likely to die in a disasterⁱⁱ and four times more likely to be displaced.ⁱⁱⁱ The impacts are worse for women with disabilities and those facing intersecting inequalities, whose discrimination is compounded.

While women across Asia and the Pacific are disproportionately impacted by climate disasters, they are also at the forefront of disaster risk reduction and are key responders in the wake of climate disasters.^{iv} Women are also stepping up to lead climate change adaptation in their communities, driving integrated responses that address climate impacts alongside gender equality goals. However, despite evidence showing the efficiency and effectiveness of women-led and gender-responsive approaches to disaster preparedness and response, particularly in reaching the most marginalised and climate vulnerable communities, women continue to be excluded from climate change decision-making and are often overlooked as countries plan, prepare for and respond to climate disasters.

This paper explores the benefits of women-led and gender-responsive approaches to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and response in the context of escalating climate disasters across Asia and the Pacific. It argues for policy coherence across the climate and disaster nexus, and ensuring the integration of gender considerations into governments' climate strategies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). It assesses the effectiveness of these plans in setting a framework for gender-responsive action across the climate disaster nexus.

NDCs embody governments' commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. If designed effectively, NDCs, alongside voluntary NAPs, can provide an effective framework to guide gender-responsive national climate action, including in relation to DRR and disaster response. However, this analysis indicates that most climate NDCs and NAPs across the region lack commitments to women-led and gender-responsive climate action, pointing to the stark reality that as climate disasters drive increasing devastation across our region, women and other marginalised groups continue to be overlooked, excluded and left behind in government responses.

These findings demonstrate the urgent need for governments across Asia and the Pacific to develop a coherent policy framework that consider the gendered nature of climate impacts. Fostering intersectional approaches that respond to the specific needs of women and marginalised groups, and that recognise women's critical role in driving gender-responsive and inclusive disaster risk reduction and response is also essential.

The submission of new and enhanced NDCs in early 2025 provides an opportunity for governments in the region to start on this journey. Gender-responsive NDCs and NAPs could provide key building blocks for a paradigm shift in responses to climate emergencies across the region: mandating the integration of gender analysis into DRR and disaster response strategies and plans, establishing clear commitments to support women's leadership at all levels, and helping to mobilise gender-responsive climate finance for women-led and gender-responsive solutions.

As communities grapple with the ever-increasing impacts of climate disasters, fostering gender-responsive and women-led responses would drive effective outcomes for the most vulnerable and climate-affected communities. As we near the deadline for the submission of new and enhanced NDCs, Asian and Pacific governments should take up the opportunity to design new gender-responsive NDCs that set the framework for effective and inclusive climate action that meets the needs of women and communities on the frontlines of disasters.

This paper makes four recommendations for governments across Asia and the Pacific to catalyse gender-responsive and women-led responses to climate emergencies:

- 1** Develop NDCs and NAPs that drive a coherent agenda for gender-responsive action across the climate-disaster nexus;
- 2** Improve gender data collection and analysis for all climate change, DRR and disaster response activities;
- 3** Support women's leadership and decision-making in climate change, DRR and disaster response planning and implementation; and
- 4** Increase funding for women-led and gender-responsive DRR, disaster response and climate action.



In the remote village of Krishnapur, Noakhali, where floodwaters have submerged homes and roads, Tajnahar Begum struggles to find enough food to feed her son. Photo: Fahad Kaizer/ActionAid

2 THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE DISASTERS

Climate change is reversing past gender equality gains and pushing more women and girls into extreme poverty.^v During climate disasters, women and girls are disproportionately affected by displacement, loss of livelihoods and worsening gender-based violence. In the aftermath – with national budgets severely strained – women are hardest hit when public services such as education and healthcare face cuts.^{vi} Under a worst-case climate scenario, UN Women has predicted that up to 158.3 million more women and girls may be pushed into poverty globally by 2050.^{vii}

Climate disasters exacerbate existing gender inequalities. Persistent discrimination and harmful gender norms already limit women's access to legal rights, resources, and political participation.^{viii} As a result, women's contributions to disaster resilience are often overlooked, and their voices are marginalised in decision-making processes and the development of DRR policies and plans.^{ix}

Climate disasters exacerbate these existing gender inequalities, reduce women's decision-making power and access to resources, and increase the unpaid care work that women are expected to shoulder.^x Increased care work, such as securing fuelwood, water, food, and caregiving for the injured, sick, and elderly during and after disasters, further limits women's opportunities for participation and leadership in disaster response and other economic and social activities.^{xi}

Climate disasters heighten women's vulnerability. On average, women experience greater risk of mortality, morbidity, and loss of resources during climate disasters. This reduces their resilience in the short, medium, and long term.^{xii} Women have higher dependence on public services, such as sexual and reproductive healthcare, suffering disproportionately when these services are disrupted or stretched thin by climate impacts.^{xiii} At the same time, the stress caused by climate shocks, such as displacement, loss of livelihoods, and breakdown of social structures, often leads to increased gender-based violence (GBV).

Access to GBV support services for survivors is often limited, under-resourced or withdrawn altogether in emergencies – leaving women without adequate support or protection, and leading to cycles of violence that persist long after the initial disaster.^{xiv}

Climate disasters result in women's greater economic loss. Women are more likely to experience economic losses during disasters because they are concentrated in insecure jobs that are often vulnerable to climate impacts, and they have limited access to financial resources, including credit, to rebuild homes and re-establish livelihoods.^{xv} Women play a vital role as farmers and food producers in Asian and Pacific countries, including making up half the agricultural labour force in a number of countries across the region.^{xvi} Women's reliance on agriculture for their livelihoods and food security increases their vulnerability to issues such as drought, flooding and increased water salinity. Women are also four times more likely to be displaced – often forced to leave their homes and livelihoods behind – by climate impacts,^{xvii} further reducing their ability to rebuild and recover.

Women-led and gender-responsive approaches to disaster preparedness and response are essential to counter these trends by addressing the needs of women and girls from affected communities, while also tackling wider gender inequality. Yet, current investments in DRR and

climate adaptation often fail to reach women, particularly those experiencing intersecting inequalities such as age, race, ethnicity and Indigeneity.^{xviii} Targeted support for women's rights organisations, networks and collectives is vital in enabling women to drive gender-transformative approaches that respond to the combined challenges of gender inequality and climate change. This should include support for intersectional approaches that foster the leadership of women who continue to face multiple forms of discrimination, including First Nations women, women with disabilities, female-headed households, and LGBTQIA+ people.^{xix}

Case Study: Women Leading the Charge Against Floods in Nepal

Rajapur, a village nestled in Nepal's Bardiyā district, faces annual floods that force families to abandon their homes, ruin vital crops like rice, and disrupt essential services such as electricity and water, plunging the community into darkness for days at a time. For the women of Rajapur these disasters hit especially hard, as they are often left to pick up the pieces while men work away from home.

In 2022, ActionAid Nepal, in partnership with Kamaiya Mahila Jagaran Samaj (KMJS Nepal), launched the Youth and Women Leadership for Community Resilience and Humanitarian Action project with one goal: to turn survivors into leaders. The project focused on equipping young women with DRR skills – preparing them to tackle the impacts of climate-induced disasters and build stronger, more resilient communities. Project members have learned to leverage technology for flood forecasting, provide first aid during emergencies, and protect community resources.



Young women leaders in Bardiyā district, Nepal, educate their communities about disaster risk reduction and response to climate-induced disasters. Photo: ActionAid

Before the project, many participants had little awareness of flood risks; today, they are leading advocates for an integrated approach that weaves education, healthcare, and social protection into long-term resilience strategies. More importantly, they've empowered others with their knowledge, creating a ripple effect that has strengthened the entire community's ability to withstand future disasters. The women's leadership – from disseminating information, to coordinating relief efforts – has reduced dependence on external aid and strengthened the community's ability to withstand future challenges. In recognition of their efforts, the project has received government support at both the local and municipal level, including targeted resources and partnerships to gather gender-disaggregated data that will inform future planning efforts.

Further acknowledging the effectiveness of gender-responsive approaches, Nepal's NDC and NAP contain specific commitments to empowering women and young people as leaders in climate response. The Government of Nepal should continue to build on these commitments to catalyse women leaders, including young women, to take ownership of DRR activities, advocate for climate justice, and drive long-term community resilience.

