



# Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

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## The Role of women as change agents for disaster risk reduction and resilience

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In Collaboration with

**United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA)**

# Ahfad University for Women Creating Women Change Agents for DRR



# Ahfad University for Women

- The first women university in the region
- A private, non-profit educational institution
- Dedicated to girls education for over a century
- Committed to community development and building an egalitarian society
- **With a vision and mission of women empowerment, gender equity & equality**



# Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality in disaster risk reduction

- Building the resilience of nations and communities require social, economic and environmental investments.
- A number of countries involve women and men actively in disaster risk management and planning and have integrated gender dimensions into risk reduction and response plans.
- *However, women and their role as change agents in their societies are often overlooked in the disaster context, where they are often categorized as vulnerable*



# Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality in disaster risk reduction

## The context

- Global agreements and instruments on disaster reduction identify the need to address gender and women's issues.
- Since The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 1990-2000(IDNDR), a call for **'stimulating community involvement and empowerment of women at all stages of disaster management, which is an essential precondition for reducing vulnerabilities of communities to natural disasters'**



# The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) & Gender

The HFA recognises that women and men are differently at risk from disasters and their *vulnerabilities* differ, that women and men are equipped with different skills and *capacities* for disaster risk reduction.

*HFA underscores gender integration as a core factor in its implementation*



# *The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) & Gender*

- Engagement and role of women across all 5 Priorities for Action of the HFA **remain under achieved against its specified intention.**

*‘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’.*



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- Women constitute more than 50% of the global population mass which implies :
- In case of **vulnerability** that much of people are at risk
- In terms of **capabilities** that so much of potentials must be utilized



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- Gender based differences are observed in all aspects of women's life ..a big **challenge** in both cases of vulnerability and capability
- These differences are rooted in and a reflection of norms and attitudes and discrimination against women, in all fields.



# ***Why gender why women in DRR?***

**Gendered asymmetries, deprive women of opportunities for participation and contribution, to bring their skills and experiences to effect decisions.**

- Limitations and restrictions related to women's mobility and protection, resulting in greater tendencies for their exclusion from planning and strategic decision making processes.**



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- Gender based perceptions of women and girls as *weak and inferior* resulted in categorizing women as weak and incapacitated in all aspects of disasters and acts as a barrier that isolates them from planning and decision making processes.
- Women and girls are often considered a *'problem'*, overlooking the fact they are *an integral part of resilience building*.
- This leads to the *perpetuation* and re- enforcement of the pre-existing parameters as evident in overall disaster management activities, including in communications and *media portrayal*.



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- Gender-based inequalities in their totality shape women's *vulnerabilities* & *capabilities*
- *Vulnerabilities*: A greater degree of risk during disasters, including the risks of gender-based violence (GBV): mostly *sexual violence* and abuse..



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- This also impacts on *capabilities*:
- Less ability to contribute to formal disaster management mechanisms
- To access and respond to early warning and other information
- Less ability *for preparedness* and survival, protecting livelihoods and productive assets



# *Why gender why women in DRR?*

- Due to gender norms & practices *social* and *institutional dynamics* simultaneously exacerbate women's vulnerabilities and downplay their capacities and potential.
- *This demand recognition and corrective action.*



## *Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?*

- Reports on HFA implementation indicate a **poor** reflection on gender integration.
- To take corrective steps in HFA2 it is important to identify **why???**



## *Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?*

- Inappropriate approach : the paradigm of *vulnerability reduction*, rather than *capacity development*
- A challenge encountered in the HFA implementation is that DRR all along was taken as an *'add on'* to the development process.



## *Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?*

- The integration of DRR and gender issues are getting largely isolated from the *mainstream* development and becoming the responsibility of a specialized parallel set of *institutions*.
- Ambiguity in *accountabilities*, which have not been clearly defined. The institutional decisions and actions implicating on *re-enforcing* gender based inequalities therefore are not held accountable.



