



IN BRIEF



GENDER-RESPONSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH TO RESILIENCE

LESSONS FROM UN WOMEN'S WOMEN'S RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

Disasters disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly in fragile and climate-vulnerable contexts where systemic inequalities limit their resilience. While the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and COP climate outcomes emphasise inclusion, gaps remain in how gender equality is operationalised.

The [Women's Resilience to Disasters \(WRD\) programme](#) financed by the Government of Australia and implemented by UN Women demonstrates a transformative approach: a multi-level model that connects local action, national policy

regional solidarity, and global influence. Implemented in Pacific, WRD strengthens women's leadership, economic empowerment, and participation in DRR at local, national, regional, and global levels.

This brief builds on the [WRD Good Practices Paper \(2025\)](#) to highlight how WRD applied a multi-level approach to gender-responsive DRR. It extracts good practices that can be adapted to different contexts, identifies entry points relevant to donors, governments, UN agencies, and women's organisations, and provides practical lessons that can inform future resilience-building efforts.

WHY A MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH TO RESILIENCE MATTERS

Resilience is systemic: it cannot be built in silos. A multi-level approach ensures that progress at one level reinforces and strengthens change at other levels. Local women's innovations shape national DRR frameworks, national reforms create enabling environments for regional solidarity, and regional networks amplify women's voices in global forums. In turn, global commitments such as the Sendai Gender Action Plan set standards and mobilize funding that flows back to the local level.

The programme's contributions across these levels show how gender-responsive DRR can reshape resilience systems from a multi-level system of feedback and learning:

- **Local innovations** shape national policies,

- **National reforms** influence regional solidarity,
- **Regional networks** amplify women's voices at the global stage,
- **Global frameworks** reinforce and fund local action.

This dynamic feedback system - top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal- aims at producing gender-transformative results in DRR. It ensures that women are not seen solely as vulnerable populations but recognized as first responders, decision-makers, and leaders, thereby having the potential to reshape gender norms and roles embedded within societal structures. By embedding women's voices across all levels, the multi-level approach strengthens accountability, supports inclusive governance, and delivers more sustainable resilience outcomes.



Image1: Illustrates the feedback systems through which women's leadership informs policymaking and drives community- and gender-responsive DRR actions.



SNAPSHOTS OF THE WRD PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS ; LINKING LOCAL TO GLOBAL RESILIENCE

The following section highlights how the WRD programme operationalised gender-responsive resilience across local, national, regional, and global levels in the Pacific and demonstrates how locally grounded action can shape systemic change, ensuring that women's leadership, knowledge, and care practices drive disaster resilience and climate adaptation at every level.

1. Local Level – Women Driving Resilient Livelihoods (Vanuatu, Kiribati)



What was done: In Vanuatu, women accessed microfinance through VANWODS to invest in solar-powered equipment, sustaining businesses during cyclones and reducing reliance on disrupted energy systems. In Kiribati, women's committees institutionalised traditional food preservation and climate-resilient agriculture like establishment of gene banks, safeguarding food security.

Why it matters: These initiatives strengthened women's economic well-being and enhanced household and community resilience. By reviving traditional knowledge systems and safeguarding climate-resilient resources, women became guardians of intergenerational adaptation practices. At the same time, improved access to renewable energy technology enabled women to sustain their businesses during post disaster disruptions, transforming them from "victims" to leaders of economic resilience.



2. National Level – Institutionalizing Gender in Policy (Fiji, Solomon Islands)

What was done: In Fiji, WRD supported the National Gender Action Plan for DRR, Humanitarian Policy and the Community Based Disaster Risk Management Policy embedding gender indicators, sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data (SADD), and accountability frameworks into national legislation. In Solomon Islands, provincial DRR committees included women's and disability organisations for the first time.

Why it matters: National laws that support gender-responsive action plans including SADD and gender indicators strengthens accountability for future investments. At the same time, the inclusion of women and disability organisations in local decision-making structures enhance protection services and lay the groundwork for more inclusive governance systems. Embedding gender equality into national DRR laws, policies and frameworks ensure lasting impact beyond project cycles.