2.1 ActionAid's Approach to DRR and Climate Disasters

ActionAid works in over 70 countries to catalyse women-led and gender-responsive solutions to climate change. ActionAid's approach to DRR and disaster response is underpinned by our Humanitarian Signature, which recognises the gendered impacts of climate disasters and the critical role of women-led and gender-responsive approaches in responding to the needs of the most marginalised and climate vulnerable groups. We work to foster the leadership of women from affected communities, building on their existing capacities, networks and knowledge. This includes enabling women's organisations, networks and coalitions to access funding and drive their own responses and resilience-building activities. ActionAid facilitates training in disaster preparedness, disaster response and climate resilience, while also supporting women from affected communities to influence policies and planning to ensure diverse gender perspectives are integrated into DRR. This approach promotes women's long-term engagement in decision-making and community resilience-building efforts.

Additionally, economic resilience is a core part of ActionAid's global efforts, supporting climate-resilient livelihoods, agroecology, improving access to capital, and advocating for social safety nets to enhance the resilience of women and marginalised groups to disasters. ActionAid also works to recognise and value unpaid care work and ensure it is incorporated into disaster loss assessments and redistributed through improved public services.



Youth leaders in Bardiya district, Nepal, are trained about DRR so they can lead the response to climate-induced disasters. Photo: ActionAid

Figure.1 ActionAid's Humanitarian Signature

How we respond

ActionAid's emergency responses are guided by our Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) as well as our Humanitarian Signature. Disaster affected people have the **right to assistance: both immediate lifesaving support which meet basic needs whilst also working to address underlying inequalities and promote long-term change.**

Our rights-based approach promotes the leadership, engagement and agency of poor and excluded people, particularly women, ensuring they are at the centre of emergency response. ActionAid aims to save lives and protect rights.

Shifting the Power

ActionAid's presence and relationships with local organisations in communities are enhanced through our responses and we build local capacity.

We enable local leadership in programme design and response, and support access of local leaders to national funding and advocacy opportunities.



Women's leadership

Women are often the worst affected in emergencies, as well as the first responders. We ensure power is shifted to women leaders in order to address existing power imbalances at all levels by promoting the leadership of women who are affected by the crisis. This will also mean that we will focus on women's rights programming, including protection programming, so that women have the space, and agency, to lead change processes.

**ActionAid's
Humanitarian
Signature**



Accountability to affected communities

Effective humanitarian response means that all stakeholders and actors are accountable to affected communities.

ActionAid works with communities and local organisations to support them to hold powerful actors (including national governments; donors; INGOs) to account, and to ensure that they are responding appropriately to the needs expressed by the communities themselves.



Youth leadership

In emergencies the diverse and intersecting needs of young people are often overlooked and we recognise the need to provide safe spaces for young women and young LGBTQ persons.

We see young people as beyond 'first responders' as we seek to work together to prepare, respond and build resilience to crisis. We do this by partnering with and strengthening the capacity of youth leaders, their organisations, and movements.



Sustainability and Resilience:

Underlying the Humanitarian Signature, it is crucial to link emergency response to resilience-building and longer term sustainable change, including empowering individuals and addressing underlying inequalities through all our development programming.

3 THE POWER OF WOMEN-LED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESPONSE

Ensuring climate strategies and plans are gender-responsive is vital in upholding the rights of women and girls, as well as being an essential element of effective and sustainable climate adaptation and disaster response. Evidence demonstrates that when women are involved in climate change decision-making and enabled to drive DRR and disaster response, the outcomes for women and marginalised communities are amplified.^{xx} These benefits include:

More equitable, efficient, and effective DRR programs: Gender-responsive approaches ensure women's active participation and leadership in climate-related decision-making, leading to more comprehensive and inclusive policies and programs, and to more effective and inclusive DRR and disaster response.^{xxi} Women's participation in climate leadership and decision-making not only promotes gender equality, but leads to more effective climate change responses. The evidence shows that when women are involved in designing and driving climate solutions, these solutions are more likely to be comprehensive, contextually relevant, sustainable, and designed specifically to meet the needs of women and other marginalised groups.^{xxii}

Increased community resilience: Women's active participation in DRR and disaster response enhances community resilience by leveraging their local knowledge, social networks, and caregiving roles to create better-prepared communities and more resilient recovery processes.^{xxiii} Women's intimate knowledge of community needs, resources, and vulnerabilities allows them to identify risks and devise practical, culturally appropriate and gender-inclusive solutions.

For instance, women often know which community members are most vulnerable – such as the elderly, people with disabilities, or mothers with young children – and can ensure their needs are met and they are not forgotten or left behind during emergency procedures.^{xxiv} The leadership of women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people and women from other marginalised groups ensures that climate responses are designed to meet the needs of these often-excluded groups.

Reduced gender inequality: Gender-responsive approaches promote gender equality and women's leadership and participation, reduce the economic and social impacts of climate change on women, and increase their ability to participate in and contribute to community development.^{xxv} Empowering women in DRR consequently has a ripple effect: challenging patriarchal social structures and values that disadvantage women and shifting community attitudes towards a greater recognition and valuing of women's participation and leadership across all areas of public life. This leads to more inclusive governance, improved gender equality, and better overall development outcomes.^{xxvi}

Greater economic resilience: Women, particularly across Asia and the Pacific, are more likely to be employed in insecure employment in sectors that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as agriculture, fisheries, and informal labour. Access to new technologies, knowledge and skills allows women to better protect their incomes and assets and safeguard their livelihoods.^{xxvii} At the same time, addressing gender gaps in access to finance, training, and economic markets unlocks the full potential of women as entrepreneurs and economic agents, particularly in emerging sectors like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-tourism – promoting women's economic empowerment and increasing social equity.^{xxviii}

Reduced violence and conflict, and sustained peacebuilding: Climate change increases the threat of conflict and violence by creating instability, stress and competition for dwindling resources.^{xxx} In conflict-affected regions, women are leading efforts to rebuild social cohesion and foster dialogue between divided communities. Their perspectives and experiences allow them to identify and address the underlying causes that fuel conflict, such as the importance of addressing GBV as a critical component of post-conflict recovery.^{xxx}

Case Study: Planning for Resilience in Cambodia

The village of Chroy Svay Keut lies within one of Cambodia's natural protected areas – a complex ecological system with coastline and mangrove forests that hosts marine life, on which locals depend for food and livelihoods. The mangrove forests also act as a natural barrier against storms and as a natural filter, absorbing carbon dioxide and removing pollutants from coastal waters. This area is under constant threat, with mangrove trees illegally felled and sold for personal profit, and local people's access regularly cut off through land purchases and restrictions imposed by private investors.



Women leaders from Chroy Svay Keut take action to protect coastal areas and mangrove forests. Photo: ActionAid

Local women are leading the response, working to protect coastal areas and mangrove forests from development and illegal exploitation. Members of the Women-Led Alternatives to Climate Change in Cambodia project have worked to protect marine life and build a community resilient to climate change. Vowing to guard the mangrove forests, they spearheaded a fundraising campaign to plant new mangrove trees, and have watched over them, reporting illegal felling activities. Their efforts haven't gone unnoticed – gaining recognition and praise from their community, NGOs and the local authorities.

The Government of Cambodia has released one of the strongest and most coherent set of strategies and plans of any government to date, promoting women's leadership and with clear commitments to integrate gender-responsiveness in climate change adaptation policies, plans, programming, and to gender budgeting. Cambodia's NAP – the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023 – has a focus on promoting women's leadership, building social and economic resilience, and mainstreaming gender in climate policies. This has not only enhanced the country's overall resilience to climate change but also empowered women to play a central role in shaping a sustainable and equitable future. Communities where women have been actively involved in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation efforts, like Chroy Svay Keut, have seen a notable increase in disaster preparedness and response efficiency.

The Government of Cambodia has two important upcoming opportunities to set the standard for climate architecture in Asia and the Pacific, with the expected release of their updated NAP in late 2024 and NDC in 2025. As Cambodia develops and continues to implement its climate plans in coming years, building on the lessons learned in communities like Chroy Svay Keut, further raising the level of ambition in its planning, and ensuring funding to support women-led initiatives, will be crucial in guiding future efforts to build a more resilient and inclusive society.



