

# GENDER ISSUE GUIDE

GENDER RESPONSIVE RISK REDUCTION  
AND REHABILITATION



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AND REHABILITATION**

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## **Gender Issue Guide: A Gender Responsive Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation**

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Left - Aerial view of the residential area of the suburb of Milton during the great Brisbane Flood of 2011. © Shutterstock.

Right - People take photographs at Bangkok's Chinatown during the worst flooding on October 31, 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand.

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Heavy flooding from monsoon rain and tide from sea in Samutprakarn near Bangkok on November 8, 2009 in Samutprakarn, Thailand. © Shutterstock



## Background: Natural and human-made disasters

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***Cities experience large and small scale disasters that can pose great challenges to sustainable development, for natural and human-made disasters<sup>1</sup> have enormous economic, social and political impacts on human lives. "Cities, where half of humanity currently resides and much of the world's assets are concentrated, are fast becoming the locus for much of [the] destruction and loss from disasters."<sup>2</sup> These risks will increase as urban populations continue to grow.***

The greatest vulnerability to natural and human-made disasters is experienced by those who live in urban informal settlements for they have the least assets to cope with disasters. At the individual level disaster impacts are further differentiated by gender, age and ability; with poor women, children, the elderly and disabled being the most vulnerable urban dwellers (UN-Habitat 2007).<sup>3</sup>

The scale of human losses and suffering experienced is, moreover, determined by the nature and processes of urban development and urban governance. For example, the vulnerability of cities to the effects of natural and human-made disasters is often due to the growth and location of cities along coastal areas; the modification of the natural environment through human actions; the expansion of settlements within cities to hazard prone locations; and the failure of urban authorities to regulate land use building and planning strategies (UN-Habitat 2007)<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, the effects of disaster risks and impacts can be reduced and or prevented through equitable and sustainable human settlement planning, management of risk reduction and strengthening local resilience through access to economic, social, political and physical assets.

1 Natural disasters are inclusive of earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, landslides, floods, volcanic eruptions and wind storms. Man-made disasters are associated with explosions and chemical releases. Further, human actions such as construction of human settlement on flood prone areas or on slopes of active volcanoes exacerbate human-made hazards (UN-Habitat 2007).

2 UN-Habitat, 2007, *Global Report on Human Settlements: Enhancing urban safety and security*. Earthscan, UK. Page 163

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

Disasters can present opportunities for transformative change to begin and advance more quickly because the vulnerabilities that emerge as a result of crisis or disaster are clearer and consensus may be obtained more quickly to mitigate vulnerabilities. Population displacements as a result of disasters further create new settlements that present opportunities for planning how municipalities or cities will be managed and planned to cope, in equitable ways, with population changes.

Greater understanding to inform and address the underlying vulnerabilities of urban areas, and their urban inhabitants to disaster risks is therefore very much required.

This issue guide focuses attention on Urban Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation in order to broadly outline the where and how of gender responsive interventions to strengthen planned and future actions to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.



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