



REGIONAL ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON

**GENDER AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

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# Gender, DRR and Climate Change Recommendations to CEDAW

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# Brief Introduction to CEDAW

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is also described as an international Bill of Rights for women.
- It defines discrimination against women, requiring states to end *all forms of discrimination* against women. The first 16 Articles refer to specific aspects of women's lives.
- The Committee, oversees compliance and formulates General Recommendations (GRs, regarded as “soft law”). GRs elaborate existing provisions of the Convention, as well as emerging forms of discrimination against women.
- The Convention is the most widely ratified human rights convention. Countries that have ratified/acceded to it are legally bound to implement its provisions, and to submit reports every four years. The Committee then engages in a constructive dialogue with them, and issues its Concluding Observations (COBs) on the process.

# Rationale for the General Recommendation

- The Committee decided to develop guidance (a General Recommendation) to States and other actors at all levels on existing obligations under CEDAW based on
  - the link between disaster risk reduction (DRR) and human rights:
  - the application of human rights' standards, including equality, participation, capabilities, etc., will strengthen DRR processes.
- The GR will:
  - Ensure attention to gender-responsive DRR, referencing CEDAW's Articles and soft laws;
  - Provide consistency in policy, inform legislation, budgets and other measures to counter the negative human rights impact of climate change and disasters.
- The Sendai framework also emphasizes human rights, gender equality, climate change adaptation and strengthening countries' legal frameworks.
- SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; SDG 13 – Climate change

# Elaboration Process

- A Working Group of the Committee drawn from all regional groupings
- Concept Note developed and reviewed
- Half-day of General Discussion held 29-02-16
- Input received from diverse stakeholders at local, national, regional and international levels.
- Going forward, consultations will be held with different groupings in all geographical regions to guarantee that recommendations ultimately made are relevant and practical globally.

# **Nexus between the Convention and Sendai on Gender-responsive DRR and Climate Resilience:**

## **1. Understanding Disaster Risk**

### **Article 1: Substantive Equality between women and men**

#### **Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:**

- Multiple, intersectional discrimination
- Disproportionate numbers of women affected by disaster (BUT does not necessarily mean women are vulnerable)
- Addressing the multiple/intersecting factors that promote notion of women as “vulnerable” e.g. age, disability, health, employment status, care-giving responsibilities ...

#### **Potential Remedial Actions**

- Reverse stereotypes and disproportionate impacts through programs and policies (that utilize women’s networks, draw on their strengths and existing competencies).

# 1. Understanding Disaster Risk (Cont)

**Article 2:** Core obligations on states to ensure equality in national constitutions, legislation, and laws, abolish existing laws, ... practices that discriminate against women and adhere to international commitments (GR 28).

## Potential **Remedial** Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Address laws, customs and practices (including restrictions on women's mobility, care-giving roles) that impede women's ability to overcome disaster risks
- Strengthen the relevant institutions

**Article 3:** Advocates gender mainstreaming, i.e. the integration of women in all fields; role of National Women's Machinery (NWM) dealt with here.

## **Problematic** Issues in Gender and DRR:

- NWMs and women's NGOs not routinely included in key decisions on climate change and DRR programs, which are usually dominated by males

## 2. Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk (cont.)

**Article 7 & 8:** Equality in political and public life, policy formulation and participation in NGOs; participation at the international level.

### Potential **Remedial** Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Increase women's **leadership** and participation at all levels in gender-responsive climate change and DRR.
- Promote equal participation in:
  - planning and program design in all sectors that reduce risk (e.g., agriculture, urban planning, economics, government, health, education, environmental resource management)
  - **disaster preparedness** (training, relief coordination) and equal access to preparedness and recovery resources and opportunities)
  - policy and decision-making processes (natural and **water resource management, public health**, drought-prevention, **agriculture** etc.)

## 2. Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk

### Article 4: Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- TSMs can be used to bring women on board, design programs to address the inequalities women face in all areas; to consider and respond to women's needs.



# 3. Investing in DRR for Resilience

**Articles 10 -13:** Equality in Education, Employment, Health

Potential **Remedial** Actions in Gender and DRR:

**Article 10: Education/capacity building/information** are critical for ensuring that:-

- Women take up disciplines related to understanding and addressing DRR (including Science, Technology Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine, agriculture, water resources management, law, technical and vocational hazards fields), depending on prevalent risk (SIDS)

**Article 11: Employment & Article 13: Economic and Social Benefits**

- women's economic situation (i.e. address lower incomes and pensions, low take-up of insurance, social security and access to microcredit, loss of specific assets), is equalized *before* the disaster

**Article 12: Equal Access to Health Care Services**

- ensure a healthy population resilient in disasters and capable of engaging in and leading sustainable activities.

## 4. Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

**Articles 5 & 6:** Social and cultural patterns of conduct; violence, trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

**Article 12:** Equal access to **health care services**.

### Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- Negative impact and risks connected with relocations, movements and migration by women occasioned by disasters and climate change.
- The Committee addressed violence in the Haiti earthquake crisis in January 2010, and remarked that:  
*“sexual violence is common in humanitarian crises and may become acute in the wake of a national disaster”.*
- Attention to diseases that accompany climate change, including mental health to minimize women’s disproportionate casualty figures and their increased burden on care-giving

## 4. Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

### Article 14: Rural Women: The particular needs of rural women

#### Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- The geographical situation of rural women, water and fuel-wood collection responsibilities, food preparation compromises their capacity to cope with climate change/ disaster impacts
- Unequal access to the monetized system, resources, education, and participation in development and decision-making

#### Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Utilize women's indigenous/informal knowledge in natural resource management and conservation as they are critical actors in these fields.

## 4. Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

### Article 15: Equality before the Law/Access to Justice (GR 33)

#### Potential **Remedial** Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Removal of barriers to accessing justice

### Article 16: Equal Rights in Marriage and Family Relations

#### Potential **Remedial** Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Equal rights in marriage and family relations become particularly important in disasters, as surviving partners may not have legal rights to land, property and may experience increased hardship and inability to recover from disasters;
- Remove discriminatory laws as to headship of families.

# Convergence of Policy Messages between CEDAW and the Sendai Framework

## Expected Sendai Outcome:

- The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets ...
- The realization of this outcome requires ... the creation of the necessary **conductive and enabling environment**.

➤ ***CEDAW can be an important component of this enabling environment***

## Guiding Principles:

- Disaster risk reduction requires an **all-of-society** engagement and partnership. It also requires **empowerment** and **inclusive, accessible and non discriminatory participation**, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters... A **gender**, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and **women** and youth **leadership** should be promoted

➤ ***CEDAW is a powerful mechanism for ensuring the inclusion, engagement and empowerment of women in member states***

- Disaster risk reduction requires a multi-hazard approach and **inclusive** risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of **disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability**

➤ ***CEDAW's reporting obligation is an important mechanism for ensuring compliance; monitoring through the constructive dialogues which incorporate the articles, and an evidence base of gendered DRR data.***

# Conclusion

The roll-out of effective, and sustainable policies addressing climate change requires placing the reduction of existing gender inequalities and women's empowerment at the center of the analyses and action undertaken.

THANK YOU,  
for your kind attention