## *Shortcomings in HFA implementation of gender integration and women's empowerment in DRR?*

- A critical limitation lies in the progress *review mechanism*.
- *The 22 Core indicators of progress in the HFA Monitor do not include any for measuring progress in gender integration.*



# *A better measure of gender integration in DRR*

- *“A more robust measure of progress for gender integration can be sex and age disaggregated data as a core indicator and DRR planning based on **gender analysis** as a means of verification” “(Towards the post-2015).*



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

## **1- At the family & household level:**

- In the socialization of children and transmission of knowledge, values and skills (*using indigenous means, Culture of peace for man-made disasters and conflicts*)
- In their reproductive role they provide security and care ( shelter, food, protection, curing & health...etc)



# ***Women's role as actors in DRR***

- In case of fleeing and forced migration they rescue children and household belongings
- Transmit information about early warning of disasters based on experience and indigenous knowledge



# ***Women's role as actors in DRR***

- **Assume economic activity for livelihood especially in response and recovery stages**
- **In camps, outside camps offering their labour**



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

- In case of climate change women employ ancestors' indigenous knowledge in managing food, medical plants, domestic animals and soil protection



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

- **At the institutional level:**
- **Women are part of the workforce in many institutions engaged in DRR, and other related institutions.**
- **They are rescue workers**
- **Aid and recovery service delivery & providers**
- **GBV service providers**



# ***Women's role as actors in DRR***

- They offer training and information facilities
- They offer feedback on policies and intervention viability based on experience and practice from a gendered lens/women's perspective
- Decision making and consultations



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

- **At the community level:**
- **Voluntary work within some NGOs**
- **Community mobilization and formation of self-help groups & CBOs to function in case of emergency and regularly**
- **Act as safety-nets by offering services (financial informal saving), social cohesion and resilience**



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

- **Reflections from the conference papers:**
- 1- From the experience of (*Tuti Island*) in Sudan women were reported to contribute from there savings to the community fund especially established for DRR by CBOs.
- In specific community hardships (floods) women voluntarily offered their *jewellery* for community support, showing a good role model.



# *Women's role as actors in DRR*

- **Reflections from the conference papers:**
- **2- In *Somalia* women voluntary saving groups provide a mechanism to cope with drought and its adverse impact on household livelihoods.**
- **Also women utilized and managed remittances of the family members in the diaspora(majority of whom migrated due to disaster related risks) as a mechanism of DRR**



# *Recommendations to engender HFA2*

- Pathway to gender equality and enhancing the role of women as actors in DRR lies in addressing the structural impediments .
- The HFA2 call is for a *paradigm shift* in approach from *reducing vulnerability* to *capability & resilience* building in a holistic and integrated manner.
- This is expressed in Strengthened resilience, grounded in confronting the underlying causes of risk and *inequalities*.



# *Recommendations to engender HFA2*

- Use **knowledge**, **innovation** and **education** to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
- Change the approach to the engagement of women from the limited, token representation such as in **committees and taskforces**, often in stereotypical gendered roles, to more substantive, meaningful and **effective participation**.
- **This requires creating new spaces for women's experiences, interests, practical and strategic needs to be reflected in the policies, planning and program implementation at every level (Towards post-2015).**



# *Recommendations to engender HFA2*

- To adopt actions for empowering and supportive of **self realization** and **building confidence** of women on their role and capabilities.
- Trigger a changeover of social attitudes and acceptance of women in different roles.  
***Gender mainstreaming in DRR*** is key to women empowerment.



# *Recommendations to engender HFA2*

- **Capitalize on good practices** demonstrated by local women leaders, women's groups and networks, men and women champions for the cause of women's empowerment.
- Supportive **legislations and policies** such as **quota systems** in local governments and parliament representation which provide evidence for inspiration and further enhancing women's role as actors in DRR(Towards post-2015) .



# ***Recommendations to engender HFA2***

- ***Strengthening women's leadership***
- ***Monitoring and Measures of progress***
- ***Accountability***



## ***The role of Ahfad University for women (AUW) in creating women change agents for DRR***

- **AUW is committed to women empowerment through higher education**
- **It assumes many responsibilities in general such as:**
  - **Teaching**
  - **Research**
  - **Training**
  - **Community service and outreach**



# ***AUW & UNFPA partnership for DRR***

- AUW has good linkages and collaboration with **UN agencies and international NGOs**
- AUW is building on a long standing collaboration with **UNFPA** in “Gender Equity, Equality and Women Empowerment” by recently working to enhance the role of women in DRR.
- Interventions for Gender mainstreaming, advocacy, community mobilization , training , resource availability ...etc are planned to support women especially in high risk areas such as Darfur.



# Sources

- Documents related to DRR
- -Castillo et.al, A new framework for disaster reduction. [www.pwc.com](http://www.pwc.com)
- ISDR Hyogo Framework
- Global Protection Cluster ,Technical Note: Gender-Based Violence and Disaster Risk Reduction: Practical Approaches for Better Programming
- Towards the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2)



*Thank YOU.....*