3. Regional Level – Solidarity and Shared Advocacy (Pacific Region)

What was done: WRD elevated Pacific women's leadership by strengthening technical expertise and enabling their participation in COPs, APMCDRR, CSW, and SIDS4; supported the appointment of gender and climate focal points in Kiribati and Vanuatu; established a Gender and Social Inclusion Technical Working Group under the Pacific Resilience Partnership; partnered with the Pacific Disability Forum to embed disability inclusion through a 10-year strategy and practitioner training; and collaborated with the University of the South Pacific to integrate gender into DRR courses.

Why it matters: Quality partnerships and collective advocacy can amplify women's voices to influence the discourse in climate and DRR fora at regional and global level. At the same time, they ensure that resilience strategies are intersectional from the outset, and institutionalise inclusive, gender responsive DRR - strengthening regional capacity to champion women's leadership in resilience-building.



4. Global Level – Shaping International Agendas in Climate and Disaster Resilience

What was done: Through UN Women's coordination mandate and engagement in CADRI, EW4All, and the UN Plan of Action on DRR for Resilience, gender equality became embedded across interagency mechanisms, including the adoption of Recommendation 4.2 on gender-responsive DRR within the UN Senior Leadership Group's 2030 Recommendations. Building on this, UN Women, UNDRR, and UNFPA spearheaded the Sendai Gender Action Plan (GAP)—a transformative roadmap developed with 70 governments and 500+ stakeholders. The WRD Knowledge Hub provided the first global platform for evidence, tools, and peer exchange.

Why it matters: Strategic advocacy and evidence-building, brings local realities into global policy spaces, embedding gender equality at the core of resilience frameworks. By creating strong links and feedback loops between national, regional, and global levels, it ensures that grassroots experiences informed policies while global commitments reinforced action on the ground. These efforts drove structural change, ensured coordinated global action, and strengthened accountability by connecting women's leadership and lived experiences to policy and evidence systems.

