

International Day for Disaster Reduction 2012

<http://www.unisdr.org/2012/iddr/>

Women & Girls - The inVisible Force of Resilience

During the 3rd annual Women in the World Summit held in New York in March 2012, **US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** said "women have the power to shape our destinies in ways previous generations couldn't imagine." This observation about women and girls as a force to counter many of the problems ailing the world represents an idea whose time has come, and not a minute too soon.

Haydee Rodríguez is President of the Union de Cooperativas Las Brumas in Nicaragua - an association of women's farming cooperatives in six municipalities across Jinotega State, which provides credit to women farmers and influences agricultural legislation. Rodríguez lobbies for funds for poor women to purchase agricultural land. As a woman landowner, she understands the importance of land ownership - securing land titles for women is central to women's position as agricultural producers. "If the land was in the hands of women, developing countries would not suffer from hunger. With land titles...we are able to produce", she states.

Nicky Gavron, former Deputy Mayor of London, has been at the forefront of developing land use and environmental policies for London for over two decades. She was a key figure in the establishment of the London Climate Change Agency and the Large Cities Climate Leadership Group. In 2006, Business Week Magazine named her as one of the 20 most important people in the world in the battle against greenhouse gas emissions. Gavron believes "Mitigating climate change is good for the economy, for competitiveness, for productivity and, above all, for the quality of life. We need to understand that we are the first [generation to have] the knowledge about climate change and the last to be able to do anything about it."

Senator Loren Legarda of the Philippines advocates for disaster resilience in her country and in the South East Asia region. She received the 2011 Asian Leader Award of Excellence in environmental policy and climate change adaptation and is the author of the Philippines Climate Change Act, as well as the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act. She is also UNISDR's Asia-Pacific Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction. Her day-to-day actions to empower women in the Philippines are guided by her belief that "Women are powerful agents of change in the overall climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. We know this and we have a track record to prove this. In fact, women have been silently and effectively at the frontlines of confronting climate change."

Ruth Serech, the Mayan Women Coordinator for Integrated Development in Guatemala initiated a community mapping exercise, for local women to identify vulnerabilities, and disaster prevention practices. These women then agreed that planting vegetables in 'table beds' or 'hanging terraces' could be used for household consumption as well as income generation. Local women from the town of Chimaltenango developed 50 'table beds' as a pilot to ensure food security and access to familiar crops without flood risk. A task force of women has now been set up in 30 communities in San Juan Comalapa, and many women mappers have now been trained in emergency response, prevention, and disaster recovery.

Maria Mutagamba, nicknamed the 'Water Lady', is Uganda's Minister of Water and Environment. She is the first woman to be appointed Minister of Water and has been President of the African Ministers' Council on Water for the last two years. Mutagamba is an active advocate for water issues in Africa and at international levels. She believes that mainstreaming gender in the context of integrated water-resources management is critical to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. "Government bodies should ensure gender-sensitive water and sanitation infrastructure and services and equal access, voice and participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels of water-resources management. At the grass-root level, however, we are far from involving women in the planning processes. This requires a great deal of effort in education and building awareness of the issues involved and a move towards changing the culture of decision-making," she states.

Under her stewardship, the Ministry of Water and the Environment is implementing programmes to improve the livelihoods of people, particularly women and girls, in rural areas, including construction and rehabilitation of earth dams and water tanks in the 84,000 km² of dry lands called the cattle corridor.

The numbers of women calling for gender sensitive disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development grow daily as does their impact. **Graciela Ortúzar** has been Mayor of Lampa, Chile, since 2004 – a rural community of some 70,000 inhabitants. Before becoming Mayor, she was the city's Secretary of Planning. During that time she pushed for the repair of a waste water system for various neighbourhoods, in addition to other large investment projects in urban improvement. Ortúzar was appointed a Making Cities Resilient Champion, based on her community management after the February 2010 earthquake in Chile.