Members of the Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT) network prepare to distribute the food after Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin. Photo: ActionAid

Case Study: Women's Leadership in Climate Resilience and Disaster Preparedness in Vanuatu

In 2023, in just one week, twin Category 4 cyclones damaged 80 per cent of Vanuatu's infrastructure, leading to widespread water and power shortages and significant losses to homes and gardens. In response, thousands of women, including women with disabilities, sprang into action as part of the Women I TokTok Tugeta (WITTT) network. A grassroots initiative, WITTT enables women to share disaster preparedness information and coordinate relief efforts.

Even before the cyclones struck, WITTT leaders assisted with setting up evacuation centres, shared early warning messages through their phone tree network, and travelled through their communities, going door-to-door supporting vulnerable community members to get to safety and sharing disaster preparedness information with those without access to mobile phones and radios. As a result, the community was far better prepared when disaster struck, and many had pre-prepared emergency baskets with essential items emergency food supplies, as well as certificates for births, marriages and education, and land rights documents, all stored in safe, dry containers. Once the cyclones had passed, WITTT members assisted with setting up local area Emergency Operation Centres, quickly surveyed damaged regions, coordinated relief supplies to 2200 households in 15 communities in East Efate and Port Vila, and provided food parcels to over 30,000 people on neighbouring islands.

To date, WITTT members have led their communities through a range of climate disasters and COVID-19, challenging traditional gender norms by demonstrating women's capabilities in leadership roles. The success of groups like WITTT has gained the respect of the community and local chiefs, and has influenced wider government approaches.

The Government of Vanuatu's revised NDC includes a strong commitment to gender-responsive climate action as does its NAP, which was launched in September 2024. This includes prioritising climate financing tools to support women-led grassroots adaptation initiatives. However, Vanuatu's national adaptation programme for action does not reflect the gender commitment outlined within its NDC and NAP. By ensuring alignment across these plans the Government of Vanuatu can improve the coherence of its overarching climate architecture and unlock the full potential of women's participation in climate action.

Betty Bob, Betina Charlie, Rachel Orris and Rosetta Rousa, members of Women I Tok Tok Tugeta Malo at a training on DRR. Photo: Clare Douglas/ActionAid Australia



4 SETTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE ACTION ACROSS THE CLIMATE-DISASTER NEXUS

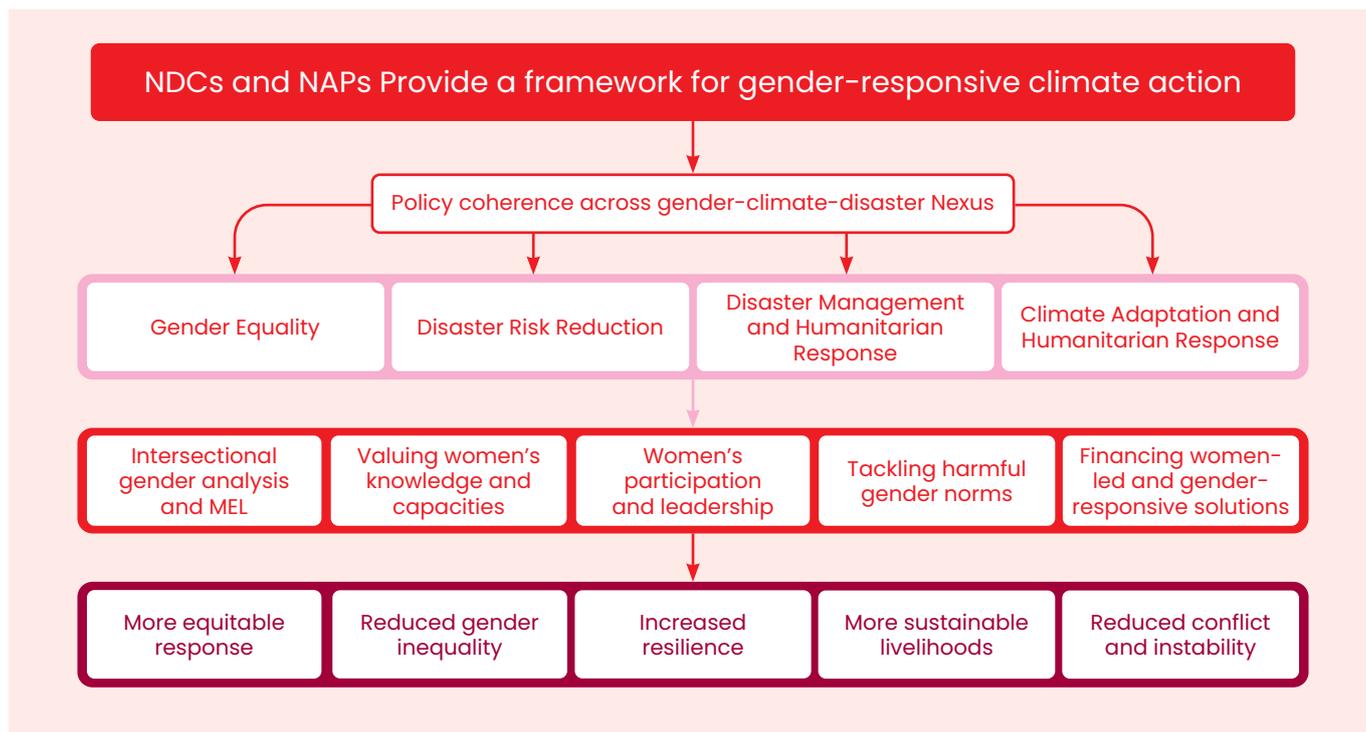
The escalating climate disasters across Asia and the Pacific are driving complex and intersecting impacts for frontline communities. These impacts are compounded for women and girls and other marginalised groups that are already experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. While efforts are being made to strengthen gender equality outcomes in climate change and disasters, urgent action is needed to drive coherent and effective responses across the gender-climate-disaster nexus.

The release of the Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai GAP) in March 2024 aims to catalyse greater integration of women and gender considerations in DRR action.^{xxxii} The release of the Sendai GAP follows the 2023 midterm review of the Framework's implementation, which found that, while countries are increasingly focused on disaster preparedness, diversity and women's inclusion are not yet being fully recognised as integral components of equitable solutions in recovery, rehabilitation, or reconstruction. Despite being critical to risk management, women's skills, capacities and contributions are consistently under-utilised.^{xxxiii}

Across the Asian and Pacific region, women continue to be overlooked in DRR and disaster response strategies and plans, while investment in women-led and gender-responsive preparedness and response remains insufficient. Research by UN Women found that just under a third of Asian countries have no gender-inclusive disaster, climate or development frameworks and only two countries in Asia and the Pacific, Fiji and Samoa, have policies that are inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people.^{xxxiii}

In this context, national level action will be critical to implement the recommendations in the Sendai GAP and foster more gender-responsive and inclusive DRR and disaster response. However, by building a coherent agenda that connects the intersecting issues of gender-equality, climate adaptation, DRR and disaster management, Asian and Pacific governments can catalyse gender-responsive action across the gender-climate-disaster nexus. The submission of new NDCs in early 2025 provides an opportunity for Asian and Pacific governments to drive this critical agenda for women on the frontlines of climate disasters.

Figure 2. Gender-responsive Climate and Disaster Action



4.1 The Role of NDCs and NAPs in Driving Gender-responsive Approaches

All signatories to the landmark Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, are required to create and regularly update national strategies to address climate risks and integrate adaptation into broader national development plans and policies. These strategies must include a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which sets out the part each country pledges to play in global efforts to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Countries must submit an updated NDC to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) every five years, with each new submission expected to reflect the highest possible level of ambition and to build on the commitments set out in previous plans. Governments' updated NDCs are due to be submitted in early 2025 and will provide a framework for domestic climate action through to 2035. The Paris Agreement also encourages the development of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs): voluntary tools that countries can use to assess their medium- and long-term adaptation needs, and to develop and implement strategies to address those needs.

When designed effectively, NDCs and NAPs have the potential to create a cohesive framework for national climate action that considers the gendered impacts of climate change and fosters women-led and gender-responsive approaches that are most effective in responding to the complex and intersecting challenges of climate change. When these plans are designed without considering the gendered dynamics of climate change, the opposite can occur, with NDCs and NAPs contributing to the systematic exclusion of women from climate action.

How gender-responsive are NDCs and NAPs in Asia and the Pacific?

The effectiveness of Asia and Pacific NDCs and NAPs in integrating gender considerations and driving strong commitments and action for gender-responsive climate action across the climate disaster nexus is considered through this paper. A gender analysis of NDCs and NAPs was undertaken to assess their level of gender responsiveness, and their alignment with national level climate change and gender equality strategies.

