

# MIAMI CONFERENCE ON REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS June 2000

## Executive Summary

### Overview

Reaching women and children in disasters: What are the issues and how can we best address them? Over 70 practitioners, policy-makers and researchers from North and Central America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean met in Miami for two and a half days in June 2000 to address these questions. This interactive workshop was planned by the *International Hurricane Center at Florida International University* and convened by Betty Hearn Morrow and Elaine Enarson. Representing regions and countries at all stages of development, at risk from different hazards, and in which women and children live very different lives, participants were united in their observations from the field that women and children are both highly vulnerable in disasters and highly resourceful responders. The workshop began with a reception sponsored by the *International Hurricane Center* on Sunday evening.

The program consisted of two plenary sessions and a series of workshops and presentations from a diverse group of international contributors, each summarized by a discussant with expertise in the topic. The meeting ended with the collective identification of recommendations for carrying forth the goal of reducing the vulnerability of women and children, and fully utilizing their strengths and resources.

In order for the outcomes to be shared, several contributing papers, as well as these proceedings, have been made available on the *Gender and Disaster Network* website at: [www.aglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.aglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn), as well as website of the *Laboratory for Social and Behavioral Research (LSBR)* at the *International Hurricane Center*: [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr). A bibliography prepared by Marion Pratt, *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*, is also posted and readers are invited to add to it by emailing their contributions to the *Gender and Disaster Network (GDN)* at [gdn@clio.fiu.edu](mailto:gdn@clio.fiu.edu).

Sponsors of the event included the *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*, the *International Hurricane Center*, The *US Department of Agriculture*, and the *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance*.

## Summary of the Findings

### The Problems

- There are enormous unmet needs of women and children in disasters.
- Effectively addressing the vulnerabilities of women and children requires disaster management that is tied to mitigation and sustainable development, i.e. that addresses the root causes of inequality.
- As revealed in case studies from around the world, the structural and cultural circumstances of everyday life tend to place women at high risk in times of disaster.
- Most disaster response organizations, public and private, either do not recognize the special needs of women, or, in the urgency of the moment, put aside gender-based policies and practices.
- The gender policies and practices of many development projects around the world have applicability to disaster management, but to date there is little evidence of effective crossover.
- Not only do most disaster evaluation efforts not look at gender issues, they often do not disaggregate whatever data they collect by sex, making gender analysis impossible.
- Women are an under-utilized resource in disaster management at all organizational levels from neighborhood local to national.
- The way in which disaster response unfolds today in many cases creates another set of disasters, or “disastrogenesis” as one speaker termed the resulting negative symptoms.
- Gender-specific data are needed concerning the relationship between impeded role performance and social problems such as family violence, substance abuse, and depression among disaster-affected populations of all ages.
- The increasing population of abandoned street children in urban areas around the world require attention in disaster mitigation and response in order to address their risk and to deal with the increases in their number that are likely to occur after a major event.
- Most disaster planning and response does not sufficiently anticipate that symptoms of individual and family psychological and emotional stress, including woman and child abuse, will accelerate and that appropriate social services should be part of all emergency planning.
- More opportunities are needed for researchers and practitioners interested in gender issues to work together.

## The Solutions

- Targeting women with policies and programs is an efficient way and effective way to improve total disaster mitigation and response.
- Women and children are largely untapped resources in disaster response.
- Activities that focus on helping children are an excellent way to bring diverse communities and constituencies together.
- A solid body of empirical evidence on women's disaster risk is essential, gathered by qualitative and quantitative methodologies, from a variety of disaster settings and circumstances, focusing on all levels of analysis.
- Strong advocacy, armed with convincing data, is required in order to convince policy-makers and leaders that gender-based risk exists and that targeting it can be highly effective in making communities more disaster-resilient.
- The most effective disaster response projects are those that actively engage the local community in their own recovery.
- There is evidence that community response and development projects that actively engage women tend to be different, and to be more effective and enduring.
- Effective disaster mitigation begins with educational programs for children and youth.
- The needs of children and youth for developmentally appropriate care and activities throughout the disaster cycle should be addressed in disaster planning.
- Actively engaging children and youth in family and community disaster response is an important therapeutic strategy.
- Greater advocacy, including effective use of the media, is required.
- More educational and training materials directed at the needs of women and children are needed.
- The internet, including the *Gender and Disaster Network's* website and listserv can be a valuable tool in working across barriers to address these issues.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **FROM THE MIAMI CONFERENCE ON**

### **REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS**

The conference ended with roundtable discussions to develop general and follow-up recommendations that were then reported and discussed with the larger group. These recommendations were presented as ways in which agencies, public and private, and individuals, beginning with the participants themselves, can begin to change the landscape of disaster mitigation and response to better meet the needs of woman and children.

#### **REGARDING POLICIES**

- Promote disaster response policies and practices that address the root causes of vulnerability, particularly for women and children
- Effect change in the balance of disaster resources currently invested in relief and mitigation, directing increased resources toward vulnerability reduction
- Better understand and effectively counter the main constraints to carrying out gender-sensitive recommendations in the disaster context
- Advocate for a gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of all disaster interventions and programs
- Establish a standard practice of collecting disaster-related data in a manner that allows for the assessment and tracking of gender, race, ethnic, and age patterns.
- Develop “best practices pilot projects” where a concerted effort is made to ensure that gender issues are addressed from planning through rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Promote the transfer of knowledge gained from model programs for women and children, such as the “lessons learned” from successful development projects
- Seek an audit of existing services for women and children in the disaster context as a first step to identifying unmet needs
- Promote the expansion of childcare and recreational programs for children and youth in disaster settings
- Actively work to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in disaster preparedness and response organizations and activities
- Advocate for diverse organizations, public and private, active in women's and children's issues to become involved in disaster-related work

- Identify effective spokespersons to address the information needs of policy-makers, researchers, donors, community members and other key actors
- Target key public officials and policy-makers with information about women and children in disasters
- Press for the mainstreaming of educational programs and materials on the needs of women and children in the curriculum of disaster and emergency management training programs at the local, regional, national and international levels
- Develop international mechanisms to expand awareness of and services to children pushed on to the street in the course of disasters
- Work to reduce the morbidity and mortality of street children by developing protocols with disaster organizations to increase their accounting of, and accountability to these children
- Promote the long-term mitigation of future disasters through such actions as global debt reduction and international commitment to the global treaty to ban land mines

## **REGARDING OUR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

- Actively consult with our respective communities of interest to identify resources, vulnerabilities, and priorities for action
- Communicate with organizations supporting or engaging in disaster work about the importance of anticipating and planning for the needs of women and children and the type of research needed to accomplish this goal
- Work creatively through disaster relief projects and organizations to enhance projects that address the needs of women and children
- Fully engage in all disaster-related work the disaster victims, survivors, vulnerable groups, clients and others to whom researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers are accountable
- Consult with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to develop an inventory of significant theoretical, practical and policy issues in gender and disaster research and set up task forces/working groups to address them
- Develop mechanisms for collaborative multidisciplinary, cross-national research and for the sharing of research tools and information
- Translate research findings into user-friendly language accessible to practitioners in all audiences and languages
- Develop teaching and agency support materials on issues important to women and children
- Refine messages and develop innovative strategies for communication, particularly across cultural and geographical barriers

- Commit to exchanging ideas, information, good practices, insights and experiences through the *Gender and Disaster Network*
- Develop at least one publicly accessible archive for knowledge and data on gender-based disaster work
- Work to legitimize disaster research in academic institutions and to increase the opportunities for future researchers to secure academic positions enabling them to pursue gender and disaster issues
- Initiate planning for a follow-up meeting to assess progress, providing increased time for dialogue and incorporating a broader range of national and international organizations

# REACHING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS<sup>1</sup>

June 4, 2000

## OPENING REMARKS

Participants were greeted by Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, and by representatives from several sponsoring organizations, including Stephen Leatherman from the *International Hurricane Center*, Wayne Westhoff from the *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Relief* and the *University of South Florida*, and by Marion Pratt from the *Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID* who made the following welcoming remarks.

### **Marion Pratt, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID**

A warm good evening! I and my three colleagues from *USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance* are delighted to be participating in this ground-breaking conference. Over the past several years, both the expansion of the technical staff at *OFDA*, and the merging of our Disaster Response Division with our Planning, Mitigation and Preparedness Division, have facilitated *OFDA's* ability to collaborate effectively with our implementing partners to better address technical and analytical issues associated with disaster response, one of the most important being gender.

Ongoing collaboration with the PVO umbrella organization *InterAction*, through a series of workshops on gender spurred the development of content-specific principles, a new addition to *OFDA's* Guidelines for Proposals and Reporting. These principles are designed to help our implementing partners assess the following issues for every proposed activity:

1. The organization and capacities of a given population in non-disaster settings;
2. The differential impacts of the disaster on women, men, adolescents, and children;
3. The range of potential positive and negative effects of the proposed disaster intervention on the social, environmental, and economic aspects of the society.

We hope these will help serve the wide variety of people in disaster contexts around the world, including:

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda Phillips, *Texas Woman's University*, prepared the first draft of the conference proceedings that were then finalized by abstracts, papers and comments from many conference participants. Therefore, in some cases the words of the speaker are provided, others are third-person summaries.