Selina Hayat Ivy is the first elected mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation in Bangladesh. She is a social activist, the former mayor of the Narayanganj municipality as well as the current Vice-President of the Municipality Association of Bangladesh - the coordinating body for mayors of municipalities in the country. During her last nine years in office as Mayor of Narayanganj Municipality she retrieved 90 percent of the land from 'land-grabbers' and has led various initiatives to make her city pollution free and environmentally sustainable. During Ivy's various tenures she has done remarkable work for municipal dwellers - better roads, drains, footpaths, public toilets, construction of kitchen markets, procurement of garbage removal trucks and flood rehabilitation projects. And as one commentary observed: "Why did the people of Narayanganj fall so head over heels in love with this woman? Simply because, unknown to her, she became a choice between good and evil, between honesty and corruption, between criminally-driven and voter-driven politics, between land-grabbing and land for public benefit. In short, Selina Hayat Ivy became a choice between hope and despair."

Iderle Brénus Gerbier has worked with many organizations in support of women's rights and food sovereignty in Haiti. She is a campaign coordinator for Food Sovereignty in Haiti and an advisor of the National Confederation of Peasant Women. What drives her? It is the "need to advance the struggle of women by redefining the concept of feminism in Haiti. To do this we have to reshuffle the cards and reduce the differences between our urban and peasant women. Right now there are two kinds of women: women with a capital W and women with a small w. October 15 was declared the "Day of the Haitian Peasant Woman, but unfortunately this day has never been commemorated. We have to recognize and appreciate women farmers for their significant socio-economic worth ... We need to increase their visibility in efforts to build food sovereignty in the country".

Saheena is from a village in Bangladesh which floods every year. She learned to preserve foods, raise her house on stilts to protect it from floods, and use the radio to receive flood warnings. "I'm glad I know how to live with floods now. I can save my family, my belongings and my animals. My children are lucky too, as they have a mother who can teach them to survive a disaster," she said. Saheena has also organized a committee of women to be prepared for floods. These efforts have saved many lives and empowered women.

Evidence of women and girls from all walks of life who are making a difference continues to emerge. Women are leading efforts in many communities across the globe. Though seldom recognized, their work saves lives, communities and families. In 1998, residents of the town of La Masica in Honduras received gender-sensitive training on early warning systems. The community then decided that men and women should participate equally in disaster management activities. Women replaced men who had abandoned continuous monitoring of the town's early warning system. When Hurricane Mitch struck in the same year, the municipality was prepared and all residents were evacuated promptly, avoiding any deaths.

In *Women and Girls Last? Averting the Second Post-Katrina Disaster*, Elaine Enarson observes: "Women across the nation are also the lifeblood of voluntary organizations of all descriptions, now being pulled inexorably into relief work ... Long after we think Katrina over and done with, women whose jobs and professions in teaching, health care, mental health, crisis work, and community advocacy bring them into direct contact with affected families will feel the stress of 'first responders' whose work never ends."

And as **Hillary Clinton** noted during the Women in the World Summit: "What does it mean to be a woman in the world? ... It means never giving up ... It means getting up, working hard and putting a country or a community on your back."

Theme of International Day for Disaster Reduction

Women and Girls - the inVisible Force of Resilience

The aim of International Day for Disaster Reduction 2012 is to acknowledge and appreciate the millions of women and girls who make their communities more resilient to disasters and climate risks and thus to reap the benefits of and protect their development investments. Too much of the work and achievements of women is of low-visibility – taken for granted. The 2012 IDDR theme draws attention to the fact that women's contributions to protect and rebuild their communities before and after disasters are often unrecognized.

The International Disaster Reduction day 2012 will:

1. Celebrate the contribution that women and girls are making before, during and after disasters.
2. Highlight that the ability of women and girls to contribute is hindered by exclusion from participation and decision-making in disaster risk reduction and management processes as well as programmes and by poor understanding of gender inequality.
3. Move beyond the perception of women and girls as victims.
4. Present evidence of actions and initiatives by women and girls.

The International Day for Disaster Reduction is organized each year on 13 October (GA [resolution 64/200](#) of 21 December 2009). **This year it will be observed by the United Nations on Friday 12 October.** It is the most widely observed day for raising awareness about disaster risk reduction, creating social demand, and mobilizing the wider public to get involved and take ownership of the processes to create disaster resilience. This day will also build partnerships with organizations involved with gender and disaster risk reduction.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction use the results to reinforce advocacy for gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction at national and local government levels; key forums such as the biennial Global Platform for disaster risk reduction; and in publications such as the Biennial Global Assessment Report on disaster risk reduction. It will ensure that that gender sensitive disaster risk reduction will be an integral feature of the planning for post 2015 Hyogo Framework for disaster risk reduction which is now underway.

