

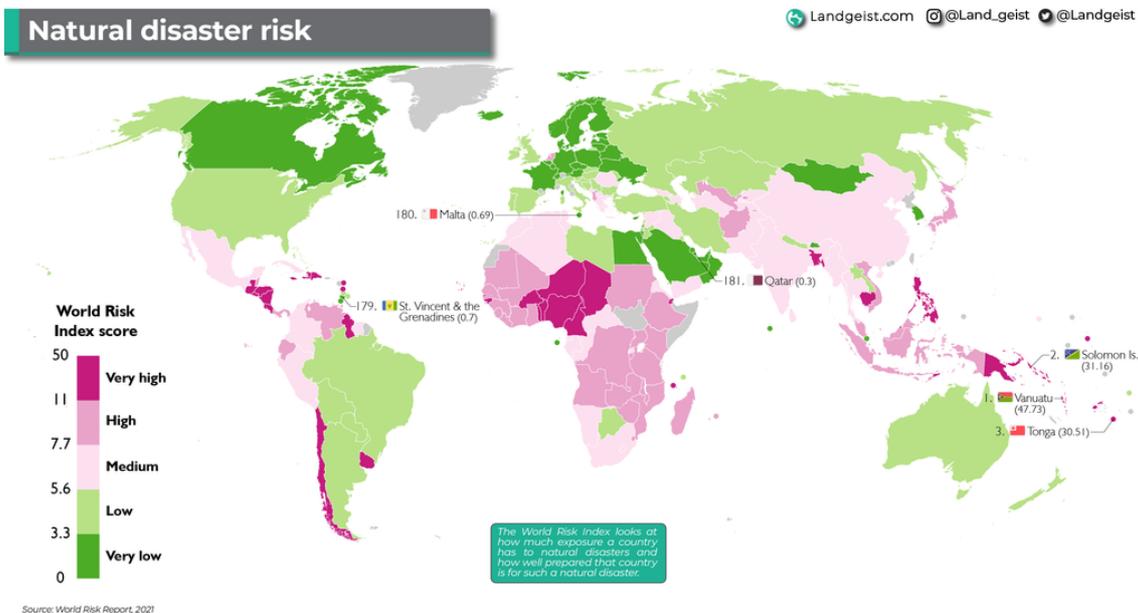
Disaster and Crisis in Tourism: Building resilience with a gender focus

Disasters, including pandemics, comprise one of the biggest threats to the tourist industry. Flights are cancelled, transportation is paralysed, and tourist attractions may be damaged. The economy also suffers, especially in regions that depend heavily on tourism. Women running local business within the tourism supply chain and those within the poorly paid informal sector, are at particular risk. Women are also often on the frontline of crises, serving as vital first responders, rebuilders and peacebuilders in their communities. As the importance of this is often overlooked in policy and practice, this webinar aims to redress this discrepancy.

Risk and crisis management is an important component of tourism and hospitality management, practised at destination level by public sector agencies, communities, larger enterprises and individual businesses.

Many of the policies and procedures for disaster management in tourism do not take a gender perspective, and do not include women in the formulation and leadership of disaster responses. This webinar aims to redress this balance and promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction within the tourism sector.

The incidence of natural disasters is on the increase, adversely affecting many major tourist destinations worldwide:



More recently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry has suffered a huge downturn, with 1 billion fewer international tourist arrivals in 2021 and a loss of around US\$1.0 trillion in total export revenues from international tourism.

The risks that various disasters and crises bring to tourism destinations and businesses are extremely varied. For instance, The UNWTO (2011) places tourism crises into five categories: environmental; societal and political; health-related; technological; economic. Many of these categories are interconnected, but for the purpose of this webinar, the focus is primarily on natural disasters and climate change – and how approaching these issues with a gender focus will help to maximise effectiveness.

Why we need to put gender equality at the core of disaster risk reduction, recovery and resilience (DRR)

Disasters worsen pre-existing gender inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination against many groups of women. There is a direct relationship between women's risk of being killed during disasters and their socio-economic status. As the majority of women are in low wage, low-status jobs, they are less likely to be able to prepare for and recover from disasters such as floods and hurricanes. Tourism businesses and governments have a key role in integrating them into disaster preparedness.

In addition, women's vulnerability to disasters is exacerbated by the way they receive early warning information and the restrictions to their mobility. As the traditional role of women often includes responsibility for food security of the family, education of children, healthcare, etc they bear the brunt of dealing with the crisis at personal and community level.