NDCs

All 38 Asian and Pacific countries covered in this analysis^{xxxiv} have submitted an NDC. To identify the extent to which gender considerations have been integrated into these plans, gender analysis of NDCs was undertaken using three criteria:

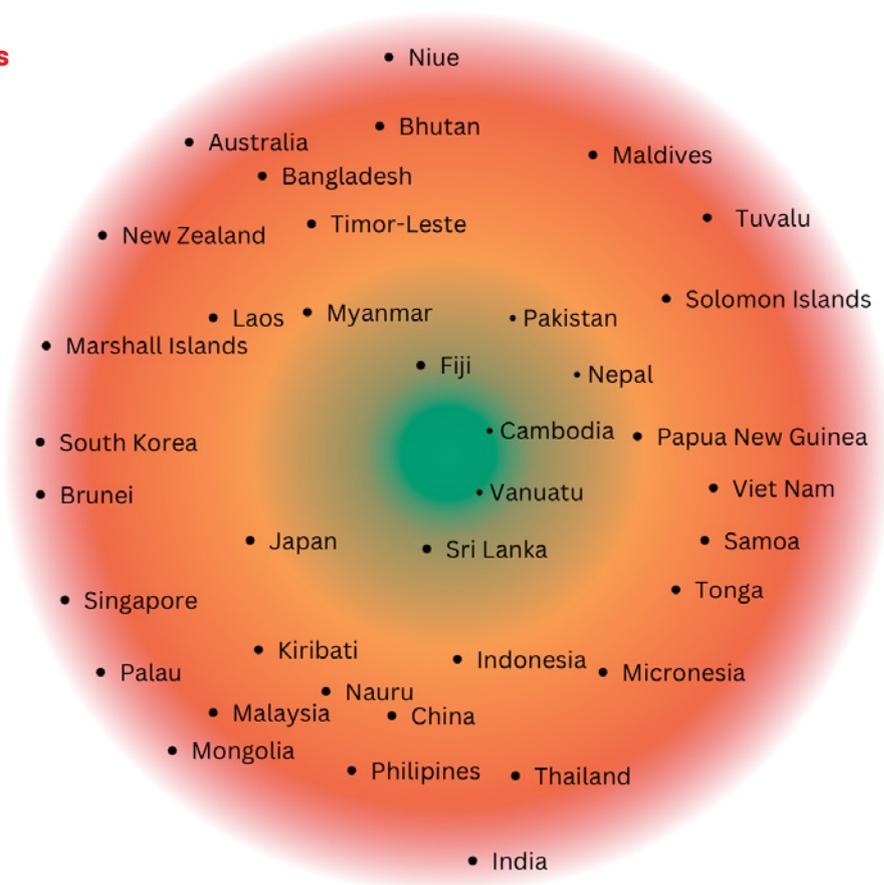
- 1 Are the differential impacts of climate change on women and girls recognised?
- 2 Is there a focus on promoting women’s leadership in climate action?
- 3 Is there a commitment to gender-responsive budgeting or providing funding for women-led responses?

This review reveals persisting gaps in Asia and Pacific governments integration of gender considerations into NDCs:

- **More than a third (34 per cent)** of Asian and Pacific NDCs fail to mention women, girls, or the gendered impact of climate change. This is significantly higher than other regions, with only six percent of Latin America and the Caribbean, and eight percent of African NDCs found to be gender-blind. The 13 gender-blind NDCs in the Asia and Pacific region include those from Australia, India, Singapore, and New Zealand.
- **More than half (58 per cent)** of Asia and Pacific NDCs do not recognise, and lack any commitment to supporting or enhancing, women’s participation in climate change responses.
- **Asia and Pacific NDCs are more likely to frame women as victims** than change agents, with only seven (18 per cent) making any mention of the need for women’s leadership in climate action.
- **Only seven Asia and Pacific NDCs (18 per cent)** propose providing dedicated funding of any kind to support women’s participation and leadership efforts.

Figure 3. Gender-responsiveness of NDCs in Asia and the Pacific

Heat map scale: NDCs with stronger gender integration appear in green and those with weaker gender integration appear in red. See endnote for country rankings.



NAPs

To assess the extent of Asian and Pacific governments' integration of gender considerations into climate adaptation, a review of available NAPs was also undertaken. Less than half (17 countries) of Asian and Pacific countries have submitted a NAP, with an additional 10 currently in progress. The analysis of available NAPs points to an increased integration of gender considerations into NAPs than NDCs by Asian and Pacific governments. However, while NAPs are more likely than NDCs to include a reference to gender or women, less than half recognise women as agents of change in adaptation planning process. This aligns with global research undertaken in 2022, which found references to women as agents of change in only half of global NAPs.^{xxxv}

- 94 percent of Asian and Pacific NAPs reference women or gender.
- NAPs are more likely to refer to women as beneficiaries of adaptation (88 per cent) than participants (64 per cent).
- Less than half (47 per cent) of NAPs integrate women as leaders or agents of change and only seven include a reference to gender-responsive budgeting.

4.2 Designing updated NDCs and NAPs that Catalyse Gender-responsive Action Across the Climate-Disaster Nexus

The findings of our review of NDCs and NAPs point to persistent and alarming gaps in Asian and Pacific governments' recognition of the intersection between climate change, DRR and gender equality and the integration of gender considerations into climate and disaster response planning and practice. Urgent action is needed to address these gaps and to better integrate gender analysis and commitments into NDCs and NAPs. The UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP) provides specific recommendations to help countries incorporate gender considerations in NDCs, NAPs, and other climate-related policies and programs.^{xxxvi} At a minimum, to ensure they provide an effective framework for gender-responsive climate action, updated NDCs and NAPs should contain explicit commitments to address the gendered impacts of climate change, including by:

- Integrating a gendered analysis of climate change;
- Fostering women's participation and leadership;
- Promoting gender-responsive and women-led approaches; and
- Providing gender-responsive climate finance.

Driving Policy Coherence across Gender Equality, Climate, DRR and Disaster Management Strategies

To ensure reformed NDCs and NAPs drive a coherent agenda for gender-responsive action across the climate disaster nexus, there is a need to better align these plans with their gender equality strategies and their national and local-level climate adaptation, DRR and disaster management plans. Gaps in alignment between NDCs and NAPs and national climate policies and plans can lead to fragmented climate change approaches, with climate, DRR and disaster management plans containing different gender equality commitments or employing different strategies for gender integration. This lack of coordination undermines the potential for comprehensive, inclusive climate and disaster responses that could strengthen resilience and promote equity and equality.

By including a commitment to gender-responsive action in NDCs and NAPs, governments can set a framework that drives greater alignment between gender equality, climate adaptation, DRR and disaster management strategies. Policy coherence across the gender-climate-disaster nexus would catalyse integrated and transformative approaches to gender equality, climate change and disaster preparedness and response and drive better outcomes for women and their communities.

Case Study: Addressing Gaps in Australian Climate Plans and Strategies

First Nations women faced some of the harshest impacts of Australia's Black Summer bushfires of 2019, due to a combination of systemic inequalities and historical marginalisation. More likely to be living in poverty and inadequate housing, many First Nations communities faced additional barriers in evacuating, recovering and rebuilding after the fires.^{xxxvii} Health inequalities, including higher rates of respiratory problems and chronic disease, were exacerbated by poor air quality, stress and trauma.^{xxxviii} At the same time, many First Nations women's deep spiritual and cultural connection to sacred sites, traditional lands, and ecosystems critical to Indigenous cultural practices and livelihoods meant their loss had profound emotional and psychological effects.^{xxxix}

First Nations women have long histories as experts in traditional bushfire management practices such as cultural burning, which often remain ignored or underutilised in mainstream fire prevention and response strategies.^{xl} This underrepresentation in disaster planning and recovery impedes First Nations women from advocating for their own needs, and the needs of Country and community, in post-fire recovery efforts.

Australia's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security contains an explicit commitment to show international leadership and support women's influence and participation in climate policy decision-making; recognising that inclusive policy processes improve long-term outcomes for communities in crisis. However, these commitments are not currently reflected in Australia's NDC or its National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy (NCRAS). While the NCRAS emphasises the importance of integrating First Nations knowledge, local leadership, and gender-responsive approaches in adaptation planning, it fails to make meaningful commitments to support women's participation in disaster preparedness and community resilience efforts. At the same time, Australia's NDC makes no mention of women, girls or gender equality.