While instituting gender sensitive disaster risk reduction is addressed in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) – the current global disaster risk reduction framework - the [2011 Mid-Term Review of the HFA](#) found it is rarely taken into account when planning activities. This is echoed in *Women's Views from Frontline* a civil society assessment. Initiated by the Huairou Commission, it surveyed women's organizations involved in advancing development priorities in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, as well as in the Middle East and North Africa. Four major findings emerged including the:

- disconnect between national programmes and grassroots organizations;
- exclusion of women from emergency preparedness and response programmes;
- lack of a shared definition of effective risk reduction in poor, vulnerable communities;
- and the untapped potential of organized constituencies of women with pro-poor practices.

The HFA Mid-Term Review (2011) reveals that multilateral institutions do not have adequate knowledge of or the political commitment required to advance gender concerns in the field of resilience. The [2011 Global Assessment Report \(GAR\) on – Revealing Risk, Redefining Development](#) states, "A large number of countries concur with Tanzania, which identifies the lack of appropriate knowledge of 'how and where to implement gender matters' as the main barrier." The report finds that only 26% of countries reported significant ongoing commitment to gender as a driver of progress.

Key Messages (KM) for IDDR 12

EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR A SAFER TOMORROW

- **Women and girls are empowered** to fully contribute to sustainable development through disaster risk reduction, particularly in the areas of environmental and natural resource management; governance; and urban and land use planning and social and economic planning – **the key drivers of disaster risk.**

WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE POWERFUL AGENTS OF CHANGE

- *"In their vital but unsung roles, women reweave the fabric of their communities while men rebuild the structure"* – Helen Cox, "Women in Bushfire Territory," in Enarson and Morrow (eds.), *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster*, p. 142.
- **Women and girls are invaluable in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation processes** if real community resilience and significant reduction of disaster impacts are to be achieved. Women must always be part of policy, planning and implementation processes.
- Women and girls are 52% of the world's population and are among the most affected by disasters. **Their experience, knowledge and expertise are critical to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies and processes.**
- **Household adaptation measures are more likely to take root if women are included in processes from beginning to end.** *"If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation).* – African Proverb.
- Women and girls are powerful agents of change as they are activists, law makers, social workers, role models, community leaders, teachers, and mothers.

A RESILIENT COMMUNITY IS A GENDER SENSITIVE COMMUNITY

- *"If we are going to see real development in the world then our best investment is women."* - Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize.
- Gender inequality puts women, children and entire communities in danger when natural hazards strike. The weakest link can mean the destruction of the entire chain. **Gender inequality is a weak link - strengthening that link strengthens resilience.**
- **Gender equality begins with education.** Women and girls must be included in public life. This begins with the education of boys and girls through to adulthood. This is how men and boys will become involved in removing the barriers that prevent women and girls from participating in the disaster risk reduction cycle.
- **Women and girls are effective purveyors of information.** Information mechanisms must be two-way and accessible for equal inclusion of women's and men's voices.

What Can You Do?

The 13 October is a global call to "Step Up for" by taking part in any action or activity on IDDR 12 that will showcase the contributions and actions of Women and Girls to build resilience. **For activity suggestions and ideas see Annexes 1 and 2.**

For More Information on Gender & Disaster Risk Reduction

- ✚ UNISDR - www.unisdr.org/2012/iddr/
- ✚ UN Women - www.unwomen.org/
- ✚ Gender and Disaster Network - <http://www.gdnonline.org/>
- ✚ Global Fund for Women - <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>
- ✚ Groots International - www.groots.org/
- ✚ The Huairou Commission - www.huairou.org/
- ✚ ActionAid - www.actionaid.org/?intl=
- ✚ Plan International - <http://plan-international.org/girls/>
- ✚ Gender Network and Communities
www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/networks/list.php?cat_id=7&scat_id=38

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Annex 2

Women & Girls - The inVisible Force of Resilience

What You Can Do

Consider UNISDR's webpage for IDDR12 as a blank page – populate it with activities, interviews, statements profiles etc. for the day. It's that simple – you just have to:

- **Showcase** what women and girls are doing to contribute to disaster resilience.
- **Organize** public events to increase understanding of gender concerns in DRR processes.
- **Lobby** national and local governments as well as community leaders and decision makers, academia, and international organizations to 'Step Up' to the changes that are necessary to remove the cloak of invisibility and victim hood that is obstructing the development of women and girls.
- **Mobilize** the public at large to demand changes to the socio-cultural/political framework that exacerbates the exclusion of women and their vulnerabilities.
- **Encourage** men and boys to get involved in some activity or event that gives tangible support to the theme for the Day and to continue to be involved with the issues after IDDR 12.
- **Think Big** - Plan now to:
 - respond in ways that empower women and local communities;
 - rebuild in ways that address the root causes of vulnerability, including gender and social inequalities;
 - create meaningful opportunities for women's participation and leadership;
 - fully engage local women in hazard mitigation and vulnerability assessment projects;
 - ensure that women benefit from economic recovery and income support programs, e.g. access, fair wages, nontraditional skills training, child care/social support;
 - give priority to social services, children's support systems, women's centres, women's "corners" in camps and other safe spaces;
 - take practical steps to empower women;
 - consult fully with women in design and operation of emergency shelter
 - deed newly constructed houses in both names;
 - include women in housing design as well as construction;
 - promote land rights for women;
 - provide income-generation projects that build nontraditional skills;
 - fund women's groups to monitor disaster recovery projects.
- **Get The Facts** - Nothing in disaster work is "gender neutral." Plan now to:
 - collect and solicit gender-specific data
 - train and employ women in community-based assessment and follow-up

- research
 - tap women's knowledge of environmental resources and community complexity
 - identify and assess sex-specific needs, e.g. for home-based women workers, men's mental health, displaced and migrating women vs. men
 - track the (explicit/implicit) gender budgeting of relief and response funds
 - track the distribution of goods, services, opportunities to women and men
 - assess the short- and long-term impacts on women/men of all disaster initiatives
 - monitor change over time and in different contexts
- **Work With Women** - Women's community organizations have insight, information, experience, networks, and resources vital to increasing disaster resilience. Work with and develop the capacities of existing women's groups such as:
- women's groups experienced in disasters
 - environmental action groups
 - women and development NGOs
 - women's advocacy groups with a focus on girls and women, e.g. peace activists
 - women's neighbourhood groups
 - faith-based and service organizations
 - professional women, e.g. educators, scientists, emergency managers
- **Resist Stereotypes** - Base all initiatives on knowledge of difference and specific cultural, economic, political, and sexual contexts, not on false generalities.
- **RESPECT AND DEVELOP THE CAPACITIES OF WOMEN**
- Identify and support women's contributions to informal early warning systems, school and home preparedness, community solidarity, socio-emotional recovery, and extended family care.
 - Materially compensate the time, energy and skill of grassroots women who are able and willing to partner with disaster organizations.
 - Provide child care, transportation and other support as needed to enable women's full and equal participation in planning a more disaster resilient future.

Suggested Activities/Ideas

- **Submit stories, features, profiles or videos** about outstanding action by women and girls in disaster prevention, recovery and risk reduction or on someone whose accomplishments you wish to spotlight.
- **Organize Flash Mobs** - a large group of people who gather at a public location to perform a pre-defined action, typically a brief synchronized dance, and disperse rapidly after the event has concluded. On 13 October, girls and interested others are being asked to produce Flash Mobs that **promote the Step Up for disaster risk reduction slogan as well as the theme for the International Day**.
- **Be creative - come up with other events** to support 'Step Up for Disaster Risk Reduction'.
- **Use Social Media**
 - a. Website: Submit stories, events, profiles to UNISDR's interactive IDDR 2012 webpage - <http://www.unisdr.org/2012/iddr/>
 - b. Twitter: Contribute comments using #iddr
 - c. Facebook: Share you stories, photos, links and videos on the Event page:

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- <https://www.facebook.com/events/391850044170838/>
- d. Flickr: Add photos to the IDDR 2012 Flickr Group - <http://www.flickr.com/groups/iddr12/>
 - e. Tell UNISDR what disaster risk reduction means to you and how you plan to make your community safer from disasters. The best activities will be illustrated on the UNISDR website.
 - f. Ask women and girls and others to text their mayor or local Government representative on 13 October with questions related to gender issues.
- **DRR NETWORKS** for women and girls are growing
 - a. Mobilize members for the event.
 - b. Create an event for the day around the Step Up movement.
 - c. Report and send visuals and stories of actions.
 - **TEACHERS** have direct access to the minds of the next generation
 - a. Organize a Step Up event in the classroom.
 - b. Work on a gender sensitive DRR issue, educate and raise awareness by involving girls and boys e.g. a debate.
 - c. Create a dialogue on gender sensitive DRR and develop a plan of action that can be discussed in 2013 and 2015.
 - d. Educate boys about gender issues and DRR - stimulate girls into action.
 - **EDUCATION & SCHOOL SAFETY NETWORKS & COMMUNITIES**
 - a. Engage girls and boys to celebrate the day.
 - b. Organize an event to celebrate the day.
 - c. Organize long term activities around the day.
 - **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**
 - a. Engage women and girls and others to celebrate the day.
 - b. Organize an event to celebrate the day.
 - c. Print T-Shirts, posters.
 - **MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS**
 - a. Report on the activities of the day.
 - b. Organize special programmes such as TV and radio talk shows and special features on disaster risk reduction and gender issues as well as other awareness raising media activities.
 - c. Air the PSA.
 - d. Organize interviews with women and girls to capture their views on the issue.
 - e. Do a documentary on the contribution of women and girls in a particular community.
 - **ISDR NETWORK**
 - a. Organize an event, an activity, or a programme on the theme.
 - b. Advertise the Step Up movement on your website.
 - c. Develop a long-term programme with women and girls in the lead up to the World Conference on Disaster reduction in June 2015, the Global Platform on DRR in 2013 or any other scheduled UN events.
 - d. Work closely with organizations for women and girls to build awareness of and stimulate more involvement with DRR.
 - e. Get your staff to "Step Up" for the day.
 - **NATIONAL PLATFORM OR HFA FOCAL POINTS**
 - a. Organize an event, an activity, a programme with women and girls.
 - b. Advertise the Step Up movement through posters, T-Shirts and other products.
 - c. Develop a long term (4 year) programme with women and girls in the lead up to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in June 2015, the Global Platform on DRR in 2013 or other forthcoming UN events such as Rio+20.

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d. Work closely with gender based organizations to build the DRR momentum.

➤ **MAYORS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY LEADERS**

- a. Organize a major Step Up event in your community to build DRR awareness among the public for the contributions by and needs of women & girls.
- b. Include women and girls in your DRR activities.
- c. Organize an event with your national media to report on the day.
- d. Organize special posters, drawing contest, activities around the Step Up.
- e. Initiative long term activities with women and girls.
- f. Engage local music and movie stars to carry messages.

➤ **PRIVATE SECTOR**

- a. Involve your staff in IDDR 12 - raise awareness about gender sensitive DRR.
- b. Organize an event in your community of operation.
- c. Sponsor a project for IDDR 12 in your community of operation, with a CSO with UNISDR.



A Critical Shift in Language but Not in Action

There has recently been a critical shift in the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into DRR: from a women-focused approach to a gender focused approach, based on the premise that the roles and relationships of women and men in disaster risk reduction should be analyzed within the overall gendered socioeconomic and cultural context. On top of this shift, the strategic focus of disaster management has changed from reactive disaster response to long-term proactive disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and resilience building, where gender and DRR are considered necessary to achieving sustainable development.

At the global level, available information shows that efforts to promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction have focused on advocacy and awareness-raising, along with support for policy changes and gender mainstreaming in inter-governmental processes. Unfortunately, commitment to gender issues is rarely stated explicitly; rather, it can only be assumed to be a part of larger commitments to the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*.

At the programme or operational level, implementation is ad hoc and inconsistent, and progress is largely due to the dedicated work of a handful of organizations, particularly NGOs.

Ultimately, although there are numerous policy documents clearly stating political commitment to mainstream gender issues into disaster risk reduction, no tangible or sustainable progress has resulted, with the exception of some ad hoc activities. Furthermore, there has not been much substantial progress made in mobilizing resources for mainstreaming gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction processes.

