

Women's Major Group Intervention
Informal Dialogue #1 between Co-Chairs and Major Groups
September 9, 2014

Good afternoon Co-chair(s) and colleagues. My name is Lily Hutjes-Boelaars of the Huairou Commission speaking today on behalf of the Women's Major Group.

At the outset we'd like to appreciate and welcome the efforts by the Bureau to reflect the multiple submissions and positions presented in PrepCom1 and for sponsoring a robust consultation process. The inclusion of stakeholders particularly those representing key marginalized groups such as women and indigenous peoples, and your respect for our leadership and knowledge is appreciated.

The draft document's reference to and link between responsibilities and rights is particularly welcome. However, we feel that these and other key aspects of the document need better articulation. Thus we wish to contribute the following points to explain our general views and specific comments on Sections A, B and C in this 1st discussion among the Major Groups and Co-Chairs

General Views: 7 Priorities for the Women's Major Group

(1) Goals/targets: While we understand the benefits of a small number of targets, the final targets must provide sufficient depth to reflect all 3 dimensions of sustainable development and to facilitate actions that are effective and inclusive--promoting the rights of **all** persons. The proposed targets currently do not align to the wider aims of the goals. Therefore we reiterate other targets should be included.

For example, while the document pledges to reduce loss across economic, social and environmental, environmental impacts of disasters are not here as a specific target. Disaggregated data by sex is essential; and measures must be inclusive of economic loss, at all levels (including subsistence and small scale farmers as well as slum dwellers for example). Wider social impact also includes 'secondary' affects such as increase in VAWG and longer-term outcomes such as disability and psychosocial impact that need to be monitored.

(2) Gender equality / women's rights: The Guiding Principles state that '**gender considerations** are to inform all policies and practices...' but this is not enough. For mainstreaming to succeed there is a need to explicitly mention gender differentiation and women as a specific group in all appropriate instances, e.g. addressing gender differences in access to and control over resources to ensure resilience. Only priorities that are explicitly named will get implemented and counted.

Recognition of women's capacities to lead and manage DRR (as in the Guiding Principles) is crucial. Policymakers must insure that income and time poor women, many of whom are already organizing and taking leadership, are rewarded, not held back, in the future. Women must be positioned as more than a human and economic resource for DRR but as active stakeholders and decision makers, with rights and knowledge. ***Through Principles, targets and indicators, the HFA2 can guide Member States toward measures to ensure women's active role is encouraged, valued and supported*** - so that women and girls are assuming decision making roles in their communities and households in the decade ahead.

(3) Stakeholders: An inclusive and diverse approach to stakeholder groups is important, but power imbalances among stakeholder groups must be acknowledged and addressed and distinctions must be made between rights holders and duty bearers. Trans-national companies, part of the private sector, have for example, responsibilities to respect the rights of other groups and peoples, including the workers and communities their activities affect. Developing platforms where women, girls and young people’s experiences and recommendations - and the situated knowledge of indigenous peoples – are respected and acted upon are key to redress the power gap.

(4) Human rights: A clearer rights based approach would help to ensure rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders are better articulated. Currently only one reference appears (in the Guiding Principles).

(5) Inclusive language: is spotty and should be improved by using the word “**ALL**” throughout (e.g. strengthen economic and social resilience of **ALL** countries and **ALL** people).

(6) Difference: Differences between people, especially in terms of differential risk, exposure and vulnerability must be recognized in the document to insure a rights-based approach and inclusive actions that deliver for a larger group of people.

(7) Environmental Resilience: The three strands of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – need rebalancing so that commitments to investing in strengthening environmental resilience are made and realized.

Section A: Preamble

The preamble provides a list of underlying factors driving risk that didn’t receive enough attention. ‘Poverty’ is noted here but fails to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of poverty, beyond economic (to social and political)—a crucial distinction to promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality in DRR.

Para 4 in the preamble is one place to bring in inclusiveness, environmental resilience and rights: *“prevent the creation of new risk, reduce the existing risk and strengthen economic, **environmental** and social resilience of **all** countries and **all** people”* **within a human rights framework.**

It is very important to give full attention to small-scale disaster, as mentioned, and to broaden the definition of loss beyond economic and mortality

The WMG strongly supports strengthening the sharing of information/technology/etc. and encourages Member States to ensure it is in multiple directions – and not only from west/developed to others.

Investments and financial instruments, as well as international cooperation, require emphasis in the preamble to promote equity, justice and accountability.

