

# DISPLACEMENT, CLIMATE AND GENDER

## Climate Training



For key concepts and terms please refer to Fact Sheets 1, 2 & 3

### Key messages:

- ▶ Gender is a term used to describe the different roles men and women have in society. Often women and girls experience significant disadvantages because of their lower status in society and the nature of their social roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ These disadvantages are often exacerbated during times of crisis, such as situations of climate displacement, where women and girls are more exposed to risks, including sexual and gender-based violence.
- ▶ The adverse impacts of climate change are also felt more acutely by women and girls, which can undermine their resilience and make them more susceptible to becoming displaced in the event of a disaster.
- ▶ The IFRC has developed a number of policies, trainings and case studies to improve awareness and identify actions which can help to address these issues.

Gender plays an important role in people's experience of climate change, disaster and displacement. For those already vulnerable or marginalised, climate change and disasters not only increase the risk of becoming displaced, but also increase the risks experienced during displacement.

Climate-related displacement creates specific vulnerabilities based on gender. It can also exacerbate inequality, increase sexual and gender-based violence and prevent access to essential services and livelihoods. Recognising and responding to gender differences can therefore make an important contribution to improving resilience to climate change, minimising the risk and impact of displacement and ensuring faster recovery.

### What is gender?

The term 'gender' is often confused with the term 'sex', which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. Gender on the other hand, refers to the status, roles and responsibilities and capacities that both men and women have in society.

**Sex** ▶ biological differences between men and women

**Gender** ▶ differences in the roles men and women have in society

Gender roles vary greatly between countries, communities and social groups, and are influenced by a range of social and cultural norms and practices. Experiences of gender are also influenced by other factors such as education, financial resources, sexuality, age, ethnicity and religion. Gender roles can also change over time, as social attitudes and norms evolve.

# Gendered impacts of climate-related displacement

**Why is gender so often about women?** The *IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues* takes an inclusive approach which covers all types of gender roles, both male and female. However, statistically women and girls are much more likely to suffer from gender-based discrimination in society. Women and girls constitute most of the world's poor and globally experience significant inequality in a number of areas including:

- ▶ Limited access to education, land and financial assets.
- ▶ Higher dependence on natural resources for food, water, fuel and income.
- ▶ Less decision-making opportunities, autonomy and access to justice.
- ▶ Greater responsibilities for caring for children and the elderly.
- ▶ Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, forced marriage and trafficking.

As such, much of the research, literature and programs seeks to address these gaps. However, this does not exclude or detract from issues experienced as a result of other gendered roles, which should also be addressed.

## The gendered impacts of climate-related displacement

There has been a lot of research dedicated to exploring the issues of gender in disaster and displacement settings, and also issues resulting from the adverse impacts of climate change. The challenges of gender, specifically in situations of climate-related displacement, is a relatively new area of focus, but it is clear that the impacts of climate change, disasters and displacement exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, many of which are disproportionately faced by women and girls.

Moreover disaster situations can cause existing protection apparatus such as law enforcement to break down, leaving some people, especially women and girls, particularly vulnerable.

**"...natural disasters affect women more adversely than men in terms of the effect of disasters on the life expectancy at birth.** What this means is that natural disasters on average kill more women than men or kill women at a younger age than men, and the more so the stronger the disaster."

Source: Neumayer, E., and T. Plumper, 'The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, issue 97, 2007.

## Disaster displacement has a disproportionate impact on women and girls

Situations of disaster displacement, including those which are climate-induced, pose additional threats to life, health and safety for everyone, however these risks are experienced differently based on gender.

Some ways in which climate-related displacement has a disproportionate impact based on gender includes the following:

- ▶ **Life and health:** Women are more likely to die during extreme weather events than men, and women who survive have decreased life expectancy. Sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is also known to increase significantly during times of crisis. Many women also face increased and disproportionate pressure to support their families, which can lead to poor mental health and stress-related disorders. Damaged health services and infrastructure has a negative impact on sexual and reproductive health and may lead to unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortion practices.



