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Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

This note is an informational update on challenges and progress in supporting gender-responsive policies and programmes in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework). It will outline progress on the global targets of the Sendai Framework and consider the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment across each of the four priorities of the Sendai Framework.

Introduction

The goal of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) is to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk, which contributes to strengthening resilience, and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis demonstrate the complexity of risk. While the underlying social, economic and environmental risks driving the spread of COVID-19 and its socioeconomic impacts are not new, governments and communities worldwide were not well prepared to address them.¹ At the same time, the climate crisis continues to intensify with higher-than-average number of recorded disaster events and economic losses in 2020.² Nevertheless, disaster risk continues to be created by decisions that are not risk informed.

Understanding how people's lives are impacted by gender norms, roles and relations within a given culture and society is critical to understanding and reducing disaster risk. Women, girls, boys, men, and people of diverse gender identities have distinct vulnerabilities in each context that determine their risk levels, in terms of vulnerability, exposure, and coping capacities, and shape the way that they experience and recover from disaster impacts. Furthermore, the ways in which gender intersects with socioeconomic characteristics such as age, disability, race, sexual orientation, displacement and migration status, etc. shape people's unique vulnerability. Due to the systemic nature of risk, disasters can have cascading impacts across the Sustainable Development Goals which can last for years after the initial event. Applying a gender-lens to the specific vulnerability and exposure that different populations experience is critical, including to ensure that inequalities are not exacerbated when hazards strike.

¹ Report of the Secretary-General, *Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 27 July 2021

² United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, *2020: The non-COVID Year in Disasters*, 2021

Effective disaster risk reduction requires meaningful and diverse participation, engagement and leadership, through an inclusive and accessible, all-of-society approach. Including a “gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices” and promoting women and youth leadership, are guiding principles of the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Framework acknowledges both the specific vulnerabilities that women face in disasters, due to pervasive gender inequality that exists across all societies and recognises the indispensable role of women in risk reduction efforts. It moves beyond the idea that women and people of diverse genders are intrinsically vulnerable in disasters to a recognition that structural gender inequality puts them at higher risk because it limits their access to resources and opportunities and reduces their autonomy to make decisions about their own lives.³ The Sendai Framework states that gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes need to be designed, resourced and implemented, and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women to lead disaster risk reduction efforts.

Progress in gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework

The Sendai Framework provides Member States with concrete actions to protect development gains from the impacts of disaster. The latest data on progress towards the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework reported to the Sendai Framework monitor reveal a mixed picture of progress and challenges.⁴

- As of April 2021, the average annual number of dead and missing persons in the event of a disaster per 100,000 people (global target A) has fallen from 1.98 between 2005 and 2014 to 1.32 between 2011 and 2020.
- The number of persons affected by disasters per 100,000 people (global target B) has grown from an average of 1,981 to 3,145 per year for the same periods.
- Economic losses due to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (global target C) remain stubbornly high, and the number of critical infrastructure units and facilities destroyed or damaged by disasters (global target D) averaged 158,800 per year between 2015 and 2020, with figures expected to increase as more countries report on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 120 countries report having national and/or local disaster risk reduction strategies in place (global target E).
- 56 donor and recipient countries have reported on international cooperation to implement the Sendai Framework (global target F).
- 79 countries report having access to multi-hazard early warning systems, and 28 countries report having access to appropriate disaster risk information and assessments (global target G).

While the Sendai Framework itself emphasizes the importance of gender inclusion and of sex-disaggregated data (paragraphs 19(g) and 25(a)), recognizing different capacities of Member States regarding data collection and reporting it was noted by the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction (OIEWG) that while data disaggregation might be highly desirable, it might not be immediately feasible. Insufficient sex, age and

³ United Nations Joint Study on the Status of Gender Equality and Women’s Leadership in DRR, *Beyond vulnerability to gender equality and women’s empowerment and leadership in disaster risk reduction: critical actions for the United Nations system*, September 2021

⁴ Report of the Secretary-General, *Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 27 July 2021

disability disaggregated data remains a significant barrier to understanding and analysing differential impacts and formulating gender-responsive and more inclusive disaster risk reduction programmes.

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

While the number of countries using the Sendai Framework monitor continues to increase, only 68 countries are reporting on all seven global targets, and only 44 countries have reported some form of sex-disaggregated data as of April 2021. The collection and use of disaggregated data should both inform policy development and help to monitor progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework. UNDRR advocates for and supports countries to disaggregate data by sex, age and disability when developing and reviewing national disaster loss accounting systems and databases. UNDRR continues to work with partners to build capacity on the production and use of sex, age and disability data to inform decision making, including - for example - through a dedicated training on reporting disaggregated data in the global Training of Trainers on SFM and Disaster Loss Accounting.

