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### GUIDANCE NOTE

A woman whistles to call the wind as she separates grain from chaff near the town of Kotido in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda. Traditional farming methods are employed in this part of Uganda where food security is very much an issue, especially during the dry season. The URCS food security program is helping the local population adapt to a sedentary way of life, to deal with the effects of climate change in the area, and to maximise the food yield from their meagre resources.

# Gender and Climate Change

This guidance note outlines how climate change can impact men and women differently and identifies important ways in which gender roles can strengthen men's and women's capacity to adapt to changing climate-related risks. As gender equality is an ongoing commitment of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the note proposes steps for helping Red Cross Red Crescent colleagues to be climate-smart

and gender sensitive in their programming.

This resource can be used as a tool during gender training, as an information sheet for staff and volunteers, to help National Societies inform policy dialogues about climate change, and as part of education activities in National Societies.

### Gender roles can shape vulnerability to climate change

Climate change is a global problem with local impacts. Climate change is already making some hazards such as heat waves, heavy rainfall and storm surges more frequent and severe. Not only are patterns of extreme weather events changing, long term averages in rainfall, sea level and temperature are shifting as well. When these changes intersect with with factors that increase vulnerability and exposure, such as environmental degradation and people living along coastlines, the likelihood of disasters increases, especially for the world's poor (IPCC, 2012).



Kiribati, May 2013, Eita village, Atanga station. Mathew Matang, 55. 5 children (2 boys, 3 girls). He has been living on this land for more than 30 years. He owns a car workshop and stocks all the old car behind his workshop. For now several years the water is coming in land and the cars are polluting the water. The well he had in his backyard was also contaminated by sea water, he uses it now as a septic tank.

These risks are set to increase into the future and have the potential to limit the effectiveness of development efforts. Impacts may include coastal erosion, food insecurity, increased flooding, enhanced prevalence of diseases, dwindling water resources and loss of biodiversity, including fisheries (IPCC, 2014).

Vulnerability to climate change is socially differentiated; that is, the causes of women and men's vulnerability to climate change are many and varied (see Boxes 1 & 2). Gender intersects with social, cultural and economic inequalities to create this vulnerability. In many parts of the world, women's unequal access to resources, education, legal protection,

decision-making and power make them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, lower levels of education and literacy of some women can limit their ability to access important information and support in order to prepare for disasters or adapt to longer-term climate change.

## A closer look at gender and climate change

### Examples of differential vulnerability

#### Women and girls

In their multiple roles as food producers and providers, as guardians of health, and as caregivers, climate related hazards such as drought and erratic rainfall can further burden women.

Girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school in times of stress. As climate change may increase women's work loads, girls may be withdrawn from school in order to carry out extra household tasks. A lack of education can further intensify their long term vulnerability.

Cultural stigmas in some places can mean that women are not taught life saving skills like how to swim and climb trees. This can leave women more vulnerable during a flood as these survival skills are traditionally only taught to men. More floods due to climate change may mean even higher fatalities of women and girls unless this gender sensitive vulnerability is addressed.

Violence from intimate partners and male family members can escalate during emergencies. This tends to increase as the crisis worsens, and men have lost their jobs and status – particularly in communities with traditional gender roles, and where family violence is normalised.

As natural disasters become more frequent, the number of women in displacement camps may increase. Women in such camps, especially women living alone, are vulnerable to sexual violence.

Limited access to and understanding of information and influence on decision making processes limit the capacity of women to prepare and respond to adverse impacts of climate change. Women and girls are at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies due to sexual assault in times of emergency. Lack of health infrastructure can mean they can't access adequate medical treatment or reproductive health options.

#### Men and boys

As agricultural activities such as farming and fishing become more difficult due to climate change in some places, men may have to move away from home and into cities to find work.

Notions of masculinity can compel men and boys to take more risks and as a result, men's mortality in times of disaster is highest during an event.

Men are less likely than women to seek out help and change habits. Because of the high uncertainties involved in climate change, reducing vulnerability requires experimenting with new strategies and those unwilling to change response to new information will be less successful in adaptation.

Men may not have knowledge of accurate or current information on climate change impacts in 'domestic' arenas, such as availability of drinking water or quality of crops being used for cooking. There may be social barriers in place for men to collect and update this information. Limited access to such information can impact the quality of decision making and planning, and results in less appropriate programs for the community.

As natural disasters become more frequent, communities may experience repeated temporary evacuations. In periods of evacuation or crises, many of the social norms guiding behaviour are broken and there is an increase in stress, fear and frustration. Men often exhibit an increase in violent or risk taking behaviour which impacts upon those around them.



Heavy rainfall and “dzud” events are projected to increase in Mongolia due to climate change.