Australia, known for its expansive fossil fuel industry, faces considerable challenges in aligning its climate goals with its continued support for sectors like coal, oil, and gas. These sectors contribute significantly to global carbon emissions, with ripple effects on both climate change and women's rights, domestically and internationally. Australia should use the NDC renewal process to scale up emissions reduction targets in line with a 1.5 degree pathway as well as embedding stronger commitments to gender equity in national climate strategies, and ensure coherence across its climate, security and economic plans. Australia should also take action to elevate First Nations knowledge in its NDC and domestic climate action.



Case Study: Khmer Women and Climate Adaptation in the Mekong Delta

One of the largest ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, Vietnamese Khmer communities in provinces like Tra Vinh and Soc Trang face rising sea levels, salinity intrusion, and frequent flooding. This has made fresh water more scarce, severely disrupted traditional farming practices, amplified women's economic insecurity, and increased their workload due to their roles in water collection, food preparation, and caregiving. Gender inequalities in access to resources, land, and decision-making power further exacerbate these problems, making it harder for women to adapt to the shifting climate.

Despite these challenges, Khmer women across the Mekong Delta are leading community-based adaptation efforts, including through salt-tolerant crop cultivation and aquaculture techniques that are more resilient to the region's changing environmental conditions. Women have organised local cooperatives focused on producing handicrafts and engaging in small-scale trade, diversifying income streams to reduce their communities' dependence on traditional agriculture.

Such initiatives serve as practical solutions to climate challenges but also as platforms for women to take on leadership roles within their communities, challenging gender norms and stereotypes. They have also fostered stronger social bonds, as women work collaboratively to address shared challenges, enhancing the collective resilience of the local Khmer community.

Vietnam's NAP recognises that the country is currently lagging behind, with a lack of policies, incentive mechanisms and improvements in the role and status of women that would enable them to guide the implementation of climate change response and disaster prevention and control. Both Vietnam's NAP and NDC discuss women's participation, but fall short of calling for measures to promote their leadership or to make dedicated funding available to support their efforts.

The women of the Mekong Delta have demonstrated remarkable resilience and leadership in the face of climate change, helping their communities to adapt to the changing environment. By investing in gender-responsive adaptation policies and realising their commitments under the Sendai GAP, the Government of Vietnam can empower women to continue leading the way in building a more resilient future.



Vietnamese Khmer women leaders from Soc Trang province planting avicennia. Photo: ActionAid Vietnam

5 INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO GENDER EQUALITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND DRR

Women are already at the forefront of climate action and are powerful and motivated frontline responders when their communities are impacted by climate disasters. However, action is needed to recognise women's localised and Indigenous knowledge and existing capabilities as well as supporting their systematic engagement in decision making.

Research by ActionAid and Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security Centre, has found that gender-responsive action that integrates women's knowledge, participation and collective action can catalyse institutional change and break down silos between climate, humanitarian, and security policies. By centring women on the frontlines of climate impacts, researchers and policymakers can better identify how, when and where gender-responsive policy change can be implemented to address increasingly interlinked climate-induced crises.^{xli}

ActionAid's Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change framework (GRACC)^{xlii} provides a methodology to support the implementation of integrated approaches to gender equality and disaster preparedness and response. The GRACC framework can enable governments to design DRR and disaster management approaches that integrate gender analysis and foster women's leadership, supporting them to lead effective responses for the most marginalised communities while also driving transformative change in gender relations. The key elements of a gender-responsive approach to DRR and disaster response include:

Intersectional gender analysis to ensure vulnerabilities and capacities are fully understood.

A thorough gender analysis identifies the differential impacts of extreme weather events and climate disasters on women and gender-diverse people, and examines the underlying causes of those differences. It ensures intersecting inequalities are foregrounded so climate change, DRR and disaster response strategies are responsive to the specific needs and capacities of women facing multiple and often intersecting forms of discrimination.

Strong intersectional gender analysis, combined with power analysis, reveals how power to influence change is held and used within communities, and the roles and localised knowledge that women bring to climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Collecting and utilising gender, disability, and age disaggregated data is also essential across the program cycle to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and ensure inclusive interventions that address the needs of the most vulnerable community members.

Valuing and centring women's knowledge and capacities. Given their distinct roles in the gendered division of labour within households and communities, women's localised environmental knowledge is uniquely positioned to connect various crises, such as climate change, disasters, conflict, and food insecurity. Scientists and policy-makers often fail to recognise and respect the valuable, everyday knowledge that women possess in addressing climate-related crises, while women living in poverty and facing exclusion often lack awareness of how to engage with technical information and processes. As a result, women have been locked out of opportunities to share and integrate their knowledge with professional, scientific, and policymaking communities.^{xliii}

However, evidence shows that women's cumulative and Indigenous knowledge can powerfully complement technical data, providing insights into how, when, and where multiple risks intersect

– with the potential to inform adaptation and DRR initiatives, including early warning systems and risk indicators.^{xliv} Integrating women’s knowledge with scientific expertise offers a transformative foundation for climate policy-making – one that promotes gender equality while addressing intersecting crises.

Detailed commitments to women’s direct participation in climate and disaster decision-making to ensure diverse perspectives influence outcomes. As half of the global population, women’s diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge, particularly in managing natural resources and adapting to climate-induced environmental changes, are invaluable in developing comprehensive and effective climate change, DRR and disaster response strategies. However, women face extensive barriers to participation in climate governance, which must be addressed; for example, by ensuring women’s groups can shape the creation of strategies and plans, providing capacity-strengthening opportunities, and ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive and accessible to all.

Women’s risk of violence and backlash can increase when they step outside of traditional gender roles and participate in community activities, particularly when their actions challenge the interests of powerful actors and corporations.^{xlv} Action should be taken to mitigate this risk, by cultivating open decision-making spaces that foster a culture of public engagement and participation in climate, DRR and disaster response planning and decision-making. The participation of women’s networks and collectives in climate decision-making can also reduce the risk of women being singled out by powerful community members.^{xlvi}

Allocated gender-responsive finance and budgeting across the climate-disaster nexus to ensure resources flow to where they are most needed and can be used most effectively.

Gender-responsive finance ensures the allocation and management of financial resources in ways that address and prioritise the distinct needs, roles, and contributions of women in addressing climate change and related disasters. This ensures all community members benefit from climate adaptation and DRR efforts and disaster response. As a baseline, targeted funding should be provided for women’s organisations, networks and coalitions to drive women-led and gender-responsive projects, particularly those that address the disproportionate impact of climate change and disasters on women. However, countries should aim to go further: prioritising both funding for dedicated, gender-transformative programming, and the comprehensive integration of gender perspectives across all levels of financial planning and implementation – from resource mobilisation and allocation to monitoring and evaluation.

In 2019–20, only 2.9 per cent of global climate finance identified gender equality as a principal focus, and data on how much finance is actually spent on gender equality at the local level is seriously lacking.^{xlvii} Without sufficient funding specifically targeted at addressing the unique needs of women and marginalised groups, climate and disaster responses run the risk of not only failing to meet women’s needs, but of further depleting women’s time and resources, perpetuating rather than reducing existing inequalities.^{xlviii} In this context, scaling of gender-responsive climate finance is critical in enabling women to drive transformative DRR and disaster response, lead adaptation efforts, strengthen community resilience, and influence policy change. Gender-responsive budgeting – which involves engaging women and women’s organisations in budget monitoring – is also vital in ensuring accountability and transparency of climate, DRR and disaster funding as well as ensuring that women’s voices are centred in climate governance. Gender-responsive budgeting is critical in identifying gaps in how resources are allocated and utilised. This is especially important at the local level, where women can provide valuable insights into whether funds are addressing the specific needs of women and their communities in DRR, resilience, and disaster response.



Members of the Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITT) network coordinate food distribution in Efate, Vanuatu in the wake of Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin. Photo: ActionAid.

Funding Women's Collective Action

Women's groups, particularly at the local level, face significant barriers in accessing the funding they need to support their climate adaptation and resilience-building efforts – often lacking access to critical information about available funding opportunities, as well as the time and capacity to navigate complex application processes. Many women-led organisations, networks and coalitions operate with such limited resources that they struggle to meet the strict selection criteria imposed by donor governments, multilateral funding bodies, including multilateral development banks and international climate funds, and other climate change donors.