Death and injury rates are highly specific to the type of hazard and the social context. A meta-analysis of reports on disasters in 141 countries found that the higher death rates often reported for women were directly linked to their level of economic and social rights as compared to men. In societies where women and men enjoyed equal rights there were no significant differences in the number of deaths based on sex.⁵ Gendered work roles have had significant impact on the death and injury rates of men and women in different contexts. For example, in the 2015 Nepal earthquake more women died but also fewer men were present due to working internationally; and in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, significantly higher death rates amongst women in Aceh, Indonesia, and Cuddleshore, India, could be attributed to the fact that men and women were in different locations at the time the disaster struck due to their different work routines and locations. Their exposure to the hazard was different due to their gendered work and care roles.⁶

Supporting gender-responsive DRR policies and actions requires the concept of data that is relevant to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation needs to be understood much more broadly, to include information on socio-economic baselines including the characteristics of existing gender inequality, economic information for recovery, and research that indicates the extent of women's effective participation, empowerment and leadership roles.⁷ A deeper understanding of the root causes of vulnerability can help reduced the gendered nature of risk.

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

National and local disaster risk reduction strategies are the cornerstone of disaster risk governance. UNDRR is supporting Governments to develop national and local DRR strategies in line with target E of the Sendai Framework, with gender equality and women's empowerment incorporated as a cross-cutting theme. As of April 2021, the average self-reported score of alignment of the national disaster risk reduction strategies with the Sendai Framework, based on 10 key elements developed by UNDRR, stands

⁵ United Nations Joint Study on the Status of Gender Equality and Women's Leadership in DRR, *Beyond vulnerability to gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership in disaster risk reduction: critical actions for the United Nations system*, September 2021

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

at 0.68 on a scale of 0 to 1.⁸ While this is a significant increase from 0.41 in 2015, attention still needs to be paid to improving the quality of the strategies as the focus continues to be on preparedness and response, and a lack of risk-informed strategic approaches focused on prevention remains.

Developing and implementing more inclusive disaster risk reduction plans, policies and strategies that leave no one behind requires improved measures to reduce underlying drivers of risk, including gender inequality, and to increase the focus on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in all sectors. Reviews of national disaster risk reduction strategies through a health lens reveal that in most strategies, insufficient attention is paid to biological hazards that can drive pandemics.⁹ Furthermore, explicit attention should be given to ensuring disaster risk reduction strategies at the national and local level are gender-responsive.

Ensuring meaningful participation and promoting the leadership of women in disaster risk governance can help to ensure that disaster risk reduction efforts are inclusive and accessible to all. UNDRR's flagship women's leadership programme, the Women's International Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR), promotes and supports women's leadership in disaster risk reduction. While women's participation in decision-making is enshrined in international human rights frameworks including CEDAW, there is still great disparity in the number of women playing a leadership role in DRR. WIN DRR is seeking to redress this by i) building the evidence base on women's leadership in disaster risk reduction through research and knowledge production; ii) strengthening leadership capacities through training, mentorship and peer-to-peer support programmes; iii) recognising women's achievements in DRR, including through annual leadership awards; iv) supporting institutions to adopt strategies and policies to enhance women's leadership.

Risk governance is most effective when it embraces a broad range of sectors and actors. UNDRR is supporting efforts to formalize the role of non-stake stakeholders and capitalize on their contributions to disaster risk reduction. As of 28th September 2021, the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments online platform has published 89 voluntary commitments with more than 401 committed deliverables. To date, 24 (27 percent) out of the total 89 voluntary commitments indicate that gender is covered within their focused themes and issues. These 24 voluntary commitments have a total of 136 related deliverables, 86 percent of which have been completed, while 14 percent remain in progress. A total of 168 organizations are involved indicating that the gender-related voluntary commitments are being implemented in collaboration among multiple organizations.

UNDRR promotes a gender perspective in DRR planning, disaggregation of data, disaster data collection and reporting, in trainings and strategic advice provided to national Sendai Framework focal points, as well as with other DRR stakeholders, sustainable development and climate change actors. In terms of capacity-building, in 2020 UNDRR's Global Education and Training Institute has trained 5,042 national and

⁸ Report of the Secretary-General, *Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 27 July 2021

⁹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "The COVID-19 pandemic: an opportunity for a systemic approach to disaster risk for the Caribbean" (Geneva, 2021); United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "COVID-19 brief: preliminary evidence from sub-Saharan Africa" (Geneva, 2020); and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, "Review of COVID-19 disaster risk governance in Asia-Pacific: towards multi-hazard and multisectoral disaster risk reduction" (Geneva, 2020).

local government officials and other relevant stakeholders from 166 countries and territories, 48% of participants were women.

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Governments can scale up investments and resource for disaster risk reduction by integrating it into economic planning, public investment strategies, and budgets and expenditure frameworks in all sectors and at all levels. Further work can be undertaken to support gender-responsive budgeting for disaster risk reduction. As countries develop financing strategies to implement their national and local DRR strategies it will be critical to ensure that they are gender-responsive. The participation of ministries of women alongside ministries of finance and planning in the development of national disaster risk reduction strategies and in risk-informed reviews of public budgets would be beneficial.

