

Statement to be read at the Fourth Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Americas (RP14), to be held from 27-29 May 2014 in Guayaquil, Ecuador

Prepared by the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) as their Position on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Post-2015 Discourse

85,000 ideas to strengthen community resilience

GNDR was launched in 2007 in the belief that civil society will have a greater impact in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people by working together. Responding to the underlying concerns of civil society organisations that the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 does not translate into effective implementation and change at the ‘frontline’ – where communities vulnerable to disasters live and work– GNDR focuses on how to strengthen resilience at the community level.

As the largest international network of organisations committed to working together to improve the lives of people affected by disasters world-wide, GNDR plans to actively support our members both leading up to the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in Sendai 2015, and after the post-2015 DRR framework is agreed.

The reality at the ‘frontline’

In the last six years, GNDR has worked with over 85,000 community members to gain a cross-section of perspectives from affected communities, local authorities and civil society organisations where disasters have the most impact. This massive body of evidence from our *Views from the Frontline* programme has revealed 6 key challenges viewed by local stakeholders as most critical to strengthening community resilience:

Challenge 1. Weak governance and few partnerships: Local risk governance is critical to accelerating risk reduction efforts at the local level. Dramatic changes are needed for this to take place systematically at the scale required to reverse the upwards trend in disaster losses. There is currently insufficient focus at the local level aiming to enhance inclusion and partnerships, develop local capacity, and enable greater accountability and transparency.

Challenge 2. Clouds but little rain –failure of implementation: Nationally-formulated policies are not generating widespread systemic changes in local practices. While progress may be happening at the national level, the results are not seen in local communities. Local resources are scarce and considered one of the main constraints to progress. Without adopting participatory approaches, these resources cannot be unlocked.

Challenge 3. Only the big disasters hit the headlines: In 2014, 52 million people received international humanitarian aid; even more did not. Cumulative losses due to small-scale, recurrent ‘everyday disasters’ account for the majority of localised disaster losses. These disasters are largely unreported, uninsured, and do not attract national government attention or unlock external financial assistance.

Challenge 4. The poorer you are, the worse it gets: Poverty pushes people to live in high-risk areas where livelihood opportunities do exist but lack in formal protection and safety. Up to 95% of people killed by disasters are from developing countries with women, children and the elderly disproportionately bearing the greatest disaster losses. More than 50% of people affected by ‘natural disasters’ live in fragile and conflict-affected countries. The poorer you are the more losses you experience and the less you are able to deal with adversity. Yet the DRR strategies designed at present do not sufficiently address the most marginalised, disadvantaged, excluded social groups, and monitoring tools lack the ability to provide disaggregated information according to socioeconomic indicators.

Challenge 5. Losses are increasing, not decreasing: Despite a marked reduction in lives lost over the last 23 years, and national reports of increasing progress in the implementation of the five priorities and three strategic objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action, in the last 20 years natural disasters have affected 64% of the world’s population and economic losses continue to escalate each year in all regions.

Challenge 6. Insufficient community ownership: Establishing specific and actionable recommendations that can strengthen local level resilience-building depends on gathering and analysing data from local level consultations, learning and experience that are hard to access. Insufficient support is provided to facilitating communities to understand risks and root causes, and strengthening their ability to address these through regular reflection and by working in partnership with others.

Pathways for strengthening community resilience in any post-2015 DRR framework

In the last six years, 85,000 low-income households have helped GNDR to understand how they manage hazards of all kinds, in a complex, uncertain and fragile environment, as their own way to identify pathways for strengthening community resilience. Because a global disaster risk reduction framework must be relevant to the people and communities most affected by disasters and based on the challenges faced by vulnerable people, GNDR’s research highlights 5 key recommendations to achieve this goal:

Recommendation 1. Tackle the underlying causes of people’s vulnerability to disasters: i) Support effective social change processes that address structural inequalities and power imbalances between social, economic and demographic groups; ii) Create and promote links between resilience-based post-2015 development frameworks that address the Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, climate change treaty, poverty reduction and conflict transformation in order to achieve policy coherence; and iii) Ensure inter-generational sustainability by promoting resilience-based sustainable development frameworks that facilitate integrated programmes and support policies that balance human needs with environmental management.

Recommendation 2. Recognise the impact of everyday disasters on lives, livelihoods and assets: i) Incorporate a strong focus on small scale ‘everyday hazards’ of all types in national DRR law, policies, and national loss databases; and ii) Adopt a holistic DRR framework that reflects the multi-dimensional nature of hazards.

Recommendation 3. Prioritise the most at-risk, poorest and marginalised people: i) Design DRR policy strategies and interventions that reflect the needs of the most marginalised and excluded social groups; ii) Recognise the active role and knowledge contributions of at-risk groups in local risk governance; and iii) Disaggregate disaster information according to economic and social status to get an accurate picture of local vulnerability and capacities.

Recommendation 4. Mobilise political commitment by focusing on rights, responsibilities and accountabilities: i) Establish relevant indicators, targets, baselines and performance standards to measure progress at all levels, including integration into local monitoring processes; Ensure transparent monitoring and audit mechanisms to measure and review progress at all levels; and iii) Explicitly link the protection of people’s lives, livelihoods and assets to relevant international and domestic legal provisions.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen ‘local governance’: i) Clearly define ways and means that all social groups in society can participate in disaster risk management decision-making, planning and implementation; ii) Promote and strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliance building across sectors and disciplines, ensuring that national platforms establish links with subnational; and iii) Promote collaboration between local civil society, community organisations and local government.

GNDR encourages the official representatives attending this regional platform to explicitly recognise the challenges of the most vulnerable people living at the frontline and hopes that our recommendations will be embraced by all actors present here today in Guayaquil and incorporated into the final recommendations of the outcome document of this Fourth Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Americas.

GNDR would like to thank our members, in particular to those from Latin America and The Caribbean, and to the individuals and organisations that have participated in the *Views from the Frontline* and *Action at the Frontline* programmes, for all their hard work to make possible our presence here today and we are pleased to end this statement by inviting with open arms to all the organisations and actors present at this gathering to join us and form coalitions, alliances and partnerships to work together with the common goals of building resilience and ultimately reducing the impact of disasters for those communities and individuals ‘at the frontline’.