An addendum to the UNDRR Gender Action Plan:

Strengthening the Inclusion of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Disaster Risk Reduction

August 2025

Background and purpose

This addendum to the Gender Action Plan (GAP) responds to the findings of the global conference Inclusive by Design: Considering Disaster Risk Reduction for Gender and Sexual Minorities, held on 11 June 2025. The conference was convened to examine the continued exclusion of gender and sexual minorities (GSM) from formal disaster governance systems and to advance practical recommendations for inclusive risk reduction. Participants included researchers, practitioners, community leaders and policy representatives from across regions and disciplines.

The conference affirmed that gender-responsive disaster risk reduction must explicitly consider the realities of gender and sexual minorities. Legal exclusion, criminalisation, stigma, and invisibility in data collection and response planning remain widespread. Addressing these barriers is essential to realising the GAP's commitment to intersectional gender equality in disaster risk reduction and to leaving no one behind, while complementing broader efforts to address exclusion and inequality affecting other marginalised groups in disaster contexts..

This addendum is intended to complement, not replace or override, the existing Gender Action Plan. It strengthens the GAP by explicitly recognising that gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and sex characteristics are relevant factors in shaping disaster risk, access to assistance, and the ability to participate in recovery and governance. It seeks to ensure that disaster risk reduction frameworks reflect and respond to the full diversity of gendered experiences.

This addendum outlines key framing considerations and proposed actions to more fully integrate GSM inclusion within existing objectives and implementation approaches under the GAP.

Framing considerations

Understanding of gender
The GAP recognises gender as a dynamic concept shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This understanding must be further expanded to explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. This ensures that policies and practices reflect the lived experiences and needs of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and others whose identities may not be reflected in binary gender and sexuality-based categories.

Intersectionality and structural inequality

Disaster risk is shaped not only by gender, but also by its intersections with other factors such as legal status, ethnicity, disability, and access to healthcare. For GSM communities, risks are often heightened by structural exclusion, criminalisation, lack of legal recognition, and limited access to protection mechanisms during crises. These patterns of marginalisation are shaped by underlying power relations, including those rooted in colonial legacies and global inequalities. The GAP must take a holistic approach to intersectionality by including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, while also identifying GSM-responsive means of implementation and capacity building in GSM communities. This approach should recognise diverse gender constructions found within global majority communities, many of whom acknowledge more than two genders.

Non-traditional families and care networks

Disaster response systems frequently assume nuclear or legally recognised family structures. This can leave GSM individuals, particularly those estranged from family or relying on chosen families, without access to emergency shelter, aid, or registration mechanisms. Inclusion efforts must therefore account for informal and culturally specific support structures.

Participation and leadership

GSM-led organisations are often treated as beneficiaries rather than partners. Their leadership in designing, implementing and monitoring disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies must be formally recognised and funded. Participatory mechanisms should explicitly include gender and sexual minorities as distinct and relevant stakeholders, while recognising and considering the overlap GSM individuals may have with other groups, such as GSM people with disabilities.

Community-led data and knowledge

Inclusive DRR requires a shift from extractive research models, where information is collected from communities without their input or benefit, to participatory and community-led data practices. These should be grounded in epistemic justice, meaning that those most affected by disaster risk are recognised as knowledge holders and are actively involved in shaping how data is gathered and used. For GSM individuals, this means being directly involved in defining risk, framing vulnerability, and setting priorities for resilience. It also includes recognition of oral history, storytelling, and Indigenous knowledge production as valid and valuable forms of understanding and communicating risk.

Cultural values and pathways to inclusion

Efforts to strengthen the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in disaster risk reduction must also engage with diverse cultural values and social norms. While the GAP promotes universal commitments to equality and non-discrimination, it also recognises that pathways to inclusion may vary across cultural and regional

contexts. Navigating these differences requires dialogue, trust-building, and context-sensitive approaches that do not impose external frameworks, but instead support communities in identifying inclusive practices grounded in their own traditions and belief systems. Inclusion cannot be achieved through a single model, and respect for cultural complexity must be part of any effort to advance equity in disaster contexts.