Actions for addressing this by mainstreaming gender into disaster prevention, response and recovery are given below in this factsheet.

There are more fatalities among women and girls in major natural disasters:

2014 Solomon Islands Flash Floods **96%** of those impacted 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami **70-80%** of fatalities

2008 Myanmar Cyclone Naris **61%** of fatalities 1991 Cyclone in Bangladesh **91%** of fatalities

(Source: UNDP Gender and Recovery Toolkit pp.89)

Mainstreaming Gender into Disaster Risk Reduction: Guidance and Policy Frameworks

What frameworks are available to use?

Hyogo Framework for Action, Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters 2005 – 2015 (HFA) states that a gender perspective should be integrated into all DRR policies, plans and decision-making processes.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 succeeded this in 2015 and provides UN Member States with concrete actions to protect development gains from the risk of disaster.

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

Gender is mainstreamed into both these frameworks - the Sendai in particular - emphasising the need for women's participation in all aspects of DRR from initial risk assessment through to access to resources, planning and programming. It recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders. In this respect, tourism actors at international, national and local level can play an important role in disaster risk reduction. The importance of gender mainstreaming to meet the above priorities is illustrated in the examples of actions and best practice given in case studies and ideas for prevention and action, within this factsheet.

Recommended Actions for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in the Tourism Industry

So much can be done to ensure that natural hazards do not turn into disasters, by reducing risks and strengthening community resilience. Many destinations already have plans in place to ensure rapid responses, to restore their tourism sectors to normal operations. It is increasingly common for destination stakeholders – both public and private – to formulate policies and strategies to avoid such risks and counter any crises that occur. In many places, however, this has not been given due consideration, and the near impacts of climate change are not well socialised in many parts of the world. Tourism actors can play an important part in improving efforts and ensuring that policies and practices are gender sensitive.

The Three Elements of DRR are Prevention, Response and Recovery



1: PREVENTION PHASE (Pre-Crisis Strategy)

Disaster management planning includes developing policies and courses of action to be taken in the event of a crisis. It is essential when planning for prevention that tourist businesses fully know their staff and their community, so that they can prioritise those most in need of help, when urgently required.

- **Assess and plan for disaster with the full participation of women** Ensure that women and vulnerable groups are included in planning events or consultations that will inform your strategies. This will add to the full picture of what is needed, especially at community level.
- **Gather and analyse sex-disaggregated data.** The importance of gathering gender disaggregated data in tourism planning and management has been underlined in previous Webinars 1 & 2. In times of disaster, this will lay a firm foundation for ensuring that planning, programming and interventions are gender sensitive.
- **Develop a disaster response strategy**, again with the full and effective participation of women. This will not only advance gender equality and women's empowerment but help to achieve your organisation's sustainability objectives. Include this strategy in internal policy and procedures. Ensure that women are fully included as both trainers and trainees.

- **Ensure women are included in key management and leadership roles.** This will ensure that issues relating to both women's needs and gender equality are identified and addressed. The importance of women's leadership and meaningful participation in humanitarian responses has been overlooked, leading to renewed calls for women to be included in decision-making and for the needs and priorities of diverse groups to be included in responses.
- **Ensure that women and girls have equal access to early warning information in your area of tourist operations.** Women may often not be aware of procedures to follow in the event of a disaster, particularly relating to evacuation. They may also be responsible for elderly family members, those who are mentally or physically challenged – where in the event of disaster their ability to survive or escape may be limited. Access for women to early warning sources therefore increases the chance of survival for whole families and communities.

2: RESPONSE PHASE (Immediate Post-Crisis)

The key factors in the early stages are a rapid and coordinated response of the destination tourism authorities and operators, particularly with respect to assessing the severity of the crisis and ensuring the safety of tourists and residents. Actions are then required to minimise the medium-to longer-term consequences and facilitate recovery from the situation. In case of disaster, tourist organisations will be responsible for the safety of its employees and its tourist clients. Gender responsive actions in the aftermath of a disaster may include:

