ZONTA INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 23
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

ZONTA SAYS NOW

To gender equality and climate action

# Zonta Says NOW News - AUGUST 2021



## How climate resilient are we?

Did you know that these microscopic water bears (pictured) are regarded as the toughest animals on Earth? They can survive extreme heat, cold, dryness, pressure, and radiation. They epitomize resilience - on eight legs!

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. In these trying times, we will need to find ways to build resilience for the planet and ourselves.

The last few weeks have been tough on many fronts: heatwaves in Canada, fires in Greece, floods in Europe and China – and record-breaking rains, floods, and storms in much of Australia.

Sadly, the Australian Climate Bill was not adopted, and today's UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report paints a dire picture of the future.

On top of all this, the ongoing pandemic causes much uncertainty as states go in and out of lockdown overnight.

However, there is light among this darkness! This edition will focus on the human 'water bears' doing great work around the world to build resilience and create a more sustainable, gender-equal future – and share some joy along the way.

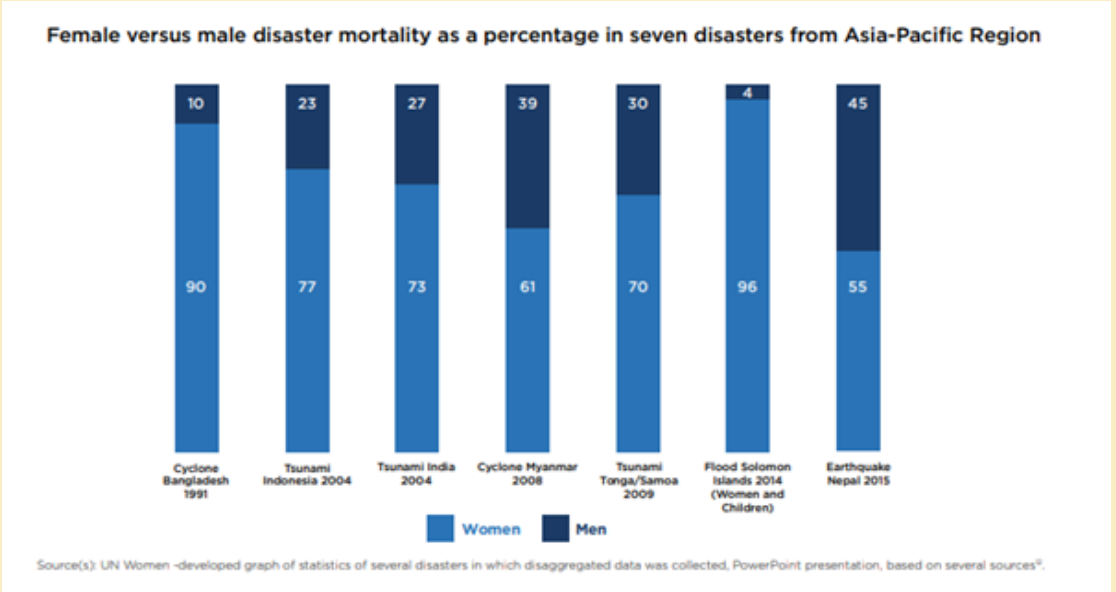
Keep smiling, and let's learn how to be stronger together!

***Carole***
Carole Theobald
District 23 Futurist/Leadership Coordinator



## Gender, disasters, mortality and displacement

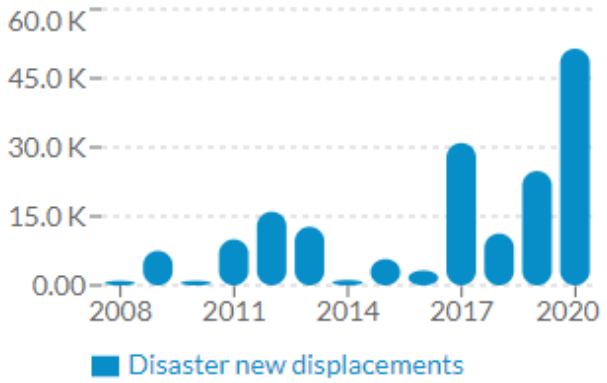
While disasters do not discriminate, their impact does – especially in countries where there is gender inequality. The graph below shows data from seven disasters in Asia. When there are similar economic and social rights for both sexes, the same number of men and women die. When there is more gender inequality, women come off worst.

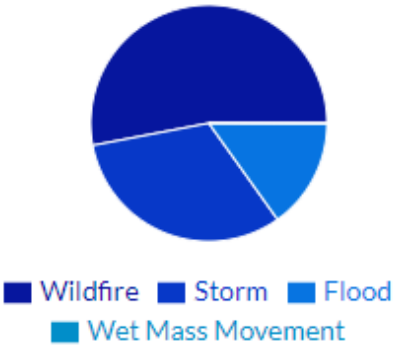



Intense weather events also cause people to be displaced within their own country. For example, in Bangladesh, around 1.2 million people are expected to be displaced every year due to sudden on-set climate events.