- ▶ **Economic stress:** The loss of livelihood opportunities caused by climate-related displacement can increase women's household workload and responsibility.



# Gendered impacts of climate-related displacement

Women are more likely to engage in transactional sexual relationships in order to acquire basic life necessities, such as food and medicine, exposing them to higher rates of physical and sexual abuse, emotional stress, sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies. The absence of men from the household while working in other locations can also increase the risk of sexual and physical violence against women and girls from others in the community. Instances of child, early or forced marriage can also increase.

- **Emergency shelter:** While evacuation is a critical life-saving measure, women seeking refuge in emergency shelters can feel unsafe and may be subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination, with less access to law enforcement and normal social protections.



- **Housing, land and property:** Women may also experience difficulties accessing housing assistance and compensation due to a lack of ownership and identity documentation, or limitations on women's property rights. This may pose additional barriers to finding durable solutions to displacement and increase exposure to other displacement risks.



- **Education:** Climate-related displacement can pose barriers to girls accessing education. Some of the reasons for this include: girls feeling too unsafe to leave the protection of family members; families prioritising the education of boys or considering it too costly; and girls being required to stay at home and care for family members or assist with household chores. The lack of quality education for girls can also have long term consequences for individual and community development.



## Climate change increases the risk of women and girls becoming displaced

There are many ways in which the adverse impacts of climate change are experienced more acutely based on gender. On the surface this may seem unrelated to displacement. However these factors in combination exacerbate underlying vulnerabilities and undermine overall resilience to withstand a crisis. If a disaster occurs when resilience is low, the likelihood of someone becoming displaced, and staying displaced for longer, increases significantly.

Some of the ways in which climate change undermines resilience, and therefore increases the risks of displacement include the following:

- **Food security and access to land:** Women experience greater disadvantage from climate-induced changes to food availability and production.



This is especially so for women in rural areas who are predominantly smallholder farmers and face unequal access to opportunities for land ownership in the most productive areas. Women also can also face greater difficulties maintaining adequate nutrition in times of food scarcity, which is especially important during pregnancy and after childbirth.

- **Health:** Some specific roles of women in society can expose them to greater health risks caused by climate change. When water is scarce, women and girls with primary responsibility for water collection can face greater physical and psychological distress and may need to travel longer distances to find water collection points, which can increase the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Those with primary responsibility for cooking and heating homes face increased risks of death and disease due to higher exposure to fossil fuels or contaminated fuels when viable alternatives are not available.



# Gendered impacts of climate displacement

Women are also especially vulnerable to vector-borne diseases which can be exacerbated by changes in temperature. In addition to lowering resilience due to poor health, the increased time women spend adapting to these changes limits their opportunities to engage as equal participants in other aspects of community life such as decision-making about climate change action.

## ► Sexual and reproductive health and rights:

Impacts of climate change such as extreme temperature, poor air quality, salinization of drinking water and inadequate nutrition from food scarcity can directly impact pregnancy, maternal mortality and morbidity, as well as increase the risk of pre-term births, congenital defects and other complications. The impact of climate change on livelihoods and increasing poverty also affects availability and access to health services and infrastructure, and may lead to increased risks of unsafe health practices and disease.



## ► Sexual and gender-based violence, and discrimination:

The links between climate change, poverty and increased sexual and gender-based violence are well documented, as are increased risks of child, early and forced marriages as a way to reduce climate-related economic stress. Existing inequality and vulnerabilities of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex may also be exacerbated.



## ► Livelihoods and decent work:

Climate change directly and indirectly affects women's employment opportunities due to the high proportion of women engaged in unpaid, or poorly paid labour intensive work. Many of these sectors are especially vulnerable to climate change such as agriculture and fisheries. Work scarcity also has a disproportionate impact on women, who often lack equal opportunities in education and re-skilling.



These effects are magnified for women with additional vulnerability due their indigenous, tribal or ethnic identity, migrant or disability status.

