

World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

PREPCOM-2 STATEMENT BY THE WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP

The success of HFA2 will depend on gender responsive policy, practice and funding at all levels on issues such as health, security and gender based violence, access to resources, and leadership and capacities. Focused and prioritized attention to address these issues is fundamental to achieve the healthy, and secure nations and communities for which the post 2015 framework aims. To that end, the Women's Major Group provides comments around 6 themes. Additional specific recommendations on the Zero Draft are available online.

Theme 1. Gender Equality, Women's Rights & Empowerment

Firstly, the document should **promote gender equality** and women's human rights through a **stand-alone guiding principle**, *which should also* appear in the Sendai Declaration, as this is fundamental for Disaster Risk reduction efforts. We urge Member States to **include gender explicitly as and where appropriate**.

This will **promote coherence** with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The SDGs include a stand-alone goal on gender equality and also include gender equality mainstreamed throughout the document, solidifying its critical role in eradicating poverty. The UNFCCC now has a standing agenda item on gender and climate change and has gender-sensitive climate policy mandates throughout many areas, from mitigation to finance to adaptation.

Recommendations

- Include '**gender equality**' in Paragraph 27, under Priority 3, as one of the key development areas that requires continued integrated focus.
- Ensure that the language of the HFA reflects both women and men and the differences between them. Paragraph 15 presents opportunities. The WMG suggests and f bis) and additions to g :

f bis) Addressing underlying risk factors demands a reduction in the socio-economic structural inequalities that produce differential risk across gender, age, disability and ethnicity and through access to education, employment, livelihoods, land and resources. These risks should be addressed through the integration of strategies and actions with co-benefits under the post-2015 HFA, climate agendas and SDGs.

g) While the drivers of risk may be local, national, transboundary or global in scope, disaster risks have local **social, cultural, environmental** and **individual** characteristics which must be understood, given the differential capacities of **stakeholders** for the determination of measures to reduce disaster risk.

Theme 2. Leadership and Training

Secondly, to support women's leadership and remove barriers from women's full and meaningful participation in DRR, the post 2015 DRR framework needs to **institutionalize mechanism for women's participation in planning, designing and monitoring processes and gender-responsive training and capacity-building** at all levels.

Women and girls' unique perspectives, skills and knowledge make them critical both in planning for disasters and in creating risk reduction strategies. Thus, we urge the Chairs to reinstate the language from paragraph 12d (Guiding Principles) of the pre-Zero Draft that said, "Gender considerations are to inform all policies and practices, and women's leadership is to be promoted

We would further suggest the need to explicitly recognise that **women's leadership role needs to be supported**. For example, including women and men in Guiding principle 15 d) "The leadership and empowerment of local authorities and men and women within communities are required to reduce disaster risk". The importance of resources can be emphasized in 25 g) "Empower, through regulatory and financial means, local action and leadership in disaster risk management by local authorities, communities, and particularly women, the young and indigenous peoples.

To support the Priorities for Action identified in the Zero draft we recommend the inclusion of training on gender-responsive approaches to DRR planning and implementation. This means that men, often in leadership roles and potential mentors in DRR institutions, also need to be trained and made aware of the importance of women's roles, gender equality, and diversity at every stage of DRR, which will be a step to removing barriers for women to implement gender-responsive DRR practices.

Theme 3. Data Disaggregation, Participatory Ethical Processes

Thirdly, to comprehensively understand disaster risk, Member States and stakeholders must engage in **gender analysis** that requires the **ethical, participatory collection and use of gender-specific, disaggregated data**.

- The WMG would like to highlight that to promote inclusion demands inclusive language and would request greater usage of 'women and men' rather than persons or people. We would also like to highlight that the use of 'the household' as a unit of analysis is problematic because of gender and age inequalities

prevalent in households; thus data needs to be disaggregated by gender and generation, not left at the household level.