Development cooperation and investments must also become more risk-informed and inclusive. This aim can be supported by aligning national development cooperation policies with national disaster risk reduction strategies and climate change adaptation plans. However, according to a review of national development cooperation policies in the 2020 few such policies include disaster risk reduction.¹⁰

Finally, the private sector is a key stakeholder in investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and UNDRR's support to ARISE, the Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilience Societies, a network of private sector entities, includes engagement with women-led businesses and SMEs where women are over-represented. As part of these efforts consideration should be paid to the social protection gaps in the informal sector, which can increase the vulnerability faced particularly by women.

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

While the growth of disaster risk means there is a need to strengthen disaster preparedness for response, disaster preparedness does not address the drivers of risk and is therefore not an end goal. To break the cycle of disaster, response, recovery and repeat, advancements are needed in national policymaking and capacity-building for a multi-hazard, multisectoral and longer-term approach to preparedness that is integrated within a comprehensive approach to risk reduction and prevention. 'Building back better' is an opportunity for transformation – not just for reducing disaster risk, but for addressing underlying gender inequalities.

It is critical that early warnings lead to anticipatory action, including forecast-based financing mechanisms and shock-responsive social safety nets. These anticipatory instruments are based on a thorough assessment of existing gender inequalities and ensure early action reduces the disproportionate impact of disasters on women and girls. Preventing and responding to gender-based violence is an integral component of these efforts.

Furthermore, effective disaster preparedness and anticipatory action require capacities and resources for long-range multi-hazard early warning systems, that are gender-sensitive and include climate forecasts as well as epidemic/pandemic early warnings. Country-reported data on global target G show that much

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General, *Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 27 July 2021

greater investments and transfer of technology are needed to build the forecasting and early warning capacities of developing countries. By the end of 2020, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems initiative was supporting 57 countries. Its projects, implemented by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Bank Group and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), are supporting least developed countries and small island developing States to strengthen the hydrometeorological and early warning services in the Caribbean, South-West Indian Ocean and South Pacific, including the integration of gender.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the ways in which gender inequalities are accentuated during disasters. The social impact of COVID-19 for women is high, with limited social safety nets and fiscal stimulus, a higher burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and higher rates of domestic and intimate partner violence.¹¹ The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to address prevailing gender-based inequalities while tackling gender issues specific to disaster contexts, simultaneously. The COVID-19 recovery packages and commitments to build back better, must be committed to gender equality. Without concerted attention to reduce vulnerability and exposure to future crises through COVID-19 recovery strategies, marginalized groups will be left further behind. An inclusive human-rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction is therefore imperative.

Conclusion

An approach to disaster risk reduction that promotes gender equality and protects human rights can facilitate the institutionalization of diverse stakeholder participation and ensure that strategies and programmes address the social and economic drivers of disaster risk, including gender inequality and racial discrimination. Key recommendations include:

- Broaden the understanding of data relevant to DRR that address the root causes of vulnerability. This includes, but must go beyond, sex age and disability disaggregated data to include a deeper understanding of the gender dimensions of social protection.
- To uphold women's rights and fully leverage the potential of women's leadership in disaster risk reduction, the perspectives of women and girls in all of their diversity must be integrated in the formulation and implementation of disaster risk reduction policies and programmes across all sectors. As part of this, women's ministries should be active participants in Government led DRR efforts including policy development.
- Apply a gender analysis to risk finance and support gender-responsive budgeting for disaster risk reduction. As countries develop financing strategies to implement their national and local DRR strategies it will be critical to ensure that they are gender-responsive.
- Develop and implement inclusive and gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, and measure progress on gender-responsive efforts in the implementation of the Sendai Framework.¹² This should include improving access to multi-hazard early warning systems and risk information.

¹¹ *Learning from COVID-19 to strengthen gender-responsive disaster risk reduction*, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2021

¹² *Learning from COVID-19 to strengthen gender-responsive disaster risk reduction*, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2021

By not only identifying and meeting the different needs of women and girls, men and boys in all their diversity, but by seeking to redress the underlying causes of vulnerability can disaster risk reduction efforts advance gender equality while effectively reducing disaster risk for all.

UNDRR oversees the implementation of the Sendai Framework, supporting countries in its implementation and monitoring. As part of these efforts UNDRR aims to support gender-transformative disaster risk reduction that not only identifies and meets the different needs of women and girls, men and boys, and people of diverse gender identities, but seeks to redress the underlying causes of vulnerability by putting women's resilience at the centre of disaster risk reduction strategies, policies and programming in order to promote women's leadership and achieve gender equality. UNDRR's Strategic Framework 2022-2025 is aligned with the Sendai Framework and takes a dual track approach where gender is integrated across the results and deliverables of the organisation in addition to specific gender deliverables.

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