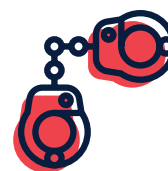
► **Cultural impacts:** Changes in climate can also adversely impact communities with cultural traditions relating to the natural environment such as indigenous land management, nutritional and health practices, which may disproportionately or uniquely affect women.



## ► Risks of defending environmental rights:

Human rights and environmental defenders are often exposed to risks of assassination, criminalization, intimidation and assault.

Women in these situations also face the added threat of sexual and gender-based violence, which can cause further stigmatization and discrimination, and if not managed appropriately, also limit women's freedom of expression and participation in society.



## Special focus: Gender-based violence

The [IFRC's Strategy 2030](#) recognises the special risks of violence, in particular (but not exclusively) faced by women and girls on the basis of gender. In 2015, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent noted "with particular alarm the persistent prevalence and the growing evidence of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies," which disproportionately affects women and girls. It affirmed "that women's political, social and economic empowerment; gender equality; and the engagement of men and boys in the effort to combat all forms of violence against women are essential to long-term efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies."

Source: Resolution 32IC/15/R3: Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response.



# Gender-based violence

The IFRC Strategy on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response 2010–2020 also recognises the links between violence, displacement and climate change, the effects of which are frequently experienced more acutely based on gender.

## Violence and displacement

- ▶ Risk factors include: over-population, high stress, lack of policing and security, lack of safe sanitation facilities and lighting, high levels of alcohol and other substance abuse, few livelihood opportunities, chaotic environments, feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness.
- ▶ Forced displacement increases risk factors that could lead to suicidal behaviours, for example refugees who are grieving or have significant stress.
- ▶ In the Great Lakes Region of Africa, more than 50% of children in displacement camps had experienced some form of sexual abuse; in one camp the rate was 87%.

Source: IFRC Strategy on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response 2010–2020 (2011)

## Violence and climate change

- ▶ Violence may arise as a result of scarce resources and environmental degradation, as a consequence of climate change.
- ▶ Alarming increases in the rates of domestic violence have been reported after disasters in various parts of the world, many of which are climate-related.
- ▶ Violence threatens sustainable development, potentially deepening women's poverty and increasing their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and displacement, which can be further exacerbated by the adverse impacts of climate change.

## What can be done?

Approaches to addressing gender issues in the context of climate-related displacement could be considered at two levels:

### Addressing gender issues during climate-related displacement

This involves undertaking a **gender impact analysis** to determine how climate-related displacement is impacting people differently based on gender. This should consider all types of displacement such as evacuation, emergency displacement, protracted/long term displacement and cross-border displacement. This information can be used to identify **specific gender-based needs** to develop **gender-informed programs**, including mitigation, response and recovery efforts. This should also take into account any other factors that may be caused or exacerbated by **climate change**.

### Addressing the root causes of gender-based discrimination and violence

This is a longer-term strategy which involves undertaking a **baseline gender-analysis**, ideally during 'normal' times to determine underlying social and systemic gender issues which may exist in a country or community. This helps to identify people or groups who may be at-risk and to anticipate specific issues which may be caused or exacerbated by the occurrence climate change, disasters or displacement. This information can be used as a baseline to determine improvements or worsening of gender-based inequalities over time, and to develop appropriate **social and organisational gender responsive and inclusive policies, programs and approaches**.



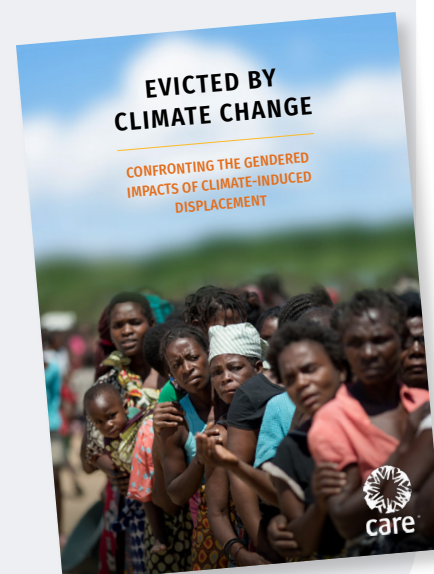
## What can be done?