Actions

The following recommended actions build on the existing GAP by highlighting areas where greater inclusion of gender and sexual minorities is needed to achieve truly intersectional and rights-based disaster risk reduction. These actions do not represent a new framework but serve to strengthen current commitments by addressing specific barriers faced by gender and sexual minorities.

5.10 Recommended gender equality actions under Key Objective 4 and cross-cutting objectives: Strengthening inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in disaster risk governance

Action 34. Recognise and integrate diverse care and support structures, including chosen families and informal care networks, within emergency planning and response systems.

For example:
- Adapt registration, shelter, and aid allocation protocols to reflect non-traditional household arrangements, particularly in contexts where GSM individuals may be estranged from biological families.
- Engage community organisations representing gender and sexual minorities to identify locally relevant caregiving structures, ensure recognition in emergency assistance procedures, and partner with them to provide such services where possible as trusted leaders in their community.

Action 35. Ensure participatory and community-led data practices that respect anonymity, dignity, and self-identification, particularly for marginalised or criminalised groups.

In alignment with GAP Priority Areas A.4, A.6, and A.7, this action demands community-governed, context-sensitive data approaches that safeguard the dignity, safety, and self-determination of gender-diverse people. Climate data and media systems have historically scapegoated or invisibilised GSM communities, particularly during disasters. This action affirms the right of communities to shape how they are represented and to reject narratives and metrics that perpetuate harm. It also affirms the principle of epistemic justice: that knowledge production must be participatory, protective, and grounded in lived realities.

For example:
- Replace extractive or externally driven research methods with participatory approaches that allow gender and sexual minority groups to define the terms, scope, and purpose of data collection.
- Develop safeguards for sensitive information, ensuring that intersectional data collection protects rather than exposes individuals in high-risk environments and is sensitive to local cultural values and contexts.

Action 36. Address intersecting structural inequalities that compound risk for gender and sexual minorities, including legal exclusion, poverty, healthcare access, and criminalisation.

For example:
- Promote legal and policy reforms that decriminalise GSM identities and protect individuals from discrimination and violence in disaster and crisis contexts.
- Integrate structural drivers of exclusion into risk assessments and preparedness strategies, especially in areas with histories of persecution or surveillance.
- Co-create disaster-responsive social protection programmes with GSM organisations to promote economic security.
- Establish clear grievance and accountability mechanisms that GSM individuals can safely access when facing discrimination or violence in humanitarian settings.
- Remove legal and administrative barriers that prevent GSM individuals from accessing aid due to lack of recognised identification.
- Ensure that emergency and temporary documentation processes are inclusive of diverse gender identities and do not reinforce binary legal categories.

Action 37. Establish formal roles for gender and sexual minority-led organisations within DRR governance frameworks and ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making.

For example:
- Include GSM organisations as recognised stakeholders in national and sub-national DRR platforms and coordination mechanisms.
- Allocate flexible, multi-year funding to support their leadership, research, and implementation efforts in disaster preparedness and resilience-building activities.

Action 38. Promote inclusive and decolonial approaches

Understood as efforts to centre knowledge systems and values that have been historically marginalised by colonial and Western-dominated governance, and to

ensure respect for diverse understandings of gender and sexuality beyond Western normative frameworks

For example:
- Validate and incorporate culturally grounded knowledge systems in DRR strategies, including those that reflect local and Indigenous conceptions of identity.
- Support dialogue across regions and communities to build solidarity and knowledge exchange while resisting the imposition of dominant identity categories.

Action 39. Develop inclusive public communication strategies and early warning systems that reflect the lived realities of gender and sexual minorities.

For example:
- Ensure risk communications are accessible to GSM individuals in remote, rural, or offline contexts, and that messages are free from gendered or heteronormative assumptions.
- Co-create public messaging with GSM communities, especially those who are gender diverse, to enhance uptake, trust, and reach.

Action 40. Promote institutional transformation by creating dedicated roles or focal points for GSM inclusion within DRR institutions.

For example:
- Develop capacity-building programmes for DRR personnel on inclusive practice, care-centred planning, and justice-based resilience frameworks.
- Pilot inclusive planning tools that reframe vulnerability around systemic exclusion rather than individual characteristics, embedding care, justice, and solidarity at the centre of DRR strategies.

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