## The Resilience of Women

While it is evident that some women will be more vulnerable to climate change, it is also important to note that women are key actors in implementing positive change. Experience shows us that when equipped with the proper resources, women have the power to help their families and entire communities prepare for disasters and the negative impacts of climate change. Women have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used to address the implications of climate change. The skills, experience, and capacities of women need to be harnessed alongside those of men by those implementing ‘climate smart’ disaster risk reduction programs.

Of course men can also be champions for gender equality and promote the inclusion of women in key decision-making processes. Male champions

of gender equality work across many sectors to promote behavioural change (DFAT).

*Remember: It is important to consider that women are not a homogenous group; marital status, age and economic status can influence their particular needs and interests (IFRC 2003).*

## Minimum standards for local climate-smart and gender sensitive disaster risk reduction

Programs that include gender respond better to men and women’s needs – climate smart programs are no different. Such programs can recognize the differential impacts of climate change on men and women, identify the issues and structures that can result in women’s disempowerment and transform disadvantage.

On the following page are some suggestions, including examples, for how you might consider gender while making your programmes more ‘climate smart’ at community and National Society levels. The climate smart activities come from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre’s ‘Minimum standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction’<sup>1</sup>. For more specific guidance on gender analysis and programming please refer to the Australian Red Cross gender guidance note series and the other valuable references listed below.

## Climate smart communities

'Climate smart' activity	Examples of gender sensitive approaches
<p><b>Community is aware of changes in weather patterns</b>, and recognizes that some weather-related risks in the future are likely to be different from the past.</p>	<p>Women and men are asked to reflect on changes they may be observing and how these changes may be positive or negative.</p> <p>Raise awareness in communities on how a changing climate may affect men and women's livelihoods in the short, medium and long-term.</p>
<p><b>Community receives and understands locally available weather information, and households know appropriate actions to take</b> when inclement weather is approaching.</p>	<p>Consider how men and women, boys and girls, receive and understand weather information and ensure that all have knowledge of what actions they can take to prepare based on this information.</p>
<p>In places where credible seasonal forecasts are available<sup>2</sup> the <b>community has a reliable relationship with an organisation that can help access and make use of the forecast.</b></p>	<p>Encourage female staff from meteorological offices and government departments to join in community trainings – women often feel more comfortable talking to women.</p> <p>Enable equal distribution of information through identifying gender appropriate channels.</p> <p>Include men <i>and</i> women in climate field schools so that both men and women know how to apply seasonal forecast information to their needs and contexts.</p>
<p><b>Community carries out 'vulnerability and risk assessments'</b> that note observed changes in weather, seasonality and hazard patterns <b>and uses the information to develop local action plans.</b></p>	<p>Understanding gendered divisions of labour (eg. who collects water, who is responsible for preparing communities, who manages money, who makes decisions, who manages food and water, who provides care for the sick) helps to understand various challenges faced by men and women in communities. It can then help determine who has knowledge of various changes occurring in their environment, the impacts of these and solutions to them.</p> <p>Encourage men and women to be meaningfully involved in decision making processes.</p>
<p><b>Community monitors and evaluates approaches to disaster risk reduction and learns</b> from experience in order to adjust plans to adapt to climate variability and change.</p>	<p>Collect gender disaggregated data during monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Use this time to reflect on whether the various needs, knowledge and capacities of men and women have been harnessed in implementation.</p>
<p><b>Community advocates for its adaptation needs</b> towards appropriate climate-related authorities and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Both women and men have the opportunity to share their challenges and needs with climate related stakeholders.</p>

*Remember: Impacts of climate change will vary across regions, nations, provinces and locally and therefore impact communities, including men and women, boys and girls, differently. Local contexts must be taken into consideration when considering the implications of climate change and solutions to adapt to the changes.*

## Different responsibilities – different knowledge – different observations

Solomon Islands and Vanuatu Red Cross Societies undertake vulnerability and capacity assessments and planning with remote communities to work towards increasing community resilience to disasters and climate change. Focus group discussions in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu revealed that community members noticed changes occurring in their environment that may have linkages with climate change. In separate groups, men and women noticed different changes according to their responsibilities in the community. For example, to adapt to the increasing issues linked to climate change, the community has introduced new methods of gardening such as the basket gardens, or raising gardens to avoid contact with sea water.



Solomon Islands, Ghatere village, Kolombranga Island. Pepilyn Silas. To adapt to the increasing issues linked to climate change, the community has introduced new methods of gardening such as the basket gardens, or just by rising up the gardens to avoid them to be in contact with the sea water.