[Slide Presentation]

1. Women's groups coming to grips with the AIDS epidemic in Tanzania;
2. Nepalese families at grave risk of the effect of earthquakes in Kathmandu Valley;
3. Somalis gathering hope despite the bleakness of life in a refugee camp in northern Kenya;
4. Bangladeshis who feel the force of annual cyclones and storm surges;
5. Sudanese experiencing simultaneously drought, famine, and war; and
6. Rwandan refugees displaced into camps in Tanzania after the genocid

To name a few!

Important themes that continue to be debated in gender and disaster analyses include: targeting, vulnerability, violence, and agency (that is, recognizing those affected by disasters as much more than just victims). We expect that this conference will help better define these topics and look forward to taking home a vast amount of new information and many innovative ideas to share with our other colleagues and partners.

## **VISIONARY PLENARY**

***What would gender-equitable disaster planning and practice look like?  
Where are we now and what could the future be like?***

**Brenda D. Phillips, *Texas Woman's University, United States***

The ecosystemic framework can be used to analyze the sources and potential solutions that underlie inequitable practice and planning. The ecosystemic framework identifies multiple levels for analytical purposes. First, the micro-level examines interpersonal interactions that impact disaster management. Efforts to ameliorate inequity at this level include efforts by emergency managers and researchers to explore, appreciate, and integrate diverse cultural, economic, gender, national identity, and language perspectives and realities into practice, planning, and academic inquiry. The ecosystemic approach then moves us from the micro-level to the meso-level, where we examine the roles of organizations, agencies, and networks that seek to link the individual interpersonal level to the larger society. Educational programs (degree-granting in particular) are critiqued for exclusionary curricula that lay an inequitable foundation for disaster practice and planning. The exo-level looks at "settings that have power" including such things as development policy. As a way of understanding the exo-level, the Miami Declaration on Sustainable Development and Disasters<sup>2</sup> was revisited for its thorough critique of policy that enables vulnerability and inequitable practice. Finally, the macro-level encapsulates previous levels within such abstract

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<sup>2</sup> Available on the *Laboratory for Social and Behavioral Research* website: [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr). Look for the *Hemispheric Congress Proceedings* under the Publications link.

structures as the larger culture and political economy. In order for disaster practice and policy to be more practical, systemic and global changes are required. To facilitate discussion throughout the rest of the conference, the Beijing Platform was examined for its potential to impact disaster practice and planning [Note: The complete text of Phillips' talk, "And Aretha sang, R-E-S-P-E-C-T!" is available on the GDN website: [www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn) and LSBR website: [www.fiu.edu/~lsbr](http://www.fiu.edu/~lsbr).]

### **Julie Demichelis, Urban Planner, Washington D.C., United States**

We humans have never conquered or controlled nature, which responds to our "scientific and commercial advances" with increasingly intense forces. Many disasters stem not from some truly extraordinary natural event, but from our geographical marginalization of socially subordinated persons -- disproportionately women and children -- toward unsafe living environments. These people remain without access to basic mitigation and preparedness resources, or sometimes basic knowledge. Often, we see vast public and private resources used to rescue such persons from slow- or fast-onset natural events we know -- well in advance -- would injure them.

Our effective preparedness for such crises has not yet matched our potential to integrate viable disaster planning (mitigation, preparedness and response) strategies into regional economic development schemes. We must strive to make disaster - planning activities a collective responsibility that builds upon and strengthens public-private relationships at the local level -- where risk-reduction and disaster mitigation show most immediate returns. As outsiders, we can seek women and their local advocates in their daily spaces -- to listen to their self-perceptions and needs, to work with them to weave their ideas into disaster planning practices that interact with neighboring communities' ideas. Plans that they own and practice. As professionals and academics in a new economy, we can creatively link these communities with others to enhance their participation in these new disaster-planning activities.

We must form a broader, co-existential "we" vision of disaster planning. This conference is a timely forum to address and improve the nature, extent and timing of popular methods used by public emergency management officials, which often neglect and undermine capacities of women and children, our primary clients in this gathering's endeavor. Let's recast our planning criteria in light of social cost-effectiveness for them rather than political acceptability for others. Let's put our clients first. Grass roots empowerment is key. Women need access to credit. We must provide help without a heavy institutional context, rules and regulations. Local development must be sustainable after we leave. Some practitioners and managers have no gender experience. We should help managers understand our points and adapt to other languages and cultures. For example, when talking with businesses, use the term "risk exposure" rather than vulnerability. We need pilot projects for legal frameworks. We must avoid imposing our values on others. We must generate policies in context so they work.

**Vishaka Hildellage, *Duryog Nivaran, Intermediate Technology Development Group* (Sri Lanka), South Asia**

Disasters are an outcome of social, political and economic happenings in society. They are processes rather than events. The key to understanding the reasons behind disasters and how to mitigate them is to understand vulnerability and risk issues -- why some are more vulnerable than others. It is clear that the poor are at the highest risk. Cultural beliefs are also important, such as in Pakistan when people often believe that disaster is God's way of punishing them. But the key reason behind disasters is economic marginalization. Women and children in general, especially in South Asia, don't have equal access to resources. In disasters, women have less access to getting help and the result is higher deaths, injuries, and disabilities. Women-headed households have little way to earn a living. In Bangladesh, for example, they must send their children to work because women are not allowed to work outside the home. Because we tend to see disasters as events, we don't see the development context. More proactive disaster mitigation is needed, including more money spent on mitigation. Victims should be more actively engaged in mitigation. In the future, sustainable development planning must consider the full environment and future generations. We must include disasters in sustainable development planning. We should consider disaster mitigation as a process and understand the hidden factors such as economic empowerment as a way to reduce vulnerability. Remember that women can contribute effectively in planning, management and mitigation. [Note: ITDG's main focus is technology for development. They have developed a network in South Asia. Publications are also available in Spanish through their Peru office (*La Red*).]

[Note: A family emergency prevented Madhavi Ariyabandu from *Duryog Nivaran* attending. Her paper, "The Impact Of Hazards on Women and Children," is available on the GDN and LSBR websites.]

June 5, 2000

## Regional Patterns and Action Issues 1

***How are women and children across the globe impacted by hazardous environments and disasters and how do they respond? What changes are needed to address the root causes and social conditions of vulnerability?***

**Moderator: Jean D'Cunha, Independent Scholar and Gender Consultant, Thailand**

**Brigitte Touré, Centre de Recherche et de Documentation en Economie de la Sante (CREDES), (Paris), Africa**

Africa accounts for 7% of the world's disasters and 67% of the direct mortality. Thirty-three out of 48 of the least developed nations are in Africa. Vulnerability is economically determined, complicated by chronic political unrest, long-lasting conflicts, recurrent drought, and cultural changes. Disasters include drought, famine, floods, epidemics, and technological disasters: conflicts, violence, technological disasters such as transportation disasters on sea and road. During drought, there are gender differences in roles and responses. Few gender-disaggregated data exist on floods. In epidemics such as HIV and malaria there is gender disparity. In armed conflict, rape is used as a weapon and war results in displacement and increasing vulnerability. They are trying to use health as a bridge for peace, but it is important to analyze and verify data on all of these issues.

Twenty-six out of a total of 53 countries have been affected by conflict. War, strife, food shortages, displaced populations all increase mortality and morbidity. During such conflict we see the collapse of state functions, the mixing of civilians with combatants, violence on civilians, a fluid and versatile situation, the development of an economy of war and the impact of humanitarian assistance. In drought, women must migrate without their livestock, leaving them in austerity. They also lose precious resources including jewelry, household utensils, small ruminants, milk, etc. Landmines have been a particular problem, with maimed women surviving to live in impacted families. In Somali, 40% of the landmine victims were women, 38% were men, 18% were boys and 4% were girls.

Lessons learned included the relevance of the specificity of African disasters and that we must gather and look at disaggregated data by gender. We must train at the community level, focusing on women. We must re-socialize boys after war. We must provide mental health support to the poor. We must provide gender tools. We must remember that women remain reluctant and men are not convinced of these issues. We must review and compile data, document and disseminate lessons, plans, laws, maintenance and procedures.

**Cheryl Anderson, *University of Hawaii, Social Science Research Institute, Southern Pacific Island Region***

The Pacific Islands range in geographic diversity from the large volcanic islands to small atolls, some spread hundreds of miles from island where political power is concentrated, with varying degrees of development, population, and urbanization. Gender relations have been largely influenced by western colonialism, although some of the matrilineal and local types of power in social relations still exist in many of the islands. The natural hazards that impact the islands include tsunamis, earthquakes, typhoons, floods, wildfires, erosion, extreme tides, and drought. Many of these events are the consequences of global climate change and variability, and have been felt throughout these islands, often in ways more drastic and immediate than in other places in the world.

For nine years, I have worked in the Pacific Island region in the field of hazard mitigation. My knowledge of the impacts on women from disasters comes from experiences working with the women and from observation, but often not as a direct result of targeting women in the projects with which I have been involved, and this is where I have increasingly become aware of a gender gap in disaster management.

