

Leadership from the grassroots and from the top levels of government is urgently needed. At this critical juncture, when the global community is uniting around the need for sustained and systemic change to reduce risk, countries must develop National Plans for Action that integrate gender across all sectors and at all levels. A just, sustainable and safer world cannot be built without the energies of women and men, alike.

Gender is a cross-cutting concern requiring attention throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the activities adopted to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. Toward this end, the need for sex-differentiated data is stressed as is the need to analyse the gender division of labour and power relationships between the sexes as these may impinge on the success or failure of all risk reduction strategies. As gender is a central organising principle in all societies, the daily routines of women and men across and within societies put women and men, girls

and boys, differently at risk. While gender concerns in disasters cannot be equated with poverty or the challenges of sole parenting alone, it is evident from past disasters that low-income women and those who are marginalised due to marital status, physical ability, age, social stigma or caste are especially disadvantaged. It must be recognised, too, that gender also shapes the capacities and resources of women and men to minimise harm, adapt to hazards and respond to disasters when they must. (Source: Words Into Action, p. 11. Words Into Action: A Guide for Implementing the Hyogo Framework: (<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Words-into-action/Words-Into-Action.pdf>)

Challenges

- Limited awareness of the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction, as distinct from gender and development concerns
- Over-emphasis on vulnerability and the effects of disasters on women and girls
- Limited uptake of existing frameworks and tools for a gender-sensitive approach to disaster risk reduction
- Disconnect between disaster managers and gender and development experts in the community, government and academia
- Disconnect with coalitions and associations of local women active in disasters
- Disconnect with in-country ministries and officials with gender expertise and responsibilities
- Relative lack of gender expertise & women in leadership roles in national disaster management agencies or departments
- Lack of governmental leadership for positive change
- Lack of governmental accountability to those at increased risk due to sex- and gender-based risk factors

Opportunities for Action

HFA ACTION AREA ONE: MAKING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION A PRIORITY

Governments are urged to make DRR a priority through stakeholder dialogue, coordination, a strong institutional basis, and dedication of appropriate resources. Decades of experience now show that consulting with women early, often and continuously is a powerful strategy, too. Toward that end:

- assess how women and gender issues are currently reflected in existing national DRR systems and approaches, and conduct a desk review of gaps and opportunities for bringing women's organizations forward;
- write a clear gender equity policy to ensure that the National Platform is explicitly sensitive to gender, using gender-specific language and developing formal mechanisms for including women as the national platform is developed and resourced;
- map women's organizations and networks in the nation, including development and grassroots organizations active in high risk areas, and seek out credible women leaders in high-risk and disaster-affected communities, especially to promote mitigation and preparedness by capitalizing on their local connections and knowledge;
- add women's bureaus to the inter-ministerial network to ensure that women with technical and professional skills and those who work on family, health, violence, education, employment and environmental issues can contribute, while also consulting with national gender experts about gender mainstreaming experience; and,
- plan only family-friendly National Platform strategy meetings or consultations organized in ways, places and times that are accessible to women with different abilities and languages, and to all women and men with family responsibilities.

Opportunities for Action

HFA ACTION AREA TWO: IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING AND MONITORING RISK AND ENHANCING EARLY WARNINGS

This part of the “roadmap” to risk reduction emphasizes the need for useful data and information, meaningful risk assessment, and effective early warning systems and risk communications. effective communication of DRR information and early warnings. We fail communities when we fail to reach women with lifesaving information. Further, women’s perspectives on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities can enrich community-based risk assessments. Toward that end:

- assess possible gender bias in local, state and national information systems relating to disaster risk assessment and risk communication;
- initiate gender and disaster research teams to capture qualitative, community-based insights into risk communication and warning systems including government and university partnerships with gender scholars and other expert groups active in communities at high risk;
- fund gender and disaster researchers who engage with high-risk communities in participatory action research to develop meaningful and sex-specific vulnerability indicators, and support gender-sensitive participatory GIS mapping;
- consult with gender and communication specialists when designing risk communication and warning strategies and include gender outreach as a standard in all risk communication target and market messages to women and men, respectively with attention to age, culture and context;
- evaluate existing risk communication practices for gaps that may limit the access of high-risk girls and women to information and warnings; and,
- do not reinvent the wheel -- consult with women’s organizations and gender experts to identify popular education and communication outlets likely to reach high-risk groups of women and men, boys and girls.

Opportunities for Action

HFA ACTION AREA THREE: INCREASING AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Governments are urged to make better use of existing information, conduct trainings for key stakeholders, mainstream risk reduction in schools and promote comprehensive awareness programming. The multifaceted roles of women as work, family and community educators cannot be over-emphasized and must be capitalized upon. Toward that end:

- create gender-balanced awareness teams to identify high-risk women/men who must be reached;
- scale up proven community-driven and women-led awareness programs;
- curricula evaluation teams should review and assess college and university courses to identify gaps and opportunities for increasing sensitivity to gender;
- support at least one national women’s institution or program to develop and operate a full-fledged degree programme in disaster risk reduction;
- create context-specific gender and disaster training modules for use in such related fields as planning, development, health studies, social welfare, law, engineering, and information technologies, contracting with gender and education specialists to develop and disseminate these;
- fund the production of women-led community education materials and make these widely available;
- develop standards for gender-inclusive awareness programming, ensuring that these are accessible to women and that women are compensated for the extra burden imposed on their time and energy;
- establish gender benchmarks and indicators for assessing all awareness and training efforts with attention to gender-budgeting and the need for women’s participation in project monitoring and evaluation;
- offer mentoring programs and institutional exchanges to develop the capacity of all partners to conduct the level of gender analysis required to fully and equally engage girls and boys, women and men; and,
- create or support information sharing networks to increase gender awareness and connect these with the planning guides, tools and other resources available through the Gender & Disaster Network.