*Remember: Working with an economically and socially representative cross section of affected men and women is important for effective targeting, as is their participation in decision making processes (IFRC 2003).*

## Climate Smart National Societies

'Climate smart' activity	Examples of gender sensitive approaches
<p>Within the National Society, <b>knowledge on changing climate risks is used to adjust work plans</b> and strategies.</p>	<p>When planning, consider the implications of climate change for various groups in society, including men and boys, women and girls.</p>
<p><b>A core group of staff and volunteers can facilitate dialogue</b> on how natural climate variability and climate change affects the National Society's work – and can explain the basic causes, trends, projections and impacts to communities.</p>	<p>Recruit men and women as staff and volunteers. Gender mainstreaming responsibilities should be included in the position descriptions of all team members.</p> <p>Develop an understanding of gender specific aspects of climate change - the IFRC gender training pack provides useful case studies to build upon.</p> <p>Consider using an experienced gender trainer to develop a tailored program/ or to modify existing training materials or to present a session at climate change training events.</p>
<p><b>National Society can guide communities on how to consider seasonal forecast and climate risk information in their community action plans</b> and on how to define 'Early Actions' to be triggered by 'Early Warning' signals.</p>	<p>Ensure that women and men's access to and understanding of early warning information is considered – remember that women are often more risk averse than men and may take action sooner rather than later in an impending disaster.</p> <p>Ensure that both women and men are linked to disaster preparedness measures that are associated with these early warnings.</p>
<p><b>National Society is able to document community-level climate-smart interventions</b> to influence policy and practice, where appropriate.</p>	<p>When documenting the humanitarian implications of climate change for reports, ensure participation and representation of both men and women. In addition, consider the implications of climate change for various groups in society, including men and boys, women and girls.</p>
<p><b>National Society makes use of dialogue opportunities</b> (e.g. meetings, national days for actions, conferences) to raise awareness of local adaptation needs, to shape local and national policies, and to ensure resource allocation reaches the most vulnerable people.</p>	<p>You can use information collected about gender specific impacts to highlight the humanitarian consequences of climate change. Remember to not only highlight men and women's vulnerabilities – but also their capacities to adapt.</p> <p>Women can and should be involved in humanitarian diplomacy surrounding climate change to ensure the needs and concerns of both women and men are met.</p> <p>In discussions with agencies responsible for creation and distribution of early warnings consider the different needs and accessibility of men and women in relation to the improvement of weather and climate information formats/communication.</p>



In the Sahel region the rainy season starts towards the end of the summer. Often the ground is so dry that it can't absorb the water and local flooding occur. Climate change has made the rains erratic and farming and life in general is often plagued by too little or too much rain.

## Understanding climate impacts on men and women through games

Kenya is experiencing more extreme flooding as well as drought, sometimes in the same district or at the same time in different parts of the country. The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre was involved in the design of a game that staff and volunteers of Kenya Red Cross could use to open conversations about gender implications of climate change with rural farming communities. The Kenya Red Cross has trained facilitators to use this game to deepen understanding within affected communities about climate risk strategies to cope with the changing weather patterns affecting agriculture. The game also opens up deep discussion about the implications of the additional pressures driven by climate change for women and girls vs. men and boys. The game enables discussion of a challenging topic in a non-challenging environment. It also allows women and men to understand each other's situations better.

**More information [climatecentre.org/site/games](https://climatecentre.org/site/games)**





This Pakistani family sit in front of the remains of their house after severe floods.

## Management and training

### RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the program coordinator and/or the team leader's responsibility to report on and plan for gender sensitive strategies and develop an understanding of gender specific aspects of climate change. Gender mainstreaming responsibilities should be included in the position descriptions of all team members.

### TOOLS

Develop easy-to-use and relevant tools to support staff and volunteers. Adapt and use existing tools, and ensure information collection tools and reporting formats are always gender sensitive.

### TRAINING

Develop culturally appropriate gender training programs for staff and local communities. Use the IFRC *Training Pack on Gender Issues* and other suitable tools (see Resources).

Ensure community-based emergency preparedness projects - such as disaster training and education programs – include both women and men and address their different needs and concerns.

Consider using an experienced gender trainer to develop a tailored program/ or to modify existing materials.

### REPORTING

Make information collection tools and reporting formats gender sensitive. Gender disaggregated data should be collected and incorporated into all phases of disaster management program, from the initial vulnerability and capacity assessment to planning, implementation and evaluation.

### RECRUITMENT

Recruit men and women as staff and volunteers. Gender sensitive recruitment should be part of an overall strategy – not only to ensure gender balance – but also so that all new staff and volunteers have an understanding of, and sensitivity to, gender and climate change. This may involve holding community forums to explain why both men and women are needed for programs, and recruiting in alternative ways, i.e. hiring people without literacy skills (in communities these are typically women) if the role doesn't require literacy.



## References & further guidance

### Footnotes

1. The Minimum Standards were developed as a practical checklist to help practitioners ensure their risk reduction efforts are climate smart and contribute to climate change adaptation, meaning that these efforts consider the future risk patterns induced by a changing climate, often including rising uncertainties. The Minimum Standards are not idealised solutions, but rather practical approaches to implement DRR activities in a way that is achievable.
2. Availability of skilled *seasonal* forecasts depends on *how and where in the world* El Niño and La Niña events influence regional weather patterns

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