Field study notes from response to hazards in small Pacific Island nations and several anecdotes from the region indicate that women generally have more control over resources within the community and within the household. Examples come from observations during typhoon preparation and drought mitigation associated with the 1991-1992 ENSO warm event. The women worked with the natural resources, and understood the natural hydrology of the island. They were able to find potable water resources to sustain the community. Since hazards often affect the availability and distribution of resources, the local resource managers---the women---need to have access to good information and alternatives for mitigating hazards.

During the 1997-1998 El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) warm event, the *Pacific ENSO Applications Center (PEAC)* provided precipitation forecasts and warnings about the impending drought throughout the region. As a result of three-years of education about climate variability and technological improvements in forecasting ENSO warm events, the governments of the US-affiliated islands took measures which drastically reduced the impacts of the climate change on human suffering and loss. Although the results of gender participation have not been quantified, there were women who participated on some of the ENSO task forces in the US-affiliated islands. The island jurisdictions that had women participate tended to be more involved in public education and awareness programs reaching into the small villages, compared to the other islands without women on the task force.

*PEAC* researchers have also convened a series of workshops with the *United Nations Disaster Relief Office* (since incorporated into the *South Pacific Applied Geoscience*

*Commission*) in Suva, Fiji to develop a methodology to assess the impacts of the ENSO event, identify vulnerabilities, and provide mitigation options for disaster managers. What has been striking in the development of the methodologies through the series of workshops, in conducting hazard risk and vulnerability assessments, and in the mitigation planning for the Pacific Islands is the disproportionate gender representation. Men far outnumber the women at the national, regional, and sub-regional workshops. For example, three women of thirty-five government participants attended the Fiji national assessment in June 1999---one in health services, one in social services, and one meteorologist. Two of these areas are more traditional fields for women, and only one from the sciences. Then, at the regional workshop, two women climatologists from the same country participated, but all of the other managers were men. The indication from these experiences is that women do not receive as much information about the hazards and opportunities to mitigate impacts.

Given the disparity in gender representation for education about the hazards and in the planning processes for disaster management and hazard mitigation, it seems that overall disaster management would be improved by increased participation from women within the planning processes. We will not continue to have the successes seen in the 1997-98 ENSO warm event if we continue to ignore half of the population of the islands. Attention to gender roles and information needs must be better incorporated into disaster management strategies.

**Enrique Gomáriz, *Fundación Género y Sociedad (GESO)*, Costa Rica  
“Gender Analysis of the Disaster Caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America”**

The Foundation did a gender analysis of Hurricane Mitch sponsored by the *Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)*. It provides the only gender breakdown of data collected. In most cases the collection of gender-related information was not deemed a priority in the emergency. To not include a breakdown of data by sex is an institutional decision. Organizations did not have gender information when they made the disaster-related decisions nor was it incorporated into aid. In the countries with breakdowns by sex, there is coinciding information indicating that the majority of deaths were men (54% in Nicaragua and 57% in El Salvador). The explanation given is that men stayed in their homes trying to save tools and animals from both flooding and pillaging. In some cases men's rash behavior translated into human losses. The majority of the disappeared are believed to be men who did not reach shelters and perished in their homes or emigrated to other countries after impact. Men's gender-specific activities included watching over family and community belongings, search and rescue, transfer of the injured, opening roadways and clearing rubble. Women's activities more typically included protecting children, caring for the injured, setting up shelters, preparing and distributing food, giving out information, and caring for family and community needs. Female vulnerability was increased by their not being familiar with how to escape from the water, including climbing to trees and rooftops. Their restricted autonomy meant they could not leave the home for biological, reproductive

and cultural reasons. Women's organizations said they did not make a strategic response (in the sense that they react with punctual actions and with discussion with the national authorities about the management of disasters). There was a weakness in coordination between organizations. Some women's organizations worked at the local level by helping at shelters where they had previous experience. [Note: Copies of the slides from Gomáriz's presentation are available on the GDN and LSBR websites.]

**Vishaka Hidellage, *Duryog Nivaran - Intermediate Technology Development Group* (Sri Lanka), South Asia**

In India and Pakistan, poverty is the main problem. Illiteracy is also high, with up to 76-80% of women being illiterate. Women are not landowners and live in disaster-prone areas if they do own property. There are cultural barriers to participating in the labor market. Women are four times more likely to die in low-income countries (an International Red Cross statistic). Capacity-building must include increasing literacy, improving mobility problems, and attending to female-headed households. In a study in Bangladesh (Kafir), the Shariah law was used to take land from women when the men died after disaster. Women, when hearing cyclone warnings, take the children and search for shelter -- and there are reports of women being raped en route to shelter, a double-edged vulnerability. Some are prevented from going to shelters. In a case study of Pakistani river floods, women often lost the jewelry from their dowry which meant they could not marry. A recent story told of a man who sold his 15-year-old daughter to buy food for the men. Another told of only women and children left in some villages after disaster. Women will bond in a situation like this in order to rebuild their lives without the men but they have little access to resources. In India, the caste situation means that some women are more vulnerable than others. For example, higher castes have more right to water. The fundamental issue is poverty, and women are more likely to be poor.

**Discussant: Walter Gillis Peacock, *International Hurricane Center, Florida International University, United States***

We need to continue to link development and disasters. "Developed" should be redefined to mean that we have reduced vulnerability. We need to attend to the cultural, economic and social roots of vulnerability. We need a revolutionary shift and alteration of deep and fundamental biases. We should acknowledge that matrilineal structures are a resource and part of the solution. We should think about what would a society look like that gives voice to everyone.

## **Regional Patterns and Action Issues 2**

***How are women and children across the globe impacted by hazardous environments and disasters and how do they respond?  
What changes are needed to address the root causes and social conditions of vulnerability?***

**Moderator: Sarah Bradshaw, *Puntos de Encuentro*, Nicaragua**

**Tobias Mulimbika, *Gender in Development Division*, Government of Zambia**

Women in Zambia lack access to resources. Street children are vulnerable to disaster. There is a lack of infrastructure. Every rainy season there are floods and epidemics, as well as recurrent droughts and famine. Women are especially vulnerable when their land is destroyed by floods. Refugee women are affected, and become eternally displaced people. Many problems face Zambia and Africa in general, including the need for a legal framework in which disaster management can operate, the absence of natural disaster plans, and the need for an integrated gender and environment approach. Meeting the needs of women is an important step toward a more disaster resistant society.

**Christine Herridge, *Dominican Disaster Mitigation Association*, Dominican Republic**

**"Perspectives Regarding Women and Children in Hazardous Environments"**

The Dominican Republic, with a population of 8.2 million people, faces seismic, hurricane and tropical storm risks. People living in small communities take on a lot of responsibility. Cultural values and beliefs make people prefer to not focus on disasters. Most households are female-headed; men have migrated to the capital. Women's homes are often also their businesses, such as candy making, sewing and beauty shops. A 7.5 to 8.0 earthquake with an impact similar to Turkey's last earthquake has been predicted.

The *Dominican Disaster Mitigation Association* is a solid contribution of the Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project to vulnerability reduction activities in the Dominican Republic. In late 1993, the CDMP began activities in the DR, allowing local businesses and NGOs the freedom to adapt project objectives to local needs and circumstances. As of late 1995, the *Dominican Disaster Mitigation Association* became a legally established NGO to ensure the mid- and long-term continuation of the CDMP's vulnerability reduction activities. The *ADMD's* Board of Directors includes five NGOs: *Food for the Hungry*, *World Vision*, *SODOSISMICA*, *ADOZONA* and the

*Haina Industrial Association*, as well as 4 companies: *Codetel*, *Sea Land Service*, *Compañía Nacional de Seguros*, and the *Haina Generation Company*. The NGO's activities fall under five strategic elements:

I. Disaster Management Training for Professionals and Technicians. The *ADMD* has given over 22 courses in which at least 502 representatives of businesses and NGOs have gained skills in various topics related to Disaster Management. Agencies and institutions such as the UNDP Disaster Mitigation Project through the *Ministry of Public Works*, the *Pan American Health Organization*, and the *Red Cross* have contributed to the training effort, yet the *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*, the *Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project*, and the *ADMD* have made Disaster Management training in the DR possible. Topics range from Disaster Administration to Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis to Contingency Plans to Emergency Brigades and Hurricane Simulations.

II. Coordination and Communication. The *ADMD* provides the mechanism through which information can be gathered and distributed among communities, organizations and agencies to facilitate education regarding risks, hazards, mitigation, preparedness and response needs and efforts. The *ADMD* coordinates with and works through over 50 national and regional NGOs and local community groups as well as with private sector companies. This permits each sector to develop a better understanding for risks and limitations and coordinate existing resources and capacities.

III. Information. The *ADMD* gathers and disseminates critical information regarding the country's natural hazards as well as effective mitigation measures. An active awareness campaign includes presentations to schools, businesses, communities and organizations. The *ADMD* has given 458 presentations to 29,885 people nation wide, 213 of them for 19,336 teachers, students and parents as part of the school campaign. In addition 13 education workshops have been given to 594 teachers. The *ADMD* has produced 18 bulletins that are sent every three months by fax/modem to almost 2,000 offices and organizations and by e-mail worldwide to over 1,000 agencies and colleagues. In addition, the *ADMD* receives generous support from the media and has received over 2,278 minutes of television time; 5,064 minutes of radio time and over 41 newspaper articles, representing donations valued at US\$1,463,163. A sponsor has facilitated a weekly one-hour radio program and the *ADMD* soon hopes to host its own television program to promote disaster awareness and mitigation.