Opportunities for Action

HFA ACTION AREA FOUR: REDUCING RISK IN KEY SECTORS

At the heart of the HFA is the commitment governments make to taking action to reduce risk in key areas, including environmental management, livelihoods and social protection, physical planning, engineering, and risk reduction in the financial and economic sectors. We should miss no opportunities to build on proven gender sensitive practices that reduce risk. Toward that end:

- build capacity for conducting gender-sensitive disaster risk assessments that capture specific knowledge about hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities in the everyday lives of women and men, boys and girls;
- consult with women's work associations, unions, producer groups and others to identify and support traditional or indigenous good practice in environmental management and plan employment-intensive crisis interventions;
- include gender-sensitivity as a standard in funding, implementing, monitoring and evaluating pre- and post-disaster livelihood initiatives as a way to recognize gender as a cross-cutting theme in pro-poor DRR initiatives;
- increase social protection by materially supporting women as "shock absorbers" in times of crisis, and partner with women's and men's groups to help mitigate gender violence in disasters, including violence against men and boys;
- identify strategies for ensuring social service continuity through partnership with local community and women's groups;
- enhance protection of critical social infrastructures such as women's spaces, child care centers, places of worship and community halls as these build solidarity and sustain meaningful recovery;
- gender-sensitive risk reduction also means engaging women as housing reconstruction experts, for example through increased support to local women's building cooperatives that train women in safer building techniques;
- include gender experts on planning teams for reconstruction to ensure that gender patterns are reflected, for example differences in women's land rights and tenancy, use of space for home-based production, women's transportation resources and needs, and the value of women's spaces;
- seek out women with technical and scientific expertise in environmental management, livelihoods and social protection, physical planning, engineering, and risk reduction in the financial and economic sectors;
- develop or strengthen microfinance systems that reach low-income women positively without increasing debt load;
- provide gender training to economic recovery experts, and plan gender-balanced recovery planning teams;
- make women's small businesses a priority in business continuity planning;
- scale up insurance schemes promoted by women's groups for low-income women;
- establish clear lines of communication with women's organizations to strongly relate disaster risk reduction to the goals of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and specific Millennium Development Goals; and,
- write explicit policy for gender-sensitive recovery planning to help guide the work of the National Platform partners, including gender benchmarks and indicators, best developed at the country level to reflect specific conditions.

Opportunities for Action

HFA ACTION AREA FIVE: STRENGTHENING DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The HFA urges signatories to support disaster preparedness and assessments of disaster preparedness capacities and mechanisms, and to strengthen planning in this area. Women's capacity to undertake activities that help them and their families and communities prepare for disastrous events can and must be strengthened. HFA activities can and must be gender focused in all activities relating to preparedness. Toward that end:

- identify appropriate partners among the many women's groups active at the local level and materially support them to develop or strengthen their capacities to undertake preparedness campaigns;
- assist municipalities to compile the gender-sensitive risk profiles needed to support preparedness;
- make gender-sensitive humanitarian relief guides available for training and guiding emergency response agencies, recognizing that community members, including girls and women, are always the first (and last) responders;
- revise and disseminate existing tools to produce context-specific and gender-aware guidelines for preparedness;
- incorporate gender sensitivity into results-based evaluation systems of disaster preparedness and response and adapt personnel policies to reward demonstrated gender sensitivity in these areas;
- tie funding to effective gender mainstreaming in emergency preparedness and relief operations by making this a National Platform standard;
- strive to provide the human and financial resources needed to institutionalize gender-fair policy and practice in the area of preparedness and relief; and,
- promote interpersonal and inter-organizational networks between girls' and women's organizations and male-dominated emergency organizations for potentially life-saving reforms in preparedness and response.

A nation state strong in the face of disaster is one that capitalizes on the everyday knowledge of its people. It is a country whose leaders know how women and men have historically coped with hazards and disasters, and who appreciate the political, economic, and social forces that have especially disempowered girls and women in risky environments. It is a country whose leaders at all levels of government know that their most important stakeholders are the women and men whose lives and futures are most at risk and who reach out to develop, strengthen and sustain community partnerships with women as well as men.

A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes.

Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by 168 countries at the World Disaster Reduction Conference in Kobe, Japan, January 2005

Selected Resources

UN ISDR, Words Into Action: A Guide for Implementing the Hyogo Framework:
<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Words-into-action/Words-Into-Action.pdf>

“Gendering Disaster Risk Reduction: 57 Steps from Words To Action,” E. Enarson, forthcoming 2009 in Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives (E. Enarson and P. G. Dhar Chakrabarti, eds.) with acknowledgement of contributions from dialogue with the ISDR gender team.

Gender policy recommendations are available on-line following most gender and disaster conferences. Visit the G&D Sourcebook for links to Calls to Action from Pakistan, Costa Rica, Canada, the US, and Turkey :
http://www.gdnonline.org/sourcebook/chapt/sec_view.php?id=1§id=1.4

The Gender and Disaster Network statements to the Global Platform meetings (2008, 2009) can be seen on the GDN website.

And visit the website of the Gender and Disaster Network for additional references, accounts from the field, policy & practice guides, examples of good practice, and core concepts for gendering disaster risk reduction: www.gdnonline.org

To reference this material: Enarson, Elaine. (2009) Women, Gender and the Hyogo Platform for Action. Gender Notes No. 1. Gender and Disaster Network. <http://www.gdnonline.org/Sourcebook>

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