However, have a look at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's database that shows the number of people displaced, the number of events and the type of climate event that caused the displacement.

We tend to think of displacement happening in other countries. Using the database, we can see that, in Australia, since 2008, over 176,000 people have been displaced by 103 disaster events. A staggering 51,000 people were displaced in 2020. (See graph below). Is this a sign of things to come?




Would you know what to do in a disaster or how you could help others?

*Action: Learn more about your State's Emergency Management Plan and what happens at a local level.*



## EmPowering women to be climate resilient

The UNs EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies program builds skills and leadership so women can have active roles in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. EmPower operates in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Vietnam, among the top ten most at-risk countries to climate change and disaster. Here are some examples showing what EmPower does.

*Disaster response*

In Bangladesh, when super cyclone "Amphan" ravaged the country in May, 12,078 cyclone shelters were set up along the coast of Bangladesh, and 2.4 million people were evacuated to them. Prerona was one of 56 women's organisations that provided a 'gendered response'.

In the thick of the pandemic, this team of 15 women and 3 men went door-to-door, evacuating 150 people to cyclone shelters, distributing food packets and masks. Physical distancing was almost impossible in the shelters as 15-20 people were in each room.

Knowing the poorest and most vulnerable could not access affordable masks, the Prerona team mobilized women to make 42,500 masks and protective gear. They trained

women five at a time, maintaining physical distancing, learning new skills, and earning some income from the sale of protective gear.

Women in farming, fishing, agriculture, and small enterprises all lost their livelihoods. Now Prerona is distributing seeds to 125 women to grow crops and looking to purchase raw materials to make hand sanitiser, masks, and sanitary napkins that women could sell in their local markets.

The Prerona team is determined to stay engaged with emergency response interventions because they know their communities and bring their needs to the forefront of recovery efforts.

*Increasing resilience with renewable energy*

In Cambodia, 80% of women's livelihoods depend on agriculture and fishing to sell their wares at local markets. Due to recent droughts, there is insufficient water to store unsold fish, irrigate fields, or wash hands properly. The Covid pandemic has discouraged people from going to markets, leaving products unsold.

In Vietnam, 90% of poultry production is undertaken by smallholder farmers who are vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters, and unexpected shocks like the pandemic. Travel restrictions made it harder to sell chickens, chicken prices crashed, income fell, and unsold chickens still needed food and electricity. Meanwhile, electricity costs doubled.

In both of these countries, gender is being integrated into renewable energy policy. This makes it possible for decision-makers to build back better from the pandemic in a gender-equal, climate-resilient way.

Renewable energy makes it more affordable for very small businesses to install water purification plants, cold storage, refrigeration, irrigation and solar-powered chicken incubation and ventilation equipment.

Women are also becoming entrepreneurs selling the new technology, including biogas digesters fed by pig waste and solar green energy.

*Action: Be inspired by EmPower's first newsletter that highlights more of their activities and reports*.



## 2021 Risk Award acknowledges women's mangrove project

Mangroves play a key role in protecting coastal areas from flooding. With sea levels in parts of Vietnam expected to rise by nearly a metre in coming decades, planting mangroves is a way of reducing flooding and building resilience to climate change.

The Strong Roots, Strong Women project has won the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's 2021 Risk Award. The project empowers women to improve the resilience of their environment and community through planting mangrove trees. The 100,000 Euro

prize will set up a community-run mangrove nursery with the local Women's Union in Hai Duong commune.

It will have an income generation component and engage with local women through theatre about gender, flood preparedness, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

*Action: Be aware that 13 October is the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction.*




## Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD) Knowledge Hub

UN Women has a new online knowledge hub to help build women's resilience to disasters. It will provide a database of research, articles, and publications on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, organised into key topics. There is also a policy tracker to monitor countries' progress on putting in place gender-responsive disaster risk reduction legislation, policies, strategies, and plans.

With inspiring stories of women on the front line doing marvellous work and an online community of practitioners to support knowledge exchange, the knowledge hub is well poised to advance gender equality in disaster preparedness. The website is in the process of being developed, so some links aren't functioning yet.

The UN Women WRD Knowledge Hub also links to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and its PreventionWeb, which has daily posts on managing current disasters and related stories.

*Action: Put the UN Women WRD Knowledge Hub into your favourites so you can keep up to date with what is happening in the climate-resilience space.*



## How does Australia fare with disaster risk

A UN report on Disaster Risk Reduction in Australia 2020 contains a graph showing the proportion of losses attributable to particular types of disasters for each state and territory. For example, South Australia's main disaster is flooding, Tasmania is bushfires, Victoria is storms, and WA is cyclones. The responses to each of these disasters require different training and preparation.