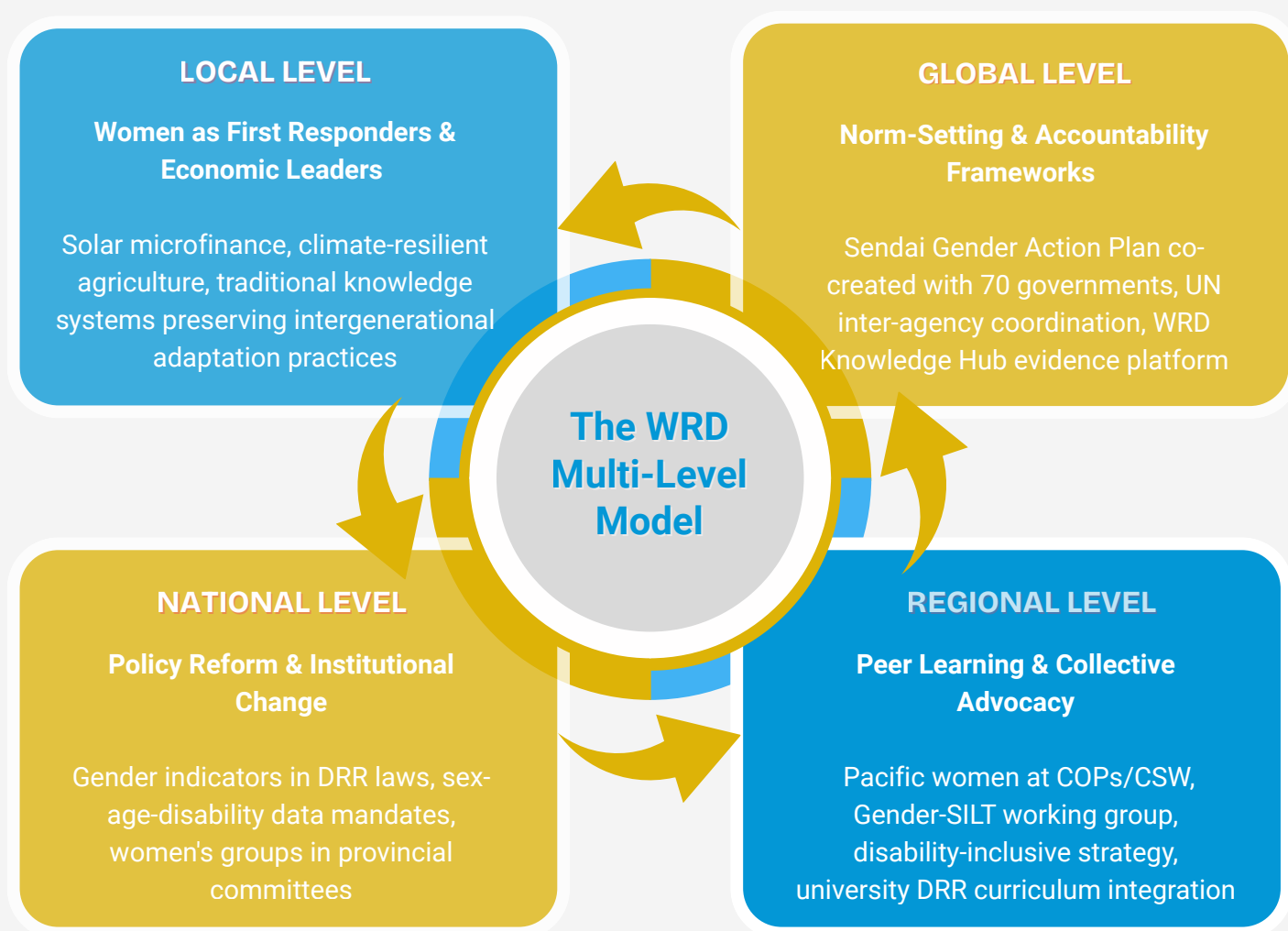


Image 2: Summary of the multi-level approach of the WRD programme, linking local action to national, regional, and global DRR outcomes.

GOOD PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN GENDER RESPONSIVE DRR

Building on WRD results, the following measures show how governments, women's organisations, donors, and regional bodies can mainstream gender into disaster risk reduction, response, and recovery. These are systemic, adaptable approaches rather than one-off interventions.

01 EMBEDDING GENDER IN POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS

- **Gender-Responsive Frameworks:** Integrate gender equality and women's leadership into DRR laws, strategies, and budgets, aligned with the Sendai Framework and Sendai GAP.
- **Data-Driven Systems:** Collection and use of SADD deepens knowledge on the gender dimensions of disaster risk needed to design targeted, and inclusive resilience strategies.
- **Inclusive Coordination:** Guarantee seats for women's organisations and OPDs in DRR governance, ensuring they shape and not just inform, decisions.

02 ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN RESILIENCE

- **Resilient Livelihoods:** Invest in women's participation in climate-smart agriculture, fisheries, and renewable energy to create income streams that buffer disaster shocks.
- **Market and Finance Access:** Link women-led enterprises to value chains, social protection, and blended finance for scale and sustainability.
- **Gendered Recovery Plans:** Ensure recovery frameworks budget for women's jobs, land rights, and enterprise support.

03 LOCALIZING DRR THROUGH INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND KNOWLEDGE

- **Direct Funding:** Channel flexible, multi-year funding to women-led organisations to strengthen local ownership.
- **Integrate Local Knowledge:** Systematically include women's traditional and indigenous knowledge in DRR planning.
- **Intersectional Inclusion:** Embed women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and youth in local DRR governance structures.

04 REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTION FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE DRR

- **Regional Solidarity:** Build peer networks and South-South cooperation platforms to share and scale women-led resilience solutions.
- **Strengthen Frameworks:** Embed gender and disability inclusion in regional and global resilience frameworks, ensuring commitments translate into national action.
- **Knowledge Systems:** Expand hubs like the WRD Knowledge Hub as global public goods linking grassroots practice with global advocacy.

Taken together, these measures demonstrate how gender-responsive DRR not only strengthens disaster response and recovery, but also safeguards and accelerates progress on the SDGs. By embedding women's leadership, economic empowerment, and traditional knowledge into resilience systems, they prevent disasters from exacerbating poverty, inequality, and gender-based violence. Just as importantly, they transform gender relations, positioning women as respected leaders, economic actors, and knowledge holders at every stage of the disaster cycle.



Please scan this QR code to learn more about the success stories from the WRD Programme!

The Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD) Programme is supported by the Australian Government and implemented by UN Women and its partners. It contributes to sustainable, secure, and thriving communities by strengthening the resilience of women and girls and making their lives and livelihoods resilient to disasters and threats including climate change.

