Reducing disaster risk through a gender-responsive midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

A side event at the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

16 March 2022
The world is a different place than it was in 2015, when we adopted the Sendai Framework. The midterm review presents a golden opportunity to make course corrections, including how we respond and address gender equality in policies and programs for DRR.”

- Ms. Mami Mizutori, UNDRR

DRR CHALLENGE

The expected outcome of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is ‘The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.’ The theme of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women provided an opportunity to review the ways in which promoting and supporting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in disaster risk reduction (DRR) can help accelerate progress to achieve this outcome, and explore opportunities to harness synergies between disaster risk reduction, climate change and environmental efforts.

Given the ongoing midterm review of the Sendai Framework, which commenced in October 2021 and will conclude with a high-level event in May 2023, CSW66 provided an opportune moment to consider the ways in which gender equality can help reduce disaster risk, disaster risk reduction can support gender equality, and gender and disaster risk reduction stakeholders can effectively collaborate to achieve these mutually reinforcing aims.

The impact of gender norms, roles and relations on people’s lives within a given culture and society is critical to understanding and reducing disaster risk. The Sendai Framework acknowledges both the specific vulnerabilities that women face in disasters due to pervasive gender inequality that exists across all societies, and recognizes the indispensable role of women, including grassroots women in risk reduction efforts. Climate change and environmental degradation are increasing disaster risk, yet national legal and policy frameworks do not yet provide a cohesive basis for gender-responsive governance that fulfils the rights of women and girls and ensures women’s participation in decision-making.

At the same time, disaster risk constrains our collective progress towards gender equality. Due to the systemic nature of risk, disasters have inequitable and cascading impacts across the Sustainable Development Goals, which can last for years after the initial event. The 2021 UN Joint Study on Gender Equality and Women’s Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction Beyond vulnerability to gender equality and women’s empowerment and leadership in disaster risk reduction: Critical actions for the United Nations System found that inadequate attention has been given to the ways in which gender inequality and disaster risk buttress each other, or how this synergy can most effectively be utilized to achieve gender equality and reduce disaster risk.

The establishment of a Gender Action Plan to support implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction would help to ensure integrated and complementary approaches with the global gender action plans agreed for the biodiversity and climate change conventions and could help to bring together CEDAW Recommendation 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the SDGs and the Sendai Framework in a structured and action-oriented way.

This CSW66 side event provided an opportunity to advance gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework as an integral component of the collective 2030 Agenda.
WEBINAR OBJECTIVES:

1. Inform gender actors about the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and highlight opportunities for engagement.

2. Identify key gender equality and women's empowerment recommendations and commitments that will help to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework recognising the strong links between climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.

3. Share the recommendations from the UN Joint Study on Gender Equality and Women's Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction to support a gender-responsive midterm review of the Sendai Framework.

3. Explore the establishment of a specific gender action plan, or work planning mechanism to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework to 2030, similar to the climate change and environment treaty plans.

SPEAKERS:

- Ms. Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Ms. Shoko Arakaki, Director of the Humanitarian Office, UNFPA
- Ms. Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Regional Manager of Shifting the Power Coalition, Pacific
- Mr. Ahmadhul Haque, Director of the Cyclone Preparedness Program in Bangladesh
- Mr. Kimihiro Ishikane, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
- Ms. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head of UNDRR
- Ms. Åsa Regnér, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women
- Ms. Bjørg Sandkjær, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- Mr. Abdullah Shahid, President of the Seventy-Sixth General Assembly
- Ms. Liane Shalatek, Associate Director of the Washington Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation

The event was moderated by Ms. Elizabeth Puranam from Al Jazeera, with Professor Virginia Murray moderating the panel discussion.

References for further reading

i. For the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, including the Supplementary Recommendations and Guidance for a gender-responsive midterm review, as well as information on how all stakeholders can engage with the process, please see: https://sendaiframework-mtr.undrr.org/

ii. For further information, resources and tools on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction please explore the Women’s Resilience to Disaster’s Knowledge Hub: https://wrdd.unwomen.org/
1. **Commit to a gender-responsive midterm review of the Sendai Framework and develop a Gender Action Plan that will help accelerate implementation to 2030**
   - Recognising that our collective progress to achieve the goal, outcome and targets of the Sendai Framework can be accelerated by promoting gender-responsive and inclusive disaster risk reduction the midterm review offers a unique opportunity to identify and close gender gaps in disaster risk.
   - As part of the midterm review process a gender action plan to achieve the Sendai Framework should be developed that is aligned with and complements the gender action plans from other climate and environmental frameworks.

2. **Prioritise understanding the gendered dimensions of disaster risk**
   - To drive the gender equality agenda, all data must be inclusive of women in all their diversity. The lack of disaggregated data on sex, age and disability remains a significant barrier to understanding and analysing disaster risk and impacts.
   - Disaster data should also consider how gender roles and relations impact exposure and vulnerability to hazards.

3. **Improve disaster risk governance through diverse and inclusive leadership**
   - There is a need to shift the perspective of women as receivers of services and assistance during disasters, to empowered individuals who are agents of change.
   - Women’s capacity, participation and leadership can be supported through the provision of opportunities, training and promoting women-friendly policies and campaigns.
   - It is essential to invest in the women’s movement, bringing together different levels of leadership and women’s diversities; particularly, young women and women with disabilities. Investment to build their technical expertise and capacities to engage within the DRR and decision-making spaces is vital.

4. **Invest in gender-responsive disaster reduction and women’s empowerment**
   - Financing decisions should be people centered, with gender equality a core outcome for any planned intervention. At the framework level, there is a need for dedicated gender policies and action plans that are sufficiently resourced and supported.
   - Gender analysis and assessments should be required for every funded DRR intervention, with progress regularly assessed and reported on.
   - Funding must be accountable and transparent including how much money is available, in what form and quality, to whom, and indicate how much is promised to support gender equality and women’s empowerment. More consideration is needed on facilitating access to financing in the informal sector particularly, where women are disproportionately represented.
   - Financing needs to be available, and directly accessible, at the local level to respond to localized needs. In the case of disasters, particularly at the local level, funding should include local currency loans with loan forgiveness. Financing local groups that are working to build resilience and address underlying causes will be key to mitigate the pressure put on urban infrastructure by growing urban populations, which make housing difficult to access and lead to informal settlements with poor electricity connections, housing materials and sanitation –increasing the risk of residents.