### Other action to address gender and climate-related displacement

In 2020, CARE released the report *Evicted By Climate Change: Confronting the Gendered Impacts of Climate-Induced Displacement*. The report “calls on all relevant actors, particularly governments, decision-makers and humanitarian and development actors, to do their part to build a safer, more equitable, inclusive and resilient future that harnesses the power of women and girls within their communities”.

The report identifies a number of specific actions that could contribute to addressing both the immediate impacts and underlying causes of gender issues in this context, including the following high-level recommendations:

- ▶ Ensure that women and girls play meaningful leadership roles and shape more ambitious policies and localised programs.
- ▶ Ensure that systems are in place so that women and girls can hold decision-makers accountable in the context of climate-induced displacement.
- ▶ Scale up climate action and public climate finance for developing countries, particularly adaptation finance, to address displacement drivers with locally led actions.
- ▶ Direct at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local organisations, with a particular focus on women-led and women’s rights organizations.
- ▶ Develop an institutional and legal architecture that provides protections from climate-related displacement, particularly for women and girls.



## What are we doing?

The IFRC has progressively been developing **policies, tools and training** to support National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies address gender issues, including gender-based violence, and to ensure that no-one is left behind as a result of climate change, disasters and displacement. Central to the practical application of these is the **IFRC DAPS Framework**.

### Addressing gender in emergencies and programs: DAPS Framework

The IFRC has developed a simple but comprehensive guide for addressing protection, gender and inclusion in Red Cross Red Crescent emergency and other programs. The DAPS Framework is built around four central concepts (listed right).



**Dignity:** For the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, human dignity means respect for the life and integrity of individuals.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent emergency responders and emergency response programmes should contribute to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity.



**Access:** Emergency response programmes should provide access for all individuals and sub-groups within the affected population.

Accordingly, the beneficiary selection and prioritisation criteria for accessing humanitarian goods, services and protection must be informed by a gender and diversity analysis to ensure that the assistance and protection reach people who are most at risk.

## What are we doing?



**Participation:** Participation refers to the full, equal and meaningful involvement of all members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives. Sharing of information is a Core Humanitarian Standard for accountability to beneficiaries and is a critical part of participation.

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**Safety:** Females, males and other gender identities of all ages and backgrounds within affected communities have

different needs regarding their physical safety. Monitoring the safety of project sites from the perspectives of diverse groups is essential to ensure that the assistance provided meets everyone's needs and concerns in an equitable manner.

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### RCRC Movement Policy on Internal Displacement (2009)

This policy recognises that gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, is an increased risk for people who are internally displaced, and encourages special attention to gender and other factors that increase vulnerability.

### IFRC Policy on Migration (2009)

This policy recognises gender in the context of migration as a key factor for increasing vulnerability requiring special attention and identifies women as being at particular risk of facing discrimination, exclusion and violence.

### IFRC Strategy on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response 2010–2020 (2011)

This strategy provides 16 specific strategic directions for the IFRC and National Societies to support the strategic aims and enabling actions of the IFRC Strategy 2020, as each one of them relates to violence prevention, mitigation and response.

### IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013–2020 (2013)

The Strategic Framework provides specific strategic direction for the implementation of the IFRC approach on gender, positioned within the context of the IFRC Strategy 2020 and other relevant policies and strategies.

The overall approach centres around achieving three key outcomes:

- ▶ Systematic incorporation of gender in all RCRC programmes, services and tools.
- ▶ Improved gender composition at all levels of the RCRC.
- ▶ Reduced gender-based inequality, discrimination and violence.

## Policies and strategies

### IFRC Gender Policy (1999)

This policy sets out the basis on which the IFRC engages on gender issues, with the goal to ensure that all RCRC programmes “benefit men and women equally, according to their different needs and with the input and equal participation of men and women at all levels within the National Societies and the Federation’s Secretariat.” It was reviewed in 2007 with a number of recommendations, which are reflected in the IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues discussed below.



