INTEGRATING RIGHTS AND EQUALITY IN **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

Introduction

Disasters and climate change are not natural phenomena; they are induced and exacerbated by human activities under different environmental, social, economic and cultural contexts. Policies and institutions governing wider development processes, such as urbanization, natural resource use, and poverty reduction, play a critical role in shaping disaster risks.

Social inequality is a key driver of exposure and vulnerability. It leads to unequal distribution of benefits and costs of economic processes, disasters and climate change impacts, as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate resilience (CR) measures. Marginalized groups who do not equally benefit from economic development face higher levels of risk and vulnerability.

Human rights and gender equality are core principles reflected in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as other frameworks that make up the post-2015 development agenda, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, approaches that have been developed to promote the integration of human rights and gender equality into DRR and CR, and sustainable development more generally, tend to focus on one, with limited engagement with the other.

This brief presents the Framework for Integrating Rights and Equality (FIRE) and its applications in the **Building Resilience through Inclusive and Climate-adaptive Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia-Pacific (BRDR) Program.**[1] The FIRE approach, consisting of six dimensions, is intended as a guiding framework for DRR and CR decision-makers at national, sub-national and local levels to use in the development and implementation of laws, policies, procedures and practices related to DRR and CR.

FIRE can contribute to the implementation of the Sendai Framework at all levels, for instance, in understanding root causes of vulnerability and exposure, designing risk assessments, developing risk-sensitive land-use planning guidelines, and building capacity around preparedness and response. FIRE aims to be relevant for RCC members and NDMO officials, as well as for local leaders and community-based DRR practitioners.

The following sections of this brief detail how the FIRE approach is understood and applied in the different facets of DRR and CR explored by the BRDR Program – namely risk assessments, risk-informed development and land use planning, and emergency preparedness and response.

Framework for Integrating Rights and Equality (FIRE)

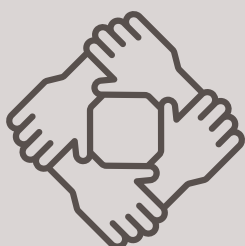|	
Fundamental rights and equality	Focuses on realizing fundamental rights reflected in international standards, including human rights treaties and more operational guidelines. It highlights how gendered social and political structures influence individual and group enjoyment of rights as well as access and entitlements to natural, physical, social, and human resources. It sees equality as an end in itself and as a right established under international law and reflected in national constitutions. For rights to be realized, the right to participation must be respected, protected, and fulfilled in order to enable individuals and groups to claim their rights and to promote accountability of duty bearers.
Non-discrimination	Focuses on addressing existing patterns of discrimination and causes of inequality based on identities and socio-economic characteristics such as gender, age, class, caste, ethnicity, health, wealth, and so forth. It recognizes that those causes of inequality intersect in a wide variety of ways, affecting every aspect of the enjoyment of rights.
Participation and access to information	Focuses on promoting meaningful, equal, gender-sensitive and effective participation of women, girls, boys and men of diverse gender identities, ages, abilities and backgrounds in policy/decision-making that shape their entitlements. Attention is paid to: ▶ Ensuring gender-equal, socially inclusive access to information ▶ Ensuring free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) ▶ Identifying and removing invisible barriers to participation such as social and gender norms, religious rules and hierarchy, stereotypes against certain identities (e.g. caste, homosexuality, disability). Ensuring procedures are in place to make participation accessible, socially inclusive, and safe for women, girls, boys and men of diverse gender identities, ages, abilities and backgrounds ▶ Recognizing the gendered politics of knowledge, i.e. whose knowledge counts? What knowledge counts? Whose voice matters? When do we listen to which voices?

Governance systems and structures

Focuses on developing and/or improving three types of systems:

▶ Law, policy and procedure on DRR and resilience building that is based on international standards and guidelines on gender equality and human rights

▶ Institutions for decision-making and accountability that enable people, particularly those belonging to disadvantaged or marginalized groups, to exercise their rights to voice, to participate, and to claim rights and entitlements

▶ Diverse platforms for civil society, particularly disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to articulate and pursue the realization of their rights

Attention is paid to identifying and addressing institutionalized exclusion on the basis of social status (e.g. gender, age, class, caste, ethnicity, health)
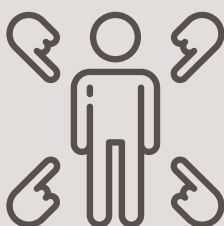
Agency and empowerment