IV. Community Education. In 1995, the *ADMD* evaluated and selected a program designed by the *Red Cross* called "Es Mejor Prevenir..." and has, to date, sponsored and/or facilitated 20 courses to train 619 local facilitators from over 50 NGOs as well as from the *Civil Defense* and the *Red Cross*. Since October 1995, 736 high-risk communities have received the Community Disaster Preparedness Workshop. About 22,080 community leaders have learned about disasters, including how to identify vulnerability, how to identify the community's human and

material resources, and how to work with a local community to design a Community Emergency Plan.

The results of this intervention are quite tangible. There is a marked interest and motivation in disaster mitigation. Many communities have established a disaster mitigation committee and also re-established or initiated *Red Cross* and *Civil Defense* chapters -- having realized that they will have to face a disaster alone, at least initially. A number of communities also established women's associations and neighborhood associations as a direct result. Also the communities have pooled resources and efforts to carry out projects to reduce identified vulnerabilities such as the construction of speed-bumps on the highway near a school. Other projects include the improvement of drainage systems, construction of roads to previously inaccessible communities, stabilization of slope embankments, and containment wall construction to stave off erosion and flooding, among others. The communities have been quite frank in admitting that they would not have embarked on such projects had it not been for the *ADMD*-sponsored workshops. As a result, they have learned how to organize the community, establish a goal, and accomplish it. In some communities the local government provided construction workers and other assistance to support these community initiatives.

V. Community Initiatives. The *ADMD*'s facilitation of community initiatives to implement vulnerability reduction projects has been designed in consultation with NGOs in the *ADMD*'s Board of Directors. Communities that have received the Community Disaster Preparedness Workshop receive orientation regarding the C.I. program and the application process. Communities must provide local counterpart contributions, such as manual labor, technical assistance, land, and project permits, worth at least 50% of the total value of the project. In our experience, however, the communities have contributed at least 65% of the total value of the projects, mostly designed to prevent flooding and contamination as well as to reduce landslides.

As regards the issue of the impact of hazardous environments on women and their children, we have found that lack of information and orientation to be the main obstacles to creating a disaster mitigation culture. The communities must better understand the nature of their surroundings and learn to interpret warning signs of impending danger. They must identify and use adequate evacuation and other techniques to move out of harm's way. Given their mistrust and fear of losing their possessions, they must be taught how to form security brigades to watch over property left behind. They must also learn to organize themselves inside the shelters to deter rape and other forms of violence common following disasters. If these issues are left unattended then the women and their children will continue to suffer the loss of family members, security, and livelihood, and be forced to cope with the physical, economic, social and psychological effects of this reality.

Changes that are needed to address the root causes and social conditions of vulnerability include:

A moral and financial commitment must be made by international agencies and by the government of each country to assure that risk-related information and mitigation measures are promoted throughout society, from grade school through social programs. All health, environment, industry, infrastructure, energy and other programs and investments must include a vulnerability analysis and disaster resistant techniques in every phase from design through maintenance. Long-term behavioral changes are not feasible expectations from projects of only six to twelve months duration. The time frame is at least three to five years to begin a meaningful program and without follow up it will most likely fail. High-risk communities need an outside source of information and moral support to be able to organize and face their vulnerabilities successfully. Disaster prevention and mitigation requires and warrants a long-term commitment.

The NGOs and other organizations that have demonstrated their ability to facilitate orientation and technical assistance to high-risk communities need to be able to establish Endowment Funds and other means of assuring a minimum budget necessary to guarantee follow-up attention and involvement. The endless cycle of presenting and modifying proposals to countless agencies that impose severe budgetary restraints on what are often small, short-term pilot projects impedes progress.

Each high-risk community must either be relocated or taught how to live more safely in the area chosen and/or maintained due to lack of a better alternative. Much can be done, and quite inexpensively, to make housing, schools, hospitals, community centers, churches and other facilities more resistant to the potential impact of disasters. Orientation and information in addition to practice can go a long way to changing behavior and to saving lives and property.

**Debbie Kleinman Robinson, *Florida Department of Community Affairs, United States***

Women and children are 95% of all battering victims. Policy makers must understand the vulnerability of women in disasters and that their everyday vulnerability to violence is likely to increase in disaster contexts. Disaster agencies assume that women have control of resources, but in a battering situation, women lack power and control. Ten to fifty percent of women are abused during their lifetime; we must acknowledge that it happens. We need to destroy myths about domestic violence. For example, more women are killed when trying to leave an offender than at other times, thus making it complex and difficult to leave a batterer. We must ask: Is this disaster policy or plan safe for women? Is the domestic violence shelter part of the community's disaster plan? Where are the high-risk offenders? We must incorporate disaster planning into our shelters.

**Audrey Mullings, *Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, Barbados***

Barbados is the number-one developing nation in the region, but is a country with high poverty. Men are still in charge, with few female ministers of government. Some islands have put men in charge of women's affairs. The *Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency* focuses on the English-speaking Caribbean. We collaborate with the *Red Cross*, *USAID*, and others in program development. Yet women's issues remain unintegrated in many areas. In the 1995 Montserrat eruption there was massive social disruption. Women were involved economically, politically and socially before the eruption and were organized and active after the disaster. Women laid the groundwork for evacuation and relocation. One committee in particular had five men and four women and was headed by a man. Women organized to provide community-based information for the national response. Women had cooperated before and used their networks and experience after. "Women on the Move" in 1998 was a pressure group to employ women as part of the reconstruction and offered therapeutic support as well. A woman who managed a credit union organized loans for women (education, small business, farming). Many female-headed households were served.

**Discussant : Graham Tobin, *University of South Florida, United States***

Gender issues are invisible. The root cause of gender vulnerability is a complex web of cultural, social, political and economic factors. Progress has been made, but we need to focus on the structural components. There must be a change and revolution. We need to better measure vulnerability in context and we need guiding principles, perhaps a humanist manifesto. More National Science Foundation funding should be available for applied research. We must link disasters with development. There is a limited capacity of local development programs to develop disaster plans. Changing the institutional framework for this is difficult. We need to influence program and policy guidelines and increase local participation. On the positive side, we are reaching a critical mass in our gender and disaster work.

**Discussant: Shubh Kumar-Range, Washington D.C., United States**

We should further the disasters and development connection. The impact, not the event, causes the disaster. Underdevelopment determines the impact. In disasters, underlying problems of vulnerability become more magnified. What gender approaches can be built in? Women are at risk and men remain unconvinced.

## Regional Patterns and Action Issues 3

***How are women and children across the globe impacted by hazardous environments and disasters?***

***How do they respond?***

***What changes are needed to address the root causes and social conditions of vulnerability?***

**Moderator: Sarah Bradshaw, *Puntos de Encuentro*, Nicaragua**

**Daisy Dharmaraj, *PREPARE*, India**

**"Community Disaster Preparedness for Women and Children"**

*PREPARE*, an NGO with long experience in community preparedness in natural disasters, would like to share its perspective and experience in equipping the communities to face and deal with disasters successfully. Disasters in India include earthquakes, cyclones, fires, tornadoes, chemical disasters and drought. In many parts of India women are culturally and religiously still second-class citizens and are vulnerable to disasters, and child labor and street children are also prevalent. In ethnic violence and wars, rape and violence are used as weapons of war. Disasters make women and children more vulnerable to poverty and social neglect. The coastal communities do not regard seriously cyclone warnings. In most States the government has contingency plans but response is slow. *PREPARE*, as a part of its developmental efforts, is involved in disaster preparedness, trying to build local capacity. The objective in community preparedness is to promote prevention. The pre-planning of indigenous and local resources is a first step towards a community providing its own relief resources immediately after a disaster, when the need is greatest and before external relief has reached the scene. The prevention program should also establish long-range policies and program measures to prevent or eliminate the occurrence of loss or damage due to disasters. Practical experience has proved beyond doubt that development of preparedness capacity in the community yields better results both in terms of economy and effectiveness, compared to sinking of resources in an *ad hoc* way in relief and rehabilitation after the disaster. Millions of lives could be saved by improving preparedness capacity, by covering areas such as disaster forecasting and warning, education and training of the population, and setting up of local organization for management of disaster situations.

Many States have developed disaster contingency plans. Unfortunately in developing countries the manuals are so old that most of the provisions are not relevant. The manuals are so voluminous, that it is not easy reference material. The whole system design is top-down and bureaucratic, and it has not taken the communities into confidence. The bureaucrats who are expected to use this manual have not been trained and the manual does not have anything to offer in terms of coordination with and between hundreds of departments within the Government. Timely reviewing and

resetting of the State contingency plan involving the professional institutions is crucial. The steps have to be precise and clear and easily translatable.

