

A Statement Surrounding Disaster Risk Reduction For and By the Women and Girls of Latin America and the Caribbean

Priority aspects for the women and girls of Latin America and the Caribbean towards Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) as a fundamental element for Sustainable and Human Development

In commemoration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction
13 October, 2012

The women and girls of Latin America and the Caribbean call for a change in defense of our rights and in order to promote a change in paradigm surrounding our role in Disaster Risk Reduction, mindful of the different ethnic communities and traditional knowledge bases throughout the region.

We ask that we not be perceived as passive victims and treated as beneficiaries in general by virtue of being considered as a group vulnerable to disasters. We emphasize that we are not vulnerable, but rather that we live in conditions of vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change. We highlight our role as active subject of rights and agents of change, proactively contributing to the wellbeing, development, security and peace of our families, our communities, our cities and our nations. We are part of the solution and therefore we ask to be seen as such.

Recognizing that:

The Hyogo Framework for Action adopted during the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) held in Kobe, Japan from 18-22 February, 2005 and ratified by the United Nations General Assembly, reiterated the guidelines of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and of Objective 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (2000), emphasizing that a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessments, early warning, information management, education and training.

Disaster Risk Reduction is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development and an important requirement for achieving the Millennium Development Goals; two areas in which women and girls play a central role, as recently indicated in The future We Want, outcome document approved during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 (2012).

Furthermore, we highlight the importance of working towards disaster risk reduction in the region, given that Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the world's regions most vulnerable to disasters triggered by natural phenomena, a trend that is on the rise.

Disasters have different impacts on the quality of life of women and men of different ages and ethnic groups. As such, plans for disaster preparedness, mitigation and response should take into

account both the needs and potential contributions of men and women. A gender perspective in the study and analysis of disasters is essential to achieving the goal of communities safer and more resilient to disasters.

We must understand that ensuring the human rights of women and girls, in turn, strengthens human rights in general. Similarly, ensuring the active participation of women and girls in public decision-making and implementing a gender perspective in all aspects of life of people and communities, in turn, serves to promote more organized and resilient societies. As such, we must safeguard the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls living in urban areas as well as in rural areas where environmental degradation and climate change have increased vulnerability to disasters.

The United Nations Security Council has recognized, through its resolution 1983 of 2011, that humanitarian crises exacerbate the risk of women to HIV, sexual violence and gender-based violence and that Member States are obliged to take positive action to protect and empower women and girls and to prevent these situations in the context of humanitarian assistance.

By incorporating a focus on Disaster Risk Reduction with a gender perspective within the public agenda, resilient development plans have the potential to reduce disaster risks, anticipate the impact on potential human rights violations and minimize the social inequalities that generate vulnerability.

Disasters are not natural; rather they are the socially constructed product of current development patterns that lead to vulnerability. As well as their negative impacts on communities and societies, disasters can also undermine the health, well-being and sense of dignity of women and girls when they are deprived of autonomy and access to social resources. The active and proactive role of women and girls as well as their involvement in decision-making is fundamental to the development process, in all aspects of planning, in actions to reduce disaster risk and in preparedness for and response to emergencies.

Natural hazards are recurrent, thus requiring that we organize ourselves, together with our communities, in order to create the tools and strategies needed to deal with these hazards and to support efforts to reduce our vulnerabilities and therefore our risk in a more resilient manner.

Women and girls have both the right as well as the duty to actively partake in disaster risk management in their communities and nations, throughout the entire process of disaster preparedness, action and recovery but also in the consultation processes surrounding decision-making and the development of public policies and plans for risk management in general.

As such, we request:

Recognition of our active as well as proactive role in maintaining well-being, security and peace within our families, our communities, our nations and our surroundings; and, as such, recognition of our right to participate in decision-making at all levels.

Promoting integrated risk management with a gender focus as a development strategy, both in the urban as well as the rural and community context, and with full consideration of the actions and knowledge of the women of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Being included as both active and proactive protagonists in disaster risk management, as well as being considered as part of the solution and as agents of change.

Equal representation in venues of decision-making and in planning processes at all levels; increasing our empowerment and political capacities in general.

Having access to appropriate and timely information.

Based on the above, we, the women and girls of Latin America and the Caribbean, are committed to:

Working towards both constructing and strengthening our knowledge and capacities, including the traditional, in order to establish and reinforcing our key role in Disaster Risk Reduction and Risk Management as an essential aspect for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and for truly sustainable development.

Supporting the initiatives of the United Nations, of International Cooperation organizations, NGOs, among others, in articulation with the efforts of national and local authorities in the region towards implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) aimed at building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

Supporting initiatives aimed at implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1983 and for protecting women and girls against HIV, sexual violence and gender-based violence as well as in situations of disaster and conflict.

Strengthening disaster resilient cities and communities by promoting and supporting the Global Campaign "[Making Cities Resilient: My city is getting ready!](#)" and motivating our mayors and local authorities to sign on to the Campaign and follow up on actions for improving disaster resilience.

Promoting the [One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals Initiative](#) and encouraging members of our families, communities, organizations, governments and other groups to commit to a safer school or hospital in order to achieve improved conditions of security and disaster resistance.

Knowing, valuing and applying the knowledge of women and girls so that such knowledge may be replicated in other communities, both urban and rural, in order to create more resilient nations.

Background:

- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979
- The creation of [GROOTS](#) in 1985 during the Third United Nations World Women's Conference in Nairobi as a global network of women's grassroots organizations and the establishment of the [Huairou Commission](#) in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.
- [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development](#), Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992
- [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) in Beijing, 1995
- [Millennium Declaration](#) and the Millennium Development Goals, 2000
- Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, 2005 and the [Hyogo Framework for Action](#) 2005-2015 (HFA)
- Third World Congress on Women in Politics and Governance and the [Manila Declaration for Global Action on Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction](#), 2008
- [The Future We Want](#), outcome document of the United Nations Conference on sustainable Development, Rio+20; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 20-22 June, 2012
- [Resolution 1983](#) of the United Nations Security Council, 2011

Our main tool: The Hyogo Framework for Action

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), product of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan (2005) includes the mandate of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of disaster risk reduction. This Framework for Action, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, establishes as an expected result the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries; providing five priorities for action for achieving this goal by 2015.

Gender is one of the cross-cutting issues of the HFA which states that “a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training”. Furthermore, the HFA also recognizes the importance of gender considerations in all areas of risk management and in all phases of the disaster cycle, including response, recovery, preparedness and mitigation.

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