



Permanent Mission of Norway  
to the United Nations

## Learning from COVID-19 to strengthen gender-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction

23 April 2021, 12:00 – 13:30 CEST

### Concept Note

As the world is grappling with the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, many communities are experiencing the impact of compounded disasters, with COVID-19 and natural hazards stretching resources and testing coping capacities. Building resilience requires a multi-hazard, inclusive, all-of-society approach that considers the wide range of challenges a community may face, from climate change to pandemics to natural hazards.

But disasters, whether caused by viruses or natural hazards, are not felt uniformly by everyone in our societies. Gender, income inequality, geography, age, and other socio-economic factors will determine how such events impact people.<sup>1</sup> Disasters exacerbate many of the prevailing gender inequalities that exist in societies. 70 per cent of health workers and first responders are women and they are more likely to be exposed to the virus. At least 11 million girls are at high risk of never returning to school as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, signaling future generations of girls who have fewer opportunities, are less-educated, and are more likely to marry early and be subjected to intimate partner violence.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic has resulted in a reallocation of resources and priorities that have adversely impacted on women's health care and protection. Furthermore, women's over-representation in sectors severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, including tourism, hospitality, and informal work, has resulted in women bearing the brunt of the economic fallout from COVID-19. The social impact 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.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding how gender relations shape lives is critical to disaster risk reduction. Gender relations can influence how people's roles, responsibilities and access to resources are affected by different hazards.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, gender intersects with socio-economic

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<sup>1</sup> 'Report on the gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period' Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0229\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0229_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>

<sup>3</sup> 'Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and service provision: UN Women rapid assessment and findings' <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/impact-of-covid-19-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-service-provision-en.pdf?la=en&vs=0>

<sup>4</sup> Ciampi, Maria, et al., 'Gender and disaster risk reduction', Oxfam, July 2011

characteristics such as age, disability, race, sexual orientation, displacement and migration status, to shape people's unique vulnerability. To reduce disaster risk we must ensure that all disaster related strategies, policies and plans are informed by an intersectional gender analysis across all sectors for greater gender responsiveness.

In the context of COVID-19, Government recovery plans must be evidence-based, participatory and take an all-of-society approach. Yet a lack of disaggregated data often means plans are not informed by adequate, quality data and as a result the gendered impacts of the pandemic are not fully understood. At the same time, women's leadership in COVID-19 recovery is lacking, with women making up less than a quarter of national-level committees established to respond to COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>

In order to recover from this crisis and build resilience we need to strengthen women's leadership at every level - from national crisis committees to local communities. Women's leadership brings essential knowledge, skills, resources and experience to emergency response and resilience building. 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 policies and programmes at all stages of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across all sectors.

While COVID-19 is a global disaster, it also presents an opportunity for change. The crisis gives us an opportunity to build back better and to put women at the centre of the recovery. If we are able to ensure our recovery to COVID-19 strengthens women's leadership in disaster governance, supports multi-hazard risk assessments, preserves and protects women's rights and enhances gender equality, we can build on this experience to strengthen resilience for all.

## Objectives of the event

The event will:

1. Highlight the need for and effectiveness of gender-responsive disaster risk reduction in COVID-19 recovery.
2. Identify challenges and good practices in developing and implementing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies, policies and plans at the country level.
3. Discuss the specific challenges of compounded disasters and how a gender-transformative approach can help reduce multi-hazard disaster risk.

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<sup>5</sup> Fuhrman, Sarah, and Rhodes, Francesca "Where are the women? The conspicuous absence of women in COVID-19 response teams and plans, and why we need them", CARE, June 2020



### **Modality and partners of the event**

The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Norad, Australian Aid, UNFPA, UN Women, the Women's International Network for Disaster Risk Reduction as well as the Stockholm Environment Institute, the Huairou Commission, Government of Finland and Permanent Mission of Norway organize together a 90 minute virtual event to discuss how a gender-responsive approach to COVID-19 recovery can build resilience and reduce future disaster risk.

### **Expected audience**

The event will be a public event, with targeted invitations to relevant Government officials, including Sendai Framework focal points and Ministries dealing with gender issues.