- **Use of hotels as a place of sanctuary and providers of help** for those vulnerable groups most affected by the disaster, including women and girls. There are numerous inspirational accounts of this e.g. providing community kitchen facilities.
- **Emergency supplies** for those in immediate need should include female specific items such as sanitary items, female underwear and supplies for pregnant or lactating mothers.
- **Safety and Security** of women and girls is paramount as gender-based violence increases in the aftermath of a disaster. Safe access to toilets, bathing areas and meeting hygiene needs should be secured from the onset.
- **Evacuation** policies and procedures should allow for the additional vulnerability of women and girls, considering the above risks and the additional risks posed during the transportation phase for sexual abuse and trafficking.
- **Communications** should be equally accessible to all. Women may have lower literacy rates due to lack of educational opportunity. Access to the internet and other communication tools may also reduce their access to information. Women may have lack of mobility due to reduced physical ability or cultural restrictions and may therefore miss out on information being passed on by word of mouth in the community. Language barriers must also be considered, although this is not particularly gendered.

3: RECOVERY PHASE (Following Initial Crisis Stage)

This includes restoring infrastructure, facilities and services. In tourism this includes restoring tourist attractions and creating a coordinated marketing response. To fully mainstream gender into this phase we need to ensure that the needs of women and girls are included. There is a unique opportunity following disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic to rebuild global tourism in a more sustainable way, introducing policies that will alleviate over-dependence on tourism. Gender Equality should be at the centre of these recovery strategies.

- **Enable the affected women in the communities to have influence over decisions** that affect their lives and communities. This can be achieved by giving women access and voice in areas where they previously had none, such as managing livelihoods and crops or the design and delivery of infrastructures and services. Women's greater visible engagement can turn into increased respect and lead to leadership roles in the community.

- **Use recovery time as an opportunity to challenge traditional gender roles.** In the aftermath of a disaster, women may have access to capacity building or new livelihood opportunities outside of their previous traditional responsibilities.
- **Ensure that women have access to resources** by ensuring women's equitable access to and control over economic and financial resources during the recovery process. Microfinance services can play a major role in ensuring access to resources when disasters strike and considerably reduce women's vulnerability. In cultures where women traditionally adopt community management roles, it is important to give them space, resources and authority to develop and manage recovery initiatives.
- **Prevent and respond to gender-based violence.** Rates of gender-based violence (GBV) can be particularly high in fragile and crisis-affected recovery settings
- **Promote transformative livelihoods and economic recovery** and resilience to advance gender equality. Gender-responsive post-crisis economic recovery and resilience programmes ensure that women have equitable access to productive resources and viable employment opportunities.
- **Include Psychosocial Care** by addressing the needs of employees after the disaster. Also consider the needs of the wider community and support service provision for the most vulnerable, especially women and girls.

Post-crisis Recovery and rebuilding. The crisis may break the established mould of tourism, creating opportunities to develop new directions and market diversification. This is also an opportunity to strengthen women's leadership and ensure equal participation.

Best Practice Examples

Collaborative disaster response to the 2015 Nepalese earthquake

In 2015, an earthquake registering 7.6 on the Richter scale hit Nepal at the height of the trekking season, killing over 9,000 people and leaving 22,000 seriously injured. The 3 Sisters, a trekking company founded by women for women in Nepal, ensured safe recovery of their trekking teams from the mountain and contacted client's families to reassure them of their safety. They also arranged helicopter rescue of two trekkers stranded in the Himalayas. 3 Sisters coordinated their staff and trekking volunteers to distribute warm clothes and food and assisted with emergency school supplies and reconstruction. In the aftermath of this tragedy, the women worked closely with the army, government and other rescue services. To prepare for future disasters, 3 Sisters started a training program to provide women and girls with the skills and resources needed to respond effectively in emergencies. Specific financial budgets are also now set by the company to support such responses.

Turning disaster into an opportunity: The case of Wayanad, Kerala

Wayanad is a key destination in Kerala, known for its natural beauty and wildlife, where many women workers are employed in the homestay industry. Since 2018, climate change induced landslides and floods, and these coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a serious decline in the tourism industry. Thousands of women's jobs were lost in the area. In response, the District Tourism Promotion Council started an innovative new initiative involving the redeployment of 150 women employees from their previous jobs as cleaners in new roles running community kitchens or working in Covid First Line Treatment Centres. Another initiative was led by a local woman, who started operating tours exclusively for women travellers, employing primarily low-income women from the local area. In addition, women's fishing organisations have started up a chain of sea-food restaurants. These women-led initiatives provide inspiring examples of how women's jobs and livelihoods can be protected in the face of the adverse effects of both climate change and COVID 19.