In addition, the amount of funding specifically allocated for community-led women's initiatives is often insufficient to meet growing demand.^{xlix} Even when funding is available, women's groups are frequently overlooked in favour of larger, well-established organisations, resulting in a critical gap in financing for community-driven, gender-responsive initiatives that could effectively address climate challenges on the ground.ⁱ

Compounding these issues, many countries, especially in the Global South, face significant barriers to accessing climate finance due to complex application processes, limited institutional capacity, and perception by donors that they are high-risk. Additionally, fragile economies or conflict-prone regions are seen as too risky for investment, further reducing the funding available for grassroots groups in those countries. As a result, the bulk of climate finance is directed towards middle-income countries, while the most vulnerable nations, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), receive a disproportionately small share.ⁱⁱ

Targeted climate finance for women's organisations, networks and collectives in countries with less developed or conflict-impacted economies is essential – not only for empowering women as leaders in climate resilience, but also for ensuring that the most vulnerable communities benefit from locally driven solutions. It's also vital for climate justice – ensuring those that have done the least to cause climate change aren't left to shoulder the worst impacts with limited resources. Simplifying application processes, increasing the availability of grants, ensuring that selection criteria reflect the realities of grassroots organisations, and that financing makes it to where it is needed most, are key steps toward closing this gap and enabling women to play a transformative role in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

5.1 A Framework for Gender-responsive Climate Finance

The integration of gender considerations into climate finance processes and decision-making is critical in removing the barriers that women's organisations face in accessing targeted finance and fostering a greater prioritisation of women-led and gender-transformative action. Asian and Pacific governments can support the provision of gender-responsive climate, DRR and humanitarian finance by:

1 Fostering women's leadership in climate finance decision-making

- Conducting intersectional gender analyses to determine funding needs for women and other marginalised groups in relation to climate adaptation, mitigation and DRR and disaster response, as well as to identify barriers in accessing funding from national and global climate finance mechanisms.
- Mandating a gender balance, diversity, and intersectional gender expertise in funding decision-making bodies, including global climate finance bodies, including the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the newly established Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage. Integrating gender equality assessments in funding guidelines and evaluations.
- Supporting the active involvement of women and other marginalised groups as key stakeholders throughout the funding cycle, emphasising participatory monitoring and evaluation.

2 Improving transparency in climate finance flows

- Increasing transparency about national and international funding for women-led and gender-responsive climate solutions, including direct funding for women's organisations, networks and collectives.
- Aligning climate finance flows with the implementation of strong social, gender and environmental safeguards aligned with international obligations.
- Conducting regular audits of funding allocations to ensure gender-responsive delivery across mitigation and adaptation activities.
- Supporting community-based women's organisations, including with accessible financial resources, to enable them to monitor climate finance flows and to have access to flexible resources to actively engage in climate finance policy-making and advocacy processes.

3 Improving women's access to climate finance

- Providing targeted funding for women and their representative organisations, in particular women's rights organisations, networks and coalitions, to redress gaps in climate funding flows. Accessible, flexible, core and multi-year grant funding should be prioritised to enable women's organisations to drive transformative and long-term solutions in their communities.
- Fostering women's access to DRR and humanitarian funding at the national and international level, including core support funding to enable women's organisations, networks, and coalitions to strengthen community resilience in long-term disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Supporting women's organisations to access funding from international climate funding bodies such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and, when operational, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage. Women's organisations should be supported to become accredited agencies and direct access mechanisms should be implemented to foster the provision of funding to women's organisations and other local civil society organisations.
- Providing technical and institutional strengthening assistance to support women's organisations to apply for climate finance and to meet compliance requirements.

Case Study: Winning the Argument for Gender-responsive Climate Finance in Bangladesh

In a community primarily dependent on agriculture and fishing, the people of Kalapara Upazila, in the Patuakhali district of Bangladesh, face recurring climate threats to their livelihoods. Natural disasters such as cyclones, tidal surges, and river erosion have increased salinity and drastically reduced the productivity of agricultural land.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Mahasen in 2013, a Women-led Emergency Response Team was set up to manage disaster response efforts, including damage and loss assessments, preparing lists of people affected, and leading relief distribution. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed; women have been invited onto the local Union Disaster Management Committee for the first time, giving them the chance to influence wider preparedness decision-making processes. And at the national level, the proportion of preparedness funding the Government of Bangladesh has allocated towards gender-dedicated initiatives has steadily risen year on year. Despite a recent decline in the overall climate budget allocation, the focus on gender-responsive budgeting has shown a consistent upward trend.

As well as increased funding, Bangladesh has also compiled a strong NAP that specifically notes the advantages of local women-led approaches and mandates the inclusion of women across multiple levels of decision-making. It also proposes measures to fund these approaches, including a Climate Resilience Fund to support climate-vulnerable women to build resilience and protect their livelihoods, and a commitment to strengthening gender-responsive budgeting to ensure allocations of public funds address the needs of people of all genders. Unfortunately, Bangladesh's NDC, in contrast, is largely gender-blind and currently contains no mention of promoting women's leadership or a specific commitment to gender-responsive climate finance or gender budgeting.

Through the release of its updated NDC in 2025, Bangladesh has the potential to align its commitments and close gaps in its overall climate strategies and plans. If, as expected, the new NDC sets an even higher level of ambition on gender than the last, Bangladesh could set the standard and an important example for the Asia and Pacific region at large.



Vietnamese Khmer woman monitors the impact of salinity on plants in Tra Vinh province.
Photo: ActionAid Vietnam

5.2 Key Components of Gender-Responsive DRR and Disaster Response Plans

When designing DRR and disaster management plans, governments should take steps to foster the inclusion of women in planning and decision-making processes and to ensure that plans address the specific needs of women and marginalised groups. Action should be taken to integrate gender equality at every stage – from risk assessment to recovery – and plans respond to the specific needs of women and marginalised groups. These should recognise women as change agents and foster women-led and gender responsive disaster preparedness and response. Gender-responsive DRR and disaster management plans should include:

