



**GENDER EQUALITY AND  
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION WORKSHOP**  
Honolulu, Hawaii USA  
2004

**Call to Action**

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In recognition of the importance of gender in disaster risk reduction, participants from 28 countries met in Honolulu, Hawaii to develop a strategy for incorporating gender-fair practices in disaster risk management. Workshop participants included representatives from international, regional, national, local, and community-based governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and academic and research institutions engaged in disaster risk management.

The participants of this workshop now call upon our own agencies, organizations, and the broader disaster risk management community to implement a range of actions to reduce disasters and impacts of disasters on communities. We promote this Call-to-Action for the disaster risk management community to conscientiously integrate gender into policies and practices.

We encourage the decisions and outcomes in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005 and ongoing work in disaster risk reduction to:

- Include gender issues and social equity in assessment, design and implementation and monitoring as a compulsory element for all development projects;
- Ensure that dynamics of disaster risk, gender, social equity, and environmental analyses are considered in an integrated manner;
- Highlight gaps in the millennium development goals in terms of disaster risk reduction and gender; and,
- Guarantee representation of grassroots and wider civil society organizations by ensuring that they receive adequate resources to be active participants.

Whereas, we stress the importance of ***building capacity in women's groups and community-based organizations***, we will use existing tools, such as Peer Learning Programs, Disaster Watch, neighborhood preparedness, and best practices, and develop new tools to:

### **1) Involve community at all levels.**

- Involve community women and men in the academic work and research conducted in their community. This will assist citizens to give back in a way appropriate to their community.
- Support formal roles of community women's groups and other community-based organizations in preparedness and recovery processes, information gathering and dissemination, and training.
- Respect and reward community ability to collect information, design, and implement programs.
- Acknowledge and understand existing relationships within the community.
- Support community to recognize and meet specific needs and responsibilities of women in preparedness and recovery.

### **2) Ensure equitable power in partnerships.**

- Foster equal partnerships and equal goals among members in disaster risk reduction partnerships across sectors and at multiple levels.
- Provide equitable distribution of resources and support within community.
- Ensure that grassroots women should benefit from and lead partnerships.
- Respect and incorporate diverse cultures and traditional knowledge.

### **3) Ensure resources and funding.**

- Allocate resources so that partners receive benefit based on needs.
- Ensure transparency and accountability to local groups.
- Provide flexible funding to encourage sustainable, short and long term projects.
- Concentrate resources in the hands of the local residents – without imposing outside interests/goals.

### **4) Address root causes of vulnerability.**

- Integrate issues of poverty and social vulnerability in designing disaster risk reduction programs to ensure that root problems are addressed and increase opportunities for participation from grassroots groups.

Whereas, in all aspects of disaster risk management, we recognize the importance of ***Communications, Training, & Education*** in policy, academic settings, and both formal and informal arenas and through practical training, such as drills and exercises, to provide access to information and resources at all levels from the upper tiers of government and decision making to the localized community action groups, we will strive to:

### **1) Improve formal and informal curriculum standards**

- Develop curriculum standards at all levels including the areas of science, technology and economics, with an integrated and gender-sensitive approach to environmentally sound and sustainable resource management and disaster reduction, response, and recovery to positively change behavior and attitudes in rural and urban areas.

### **2) Develop gender-sensitive policies, programs, and laws**

- Involve women's groups and encourage, develop, review and implement gender sensitive laws, policies, and programs that include land-use and urban planning, natural resource and environmental management, and integrated water resources management, to provide opportunities to prevent and mitigate damage.
- Encourage, as appropriate, the development and implementation of national building standards that take into account natural hazards so that women, men and their families are not exposed to high risk from disasters.
- Influence policies at national levels on gender and disaster risk reduction.
- Develop and establish mechanisms to influence policies on gender and disaster risk reduction at the national level.

### **3) Improve management, leadership skills, and decision making with gender awareness.**

- Improve basic management and leadership skills and pursue gender equality and gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster reduction, response and recovery as an integral part of sustainable development.
- Ensure the full participation of women in sustainable development decision making and disaster reduction management at all levels.

### **4) Ensure access to information.**

- Increase and ensure women's equal access to information and formal and non-formal education on disaster reduction, including gender-sensitive early warning systems, that empower women to take action in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Ensure equal access for women and men to information related to disaster risk reduction issues.

### **5) Educate the media.**

- Educate media regarding their role in disaster risk reduction and the opportunities to utilize culturally appropriate mediums and effective communication tools (i.e. radio soap opera, risk management game board) to effectively warn and educate the public, specifically marginalized groups, on disaster risk management in the context of sustainable development.

### **6) Mainstream a gender perspective in educational and training initiatives using nongovernmental organizations and non-traditional institutions.**

- Encourage civil society organizations to mainstream a gender perspective in the promotion of sustainable development initiatives, including in disaster reduction
- Target information and resources to non-traditional leaders of social institutions in the civil society community (i.e. religious leaders, leaders of women's groups, leaders of men's groups) to facilitate education of disaster issues.
- Use women and youth organizations at both the national and community level to educate disaster issues.

