

Women and Gender Constituency

Official Statement to the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2017

The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) views successful operationalization of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as implementation that recognizes the rights of all people, in all their diversity -- including gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, geography, income, migrant or refugee status and disability. It should contribute to achieving sustainable development, gender equity and equality, as well as address underlying risk factors and overcome structural inequalities through a human rights-based approach.

It is critical to recognize that women and girls are disproportionately affected by disasters, conflict and poverty. Regressive gender norms and roles limit women and girls' access to resources, finance, decision-making, time, formal and informal education and power structures. However, cultural gender roles may contribute to their specialized knowledge of natural resources, community vulnerabilities, response capacity, warning signals, water and food safety and security, as well as indicators of risk.

Women and girls are not inherently vulnerable, passive recipients of aid after a disaster. Women are crucial leaders, innovators and changemakers with important diverse knowledge and perspectives critical to DRR.

The WGC key messages include recommendations and demands in seven focus areas, all of which support a gender-responsive approach across all phases of DRR, including planning, financing, budgeting, implementation and monitoring. Several are highlighted here.

At the outset, it is inherently necessary to recognize that women and girls do not constitute a monolithic group – there is great diversity and multiple intersecting identities, some of which may exacerbate the impacts of disasters. Achieving gender equality and DRR requires gender-responsive approaches to engage men and boys but also to go beyond the binary to include sexual orientation and gender identity, and sexual and gender minorities.

Additionally, the prevailing enabling environment, including social, cultural, economic and political systems, often facilitate and institutionalize root causes of inequality, especially gender inequality, challenging inclusivity. The result is that systemic barriers – due to both conscious and unconscious biases - lead to exclusion of women from participation and decision-making in DRR. One particularly entrenched barrier is the unpaid domestic and care work generally done by women, which is exacerbated by negative attitudes and social norms that maintain its gendered characteristics.

Overcoming these barriers of institutionalized discrimination in order to achieve inclusive, gender-responsive DRR requires the following, most notably from States and local governments:

First, protect, promote and fulfill women's human rights - including rights to land and other assets, mobility, education and information, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights. Women are often responsible for farming land and caretaking property, yet, because of gender norms, often do not hold legal and financial rights to access or utilize these assets. Even where legal rights exist in principle,

customary laws may prevent women from actualizing property claims in practice while customary indigenous laws often provide women with remedies that are not recognized by the State. Therefore, when disasters occur, women not only lose safe homes and places of work, and the livelihoods from work, but face more challenges reclaiming economic status without documents recognized by the State, legal titles to land or financial resources. Ensuring women's rights and access to ecosystem resources, freedom from violence, education, literacy and numeracy, and access to formal and informal information promote empowerment of women and girls in DRR.

Second, identify national platforms for ensuring coherence among SDGs, Paris Agreement, New Urban Agenda, and DRR policies, and ensure inclusive engagement of civil society, including women's and feminist organizations and representatives, within these national platforms, to exchange ideas, knowledge and learning that would contribute to meeting targets and indicators of the different agreements by contributing to planning and projects that will have multiple benefits across platforms, sectors and groups in society (e.g. for redistributing informal and unpaid care work while diminishing erosion and promoting communication infrastructure).

Third, focus on women's participation, leadership and decision-making, within local, Regional and Global Platforms for DRR and beyond, by committing to addressing gender parity at all levels; by providing capacity-building for women; and by establishing mechanisms for providing safety, training, financial support and public services that ensure women are actively engaged in DRR processes, including expedited urgent special procedures for human rights violations..

Fourth, ensure that DRR monitoring and evaluation strategies are gender responsive. States should quantify the changes in access to, distribution of benefits from, and decision-making regarding resources following disaster. Sex, age and disability-disaggregated (SADD) data and gender analysis are fundamental planning tools to strengthen participation, leadership and advocacy of women-led and feminist organizations. Qualitative and quantitative data should be designed, collected, analyzed and shared meaningfully, including by women's organizations at all levels (e.g. in the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR), which currently lacks such a gender focus).

Fifth, while we are starting to see international policy language and national commitments on gender in DRR, in order to put these strategies into practice, government policies must prioritise gender funding, gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming. Women's organizations must have direct access to funding on DRR.

The Women & Gender Constituency is committed to working closely with all of you for inclusive and gender-responsive DRR. And, moving forward, the Women & Gender Constituency, in coordination with our local, regional and national networks and other allies, will monitor, evaluate and make technical recommendations for national and local governments to transparently and comprehensively address the aforementioned gender responsive measures in DRR policy and program implementation.