Focuses on enhancing the ability of right-holders, particularly of disadvantaged and marginalized groups to exercise their rights and entitlements, and to influence decisions and policies that shape their rights and entitlements. Attention is paid to:
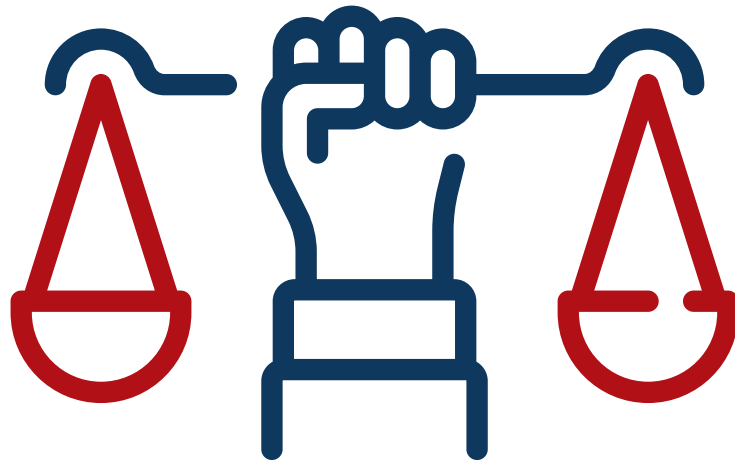
▶ Recognizing and strengthening agency, capacities and leadership

▶ Promoting collective learning and actions

Social norms and context

Focuses on transforming social and gender norms that shape inequalities in rights, entitlements and voices that contribute to vulnerability. Attention is paid to:

▶ Examining production of inequality and vulnerability, privilege and marginalization within family, community and social groups, by customary norms, practices and social processes

▶ Transforming perceptions, attitudes, norms and practices that produce inequalities

▶ Recognizing social norms and enabling conditions that support the enjoyment of fundamental rights

Integrating rights and equality into risk assessments

International and regional frameworks for DRR, such as the Sendai Framework and the Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework, call for the integration of gender considerations into risks assessments, primarily through the collection and use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated (SADD) data to inform decision-making and planning. While this is an important step towards more inclusive and equitable approaches to DRR, such data collection alone is insufficient in delivering a deep understanding of the socio-economic roots causes of disaster risk, vulnerability and exposure. Risk assessments that apply a generic "checklist" approach to data collection cannot sufficiently capture the socially rooted vulnerabilities and risks faced by different groups.

Evidence suggests that risks and vulnerabilities are often not assessed from an integrated gender equality and rights-based perspective. A stocktaking exercise founded that there are more than 120 risk assessment frameworks, guidelines, tools and checklists, the majority of which reference gender equality and/or human rights-related concerns. However, most do so in vague and aspirational terms, with few specific detailed approaches to understand rights and equality holistically. Though certain tools do assess women-specific, or child- or disability-centred risks, there remains a significant gap for a more integrated rights and equality approach to risk assessments.

How to do it?

Reframe disaster risk assessment to examine root causes of risk, vulnerability and exposure

Risk assessments should determine the root causes of unequal risks and impacts by examining socio-economic contexts, such as the power dynamics in formal and informal governance processes that shape access to resources and opportunities, as well as the capability to influence decision-making. This can be done by:

▶ Understanding risk perceptions and coping capacities of different social groups (i.e. according to the intersection of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status)

▶ Analyzing social, economic and political factors that determine differential vulnerability and exposure between groups, such as gender norms and power dynamics

▶ Examining empowerment pathways for disadvantaged groups to influence governance systems and structures

Identify and include women, girls, boys and men facing differential situations of vulnerability in risk assessment processes

Risk assessment approaches must be inclusive and participatory, not just with regard to different stakeholders but also to different groups within a target population, according to socio-economic characteristics such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. This can be done by:

▶ Enabling groups to participate in risk assessments using empowerment approaches which pro-actively acknowledge and address power dynamics between women, girls, boys and men

