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# Gender Dimensions of Disaster Preparedness and Build Back Better: Experiences from China

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# Speech outline

- Case study background
- Why gender dimensions need to be integrated into disaster prevention
- How gender dimensions were integrated into disaster response and reconstruction after China's Wenchuan earthquake
- Recommendations

# Case study background

On May 12, 2008, 14:28 pm GMT, the Wenchuan earthquake with 8.0 magnitude affected 417 counties, 4,667 townships and 48,810 villages in 10+ Chinese provinces, including Sichuan, Gansu, Shaanxi, Chongqing, and Yunnan. With a total area of about 500,000 square kilometers, 69,227 people were killed, 17,923 people went missing, and 15.1 million people needed emergency shelters.

This was the most destructive natural disaster with the biggest affected area and greatest disaster response challenges in China since the establishment of PRC in 1949.

Beautiful Beichuan before the earthquake



Where are our homes?

# Why gender dimensions need to be integrated into disaster prevention

- The lack of gender consciousness in emergency response:
  - The needs and roles of women have often been overlooked
- The impacts of earthquakes are not the same for men and for women
- Reasons:
  - More women stay at home than men
  - Women lack relevant skills for self-rescue as well as knowledge of disaster prevention, and there is a lack of relevant trainings
  - Cultural factors





# Women contributing to disaster response



This female teacher died by protecting her students with open arms

Female nurses gave medical aids



This lactating policewoman breastfed babies

Female villagers helped each other



## Key contributions of women

- Rescuing and transferring trapped personnel
- Collecting relief supplies
- Distributing relief supplies
- Giving psychological support to victims
- Transferring affected persons to temporary shelters
- Restoring livelihoods
- Transferring and providing care for injured persons
- Promoting knowledge of disaster prevention and reduction

# How gender dimensions were integrated into emergency response and disaster reconstruction after China's Wenchuan earthquake

- The Party School, the Women's Federation and some other organizations offered trainings
  - on gender awareness to relevant disaster management officials
  - on gender awareness; disaster relief, prevention and reduction; as well as livelihood skills to local women
- Women were invited to participate in the process of housing reconstruction: case study of Housing Reconstruction in Dujiangyan
- Women were encouraged and supported to join the work force: case study of flexible employment program for stay-at-home women

# How gender dimensions were integrated into emergency response and disaster reconstruction after China's Wenchuan earthquake



Reconstruction:  
Focus on the sustainable  
development of girls and women





# Lessons learned

- Without integrating gender perspectives into disaster management, women's rights cannot be protected
- Women's participation rate is an important indicator of effective disaster response and reconstruction. The higher women's participation rate is, the higher the overall degree of satisfaction and family well-being
- Disaster management should abandon the stereotype of women being vulnerable, but equally view both men and women as the main stakeholders of disaster relief and reconstruction efforts
- Enhancing women's knowledge of disaster preparedness and women's livelihood skills is critical to reduce the impacts of disasters on women



*Thank you all!*