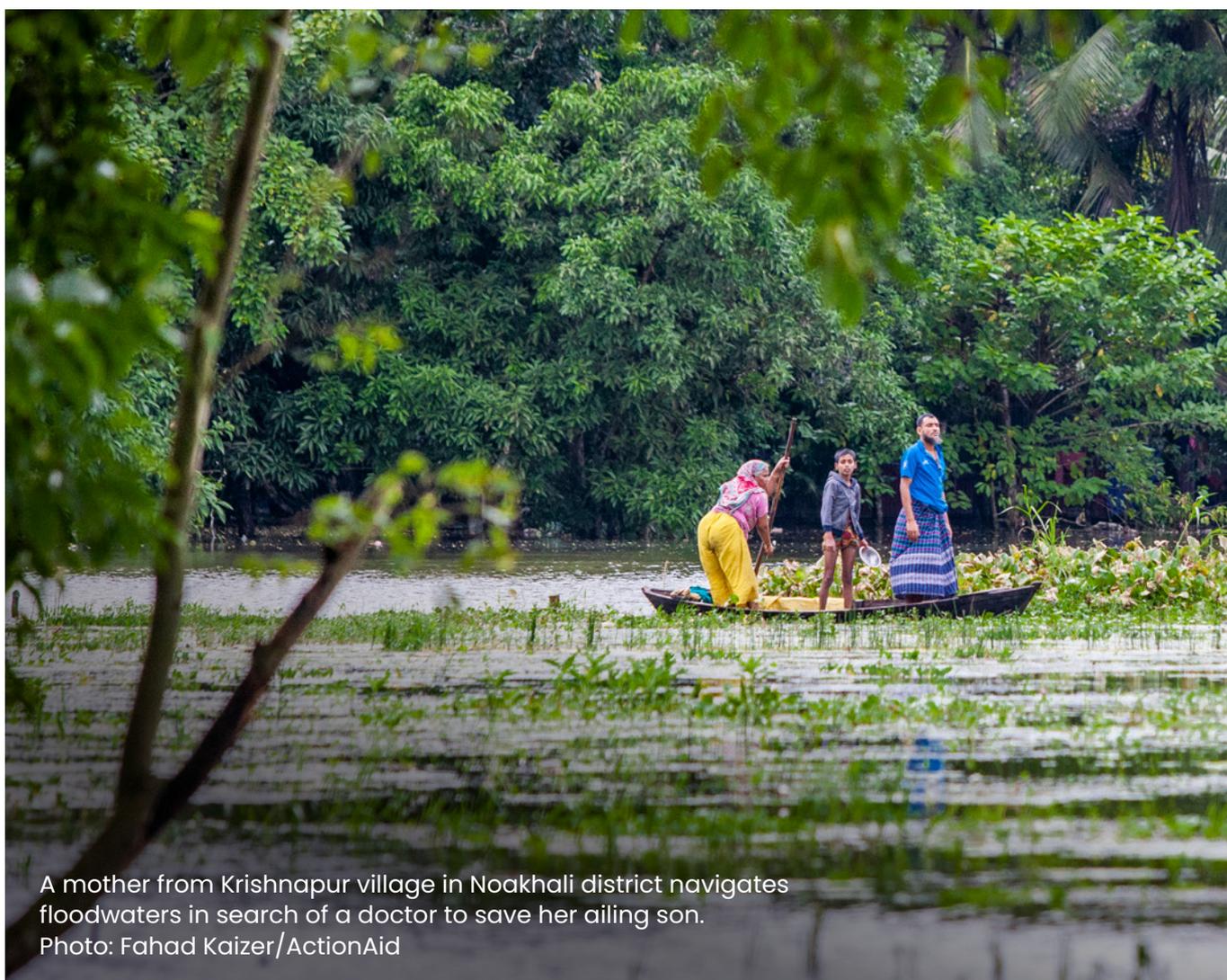
- 1 Inclusive risk assessments and gender-age-disability disaggregated data collection**, to understand the unique vulnerabilities and capacities of diverse women and girls, especially their roles in caregiving, local knowledge systems, and community organising. This should include consideration of intersectionality, recognising how intersecting factors such as age, ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status affect individuals' climate and disaster risks and resilience.
- 2 Active participation and leadership of women** in decision-making processes at all levels of climate change, disaster preparedness, planning, response, and recovery. This should include promotion of and support for women's leadership in community-based adaptation and DRR initiatives, including training and capacity-strengthening opportunities to enhance their roles in disaster response and governance, and involving women-led organisations, networks and coalitions in the development and implementation of DRR and disaster management strategies.
- 3 Gender-responsive early warning systems** that are accessible and inclusive for women and marginalised groups, particularly those with limited access to communication technologies. Warnings should be communicated in ways that are relevant and understandable for different groups, recognising literacy levels and local languages. Diverse women should be engaged in the development, leadership and dissemination of early warning messages in response to extreme climate events and systems to leverage their local knowledge and networks.
- 4 Equitable access to resources and support**, ensuring that women and marginalised groups have equitable access to resources and targeted relief to meet specific needs, such as food, shelter, and financial aid, during disaster response and recovery. Gender-responsive budgeting should be leveraged to ensure that resources are allocated in ways that meet the specific needs of women. These needs may include separate sanitation services in evacuation centres, facilities to reduce and redistribute the childcare responsibilities that many women shoulder, or promoting equal access to livelihood recovery programs, microfinance, and skills development, especially for women who have lost assets or income due to disasters.
- 5 Measures to prevent and respond to GBV**, such as targeted funding to enable women to create safe spaces in emergency shelters and relief camps, provide psychosocial and legal service support for survivors of GBV, and integrate GBV protection into disaster response and recovery plans. Governments should adhere to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Minimum Standards on Prevention and Response to GBV in Emergencies, ensuring recognition that GBV increases in every disaster and promoting a survivor-centred approach that engages women and girls as active partners to end GBV and to promote survivors' access to services.
- 6 Recognition of women's unpaid care work** and the development of strategies to redistribute and reduce care work through the provision of public services, social safety nets, or infrastructure investments like clean water access. Consideration should be given to ensuring that women's care responsibilities do not prevent them from participating in climate and DRR planning, response, and recovery efforts, for example by providing child care facilities as appropriate.

7 Capacity strengthening and training focused on building women’s and marginalised groups’ skills in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, with a focus on collective action, and strengthening women’s organisations and networks to play an active role.

8 Integration and alignment with other climate, gender and development strategies and plans, ensuring coherence between international regional, national, and local policies, enabling consistency in promoting women’s leadership in both DRR and climate resilience strategies and adequate resourcing for realising this aim.

9 Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the progress of DRR initiatives in reducing gender and other intersecting inequalities and addressing the needs of women and marginalised groups. These frameworks can collect gender-age-disability-disaggregated data, assess how resources are distributed, and evaluate how effectively diverse women’s leadership and contributions are enabled. Women and marginalised groups must be part of any evaluation process, to ensure that their voices are included in determining the effectiveness of climate, DRR and disaster response.

10 Gender-responsive financing and participatory gender budgeting to ensure adequate resources are allocated to women-led, gender-responsive DRR initiatives, with a prioritisation of funding for women’s rights organisations, networks and coalitions. Accessible, flexible, core and multi-year grant funding is particularly important to ensure sustainable, gender-equitable and -inclusive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building.



A mother from Krishnapur village in Noakhali district navigates floodwaters in search of a doctor to save her ailing son.
Photo: Fahad Kaizer/ActionAid



Women leaders from Chroy Svay Keut take action to protect coastal areas and mangrove forests. Photo: ActionAid

Case Study: Women Building Lifelines in Indonesia

In Tamanjaya village, located in the disaster-prone Pandeglang district of Indonesia, women have consistently emerged as leaders in disaster preparedness and response. Ade Herlina, a 31-year-old mother of two, is one of the women leading these efforts. Having lived through the trauma of the 2018 tsunami while seven months pregnant, Ade was determined to ensure her village was better prepared for future disasters. Together with other women in the Paniis Sub-village Women's Forum, she petitioned her Village Planning Consultation Forum to construct a new evacuation route. The route was completed in 2022, and provides a vital lifeline for the community. Women from the village have played a crucial role in both the route's construction and in educating the local community about evacuation procedures and how to use it effectively.

As Pandeglang district is a coastal area, prone to climate disasters including cyclones, tidal surges, and river erosion, disaster management is increasingly a priority for the local government. Thanks in part to the efforts of women like Ade, in recent years, greater emphasis has been given to gender considerations, and women's groups have been increasingly involved in disaster preparedness and response activities – an acknowledgement of their critical role in community resilience. However, budget allocations for these initiatives remain limited, and coordination issues have hindered the full implementation of gender-responsive strategies.

Women like Ade now need government policies and resourcing that fully supports their participation and leadership. Unfortunately, Indonesia's NDC does not set out how it plans to support women-led efforts, ensure gender-budgeting, or deliver gender-responsive climate finance. The Government of Indonesia should take action to ensure that its updated NDC integrates gender considerations and commitments to support women's participation and leadership in climate action.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Escalating climate disasters disproportionately impact women and girls, exacerbating and intersecting with existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Across the Asia and Pacific region, opportunities for gender-responsive action across the climate-disaster-nexus are routinely lost because women continue to be overlooked in climate change strategies and plans, and women-led DRR and disaster response remains underfunded.

Women-led and gender-responsive approaches to DRR and disaster response are proven to be more effective in reaching the most marginalised and climate-vulnerable groups, and driving effective climate change, gender equality and development outcomes. In a region that is facing ever more frequent and severe climate disasters, critical action is needed to catalyse gender-responsive solutions that meet the needs of women and their communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

The submission of revised NDCs in early 2025 offers an opportunity for Asian and Pacific countries to demonstrate new leadership for gender equality. The development of gender-responsive NDCs and NAPs could set a clear framework that drives the integration of gender considerations into national climate strategies and plans and catalyse women-led responses to climate disasters. To meet this moment, all Asian and Pacific governments should:

1. Develop NDCs and NAPs that drive a coherent agenda for gender-responsive action across the climate-disaster nexus

- Ensure that NDCs and NAPs promote gender-responsive approaches and contain explicit commitments to address the gendered impacts of climate change, support women's participation and leadership in climate change, DRR and emergency response, and provide gender-responsive climate, DRR and humanitarian finance.
- Ensure policy coherence between NDCs, NAPs and gender equality, climate adaptation, DRR and disaster management strategies.

2. Improve gender data collection and analysis for all climate change, DRR and disaster response activities

- Ensure all data collected is disaggregated by gender, age and disability to better understand the differentiated impacts of climate change on diverse groups, especially women and other marginalised communities, and to assess the effectiveness of DRR and emergency response for women and other marginalised groups.
- Ensure all climate-related policies, strategies, and funding mechanisms are informed by robust intersectional gender analysis that identifies the specific needs and capacities diverse women and girls.
- Integrating intersectional gender analysis across all stages of climate action, from planning to monitoring and evaluation, to ensure solutions are gender-transformative and inclusive.

