

**WOMEN'S DAY** GENDER CONCERNS IN EMERGENCIES, CHILD CARE

# Call to give women b role in disaster respo

## Getting victims back on road to recovery

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Marking International Women's Day yesterday, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) called on the global community to support the integration of gender concerns into emergency response and disaster management.

"There are advantages and disadvantages in being the gentle sex, but overall, women are playing significant roles in emergency situations," said Suvit Yodmani, ADPC executive director.

He said that when disasters occur, women tend to be more responsible in looking after their families and taking care of the children.

Under the theme "Emergencies and the Strength of Women," ADPC and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) honoured Senator Prateep Ungsongtham Hata from the Duang Prateep Foundation and World Vision Foundation of Thailand for contributing to disaster management in the region, particularly with regards to gender concerns in disasters.

Ms Prateep and her team have helped victims of the Dec 26 tsunami, particularly women and children, to come to terms with the disaster. Her activities involved art therapy, scholarships for tsunami-affected children and income-generating programmes for women.

The World Vision Foundation of Thailand also came up with emergency relief, short-term rehabilitation and long-term development projects to empower women affected by the tsunami.

The foundation programmes included grants for female-headed households, training for female youth peer educators, skills and vocational training for Muslim and sea-gypsy girls, as well as promotion of female participation in community-based disaster management.

Jean D'Cunha, regional programme director of Unifem East and Southeast Asia, said women tend to be more marginalised



About 3,000 Muslim women in Sai Buri district of Pattani province march in the district town to mark Internat

by disaster. The vulnerability to which women are exposed can be greater because of embedded cultural values that restrict their roles, he said.

This is reflected in the unequal work burden and limited facilities for education and employment.

Thanpuying Sumalee Chatkavanij, president of Thai Women Watch, said it is important to empower women in the decision-making process.

"Everywhere when there are disasters, women in families, in public administration, can help minimise the damage," she said.

People involved in accidents or emergencies should be given moral support at the community and national level. However, these essential works would not be well-organised without women.

She told of her experience when her organisation launched a school project in a fishing village in Ranong which was devastated by the tsunami.

"However, since all members of the school board are men, they gave less importance to the school project than to income-generating activities. Now 14 months have gone and there are only a few people interested in building the