- The WMG recommends the HFA promotes the collection of **gender disaggregated data as standard** and the analysis of data by gender and age as routine; this approach would be coherent with the proposed SDGs.
- Disaster risk reduction requires transparent risk-informed decision-making based on open and gender-specific/sex/age/disability-disaggregated data, and freely available, accessible, up-to-date, easy-to-understand, science-based, non-sensitive risk information complemented by local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, as relevant
- **Participatory decision-making, data collection, implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes** must occur at all levels with active participation from women and men from diverse sectors, training and expertise, and of diverse ages and family formations.
- It is of vital importance that the HFA2 include robust **indicators** which will hold governments and other stakeholders accountable **to improving gender equality and ensuring women's rights**, and help enforce implementation of policies and are essential to evaluation and monitoring processes.
- Thus global targets should include, **at a minimum, 'disaggregated by gender, age, disability and ethnicity'**

The WMG notes that the DRR framework is weak on environmental/ecosystem resilience, which is an important means of reducing risk, and which also supports livelihoods, thus it deserves space alongside assets and infrastructure.

Theme 4. Deconstructing Differential Risk: Employing a Human Rights-Based Approach

Fourthly, To address **underlying risk factors**, it is essential that we use a **human rights-based approach** in all phases of disaster risk reduction, development, and enhancing resiliency.

- **Establish baselines** using gender disaggregated data and periodically assess disaster risks, including vulnerability and underlying risk drivers such as gender inequality, and implement gender-responsive risk reduction measures.
- Dynamic underlying root causes of vulnerability create differential risk, such as for women and men, girls and boys, different age groups, among others, for which differentiated risk reduction strategies are critical.

- Vulnerability is not static but rather a product of pre-existing dynamics, social norms, policies, and is often the result of marginalization; a human-rights based approach will support policies that aim to uphold the dignity of all persons and end discriminatory practices.

There is a need to **protect women's rights** during and after an event and this includes ensuring **the right of women and girls to live free from violence** as well as ensuring the sexual and reproductive health rights for all women. These rights must be explicitly recognized within the HFA2.

Theme 5. Diversity

Fifthly, we must ensure **diverse and active participation in DRR decision-making, programming implementation, evaluation, monitoring and financing processes**

- The development, revision and implementation of relevant national and international policies, plans, practices and mechanisms needs to aim at coherence and mutual reinforcement across sustainable development goals, climate change and variability, environmental management and disaster risk reduction agendas
- **Women form a diverse group** consisting of class, caste, disability, age and rural-urban residence, migratory status, indigenous peoples, and other socioeconomic characteristics however, there is limited information and awareness of this diversity. Hence a mechanism for the active recognition and participation of diverse groups must be ensured.

It is critical to **invest equitably** in human and social resources so that women, women's organizations and their communities are recognized and supported with financial resources and public services to enable their active engagement in DRR processes; to address resilience of persons, communities and ecosystems. Thus, while we welcome the statement on women in 'The role of stakeholders' (E 34 C ii) recognising women as critical in DRR, we stress that without also supporting this role via resources and capacity building, it is not sufficient. We recommend the text read:

"The critical role of women in managing disaster risk and in workforce capacity should be recognised and valued, including through the provision of resources to further enhance their capacity to lead and be engaged in inclusive processes for designing and implementing gender responsive disaster risk management that benefits all persons and communities."

Theme 6. Gender-Inclusive Indicators: Accountability and Transparency Mechanisms

Identifying, monitoring and targeted reduction of specific gender-based vulnerabilities, while promoting inclusion and recognition of gender-specific contributions, is needed to

ensure urgent and accelerated attention to address the limiting issues. Mandating this within the monitoring and review system of the new framework is essential.

There must be accountability mechanisms for all stakeholders, especially private sector actors.

Japan Women's network recommended several actions in the 2014 *Sendai Call to Action on Gender and Diversity* that can inform the development of targets and what can be measured:

- ensure accessibility of information and services through all phases of disaster prevention, response, recovery and reconstruction to all members of society.
- strengthen support systems to prevent violence in society, specifically against women and marginalized populations.
- assure gender-specific health services in medical care and public welfare services, ensuring Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), through all stages of life.
- train and partner with local medical personnel, including midwives, doctors and support staff to secure the provision of effective mental health services, including psychological care, for disaster victims.
- provide evacuation and shelter services supporting work at overcoming specific barriers such as violence against women and sexual minorities, language barriers (Braille, sign language, minority languages) and mobility/accessibility barriers (persons with disabilities).

On behalf of the Women's Major Group and the diverse stakeholder groups we represent, we offer our sincerest thanks.