

**WOMEN AND GIRLS: A FORCE FOR COMMUNITY, COUNTRY
AND REGIONAL RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS'**

12 Oct 2012

Bangkok, Thailand

**SPEECH OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

H.E. Minister of Science and Technology of Thailand, M. Plodprasop Suraswadi,
Mr. the Secretary-General of the Southeast Asian Nations, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan
Dr. O.P Mishra, Head Geological Disaster Division, from SAARC Disaster Management
Centre (SDMC),

Excellencies, distinguished members of the AADMER Partnership Group (APG), The
Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation in Thailand, UN and civil society
organisations and the many leading community women who are present here today,

It is a great honour to be here with you today to celebrate jointly the ASEAN Day for
Disaster Management (ADDM) and the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR).

The theme of the 2012 International Day for disaster risk reduction is 'Women and Girls:
The Invisible Force of Resilience' as many women are still today, not recognised as "visible
partners" in making our communities safer from disasters.

Women play a crucial role in protecting and preventing their communities from disasters.
They are the ones who protect their children, houses and livelihoods when disaster hit
their villages and towns. The ones who plan well in advance what need to be done before
the next disaster happens and what to do after it has happened, as disaster impacts will
last weeks even months after they struck.

Women represent the power of change and it encourages their greater involvement in
disaster management.

In too many countries and communities, women do not have a say and do not participate
in the disaster decision making processes and are too often excluded or not heard when
they have so much to bring to the table and can make such a difference when they
participate in the resilience of their communities.

Today we want to highlight the positive actions of many women in planning and decision making for disaster resilience, in making their communities safer before during and after disaster hit their villages, towns, cities.

We are lucky to have with us today a number of women who have made a great difference in their communities.

Women such as Rorn Srey Thorng, from Cambodia, who started to be involved in disaster risk reduction through Plan International. Rorn built a child-centred disaster risk reduction project and learned how to produce videos to teach her friends and children of her school and community about what can be done to reduce risks when drought and floods hit her village.

Women such as Mamik Sulastri from Indonesia, who as an elementary teacher facilitated vulnerabilities and capacities assessments in 40 villages around the Kelud Volcano area to better protect them against volcano eruptions.

Phyu Zar Swe from Myanmar, who after the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, attended a Disaster management Training at Naypyidaw and organised awareness raising trainings in more than 100 villages communicating the importance of knowing what to do before, during and after a disaster.

Huynh Thanh Dao from Viet Nam who was recently elected as the Vice Chairwoman of the Women's Union of her town and is strong advocate for gender equity, especially defending women's rights and roles in local disaster preparation and mitigation activities.

These are the women we want to celebrate today because we will not be able to reduce the impacts of disasters without them. There are our role models and examples of what must be done to make our communities safer against disasters.

These are the stories of courage, mobilization and organisation that we want to highlight today.

Disaster risk reduction is a collective effort and everybody has a role to play to make our communities safer against disasters and the role of women cannot be ignored, minimized or marginalised.

We will not succeed to strengthen the resilience of our communities against disasters without the full participation and contribution of women and girls in disaster risk reduction.

Later this morning, we will have two panel discussions that will bring new ideas to the table. Men and women need to work equally together and find better ways to integrate all the special needs in the disaster risk reduction agenda.

The inputs from the two panel discussions are very important as they will also feed into the coming Asian Ministerial Conference on disaster risk reduction that will be held in Jogjakarta, Indonesia in 22-25 October and the next global platform on disaster risk reduction next year in 2013 and the post Hyogo Framework for Action.

As you know the current framework on disaster risk reduction which was adopted in 2005 in Japan is ending in 2015. We are now working with governments and all our partners to ensure that gender equality in disaster risk reduction is fully integrated in the next framework and the discussions start here today.

I call on women and girls to assume their roles as organisers, networkers, decision-makers and activist to strengthen the preparedness for resilience to disasters.