# What are we doing?

## **Resolution on Sexual and Gender-based Violence: Joint action on prevention and response (2015)**

In this resolution, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which includes IFRC, ICRC, National Societies and States, recognises the nature and scale of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the context of conflict, disasters and other emergencies. With regard to disasters, the resolution identifies a range of actions to be taken at different levels relating to: the strengthening of domestic legal frameworks to prevent and prohibit SGBV; dissemination of relevant SGBV information and good practice; inclusion of SGBV considerations in preparedness and response plans; and ensuring the participation of women in programs and decision-making.

## **IFRC Gender and Diversity Organisational Assessment Toolkit (2017)**

The aim of the toolkit is to provide National Societies with practical guidance to conduct gender and diversity organisational assessments, using the Gender and Diversity Organisational Assessment Tool. The toolkit helps National Societies to assess their performance on gender and diversity in the following areas: political will and commitment; organisational culture; resources and capacity; programme delivery and implementation; and accountability.

## **IFRC Framework for Climate Action (2017)**

The Framework includes numerous references to gender considerations, including a number of examples for addressing protection, gender and inclusion:

- ▶ Work with communities to listen and identify the needs and concerns of those most vulnerable to climate change (including women, children, people with disabilities, migrants, socially marginalised people).

- ▶ Drawing from the IFRC Minimum Standards Commitments on Gender and Diversity, advocate for the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups are addressed in climate change policy and plans (specifically for example, National Adaptation Plans).
- ▶ Disaggregate programme data to ensure women and vulnerable groups are being reached and supported.
- ▶ Promote social safety nets that are anticipatory of future climate risks, for example social protection mechanisms that anticipate floods/droughts.

## **IFRC Minimum standard commitments on protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies (2018)**

The minimum standards aim to ensure that the emergency programming of IFRC and National Societies provides dignity, access, participation and safety for all people affected by disasters and crises. They provide practical guidance on how to mainstream these four principles in all sectors, based on a consideration of gender, age, disability and other diversity factors. The second edition of the minimum standards includes a stronger focus on sexual and gender-based violence.

## **IFRC Secretariat Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2018)**

The humanitarian sector has also been responsible for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of beneficiaries. As part of its obligation to respect and protect vulnerable people at risk and commitment to zero tolerance on SEA by IFRC personnel, the IFRC adopted this policy to further strengthen the existing Code of Conduct and other policies applicable to SEA prevention and response. The Policy is also intended to be used as guidance for National Societies in the development of their own SEA policies.



# What are we doing?

## Training

The IFRC has produced a **Protection, Gender and Inclusion Training Catalogue** which

conveniently compiles the various training resources available within the RCRC Movement on approaches and specific topics. Among these include:

- ▶ Seven Moves: Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies.
- ▶ Protection, Gender, Inclusion and Disaster Law Module.
- ▶ Joint Action for Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence Training.
- ▶ Human Trafficking in the Context of Migration.

Additionally, the **Climate Training Kit module on Inclusion and Climate** is designed to give Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies a better understanding about the relationship between gender, marginalized groups and climate change that generates different vulnerabilities in society. It discusses tools to address these different vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities.



## Case studies

The following provides some case studies on how some National Societies have been addressing gender issues in disaster-related contexts.

- ▶ Australian Red Cross, *Gender and Climate Change Guidance Note* (2014).
- ▶ IFRC et al., *Unseen, Unheard Gender-Based Violence in Disasters – Asia-Pacific Case Studies* (2016).
- ▶ IFRC and Shrestha, *Nepal Country Case Study: Effective Law and Policy on Gender Equality and Protection from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Disasters* (2017).
- ▶ IFRC, *The Responsibility to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Disasters and Crises* (2018).



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IFRC Strategy 2030 (2019) <<https://future-rcrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/S2030-EN.pdf>>.

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