*Figure 2. Losses by type of disaster and state and territory 1967–2013 (Handmer, et al., 2018)*




The same report (page 17) makes these points about gender and disaster preparedness:

*Alongside poverty, vulnerability is also determined by hierarchies of power determining access to services, information, employment opportunities, support and care. For example, bushfire awareness and preparedness training in southeast Australia are shaped by the societal perception of patriarchal gender roles and relations which creates disengagement among women, thus leading to a lack of bushfire preparedness (Eriksen, 2014).*

*Women are also disproportionately represented in poverty statistics (ACOS & UNSW Sydney, 2018), which is related to parenthood. Being a single parent has been identified to correlate with higher poverty – and, in 2016, 81.1 per cent of single-parent families*

*were led by mothers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Conversely, men can be more affected by posttraumatic stress disorders or other mental health issues caused by disasters due to a perception of masculinity that prevents them from accessing support, as was identified among firefighters involved in bushfires (Eriksen & Waitt, 2016).*

*Mental health impacts*

According to a recent study, Australians are three times more worried about climate change than Covid. Women, young adults, the well-off, and those in their middle years (aged 35 to 54) showed the highest levels of concern about climate change. The study warns of looming mental health disorders such as eco-anxiety, climate disaster-related post-traumatic stress disorder and future-orientated despair.

People were managing their climate worry by self-prescribing their own remedies, such as being in natural environments (67%) and taking positive climate action (83%), where possible.

Many said they strengthen their resilience through individual action (such as limiting their plastic use), joining community action (such as volunteering), or joining advocacy efforts to influence policy and raise awareness.

The Australian government's lack of effective climate change policy and action was also likely adding to the collective despair.

*Federal Government Climate Action*

Sadly, the coalition-led Parliamentary Committee considering the Climate Bills introduced by independent MP Zali Steggall decided that they should be not adopted. So, there was no debate and no vote on the issue.

However, it is not the end of the road. The ADAC is coordinating a Mass Mailout for Climate campaign with Zali Steggall, MP. It is hoped that supporters will send over 30,000 letters to Parliamentarians asking for the Bills to be re-introduced between now and September.

Letters can be sent from clubs (if members agree) or from individuals acting on their own behalf.

*Actions: Taking an active role in Zonta Says NOW and sending a letter to your MP could be good for your health! Also, consider participating in the District 23 Mental Health First Aid project.*



## Eating meat

On the Zonta Says NOW website, we suggest eating less meat as an emission reduction tip.  However, we received this comment and felt that we needed to share it as it contained valuable information that we can all learn from.

Many thanks to whoever it was that provided the feedback!

*Be sure of facts before advocating things like not eating red meat.*

*As a primary producer, I have been personally impacted by a serious bushfire in 2020. This massively increased my workload and stress on our family.*

*Our farm carries out environmental practices with large areas of fenced vegetation which absorb CO2 as it grows. Much of this was burnt in the fires (releasing CO2) but has been re-fenced and is regenerating, thus absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere.*

*We produce meat (cattle and sheep) and there is much misinformation about the effects of eating meat and its impact on climate change.*

*Grazing practices in Australia (we are accredited producers of grass-fed meat) are not the main cause of carbon emissions. In fact, over a period of time, approximately 15-17 years, grazing is carbon neutral.*

*Cattle and all ruminants do emit methane as a by-product of digestion, but our cattle eat grass which is then stimulated to grow and as it does it absorbs CO2 from the atmosphere in a carbon cycle.*

*By far the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide are fossil fuels. Coal, oil and natural gas were laid down billions of years ago tying up huge amounts of carbon. In a matter of 200 years, these products have been mined, burnt and have contributed massive amounts of CO2, the main culprit in global warming.*

*The growing of crops such as grains is not carbon neutral requiring energy in their production. However, many farmers in Australia are adopting practices to reduce energy use e.g. no-till farming practices.*

*To feed the world, small scale agriculture will not be sufficient with exponentially rising populations. There are many alternative sources of power and until all governments worldwide adopt these, the climate will continue to warm at an advancing rate which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the Earth.*

*This is a matter for all people, but women are severely impacted and often have little say in the mining and use of fossil fuels.*

After reading this article, we found the Meat and Livestock Industry's Carbon Neutral by 2030 roadmap that is informed by CSIRO research. It points out that greenhouse gas emissions from the Australian red meat industry have fallen by 57% since 2005 and now it takes 65% less water to produce a kilo of beef.

*Action: Check out the roadmap, it is fascinating!*



## Take a break, have a raisin

It is easy to get overwhelmed by the stats, so it is useful to take a mental health break every so often.

This Raisin Meditation Practice could be just what you are looking for.

*Action:  It only takes five minutes, so give it a go!*




## What is your Present for the Future?

Zonta Says NOW aims to create a gender-equal, sustainable world by educating girls, advocating for women's rights and inspiring more female leaders.

We can work towards achieving more climate resilience through our service and education programs.  The Zonta Foundation for Women relies on your donations to fund our programs that make the world a better place for everyone.

You can celebrate a birthday or special event by giving a Present for the Future to support Zonta's Endowment Fund and send a colourful e-card to acknowledge the occasion.

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