As women leaders, we need to be role-models for ourselves.

– Ida Ngurah, Indonesia
Background

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognises the critical role of women in risk reduction efforts and the need to empower women to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction approaches. Yet despite this, women are still underrepresented in DRR decision-making and there is great disparity in the number of women in disaster risk reduction (DRR) leadership roles.

The Women’s International Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR) aims to empower women and enhance their role in decision-making in disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region by promoting and supporting women’s leadership. The 2022 WIN DRR Leadership Awards were awarded at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Brisbane, Australia on the 21 September 2022, recognising the achievements of women working in disaster risk reduction across the Asia-Pacific region. A total of 420 nominations from 24 countries were received, with 12 finalists shortlisted in the Rising Star Award, and 15 finalists shortlisted for the Excellence Award, proudly sponsored by SM Prime.

The Roundtable Discussion provided an opportunity for WIN DRR members to hear more about the work of the finalists and share with each other. Recognising the diversity of contexts across the Asia-Pacific region the roundtable discussion provided opportunity for connection and shared learning.

Roundtable objective:

The overall objective of the WIN DRR Leadership Awards Roundtable Discussion was to hear more about and learn from the work of some of the WIN DRR Leadership Award finalists. The roundtable discussion also offered a networking opportunity for WIN DRR members, who were able to connect with each other during the breakout group discussions on inclusive leadership in DRR; locally-led DRR solutions; and data and tech-driven approaches to DRR.

Speakers:

- Angela Tamrakar, Nepal
- Flora Vano, Vanuatu
- Homolata Borah, India
- Ida Ngurah, Indonesia
- Lee Macqueen, India
- Maselina Iuta Fiso, Samoa
- Priya Singh, Fiji
- Reena Bajracharya, Nepal
- Anuradha, India (Facilitator)
- Jane Rovins, New Zealand (Facilitator)
- Om Kala Khanal, Nepal (Facilitator)
- Lara Franzen, DFAT, Australia
- Marco Toscano-Rivalta, UNDRR
- Branwen Millar, UNDRR (Moderator)
1. **Women are excellent role models**
   - Self-belief, self-reflection and a willingness to learn from mistakes is key to leading inclusively. When women are role models for themselves, they are also role models for other women in communities and can indirectly support them by demonstrating self-expression and how to use their voice. The impacts of which, can have a positive snowball effect from woman to woman, and ripple into the wider community. This can lead to more meaningful engagement by women in local DRR initiatives.
   - It is important to encourage women to support and bring up other women. Particularly women in senior roles, as they may be able to provide opportunities for younger or less experienced women. Everyone can display leadership; it is not necessarily a title.

   "*How many new young women are coming on board excites me. They bring fresh ideas and dynamic innovation.*" - Jane Rovins, New Zealand

2. **More focus on meaningful participation and engagement is needed**
   - Communities want meaningful participation in DRR planning and implementation. Women are well placed to enhance local DRR as they are commonly across household activities and are well connected in communities. When women have a strong understanding of the importance of community-based DRR activities it can lead to wider community resilience.
   - There is a need to support and enhance the participation of young women and girls, for e.g., through specific youth trainings.

   "*At the government and community level the solutions require transformative change, and such a transformative change is not possible without the leadership and initiatives by women.*" - Homolata Borah, India

3. **Women have developed successful strategies for navigating strong patriarchal and institutional systems**
   - Patriarchal social and institutional systems can lead to discrimination by all who have been born and raised in them. Such power structures can be difficult to navigate and influence because the priorities are often very different and gender-related issues are not well understood. Trying to present the same ideas from ‘their perspective’, using evidence and data, and acknowledging their contributions have been successful strategies for effective engagement for WIN DRR members. When women think strategically they can challenge power structures and systems to enhance their meaningful participation and leadership.
   - Sexism prevails in science and engineering and can be quite isolating for women in these spaces. Some women have found themselves in classes where only three of the 50 participants were women, and have been asked ‘why did you join this course for men?’ and told ‘it will be very difficult for you in the long run.’ Women often need to put in more effort compared to their male counterparts or make sacrifices in other areas.
of life (such as family time) to work in such fields. This emphasises the importance of women's leadership in typically male-dominated areas of DRR, as well as the power of women supporting other women.

“As Indigenous women we have to talk more than ten times to convince a donor that we have knowledge. And then when we walk in to join the table, we see that the decision has already been made in another place.” - Flora Vano, Vanuatu

4. **Intersectionality needs explicit consideration in DRR policy**

   - There needs to be greater space in policy environments to discuss risk – not just when a disaster has taken place but pre-emptively. This needs to encompass assessing what exposes people to greater disaster risk, including truly understanding the intersectionality of women’s social and economic situations and identities.
   - Humanitarian entities need to support governments to identify the particular needs of women and understand what specifically can support and empower women in the face of disasters.
   - Intersectionality needs to be integrated across all UN programs and policies. The principals and indicators for what inclusion is needs to be expressly laid out, including existing best practices, and additional measures to improve current systems/processes.

   “As a leader with disability, I am often underestimated... but I think it is important to always persevere and bring forward other leaders from the disability space”
   - Maselina Iuta Fiso, Samoa

5. **Effective disaster risk communications need to be inclusive and locally relevant**

   - Initiatives that focus on translating national emergency communications for people with diverse needs, specifically people who are deaf or hard of hearing, enables them to effectively understand emergency messages. People who are deaf or hard of hearing are often excluded completely, and in Samoa, recent translations of emergency information was the first time some had ever understood disaster messaging.
   - It can be difficult to explain and communicate the science of climate change and disasters to people at community level who don’t have formal education. There is opportunity to build understanding by supporting and investing in approaches to enhance community level communication.

   “Technologies will make a difference, it excites me. Innovations solve issues and close gaps.” - Reena Bajracharya, Nepal

6. **Greater funding and investment is needed for women-led organisations**

   - Getting resources directly to local women’s organisations is an ongoing issue. It needs to be easier for local women’s organisations to access both government and donor funding. There is a gap in knowledge and access to such funding opportunities, for example, if more women’s groups knew about the Philippines
Government contribution of 5% of revenue to DRR they might be able to acquire more funding.

- Compliance with donor requirements is a challenge for many smaller women-led organisations. Investment in the capacity of local women’s organisations will support them to effectively manage donor and government funds.
- There needs to be more access to tailored training for groups of women from different countries, for example indigenous women need separate and tailored support. This could be implemented through an Innovation Academy for Women in DRR.

7. **Opportunities and priorities for WIN DRR**

- More networking events and opportunities for WIN DRR members to engage, collaborate and share with each other would be welcome.
- The convening power of the UN can help to support communities, local government, and local disaster risk management institutions develop trust to exchange information.
- Continue to build and share profiles, publications and videos of WIN DRR members, as this recognition boosts morale and commitment.
- Connect members to national WIN DRR networks, and across other regional networks and find opportunities to promote exchanges across particular thematic or technical areas.
- Enable greater intergenerational exchange between youth WIN DRR members and women leaders in DRR so that young women can share their ideas and initiatives and be heard and supported by those who hold more experience and power.
- Support women’s capacity development and trainings, including supporting women-led organisations to enhance their influence.
- Facilitate sponsorships or scholarships for women.
- Implement formal and informal mentoring, and peer-to-peer learning with WIN DRR members.

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**References for further reading**

- [https://www.undrr.org/womens-leadership](https://www.undrr.org/womens-leadership)
- [https://www.undrr.org/gender](https://www.undrr.org/gender)

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