While we applaud the growing consensus that women are vital aspects of strong and inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR), ActionAid contends that not enough is being done to actually make this a reality.

Women around the world face burdens of unpaid care work that often far surpass those of men. This unpaid care work – whether it is cleaning, cooking, looking after children or sick and elderly relatives – reduces the time, economic independence, and even education possibilities of women and girls. The gendered notion of women’s ‘role’ as confined to the home also impacts both their self-confidence and their ability to be perceived as leaders by the wider community. And we have seen that challenging unpaid care burdens can even be a cause for violence.

All of these impacts are exacerbated in times of disaster. Although not yet routinely measured, the noneconomic impacts of disasters on women, in particular adding to their burden of unpaid care, are severe. Women are typically the community members that care for family members when they are injured by disasters, that journey to seek water from ever-distant sources during drought, and that must protect their children from diseases despite an influx of flood water.

But every hour a woman spends doing unpaid care work for her family is an hour that she does not spend in education, or performing economic activities, or relaxing, or supporting her community to build its resilience and reduce future disasters. This is not just a pity for women themselves, but for the whole community. Women bring unique and vital skills, resources, and knowledge to resilience-building. To neglect to empower women to participate, therefore, would result in weaker DRR.

ActionAid has found that there are positive ways to reduce women’s unpaid care burdens and empower them to engage in and lead DRR. **Recognition** is a first step – from sensitising communities through Time Diaries so that the disparity of unpaid care work hours between men and women is made transparent, to data that is fully sex, age, and disability-disaggregated (SADD) and analysed, to an inclusion of non-economic losses in calculations of the impact of disasters. **Reduction** of unpaid care work – often through essential services (from piped water to childcare) provided by governments – is another key step. Unpaid care work must also be **redistributed** fairly amongst the community, with civil society as well as governments playing a key role in sensitisation and challenging traditional roles so that unpaid care work is shared between men and women. And finally, women’s voices must be **represented** – with women empowered to speak about their challenges at a local, national, and international level, and women’s organisations supported and facilitated to raise women’s voices. From a community-level disaster risk committee to the Global Platform on DRR, including women’s voices has never been so crucial if we are to take tangible, real steps in women’s inclusion and leadership of DRR.

In order to facilitate these aims and others, ActionAid makes four recommendations to governments, civil society, and the international community:

1. Governments must ensure meaningful participation and leadership of grassroots women in the design of national and local DRR strategies
2. Governments, Communities, and Civil Society Organisations must commit to reducing the unpaid care burden on women and girls, to enable them to participate in DRR planning.
3. Governments must ensure that unpaid care work is included in the calculation of economic and non-economic losses from disasters.
4. The international community must ensure that disaster risk transfer mechanisms and insurance are real solutions for the least developed countries and poorest populations.