▶ Designing tools to capture demographic data disaggregated by socio-economic characteristics beyond sex, age and disability (i.e. 'SADD' data), that enables risk assessment models to better identify people in situations of risk and vulnerability according to different socio-economic condition
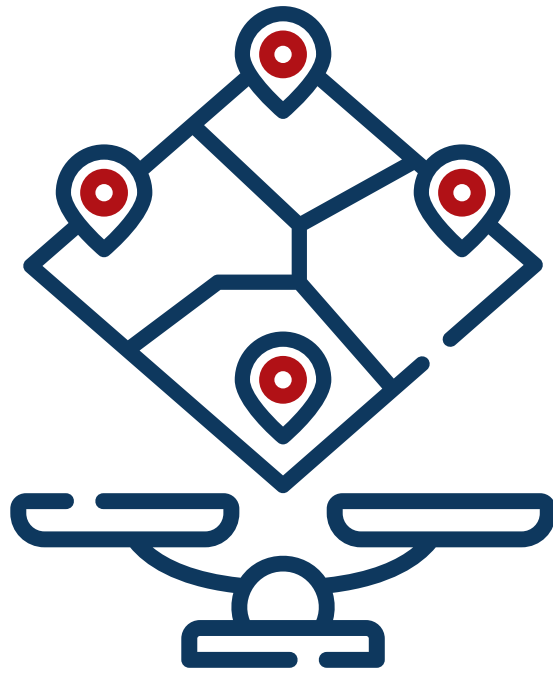
Applying FIRE in assessing root causes of risk, vulnerability and exposure

FIRE dimension	Key questions for risk assessments
Fundamental rights andwequality	1. What risks (i.e. hazards, vulnerabilities and exposures) do different groups and people (i.e. according to the intersection of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status) face? 2. What fundamental rights and entitlements (e.g. food, shelter, health, mobility, security, employment, access to resources, access to information) determine the capacity and ability of different groups to cope with and adapt to identified risks?
Non-discrimination	3. What causes and consequences of social inequality, including discrimination and marginalization, are identified by different groups? 4. How do the manifestations of social inequality, discrimination and marginalization shape differential risk, vulnerability and exposure among different groups?
Participation and access to information	5. What opportunities do women, girls, boys and men have to inform the risk and vulnerability narratives that shape decision-making processes and outcomes? 6. To what extent are women, girls, boys and men able to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes that determine their access to fundamental rights and entitlements, resources, and information?
Governance systems and structures	7. What governance systems, structures, and actors exist with the roles and responsibilities to enhance the integration of rights and equality in DRR and CR, at different levels? 8. How do socio-economic and political processes and outcomes determine the fundamental rights and entitlements of women, girls, boys and men, and subsequently create differential risk, vulnerability and exposure?
Agency and empowerment	9. To what extent are risk assessment approaches proactively supporting the empowerment and agency of women, girls, boys and men to shape decision-making processes and outcomes which determine the levels of risk, vulnerability and exposure they face?
Social norms and context	10. How do social norms and context, including community- and household-level power dynamics and gender roles, shape the risk, vulnerability and exposure of different groups?

Key Message 1

Integrating rights and equality into risk assessments for DRR and CR enables the identification of who is vulnerable; what they vulnerable to; and crucially, why they are vulnerable. To holistically assess risks, there is a need for more inclusive approaches that prioritize understanding the root causes of risk which shape the differentiated vulnerability and exposure of women, girls, boys and men.

Integrating rights and equality in risk-informed development and land use planning

Risk-informed development and land-use planning are critical components of effective DRR and CR decision-making and implementation. Equally important is the meaningful consideration and integration of rights and equality throughout the stages of planning and development, ensuring that no one is left behind in key decision-making processes and intended outcomes build resilience and sustainability for all.

More specifically, integrating rights and equality in risk-informed development and land use planning requires decision-makers, together with all stakeholders, to design and implement processes that promote active and meaningful participation, ensure equal access to information, and address the implications of the processes on the fulfilment of fundamental rights and equality, for current and future generations. Such approaches can help address root causes of risk and vulnerability, in line with the Sendai Framework and Agenda for Sustainable Development (i.e. SDGs).

Integrating gender and rights-based approaches into disaster-resilient development and land use planning

Reframe development and planning goals to have a strong rights and equality focus

- Shift the focus from infrastructural development to improving access, particularly of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, to key services and related facilities

- Combat spatial and zoning inequalities by prioritizing the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable

- Address housing needs of urban dwellers regardless of formal residential or social status

Ensure inclusive governance at all levels of development and planning decision-making

- Promote accountability of both government and non-government actors in ensuring equal rights to housing and services

- Consider different forms of knowledge on risk and development from diverse groups in decision-making and planning processes

- Ensure equality and rights through transparency and accountability mechanisms, as well in sustainability and M&E frameworks
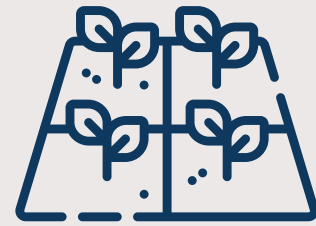
Guarantee meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders in decision-making