### **7) Establish and strengthen cross-cutting partnerships and mainstream gender in corporate society.**

- Establish and strengthen cross-cutting, interorganizational partnerships with the private sector, community-based women's groups, NGOs, and government agencies.
- Mainstream gender into corporate society to ensure its full participation.

## **8) Encourage women in disaster management positions.**

- Encourage women to enter disaster management field through equal access to training and education because women are underrepresented in disaster risk management organizations.
- Develop retention mechanisms through mentoring, training, and flexible programs.

Whereas, disaster risk reduction tools have been improved by **Science & Technology**, and it is important that stakeholders in science and technology must recognize that community participation should be at the heart of disaster risk reduction, that women should be engaged in the development of science and technology, and that access to tools and information at all levels should be provided, we will strive to:

## **1) Increase participatory action research in science and technology.**

### **Promote a paradigm shift that infuses participatory research and gender issues in all disaster-risk reduction related activities.**

- Recognize that community participation should be at the heart of risk reduction initiatives and the development tools and technology in context with local concerns, using social science methods and participatory action research. Trust between science and community is essential for success.
- Link science to society and produce a range of tools that can be used for multiple purposes. This facilitates innovation and application.
- Increase funding for participatory research through scientific funding agencies. Required resources need to be made available to scientific agencies for participatory research.
- Change reward structures in agencies, organizations, and academic institutions to acknowledge applied and participatory research and promote tenure for applied researchers.
- Train scientists (physical, life, social, engineering, etc.), educators, decision-makers, and the public to recognize that science and technology is a process of exploration, not just a collection of facts and figures, by promoting inquiry science (teachers and students engaged in “hands-on” science projects) and citizen scientists.

## **2) Recognize expertise from many different backgrounds.**

- Recognize that a disaster risk reduction framework requires knowledge and expertise from different backgrounds and from multiple scientific and technological disciplines, multiple agencies at all levels, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and local communities.
- Foster greater integration of local and traditional knowledge into disaster risk reduction programs.

## **3) Continue to focus on recruiting and retaining women into science and technology.**

- Move women not only into the workplace, but also into management level positions and leadership roles by empowering girls to pursue science and by increasing scholarships at the higher educational levels.
- Increase job retention by developing programs in the workplace that recognize and support unique needs of women and men (e.g. for flexible schedules, job sharing).
- Institutionalize mentoring relationships for women and establish support groups for girls and women for engaging in scientific inquiry (government, university, NGO, community, and private-sector).

#### **4) Promote awareness about scientific and research ethical issues in disaster risk reduction.**

- Balance the benefits of science and technology with issues of confidentiality and privacy.
- Provide equitable access to scientific and technological information and tools.
- Promote equitable representation in science, policy development, and program implementation.
- Consider how new information can change power structures within society and communities so that social systems are not irreparably altered in negative ways.
- Focus research to understand these issues in the context of new technologies and tools (including looking for lessons in technological adoption from other fields).
- Develop methods to assess ethical impacts of technological tools in communities.

#### **5) Enhance efforts to share lessons from science and technology in different communities, regions, and disciplines, and elements of the disaster risk reduction community and learning from focus on successes and failures.**

- Secure support for the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN) as a clearinghouse or forum ([http://online.northumbria.ac.uk/geography\\_research/gdn/](http://online.northumbria.ac.uk/geography_research/gdn/)).
- Establish regional hubs/chapters for the GDN (look to examples from other organizations)

Whereas, disaster risk reduction includes reducing the impacts of all forms of disasters including complex and humanitarian emergencies, it is important to recognize the specific challenges in **engendering complex emergencies**. Therefore, we will:

#### **1) Promote recruitment and retention of experienced women and men in the field.**

- Retain experienced people in the field by providing training, incentives and opportunities that will reduce problems by having inexperienced staff. Implement a survey of experiences to find out why people leave work in the area of complex emergencies. There have been institutional-based studies, but maybe not an overall study for all in the field.
- Improve appreciation of fieldworkers to maintain morale in this type of work.
- Develop a gender analysis *and* an analysis of studies that have been done on retention of people working in complex emergencies.
- Recruit people who have humanitarian perspective and not an elitist view. Fieldworkers and organizations need to understand and be sensitized to the context of people and their situations.

**2) Create institutional memory that promotes dealing with specific gender issues on the ground during complex humanitarian emergencies.**

- Develop professionalism in the field of complex emergencies in which there would be institutionalized memory and opportunities for career progression once leaving fieldwork duties.
- Bring in-country people into integration with disaster management, so experienced people are brought into the field of complex emergencies.
- Establish a standardized process and protocol to gather feedback from the field, because data and information is rarely collected because the urgent nature of the work with variations in staffing, involvement of multiple organizations, and temporal variations of specified duties.