3. Support women's leadership and decision-making in climate change, DRR and disaster response planning and implementation

- Prioritise women's leadership and participation in climate governance and decision-making, ensuring they are involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of climate policies, plans, and projects.
- Scale-up capacity strengthening programs to support diverse women to take on decision-making roles in climate action at local, national, and regional levels.
- Promote partnerships between women's organisations, civil society, and government bodies to institutionalise women's leadership in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

4. Increase funding for women-led and gender-responsive DRR, disaster response and climate action

- Mandating a gender balance, diversity, and intersectional gender expertise in climate, DRR and humanitarian funding decision-making bodies at the national and global level.
- Increasing transparency about national and international funding for women-led and gender-responsive climate solutions, including direct funding for women's organisations, networks and collectives.
- Providing accessible, flexible, core and multi-year grant funding to women's organisations, networks and coalitions to enable them to drive transformative and long-term solutions in their communities.
- Improving women's access to climate finance, DRR and humanitarian funding, including by supporting women's organisations to access funding from international climate funding bodies and other multilateral mechanisms.



Women from Affected Noakhali district navigate floodwaters as they collect food and other humanitarian supplies. Photo: Fahad Kaizer/ActionAid

References

- i ActionAid. (2022). *The long shadow of the climate crisis: Impact and consequences for women and girls*. ActionAid.
- ii Peterson, K. (2007) *Reaching Out to Women When Disaster Strikes*. Soroptimist White Paper.
- iii Habtezion, S. (2016) *Overview of linkages between gender and climate change*. UNDP.
- iv ActionAid. (2017). *Women's leadership in disaster risk reduction: Breaking down barriers of unpaid care*. ActionAid.
- v ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- vi ActionAid. (2023). *The long shadow of the climate crisis: Impact and consequences for women and girls*.
- vii UN Women. (2023). *Feminist climate justice: A framework for action*.
- viii ActionAid. (2017). *Beyond caring: Enabling women's leadership in disaster risk reduction by breaking down the barrier of unpaid care work*.
- ix Economist Intelligence Unit. (2014). *The South Asia Women's Resilience Index: Examining the Role of Women in Preparing for and Recovering from Disasters*.
- x ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- xi ActionAid. (2017). *Beyond caring: Enabling women's leadership in disaster risk reduction by breaking down the barrier of unpaid care work*.
- xii ActionAid. (2022). *Hotter planet, humanitarian crisis: The gendered reality of climate disasters*.
- xiii UNFPA and Queen Mary University of London. (2023) *Taking Stock: Sexual and Reproductive and Health and Rights in Climate Commitments: A Global Review*.
- xiv ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- xv Creusen, A., Feenstra, M., (2022) *The Gender Face of the Climate Crisis. Causes and consequences of the fossil crisis and the need for feminist solutions*. ActionAid
- xvi FAO. (2023). *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.
- xvii Habtezion, S. (2016) *Overview of linkages between gender and climate change*. UNDP.
- xviii Picard, M. (2021) *Beyond Vulnerability to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Leadership in Disaster Reduction: Critical Actions for the United Nations System*. UN-Women, UNFPA and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- xix ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- xx Ibid
- xxi Ibid
- xxii ActionAid. (2017). *Women's leadership in disaster risk reduction: Breaking down barriers of unpaid care*. ActionAid
- xxiii ActionAid Cambodia. (2022). *Women's resilience index. Cambodia*.
- xxiv ActionAid. (2022). *Hotter planet, humanitarian crisis: The gendered reality of climate disasters*.
- xxv ActionAid. (2023). *The long shadow of the climate crisis: Impact and consequences for women and girls*.
- xxvi ActionAid. (2017). *Beyond caring: Enabling women's leadership in disaster risk reduction by breaking down the barrier of unpaid care work*.
- xxvii Creusen, A., Feenstra, M., (2022) *The Gender Face of the Climate Crisis. Causes and consequences of the fossil crisis and the need for feminist solutions*. ActionAid
- xxviii ActionAid. (2023). *The long shadow of the climate crisis: Impact and consequences for women and girls*.
- xxix ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- xxx ActionAid (2016). *On the frontline: Catalysing women's leadership in humanitarian action*.
- xxxi UNDRR, UNFPA, and UN Women. (2024). *Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*.
- xxxii UNDRR. (2023). *The Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030: Regional Report for Asia-Pacific*. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- xxxiii UN Women. *The Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD) Policy Tracker*. Available at <https://wrd.unwomen.org/practice/resources/policy-tracker>. Accessed 25/09/2024.
- xxxiv The countries covered in this report include Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Niue, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam.
- xxxv Dazé, A and Hunter, C. (2022) *Gender-Responsive National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Processes: Progress and promising examples*. NAP Global Network.
- xxxvi UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan>
- xxxvii Parc, E and Yasukawa, L. (2020) *The 2019-2020 Australian Bushfires: From Temporary Evacuation To Longer-Term Displacement*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.
- xxxviii Heffernan, T., Macleod, E., Greenwood, L-M., Walker, I., Lane, J., Stanley, S. K., Evans, O., Calear, A. L. & Cruwys, T. (2022). *Mental health, wellbeing and resilience after the 2019–20 bushfires: The Australian national bushfire health and wellbeing survey – A preliminary report*. Australian National University
- xxxix Ibid
- xl Williamson, B and Weir, J. (2021). *Indigenous peoples and natural hazard research, policy and practice in southern temperate Australia: an agenda for change*. Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience.
- xli Tanyag, M, and True, J. (2019) *Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change: A Global Research Report*. Monash University-ActionAid
- xliv UNFCCC. (2023). *Progress, good practices and lessons learned in prioritizing and incorporating gender-responsive adaptation action*. Policy brief.
- xliii Tanyag, M, and True, J. (2019) *Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change: A Global Research Report*. Monash University-ActionAid
- xliv Tran, D. and Hanaček, K. *A global analysis of violence against women defenders in environmental conflicts*. Nat Sustain 6, 1045–1053 (2023).
- xlvi Tanyag, M, and True, J. (2019) *Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change: A Global Research Report*. Monash University-ActionAid
- xlvii Zagema, B., J. Kowalzig, L. Walsch, A. Hattle, C. Roy and H.P. Dejgaard (2023) *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2023: Assessing the Delivery of the \$100 Billion Commitment*. Oxfam International.
- xlviii ActionAid. (2023). *Escalating climate emergencies: Implications for humanitarian and loss & damage policy and programming*.
- xlivx Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and Prospera. (2019), *Women's Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources*.
- I ActionAid Australia et al. (2022). *Falling Short: Australia's Role in Funding Fairer Climate Action in a Warming World*.
- li ODI. (2023). *A fair share of resilience finance for Small Island Developing States*.

Figure 3. Endnote

Country ratings reflect the extent of gender integration into NDCs and range from gender-blind (0) to strong gender integration (7). Country rankings are as follows:

0 – Australia, Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, India, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, South Korea, Singapore, Tuvalu;

1 – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Thailand;

2 – China, Laos, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vietnam;

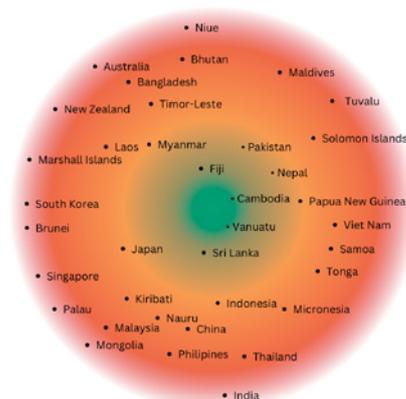
3 – Japan, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste;

4 – Indonesia, Myanmar;

5 – Nepal, Pakistan;

6 – Fiji, Sri Lanka;

7 – Cambodia, Vanuatu.



Vietnamese Khmer women leaders from Soc Trang province planting avicennia. Photo: ActionAid Vietnam



act:onaid

ActionAid Australia

Level 15, 115 Pitt Street,

Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9565 9111

Donations: 1300 66 66 72

Email: info.au@actionaid.org

ABN: 87 001 251 930

 facebook.com/ActionAidAustralia

 twitter.com/actionaid_au

 instagram.com/actionaيداustralia

www.actionaid.org.au