The local knowledge system available with the community should be taken into account. The local knowledge system for predication and warning of cyclones in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu in India were documented by *PREPARE* some years ago. These are invaluable and time-tested and have proven helpful in areas that have no access to timely communication from the meteorology departments. The Golden period, i.e. the first 24 hours after the cyclone, is very crucial to minimize loss. In order to be prepared to deal with the situation the community should have a contingency plan of it's own. Thus Community disaster preparedness assumes importance, especially to ensure that women and children who are most vulnerable are protected. *PREPARE*'s emphasis in practical training is on the use of indigenous, inexpensive and easily available material for use in disaster situations. Bamboo, brass pots, dry coconut husks, petrol and paint drums are the equipment used for life saving devices. Sophisticated equipment like life jackets and life buoys are also demonstrated, to show the people how to use them if these are provided by the external relief agencies during the disaster. The training cover three aspects of disaster management / preparedness - rescue, relief and rehabilitation. Task Forces are formed in each village or community. Members of the task force must satisfy these criteria: acceptance by community at large, capacity to organize people, commitment to serving the community, previous involvement in disasters or community service, leadership qualities, and disciplined behavior. The emphasis is on skills development, using visual aids, demonstrations, and simulation exercises. One of the most effective means of training has been the sustained community-level trainers' training program. The trainers are responsible for organizing and preparing the Task Forces. As soon as a Community Volunteer force is equipped and strong enough to manage on its own, *PREPARE* withdraws and keeps in touch through follow-up and "Disaster Camps" before every monsoon to review the skills. The volunteer groups with their trainers/leaders work on their own, effectively utilizing skills taught to deal with day-to-day emergency situations like snakebites, drowning, bleeding etc.

Natural and manmade disasters have increased in occurrence over the decades. Women and children have always been the vulnerable segment of the population. Although the State has the primary responsibility in mitigating disasters and responding to them, there is an important need to equip this vulnerable segment to deal with these, and hence a serious international effort has to go into developing plans towards this.

**Patricia Delaney, *George Washington University, United States***  
**“Gender and Post-Disaster Reconstruction: The Case of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua”**

A recent *World Bank* study of Central America looked at why gender was invisible during the Hurricane Mitch response in Nicaragua and Honduras.<sup>3</sup> Seven patterns were

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<sup>3</sup> The final report is scheduled for release in November 2000. Check the *World Bank* website for details.

found. First, the "tyranny of the urgent" tended to override longer-term developmental concerns, leading agencies to abandon consideration of gender processes, and other participatory practices. Second, there was an "abandonment of gender sensitive approaches" even for organizations with a strong history of gender programs and policies, again motivated by the desire to move quickly. Third, there was a "lack of institutional familiarity with disasters." Many development-based programs had no disaster plans or did not understand social risk. Fourth, during the rehabilitation phase "comprehensive assessment methodologies and experience with disaster assessment were lacking." This led to a tendency to see only the most dramatic damage, guaranteeing that gender concerns would not be thoroughly examined. Fifth, there was a "lack of integrated planning between disaster response and development organizations." Sixth, there was "weak gender analysis capacity in implementing agencies and NGOs in the region." Seventh, there was "resistance to gender analysis." Those organizations with technical expertise in short-term disaster relief and rehabilitation expressed the greatest resistance to the importance of gender.

Recommendations include: the development of disaster data disaggregated by sex and analyzed by gender; additional research and analytical work on the gendered dimensions of impact, loss, and recovery, including the issues of female headship, losses to the informal economy, and the potential productive role of women in non-traditional occupations; the development of reconstruction pilot projects which focus on gender issues; and the continuation of important dialogue about gender and disasters within the *World Bank*, donors, the *IDB*, members of civil society and the UN. Some specific suggestions are to: build capacity in gender and disaster organizations, use existing tools for policy and methodology, increase participation and consultation processes, and create gender guidelines for task managers, and develop indicators on how to track all of this.

**Cheryl Childers, *Washburn University*, United States**

Women share common global roles including caregivers and traditional domestic responsibilities, emotional work, and are used in post-disaster responsibilities to reconstruct households. We believe that battering is exacerbated in disaster situations and that women suffer disproportionately from post-traumatic stress. The developed world offers a lot of privilege and more choices for women. In the US we have reduced female loss of life, but we need to understand that equality varies. We are not an equal society, but our policies assume that we are equal. We should acknowledge vulnerability as a lack of equality and not talk about women as a homogeneous group. Three key things affect women's vulnerability: How disaster-resistant is our home? What resources do we have? And what is our proximity to the hazard? We must ask also who has more or less choice about such things as disaster resistance mitigation efforts. Look at the US labor market and women's financial standing. We see significant gender disparity in salaries, but even more between different racial and ethnic groups within the categories of male and female. Policies do not take this into consideration. Regarding age, the rest of the world is getting younger, but the US is getting older on

average. Forty-two percent of women over 65 live alone. Risk perceptions and realities vary depending on where you are socially and economically located.

White men perceive less risk than anyone and are more accepting of risk. They are also the decision makers and policy makers -- we have one worldview among those in charge of disasters. How might that change if the demography of decision-makers changed? Women respond to disasters more informally, through community-based organizations for example, and tend to prefer flexible organizations that better allow for adaptation to special needs than the traditional "command and control" model. The question is how to address vulnerability. To do so, we must address social structure issues. Women must become emergency managers and decision-makers. We need to respect women's ideas and the jobs they do after disaster, especially at the local level.

Several challenges or windows of opportunity come to mind. (1) Strategic planning meetings must address all hazards; (2) Research is needed beyond the anecdotal, especially on women and children; (3) We must shift from relief to preparation and mitigation. Where women understand risks, they prepare in a familial context. We can build a hazard-resistant family through women.

**Helena Molín Valdes, *International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat* (Costa Rica), Central America**

Regional strategies need to be developed for gender issues. The *United Nations'* International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in the 1990s promoted a risk reduction focus. The *UN* continues to promote disaster reduction with specific campaigns every year. 1995 was the focus on women and children, with women not as victims but as key partners. There is a question of legitimacy that needs to be addressed. For example, how can abused women be in charge of change? But in many cases women are in charge of change and are actually the economic backbone of the family. Women need to be on the disaster agenda as a general topic and are taking the lead in many community development projects associated with housing and water, in Peru and Colombia as examples, but this has not changed the power balance. The IDNDR decade has ended, but nothing in any document indicates gender is a continuing part of the international strategy. The existing gender programs are rehabilitation and reconstruction focuses, using women as cheap labor, not as a way to empower them.

We need to take the conference recommendations back to our own organizations and use them in every event. The disaster arena is very male-dominated and we need to include women on the podium of every conference as speakers.

**Sylvana Ricciarini, *Organization of American States*, Dominican Republic**

First of all, it is necessary to assess how many women and children are vulnerable to the existing hazards in a specific area, taking into account that vulnerability includes cultural, social and economic factors. Two projects described on the *Organization of American States* web page ([www.oas.org](http://www.oas.org)) include vulnerability reduction and citizen participation in which women and children are important components: The Hemispheric Action Plan, and The Reduction of the Vulnerability to Floods in Minor River Basins in Central America.

**Discussant: Jean D'Cunha, Independent Scholar and Gender Consultant, Thailand**

We must break down the walls that impede women's ability to respond to and recover from disaster. We are increasing women's burden and exploitation. Cultural norms and values that give us identity also hinder change, as institutions are influenced by culture and subsequently shape development patterns. We need studies of gender in organizations. We need data. We need to understand how institutions are kept in place by power arrangements.

**Discussant: Lynn Orstad, Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada**

We need to train emergency managers in gender issues. We need to connect with academics and work together. Women deserve dignity and respect. Women's lives are at stake before, during and after disasters. It is essential that emergency planners recognize the hazards facing women and children. Planners must also understand that women's service organizations are a vital lifeline and a place of last resort for many women.

With this in mind, an advisory group was formed to develop a workbook to assist women's agencies in British Columbia in developing their own emergency preparedness and business continuity plans. The workbook presents a process to enable organizations to develop and maintain an effective emergency preparedness plan for their agency. The workbook gives suggestions of accomplishing several "tasks" including: Establishing the Team Structure; Identifying Critical Organization Functions; Analyzing Resources and Support Requirements; Developing an Emergency Operations Centre; Implementing Staff and Volunteer Emergency Preparedness Programs; and Conducting the Business Impact Analysis.

Unfortunately, violence against women increases in the aftermath of a disaster. It is hoped that this workbook will assist women-serving and victim-serving agencies in British Columbia in developing their own emergency plans for our most vulnerable populations.

## Researchers' Roundtable

### ***What do we most need to know and why? What research strategies are effective?***

Questions raised in this open discussion for researchers and other interested participants included: What do we need to research regarding women and children in disaster? What research strategies are most effective? Decision makers, disaster managers, and policymakers typically do not understand the word gender and why it is relevant to disaster work. Women are listening to emergency managers and are taking actions. We need particular kinds of information, convincing, applied and practical. Women are active listeners and we should target them. We can reach children through the schools. It is more efficient and economical to go through women; we get more for our money. A *World Bank* study discussed earlier by Patricia Delaney found a 35% return on flood mitigation -- people pay attention to results like this.