- Employ gender-sensitive, participatory and community-driven approaches, and avoid tokenism in governance systems and decision-making processes

- Apply principles of free, prior and informed consent for measures that may have human rights implications, such as planned relocation

Consider the role of gender and social norms in determining priorities and goals

- Address specific needs of people and groups that are often disadvantaged and vulnerable based on intersecting socio-economic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status)

- Set budgets and resource allocations according to the needs and priorities of all, and include dedicated gender equality and rights resources

A snapshot of the review of the Comprehensive Land Use Planning Guidelines of the Philippines (CLUP) and Nepal Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP)

Volume 2 of the CLUP of the Philippines outlines specific guidelines on how to conduct land-use analysis, with recognition of the intersection between gender and age as stakeholder groups. Social inclusion is reflected in its community consultation schemes, where communities are invited to provide and validate information and inform analyses led by expert groups. The CLUP also adopts a gender-responsive population and sustainable development framework to explain gendered aspects of demographic data. Some of the recommendations to help a land-use guideline such as the CLUP facilitate more inclusive processes and outcomes are:

▶ Expand the scope of community consultation in all designing and decision-making stages of the planning process, not only to inform technical analyses but also to invite inputs into plans and designs

▶ Identify all relevant stakeholders and recognize their diverse needs and concerns as well as intra-community power dynamics

▶ Build capacity for land-use planners to analyse data and design gender-responsive measures in land-use planning.

A technical guidance such as the CLUP is important for assessing potential impacts of disaster risks and land-use planning on communities but does not guarantee equality.

Commitment for just and equitable development should be coupled with affirmative policies that prioritize the needs and rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Nepal's LDCRP aims to make the planning process participatory, accountable and inclusive. It also reflects a commitment to addressing the particular situation of vulnerable groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and so forth. Some of the recommendations to help a resilience plan such as the LDCRP facilitate more inclusive processes and outcomes are:

▶ Translate the vision and commitment for inclusion into guiding principles, objectives, guideline and outcomes of the document

▶ Recognise the diversity of vulnerable groups, their intersecting identities and different local needs and concerns

▶ Expressly incorporate reference to international standards and guidelines on human rights and address substantive rights in the document from a gender perspective

▶ In addition to adopting a rights-based and gender-responsive policy approach in the LDCRP, efforts are also needed to enhance institutional environment and improve capacity of relevant agencies to effectively implement the guidelines.

Key Message 2

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To address the root causes of unequal distribution of risk and vulnerability across spatial scales, development and land-use planning processes must not only be risk-informed, but also informed by rights and equality principles and analyses based on the realities of women, girls, boys and men.

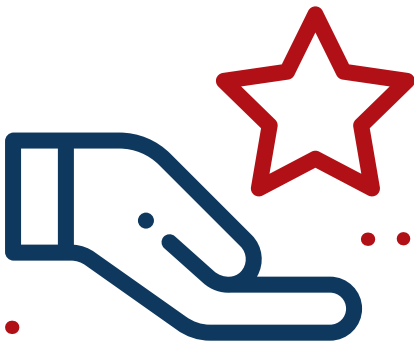. . . . .

Integrating rights and equality in emergency preparedness and response

Disaster and climate risks are deeply embedded in the social contexts and political structures in which they occur. As a result, experiences of disasters vary widely depending on people's locations, economic status, gender, ability, ethnicity, immigration status, and other characteristics which all intersect with one another to shape vulnerability and risk.

Where fundamental rights and equality are not adequately respected, protected and fulfilled, disaster preparedness and response is often hindered, resulting in ineffective and delayed services and interventions, and certain social groups being marginalized, left out or discriminated against, which consequently exacerbates the disaster impacts. Lack of awareness and access to fundamental rights and equality, weak mechanisms of accountability, transparency, and participation, as well as a lack of attention to the gender and social dimensions of preparedness and response, hamper the safe and timely management of risks.

To translate the broad principles and recommendations for integrating rights and equality in preparedness and response into practical and applicable approaches, BRDR has developed guidelines for three core aspects: early warning; evacuation; and camp management. The guidelines pose key questions to be considered and contextualized by decision-makers, planners, practitioners, and communities, when planning and implementing preparedness and response action. A summary table of the guidelines is shown below.

Recommendations on integrating rights and equality in emergency preparedness and response

1 Understand and account for social norms and the rights and equality context, including individual and institutional power dynamics, when making decisions and implementing actions.

2 Strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms for international and national law related to rights, equality and DRR by taking steps to promote more systematic engagement with national human rights institutions in addressing disaster risk.