Section B: Purpose, Scope, Outcome and Goals

We welcome the 2 targets added post PrepCom1– on reducing the number of affected people and on increasing the number of countries with national and local strategies-- and underscore the need for a stronger social and rights aspect.

For example:

- One target should decrease persons who are displaced and prevented from accessing adequate and essential services (...water, food, sanitation, healthcare,...), with specific attention to women and other marginalized groups.
- Another should ensure gender-specific health services during crises, including women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), through all stages of life.
- The last target should add “and ensure diverse participation at all stages of development, implementation, monitoring and review of strategies – including women, grassroots women’s groups representing poor communities, indigenous peoples, youth ...and marginalized people.”

Targets currently address the States’ overall outcome in terms of losses, but lack real measures of environmental loss. An explicit target on this is needed– as environmental losses diminish resilience and challenge insuring basic human rights.

Targets must be differentiated by gender, sex, age, income, ability, etc. to improve outcomes for marginalized women and other similar groups. Devising appropriate indicators through a participatory and inclusive process is also important.

We note the Goals have a stronger “social” orientation than the targets, which are extremely quantitative and miss the nuances and intricacies of DRR. To further strengthen, we suggest looking at the DIFFERENTIAL exposure and vulnerability to insure women and others facing the greatest vulnerability and exposure receive priority.

Section C: Guiding Principles

We welcome mentions of gender, traditional knowledge culture and practice, and rights. However we call for the following:

Re “Gender” –

Mainstreaming references are not sufficient; the **document should include gender explicitly as and where appropriate.**

Noting that (d) has 3 sentences, we urge that the reference: ‘*gender considerations should inform all policies and practices, and women’s leadership is to be promoted*’ be incorporated as a stand-alone principle. (As should the following sentence on children/youth, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples).

‘Gender considerations’ should recognize that gender inequality manifests as differential access to and control over the resources to build resilience. Hence all policies and practices seeking to reduce gender inequalities must address this as a key element in DRR. Gender considerations in disaster response should include promoting the right of every women and girl to live free from

violence, exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and secure entitlements and decent livelihoods.

We recommend that (j) is changed to emphasize: ‘...*risk information, including on **DIFFERENTIAL** disaster losses, socio-economic impact, hazards’ characteristics, and **DIFFERENT** people and assets’ exposure and vulnerability, at every level....’ to insure inclusive, equitable action. (Disaggregated, context specific data is essential to such processes.)*

(l), should be rephrased to read: *The post-disaster recovery and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to prevent the creation of new risk and reduce existing risk, **THROUGH** strengthening the resilience **OF ALL PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES and ECOSYSTEMS**. Appreciating its reference to taking ‘Relevant, local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, culture and practices... into account’ we urge adding **in any assessment of differential risk and how to manage this (to account for both +/- aspects)**.*

Looking at “Women” –

Women’s leadership in (d) requires further specification to insure women are publicly recognized, resourced, and supported to exercise our rights. This means taking women’s roles, responsibilities and/or cultural constraints into account to insure actions extending women’s participation and leadership in DRR improve women’s political, economic and social status. Public participation in policy development will better insure that particular vulnerabilities are better addressed and will help to ensure that the leadership and capacities of marginalized groups are fully enlisted in efforts to build resilience. Recognizing the importance of meaningfully involving organized groups of women in the slums and rural areas in all elements of DRR decision-making is particularly important.

Finally, looking at “Rights” –

We suggest reordering section (b) to centrally emphasize rights:

Managing the risk of disasters should be seen as integral element in protecting human rights, and actions should be aimed at protecting all people, particularly the most marginalized, and their livelihoods and property, and to building their resilience.

Adding: Rights can improve (f): ‘*clear recognition, articulation, and alignment of **RIGHTS** and responsibilities across public and private stakeholders...*’

In conclusion, a people-centered approach to disaster risk reduction, emphasizing women’s empowerment, human rights and gender equality, is essential for building resilience. Mainstreaming the emphases we have noted into HFA2 is crucial to insuring it reverses the under performing results of its predecessor. . In doing so, the Framework will necessarily need to understand the current AND DIFFERENTIATED situation of risk and vulnerability – and knowledge and capabilities; ensure basic human rights are respected, especially in times of disaster and rebuilding; and create mechanisms for accelerating women’s public leadership in all key decision making areas including monitoring and accountability and requiring and collecting gender and class appropriate disaggregated data.