We need studies of grassroots organizations. We need to recognize that multiple audiences exist, that there are different groups of women with different needs and interests. How do we put the services to work effectively? How do men maintain power and privilege in the emergency management system? Who will fund the work we want to do? Is there new money for gender and disaster research? Some potential funders include groups working on post-conflict issues, *World Bank*, *Oxfam* (must be tied directly to community activity), and the *USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*. Researcher needs must be tied to projects for potential funding from *Oxfam* and the *Ford Foundation*. It is harder to get long-term research; the US *National Science Foundation* has not supported this kind of research in the past. Evaluation projects might be possible through the *Central American Bank for Development*. We need more participatory action research and more collaboration between NGOs and academics. What if we pooled successful research proposals? We could do so across countries to lessen internal competition. (UK could share with US for example.) Could we ask similar questions in different countries of similar groups? More resources are available post-disaster and if we had cross-cultural instruments prepared, we could be ready to go. We need to publish strong research and document the research in a convincing way. We need to be poised to go in and document job loss and other economic impacts. We need practitioners to read our work as well as feminists.

We need to establish answers to how women get power and our projects need to be descriptive and prescriptive. We need data to convince people to invest money because many if not most are not convinced a problem exists. Examples of gender-influenced research could be through *USAID*, foci to include gender and input market systems, global climate change and post-Mitch rehabilitation. Turkey researchers are engaging in a major effort to study women and have promised to stay in touch with conference organizers. We need to continue this discussion on the Gender and Disaster Network and we need a clearinghouse for data. Some research questions revolve around women's employment losses in the informal economy after disaster.

Housing insecurity is a gender issue. Violence and development literature should be included. Child care needs to be included as an issue.

Research strategies include qualitative and quantitative approaches, feminist methodology, traditional and participatory approaches, emancipatory research that makes a difference, ethical issues. We need to think about the "anecdote" and how it is defined and used. But we also need massive data to prove our point. We should use a combination of approaches and get the numbers/data. We need to use our networks such as the *UN Commission for Refugee Women and Children* where relevant recommendations are not currently being carried out. There is a gap between policy and field application. Questions include: How have women politically mobilized around disasters? How do NGOs help and hinder women? We need to link gender and development into one framework. We need to find out why gender frameworks are not being adopted. We should draw from the women's movement experience of trying to implement gender perspectives. We should look at organizations with gendered perspectives and how they work. One book that was passed around was titled: *A Guide to Gender Analysis Frameworks* by Candida March, Ines Smyth and Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay (1999 Oxfarm).

We need media contacts and outlets. We need to publish outside of our fields. We need to explore ethics in publishing and in how our research will be used.

June 6, 2000

## Reaching Children in Disasters

*What are the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of youngsters and adolescents in emergencies?*

*How can their strengths be utilized and their needs met?*

**Moderator: Dick Krajewski, Church World Service**

**Raquel Cohen, University of Miami Medical School, United States**

Children in disaster are a major concern throughout the world, and are a very special population. Childcare and intervention in trauma are specialized. With trauma, the age and developmental level of the child affects the trauma experience. Trauma can last a long time, particularly in certain circumstances. Spending a long time in a refugee camp, for example, can impact brain development as certain brain regions are affected by chronic, intense trauma. We need to be aware of the developmental stages and put programs in place that understand these stages. Children absorb their surroundings and can recover, but someone has to listen. Disaster effects produce a variety of reactions specific to each child. We must understand trauma in terms of biological, psychological, interpersonal and social perspectives. We must attend to the child after the event as well as to the sequel of events. Children need opportunities to draw, talk, relive and deal with trauma. We can do this face-to-face in shelters and in families and in school groups. The purpose is to restore children's capacity. We should be aware of traumatic reminders and increase children's understanding of traumatic reference, assist with cognitive discrimination and increase tolerance for expected reactions.

**Jonathon Spencer Rose, Johns Hopkins University, United States**  
**"Children of the Street"**

Children of the street are unique, and their uniqueness makes them particularly vulnerable during disasters. The world's street children have been divided into two groups. The United Nations defines one group as children of the street (a.k.a. Homeless Youth) who have fragmented or terminated family ties, who sleep in street locations, and who are often involved in illegal activities for survival. This is to contrast them with children on the street who may work on the street but return to their families and a home. Internationally, there were more than 30 million children who in 1989 met the United Nations definition of a child of the street. Another 70 million children in the world are classified by UNICEF as children on the street. Both populations have grown significantly since that time, but no accurate census is available.

Children of the street are particularly vulnerable during a disaster, and are routinely overlooked by government and non-government organizations seeking to provide assistance during disasters. This results in particularly high morbidity and mortality for these children. For example, when Hurricane Mitch slammed into Honduras on October 27, 1998 it brought injury, homelessness, and death to many thousands of people. Of all of those people, perhaps the most vulnerable population was that of the more than 10,000 street children in Honduras. Their vulnerabilities included lack of shelter, food and protection normally afforded to non-street children. This disaster provides a clear illustration of the effect disasters or conflict situations have on children of the street especially when they are overlooked. Furthermore, during disaster and conflict situations children, and especially children on the street, become separated or orphaned from their parents or guardians. This creates a new population of children of the street who, because they have not yet developed the survival skills of the previously existing children of the street, are even more dependent and vulnerable. There is currently no government or non-government organization devoted to carrying for children of the street during disasters anywhere in the world. They appear on no list prior to the disaster, during the disaster, or after. As a result, there is no accounting for the number of children of the street lost during disasters.

Children of the street deserve to have the same humanitarian assistance afforded to them as all other victims of a disaster or conflict. This can be achieved through a three-phased approach. The first phase is to objectively establish that there is indeed a need that is not being met by providing a quantitative analysis of the problem. Some of this has already been documented but has not been collated. The second phase has two components. The first component is to develop specific protocols to address the special needs of existing, as well as newly created, children of the street during disaster and conflict situations. The second component is to bring these protocols to existing NGOs and to attempt to incorporate them into the existing organization. If this is not successful then the third phase will begin. The third phase is to develop an NGO that specifically addresses the needs of existing and newly created street children during disaster and conflict situations. This may be eventually absorbed by larger NGOs.

**Kay Goss, *Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States***

It is necessary to educate women and children about hazards and disaster prevention if we are ever to develop a hazard-resistant culture. When disaster strikes, the public bears 80% of the burden of response and recovery, and that falls disproportionately on women and children. Women's special strengths include determination to protect children in the fact of disaster, and drawing out the unsuspected strengths of children themselves, involving them in whatever is needed. Their involvement reduces the sense of helplessness and reduces psychological trauma. Knowledge about what to do empowers us. It gives us the tools to meet whatever we face. Provide women with the knowledge and with reliable information and we will reduce the toll of disaster very significantly.

I congratulate Florida International University and the sponsors of this conference and hope *FEMA* can help sponsor the next conference on this topic. I bring greetings from President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and *FEMA* Director James Lee Witt. On the international front, a disaster preparedness memo was recently signed by the President with the Ukraine president. An agreement between *FEMA* and *EMERCOM* of Russia is being discussed. It is very important to build international relationships. One way to reach women and children is to have more female emergency managers. *FEMA*'s Higher Education Project will have a summit the end of June. I think we need some courses directed toward meeting the needs of women and children. *FEMA* is seeking course developers. *FEMA* has outreach programs in schools that are particularly in need of materials. Two demonstration curriculum projects are going on in Maryland and Arkansas. National Fire Prevention efforts include the RISK program that will include natural disasters. Disaster resistant initiatives are ongoing in several universities. A second conference on African American outreach is being held. Materials are being converted into Spanish. *FEMA* is working to expand its materials and programs to meet the needs of our diverse population. Focusing on the needs and strengths of women and children is one step in that direction. [In the questions that followed several positive comments were made about the teaching materials for working with children available in English and Spanish on the *FEMA* for Kids website: [www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids) .]

**Deborah Thomas, *Hazards Research Laboratory, University of South Carolina, United States***

Communicating risk to children prior to a disaster is an important aspect to reaching this group in a disaster. If children have some idea about what to expect and what they should do, they will be empowered and be easier to reach. Examples of very young children using the 911 system in the US illustrate that they can act if provided with the appropriate skills. Children's ability to cope in an emergency is partly influenced by the knowledge that they possess about what they can and should do in the face of adversity. In 1999, the *South Carolina Atlas of Environmental Risk and Hazards* was released on CD-Rom with the intention of educating school-aged children in South Carolina about the types of hazards that could potentially affect them. (Note: the CD can be purchased from the University of South Carolina Press.) The atlas is not only about what hazards impact South Carolina, but also what people can do if confronted with a dangerous situation. In other words, students are informed about what to do before, during, and after a hazardous event occurs. Teachers in South Carolina have expressed excitement about this product, both in terms of its usefulness in creating lesson plans and as a research tool for the students. The creation of materials, such as the Atlas, aimed at conveying information about multiple hazards to children poses some unique challenges. Probably one of the greatest of these is identifying which hazards should be included in the educational resource. Not all places experience the same hazard potential. Consequently, only a select set of hazards may be relevant. The specific type of educational materials varies by location and should be fashioned in

terms of content and style to meet the needs of children in a particular area. The language and information must be appropriate for this younger audience; the intent should be to inform, not to alarm. Further, the graphics and design must also appeal to the intended age group. Another major issue is the dissemination mechanism and delivery of the product so that it gets widely used. In other words, identifying ways to reach children of all ages in a meaningful way is vital. The possibilities range from the high-tech computer program to the low-tech coloring book. However, just developing a product does not mean that the message will reach the intended audience. Successful risk communication also requires identifying potential outlets for the end products. This may involve establishing partnerships with schools, teachers, parents, or even religious organizations. The goal is to create an interesting product that retains the educational message about hazards and to ensure that the message actually reaches children of all ages.