3 Enhance partnerships between dedicated rights and equality institutions and preparedness and response actors and clarify mandates.

4 Increase coherence between sectors, stakeholders and levels of governance engaged in preparedness and response planning and action.

5 Enable and monitor the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, especially at-risk and marginalized groups, in preparedness and response decision-making and implementation.

6 Proactively build the capacity of all sub-national and local levels of government for effective preparedness and response, and for integrating rights and equality.

7 Strengthen the implementation of legislation and policies, including dedicated preparedness and response plans, guidelines and SOPs, and capacity building activities at all levels.

8 Allocate dedicated human, financial, physical and intellectual resources for the integration of rights and equality at all levels.
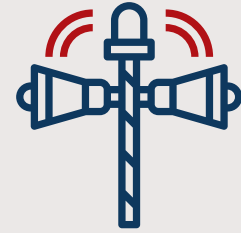
9 Enhance governance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the accountability and transparency of preparedness and response action for all stakeholders.

10 Collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative sex, age and disability disaggregated (SADD) data to inform actions, accounting for all realities and ensuring that nobody is left behind.

These recommendations are based on research conducted in Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP).
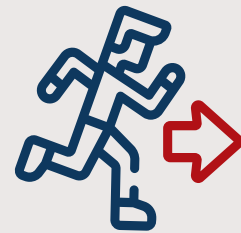
Early warning

▶ What measures are in place at this level to ensure that early warning messages reach people with sensory disabilities?

▶ Are measures gender-responsive and account for intersectionality?

▶ What steps have been taken to ensure the active, meaningful and gender responsible consultation and participation of different groups, including, for instance, persons with disabilities, older people, migrant workers, people from marginalized caste groups, and in particular women and girls from these groups?

▶ Is the budget allocation at this level adequate to enable early warning measures to be effectively implemented in a manner that leaves no one behind? If not, can the budget be increased, or are there other mechanisms to enhance early warning?

Evacuation

▶ What mechanisms are in place to protect the health and well-being of people being evacuated, particularly in the context of COVID-19? Are those mechanisms gender sensitive?

▶ Are evacuation routes and evacuation centers accessible to persons with disabilities?

▶ What steps are taken to promote inclusive and gender conscious participation of people in the design of evacuation strategies?

▶ Are authorities permitted to use force to enforce evacuation? What are the criteria for authorizing the use of force in this context? Are those criteria gender sensitive?

Camp management

▶ What measures are in place to prevent and address gender-based violence in evacuation camp settings?

▶ Are camps designed in a manner that addresses the particular needs of women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, and others in situations of potential vulnerability?

▶ What mechanisms are in place to ensure that residents participate in the management of the camp? Are those mechanisms gender-responsive?

▶ What mechanisms are in place for monitoring camp settings, and for residents to provide feedback and complaints? Are those mechanisms gender conscious?

Key Message 3

Disaster preparedness and response interventions must integrate rights and equality considerations from design through implementation to evaluation. Action should be rooted in local contexts and people's realities, including gender norms and power dynamics, and guided by key principles including, active and meaningful participation, non-discrimination, and protection of fundamental rights and equality.

Summary of key messages

Key Message 1. Integrating rights and equality into risk assessments for DRR and CR enables the identification of who is vulnerable; what they vulnerable to; and crucially, why they are vulnerable. To holistically assess risks, there is a need for more inclusive approaches that prioritize understanding the root causes of risk which shape the differentiated vulnerability and exposure of women, girls, boys and men.

Key Message 2. To address the root causes of unequal distribution of risk and vulnerability across spatial scales, development and land-use planning processes must not only be risk-informed, but also informed by rights and equality principles and analyses based on the realities of women, girls, boys and men.

Key Message 3. Disaster preparedness and response interventions must integrate rights and equality considerations from design through implementation to evaluation. Action should be rooted in local contexts and people's realities, including gender norms and power dynamics, and guided by key principles including, active and meaningful participation, non-discrimination, and protection of fundamental rights and equality.

With extensive and express calls for DRR to be guided by a human rights-based and inclusive approach, the BRDR program is working with the DRM community to demonstrate the application of rights-based approaches into different thematic focuses including Risk assessment, DRR mainstreaming into Development, and Emergency Preparedness and Response, DRR data management and progress monitoring, and Women empowerment, to achieving transformative change towards inclusive disaster resilient actions.

BRDR program partners

adpc **Asian Disaster Preparedness Center**

MSB **Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency**

SEI **Stockholm Environment Institute**

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