**3) Undertake gender training activities and improve gender awareness with a view toward long-term implementation.**

- Promote gender training as a component of professionalizing the field. Gender training is part of raising the standard of excellence.
- Foster training of local people to increase their skills. Education in complex emergencies is also an issue, but examples for this work could come from UNICEF.
- Develop ways to convince policy and decision makers and funders that having gender sensitive issues is important by emphasizing security issues, including physical safety and access to food and water.
- Increase attention, resources (time and space) and awareness. Donors allocate a certain percentage to gender based evaluation and training. Maybe use the consideration of “vulnerable people” instead of “gender”.

**4) Engage in civil-military interaction and interface training.**

- Provide a place for discussions concerning disaster risk reduction in civil-military interactions. By engaging in mitigation actions resulting from these interactions, it is possible to reduce risk.
- Engage dialogues, develop cross program interaction, and model joint interventions to build clarity of roles and relationships between civil society and the military during complex humanitarian emergencies.

**5) Develop mechanisms for accountability, funding, and evaluation to pursue long-term improvement in gender awareness.**

- Educate decision makers and upper management. They need concrete plans: cost, who will do it, etc and require details on how training will happen.
- Establish a body that examines and monitors these issues during the conference in Kobe.
- One of first steps is to convince leaders of NGOs that engendering complex emergencies will improve their output.
- Provide funding for follow up! Evaluation is an important step toward making improvements, but there needs to be follow-up action once evaluation is complete to implement findings. We need to push for IMPACT! Note of Caution: Evaluations should not be done alone, but need to involve the public and make public evaluations.

- Expose linkages between these issues so that it is transparent. Kobe could be the way to create space to push forward independent, transparent evaluations. This could start to uncover the problem.

Whereas, **organizational structures** provide the framework for policy and action in reducing disaster risks, it is essential that we recognize changes needed in these frameworks that encourage gender sensitivity, gender-fair practices, social equity, inclusion of indigenous and cultural knowledge, participation and partnerships, and access to resources and information. In changing and influencing organization structures, we will strive to:

- 1) **Develop legislation ensuring disaster risk reduction is gender sensitive and addresses social equity.**
- 2) **Ensure that gender issues and social equity become part of disaster risk reduction agendas at international and national levels.**
- 3) **Develop a global legal framework for ensuring risk reduction is gender sensitive.**
- 4) **Improve structural arguments in national governments, local governments and in non-governmental organizations that link gender, social equity, and risk reduction.**
- 5) **Institute a Global Fund for Gender-specific Disaster Risk Reduction (GDRR) (in all phases of Disaster Management) with national commitment and membership prerequisites to ensure resource allocation.**
- 6) **Establish mechanisms for gathering and distributing information related to gender mainstreaming in disaster risk management.**

Whereas it has been well recognized that disaster risk reduction benefits from multidisciplinary action with multiple perspectives working at international, national, and local levels through governmental and nongovernmental organizations, we promote **participatory action research and participatory approaches** to disaster risk reduction. We will, therefore, work to:

- 1) **Develop a gender focused ethical framework.**
  - Develop a gender-focused ethic to frame disaster research with vulnerable populations, especially as it pertains to women – with consideration of unequal power relations---recognizing that gender: a) includes diversity of families and relationships, b) assists in examining diversity, and c) is an evolving concept due to its complexity in context and culture. This ethic should be incorporated into government, NGO, research and community levels, so that it permeates all levels of action and policies and funding.

## **2) Ensure accountability to gender guidelines and frameworks.**

Hold all governments and NGO's, international agencies and research bodies accountable to existing gender guidelines and frameworks when commissioning design and practice of research.

- Review the ethical guidelines of researchers to insure the extent to which they are non-exploitive in process, practice, and policy.
- Ensure informed consent (what are the ethical guidelines of research) timing issues.
- Do no harm! Do Good always. Love thy neighbor. --- These are the ethical basis of any type of action and policy.

## **3) Fund research that addresses vulnerability.**

- Focus funding sources on supporting research for social action, that address root causes of vulnerability.

## **4) Develop indicators for gender analyses.**

- Develop indicators for gender analysis that include the following: a) health, b) assets, c) leadership, d) relationships, and e) poverty/economics. These should be understood and incorporated into action research.
- Develop benchmarks and indicators to monitor efforts to integrate gender equality and social vulnerability in national and international disaster risk reduction activities.

Whereas the participants of the Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop, Honolulu 2004, recognize that we all have spheres of influence and varying expertise, and that the men and women acknowledged and advocate their specific roles in ensuring gender equality, we will pursue disaster risk reduction in our activities and will strive to:

- Review the proposals and policies in disaster management and incorporate gender as an integral part (continuous and critical review of documents leading to Kobe 's discussions).
- Take core message of this conference and suggested action points to respective organizations.
- Build alliances and coalitions or work with existing coalitions to promote and build regional, national, international subsequently platforms towards influencing Kobe discussions and outcomes.
- Form an advocacy and learning group to monitor policy commitments made by our governments and international actors.