**John Kinsel, *Church of the Brethren*, United States**

Since 1941 the *Church of the Brethren* has been doing disaster relief. In the mid-1970s we moved to childcare and a focus on children under six. We train volunteers to put together childcare areas in disaster assistance centers. Particular training foci include: Who are the children? What are the effects of trauma? What can we to encounter at a disaster site. How can we learn to be open and responsive to children? How can we meet children "where they are"? The program is called Cocoon and has developmentally appropriate materials. It is non-directive and includes play, use of paint, shaving cream, play-dough, blankets, books, stuffed animals. Safety and caring are paramount. Sometimes we will send a worker to stand in line for a parent if the child needs the parent with them. The work of children is play in which they develop a mastery of their situation. Some just play, others tell a lot about themselves through their play. But play provides information to parents and caregivers about the effects of trauma on children.

**Carolyn Rose-Avila, *Save the Children*, United States**

I was director for *Save the Children*, an NGO, in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch. Our focus was on health and education. Most NGOs are development-focused. We need to integrate disaster with the work they do -- a switch in focus. People are in new roles after disasters and we need to offer training. Funding for psycho-social assistance is not readily available. Rural communities are often dismissed by aid workers focusing on cities. NGOs and relief workers in Nicaragua found themselves dealing with politics and power situations. Most of the people we were helping were from disenfranchised populations, and many were in refugee camps. They couldn't get land for the people and are just now getting people back to farming. Most rural communities were extended families. Refugee camps had pieces of communities. Families began to disintegrate. People wanted to go back to work, back to subsistence farming. Bureaucracy often inhibits recovery efforts.

**Frank Zenere, *Miami-Dade County Public Schools, United States***

Exposure to disaster occurrences has long been part of the human experience. Although, all who come in contact with calamitous events will be emotionally impacted to some degree, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Developmental growth processes greatly influence a child's ability to cope with disaster-related trauma. Reactions of fear, anger, confusion, guilt, shame and grief, all represent the prism of expected responses.

Disaster experiences frequently serve to overwhelm a child's coping ability, much as a tidal wave inundates coastal communities. This emotional overload is exacerbated by the child's minimally developed affective defense system. This inability to deny inability to comprehend, the permanence of death and other multi-level losses, along with early age egocentrism that accentuates feelings of guilt and shame, sets up youngsters for the possibility of enduring trauma reactions.

Underserved communities and populations before the disaster will be underserved afterward. Families, friends and faith are the strengths and protective factors that provide resources. We have to meet children at their developmental age, which may be different than chronological age. The goal is to re-establish family routines, even if they are living in tent cities or shelters.

Adolescents tend to demonstrate emotional reactivity in the form of regressive behavior, behavioral difficulties, depression, school and relationship difficulties and changes in character. Some teens will radically divert from pre-disaster personality traits; the outgoing and active youth, suddenly becomes withdrawn and isolated; the normally reserved and cautious youth may initiate risk-taking behavior. During the post-disaster period, youth of all ages will greatly benefit from well-developed connections to emotionally stable caregivers. Physical closeness and open communication will greatly benefit this process.

Adolescents who have a strong social connection to peer support will also have greater access to express concerns. Additionally, the provision of routine and structure in the lives of youth fosters a sense of comfort and stability. Generally, the increased capacity of youth to cope with disaster experiences will be enhanced by the following recommendations: provide a sense of safety and security; offer opportunities for ventilation and validation of concerns; and assist in predicting and preparing for the future. Youth should be allowed and encouraged to take an active role in the family and community recovery. Assisting their families and helping others in debris removal and physical reconstruction often taps into youth resiliency, and aides in emotional reconstruction as well.

## **Working Across Barriers**

### ***How are disaster-impacted communities divided***

***and with what effects on women and children?  
How can economic, ethnic, cultural, generational, religious  
and other barriers be bridged in practice?***

**Moderator: Shirley Collins, Bureau of Recovery and Mitigation, Florida Department of Community Affairs, United States**

**Maureen Fordham, Anglia Polytechnical University, United Kingdom**

Working across barriers means doing socially inclusive disaster management. Social categorization can be an exclusionary practice, an us-versus-them process, and can be discussed as either choice or imposition. Do people choose identity or is it imposed on them, as a "victim" for instance? We need to acknowledge different experiences and needs but avoid the rigid conceptions of identity. Labeling can take away power and agency. Pre-existing divisions and structured inequalities can worsen disaster-induced divisions. A term could be coined, such as "disastrogenesis", a negative condition induced by the disaster management process that makes things worse. We need to think about the kinds of communities we create through practice and planning: therapeutic or corrosive. Negative effects on women and children include negative effects that worsen vulnerability physically, socially and psychologically. I recommend Mary Anderson's book, *Rising from the Ashes* (1989, Westview Press).

Positives include empowerment, group bonding, a new or renewed sense of self worth. To bridge barriers we need to identify what we do and do not know, think of scale (micro to macro), look at distributions of resources and power. We need to engage in vulnerability and capacity analyses, social inclusion, and participatory approaches. The everyday world, not disasters, creates vulnerabilities and capacities. Here I recommend Robert Bullard's book *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* (2000 Westview Press) and a recent report by Jennifer Wilson and Arturo Yemai-Oyola<sup>4</sup>). Decision makers must reflect the diversity of the locality Web sites are one way to work across barriers, starting with the *Gender and Disaster Network* website: [www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/geography/gdn). Interested persons can join the disaster network listserve on the website.

**Kristina Peterson, Church World Service, United States**

Children are a key to bringing people together and bridging barriers. Things that work to bridge diversity and disaster context include: a holistic response that looks at the family unit; working on safety issues for children, addressing health issues, along with food and shelter. In an example from Dayton, Ohio, we worked with black and white encounters in school districts, finding that the bridge that brought families together was

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, Jennifer and Arthur Oyola-Yemaiel. 1998. "Emergent Coordinative Groups and Women's Response Roles in the Central Florida Tornado Disaster, February 23, 1998." Quick Response Report. Boulder: Natural Hazards Center.

concern over child safety. The kids wanted a place to play, so we led efforts to create a day camp with both groups for 10 weeks.

We cannot and should not avoid addressing pre-existing conditions. This is essential. Issues of resources, time, transportation and jobs go to the heart of recovery. We need to build trust with truthful, forthright information, not withholding information from victims and families. We must interpret vocabularies of disaster for people: terms, acronyms, possibilities and resources. We need to listen to what people say they want and need, not what we think they do. We need to be an advocate, standing beside and with women. It is import to engage in conflict resolution when needed. The development of indigenous leadership is vital. We can move clients from recipient to co-worker and leader by creating opportunities and choices.

Positive steps to help women and children while working across barriers include: creating a neutral center for children to play, providing an opportunity to interact across lines of diversity, opening schools and camps as family centers, and creating weekend retreats for parents and teachers.

**Dave Neal, *University of North Texas, United States***

I see a number of approaches in order to work across barriers. Generally, I propose that we must define the notion of "victim," and we must create new knowledge for more and improved training and hiring practices within disaster relief and other types of agencies.

As we move forward on the topic of disaster on women and children, I believe we must pause on one important topic. Specifically, we need to focus, develop and improve our ideas about disaster victimization. For example, except for Russell Dyne's paper on the concept of role and disaster.<sup>5</sup>, researchers and practitioners have not explored deeply the definition of "disaster victim." Thus, as we move forward with this conference's topic, we must also establish a definition or definitions of "disaster victim." Consider these issues that I believe we must answer. How do researchers define "disaster victim? How do practitioners define "disaster victim?" How do relief agencies and others define "disaster victim?" How do disaster victims see or define themselves as "disaster victims?" How do response, relief, and recovery efforts create or exacerbate victimization? How can we manage the possibility of multiple realities of "victimization?" Can disaster victims exist even if "victims," disaster organizations, and/or government agencies do not define or declare an event a disaster? In summary, the process of understanding the vulnerabilities of women and children is tied directly with broader issues of defining "victim."

No one effort will bridge in gap regarding the issue of women and children being victimized by disaster. Rather, multiple efforts can provide a synergy for success. Three

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<sup>5</sup> Dynes, Russell. "The Concept of Role in Disaster Research" in Dynes, R., B. DeMarchi and C. Pelanda (1987) *Sociology of Disasters*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

related steps, noted below, have been shown to be effective in bridging this gap. They include: Continued new and expanding training courses to sensitize people in disaster organizations to the special needs of women and children; continued and improved diverse hiring practices that reflect victimization patterns; continued and more research on victimization that provides new and better information for training; new and better information regarding hiring practices; new and better theory and research.

In conclusion, I believe that a clearer understanding of "victim" from multiple perspectives (e.g., practitioners, victims, researchers), combined with improved training, hiring practices, and research, can help us bridge the gap across barriers. The approaches I mention here, I believe, can also be integrated with the many other ideas that we will discuss during the workshop.

**Lourdes Meyreles, *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO)*, Dominican Republic**

Meyreles spoke about FLASCO's work in the Dominican Republic after Hurricane Georges, and about experiences working with women. The Caribbean region is at high risk to hurricanes and includes vulnerable populations due to exclusion and unequal access to resources. Women tend to be heads of households, a phenomenon that has increased fourfold in recent decades. Most poor households are headed by women and a woman is often the only adult responsible for children. In dual-parent households, women are the emotional foundation. Gender barriers must be eliminated for effective disaster management to work. Experience has shown that if the response effort is inclusive of women, once included, they will take leadership roles.

"Ser Mujer", an effort post-Georges has been evaluated. All community members were included such as children and single women. This group contacted funders for reconstruction housing, schools, educational programming, waste disposal, clean up, inter-organizational coordination and health initiatives. Community members, especially males, changed their views of women. It was mentioned women created better relationships with local authorities and this experience proved women's capacity for leadership.

**Jean D'Cunha, Independent Researcher and Gender Consultant, Thailand**

Women are socially constructed to be weak, to be rescued, which reinforces gender stereotypes and women as dependent recipients of disaster relief. Gender must be seen as interactive with other social categories. In Bangladesh, a poor country with high illiteracy, large numbers of female-headed households, poverty, and a rigid division of labor in both public and private, strict segregation and decreased mobility, women (especially Muslim women) are at risk. In the 1991 cyclone, in some instances women did not get warnings because men did not relay the warnings to secluded women. Some women procrastinated leaving the house, waiting for husbands -- and died with their children. They feared sexual harassment on the way to shelters and being labeled loose women. In that delay, they perished due to gender roles. More women than men

died trying to save themselves and their children. Some men went to shelters and abandoned their families. Women found it harder to climb onto rooftops since it is not a familiar, routine activity. Cultural values dictate that women's modesty include cumbersome clothing and long hair that impedes quick movement and swimming. Some women stayed in the waters due to their clothes being torn from them. Shelters were too distant and while en route women had to care for children, parents and livestock. Shelters were not gender or culturally sensitive. There was no sex segregation, no privacy, no separate toilets, and sexual harassment occurred. Problems by pregnant women (standing in knee deep water), lactating and menstruating women were not addressed. Post-disaster work loads for women increased. They did not get relief items and were hesitant to go to male distributors. Land and housing often were tied to ownership, but women do not own.

We must ground our work and build on women's strengths. In South Asia some initiatives include joint ownership of houses, involving women in management and volunteerism at the grass roots levels, and enhancing women's access. Empowering women creates new role models, challenges traditional boundaries, and sustains communities.

**Discussant: Susanna Hoffman, Independent Anthropologist, United States**

There is a false bifurcation between culture and society, which are actually very tied. Social organization is an expression of culture. Women, locally, bring in 50-80% of the economy all over the world and are economic providers, whether it is with goats, eggs, chickens, crops, etc. Women feed men, yet remain invisible. A number of themes resonated in this session: having more female managers, understanding scale, categorizing and identifying by outsiders, separating women from who they relate to, defining women as victims, and issues of bifurcation: male/female, race/ethnicity, urban/rural, organized and not organized, private/public, and visible/invisible. The more we make a hue and cry, the more change can happen.

**Discussant: Marian Burns, Greater Miami and the Keys Red Cross, United States**

Partnerships are key in breaking barriers. We cannot work in isolation, but must seek the local community's input. The Red Cross is local, not just national in the U.S., with 1300 chapters. They want research, and to take it to the community. The Red Cross is trying to increase its diversity. Let's work together. Let's use the internet to connect. Find a mentor and be a mentor, especially to a girl.

## **Building on Women's Strengths**

***What best practices exist for gender-equitable disaster work?  
What factors facilitate and limit their implementation?***

**Moderator: Brenda Phillips, *Texas Woman's University***

**Sarah Bradshaw, *Puntos de Encuentro/ICD, Nicaragua*  
“Impacts and Interventions: A Gendered Analysis of Post-Mitch Nicaragua”**

The issue of the role of NGOs in reconstruction and their ability to compensate for weak governments has been brought to the fore in the Nicaraguan context, given that reconstruction, to the extent that it has occurred, has been largely via national and international NGOs.

Two key data sources exist on the impact of interventions for reconstruction post-Mitch. The first, the Social Audit, was a large-scale household survey undertaken in the regions affected by Mitch, seeking to present the needs and opinions of the people directly affected by the disaster. This initiative was promoted by the *Civil Coordinator for Emergency and Reconstruction (CCER)*, an organization that emerged soon after Mitch and encompasses more than 300 national NGOs via established NGO networks. The evidence provided on reconstruction initiatives has been used by the *CCER* in their advocacy role to highlight the inefficiency of the Government and to promote an alternative people-centered vision of reconstruction: a vision that places as central the need to change existent unequal relations of power. A more in-depth study of four communities affected by Mitch undertaken within *Puntos de Encuentro*, a national feminist NGO and member of the *CCER*, complements this survey evidence. It focuses on the impact of crisis and reconstruction on gender roles and relations within households.

The studies highlight the differential impact that crisis and reconstruction interventions have had depending on sex, age and position of the person in the household (head or partner). The evidence highlights young people as those who most feel that the situation has improved. Apparent success at gaining access to available resources for reconstruction would appear to explain this. Female heads of household also emerge as a group that has had greater access to reconstruction; however, the extent to which female heads are really benefiting from this access in terms of their longer-term more 'strategic' needs is questionable. Finally, the seemingly greater negative impact of crisis and reconstruction on the position of young female partners/wives within households suggest this as a group for concern.

The studies also suggest that while most reconstruction has occurred via NGOs, these projects are not without problems. More importantly there is evidence that reconstruction projects appear to have a negative impact on relations between men and women in households, in terms of both increased levels of conflict and violence.

Further the presence of reconstruction projects in general appears to create demand for psychological support, a demand that may often go unmet due to lack of resources. The need for more integrated reconstruction projects that address practical, strategic and emotional needs is thus clear.

The evidence also presents a dilemma for those working from a gender perspective. While some women suggest that the situation in terms of male/female relations has actually improved post-Mitch, a closer look highlights two issues for discussion. First, the trend post-Mitch for men to turn to religion appears to have promoted a positive, if cosmetic, change for the better. Second, the inclusion of 'masculinity' training with men in some reconstruction packages seems to be having an equally positive, although possibly more fundamental impact. While the first raises a question about to what extent can and should such openings be used, the second raises questions around the channeling of scarce resources toward men in post-disaster situations.

**Wayne Westhoff, *Center for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance*, United States**

The CDMHA has will have money available to fund projects beginning in September. Information will be available via its web site: [www.cdmha.org](http://www.cdmha.org). This is a joint effort between *Tulane University* and *University of South Florida*. We want to build partnerships with the money. Funds come from the *US Congress* and *Department of Defense*. We concentrate on the Americas, excluding Canada, and focus on countries and areas under the Southern Command of the *DOD*. An example has been rebuilding bridges in Tegucigalpa with transporting materials to sites. We conducted 650 flights into Puerto Rico. The Center offers education and training (conference support, distance learning, graduate courses), communication, and research funding. Last year we gave \$400,000 to projects. Projects must focus on the Americas. Other themes are partnering, and social and behavioral research. Proposals should be for \$30,000-\$50,000 in funding with a possibility of up to \$100,000.

**Lynne Cameron, *Neighbors 4 Neighbors*, Channel 4 Miami, Florida, United States**

It is important to work with reporters. Watch the media. If a reporter covers an issue that you want to address, contact that reporter. After Hurricane Andrew, a female producer decided to use a phone bank to connect people in need with donors, and *Neighbor 4 Neighbor* was born and continues today. We connect people and resources. I urge you to educate the media and work with reporters, particularly female reporters who are more likely to cover home and family issues. It is important to prepare and empower the community by working with local media, building a

relationship with the media prior to impact, helping with information dissemination, and educating the media about disasters before they strike.

**Lynn Orstad, *Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada***

My role as practitioner is to interpret research at the local level, with a special focus on battered women. It is important that we incorporate women into emergency management. In our training, we have given 10 courses with 300 people; 90% have been male. Teaching about how women are made invisible in emergencies has been successful. Fifteen emergency managers have made contact with women's organizations in 15 communities. It's a good start -- the key is to start doing something.

**Discussant: Brigitte Toure, *Centre de Recherche et de Documentation en Economie de la Sante (Paris), France***

It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm and energy here. It is clear we need to use a gender methodology, with gender tools. We need to avoid the top-down approach and include women. We need to disseminate information, lobby and influence governments and include women. In Africa, there is a lack of research, information and coordination and it is difficult to put things together. The success in British Columbia is very important, a concrete success.

**Discussant: Bruce Netter, *Catholic Charities, United States***

Netter told a joke to make the point that men need to be included as part of the solution. Several men were quite active in the conference and he encouraged the group to seek to find and encourage supportive men, and to educate the others on gender issues and include them in initiatives.

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