Gender issues have slowly become visible on the global disaster risk reduction agenda after decades of marginalization in inter-governmental processes. This is largely due to consistent global advocacy, awareness-raising and technical support from the UN Disaster Risk Reduction Office in cooperation with other UN agencies, such as UNDP, UN Women (formerly UNIFEM), United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, regional organizations and civil society organizations.

Timeline of International Decisions

2001: [An Expert Group Meeting on 'Environmental Management and the Mitigation of Natural Disasters: A Gender Perspective'](#), was held in Ankara, Turkey, organized by the then UN Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the UNISDR. The group recommended the inclusion of gender sensitive environmental management and DRR in the agenda of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

2002: World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg adopted issues from Ankara in the [Johannesburg Plan of Action](#).

2002: The 46th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women [adopted a set of policy recommendations](#) that recognized women's role in disaster reduction, response and recovery. Governments called for actions to strengthen their capabilities, ensure their full participation. They also called for collection of sex-disaggregated data and good practices.

2004: At a Workshop on Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction held in Honolulu, Hawaii, participants agreed to develop a Gender and Disaster Sourcebook. They also called upon the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR II) and ongoing work in disaster risk reduction to consciously integrate gender into policies and practices.

2005: [The Hyogo Framework for Action](#), endorsed by 168 national governments in Kobe Japan, contained the most explicit reference to gender of any other international policy frameworks for disaster risk reduction. It requested all nations represented at the World Conference to consider gender mainstreaming in five areas by:

1. Mainstreaming gender perspectives into all disaster management initiatives;
2. Building capacity in women's groups and community-based organizations;
3. Ensuring gender mainstreaming into communications, training and education;
4. Ensuring opportunities for women in science and technology;
5. Ensuring gender mainstreaming in programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

2005: The 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted [a resolution](#) on natural hazard-related disasters that urges governments to integrate gender perspectives into all phases of their planning for disaster preparedness, and to integrate a gender perspective in post-disaster relief.

2006: Governments recognized the neglect of women needs, concerns and contributions to disaster risk reduction at the **61st General Assembly of the UN** in [a resolution adopted on 'Natural disasters and vulnerability'](#).

2007: Stockholm Forum for Disaster Reduction and Recovery was organized by the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and UNISDR. The Forum recognized the need for long-term, gender-inclusive engagement to address underlying vulnerability and poverty, in order to sustain progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

2007: Gender Issues were addressed at the first session of the **Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**. [The Session summary](#) pointed out that while women play important roles in building a culture of disaster prevention, particularly at the community level, this was not too well recognized and, so, their potential to contribute to DRR was mostly left untapped. The fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by disasters was also noted. The summary urged system partners of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) to raise awareness, take action to address gender factors in disaster risk, and actively promote women's leadership and participation in DRR.

2008: [The Manila Declaration for Global Action on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction](#) endorsed by 250 participants at the Third International Congress of Women in Politics, stressed the lack of a gender perspective in global agreements on climate change. There were 12 key declarations, including that women and men must equally participate in climate change and DRR decision-making processes at community, national, regional and international levels; and that gender-responsive budgeting must be pursued by Governments and international organizations to ensure adequate allocation of resources to enhance women's capacity, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, to enhance their resilience to climate change and disasters.

2009: [The Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction](#) to be implemented by 2015 sets out guidance for practical action by governments and international organizations to build gender-effective disaster resilience at the local and national levels. It calls for political commitment to mainstreaming gender in disaster risk reduction and encourages governments to carry out gender sensitive vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments and monitoring.

2011: [The Third Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), and the largest to date, once again put [gender sensitive risk reduction on the front burner](#). Among the pressing issues raised and actions called for were: acceleration of HFA implementation, particularly in the mainstreaming of gender and disaster risk reduction into development processes and consideration of women as leaders and catalysts of change.

And although this plethora of well-intentioned directives exists, created one after another in the last decade, tangible progress on the ground lags significantly behind.

International frameworks such as the HFA and the MDGs are leading to changes in policy, legislation, financing or programming for disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. The mainstreaming of gender perspectives in disaster risk reduction, however, still requires greater efforts and priority at all levels, from local to global. Much still needs to be done to secure concerted and coordinated efforts by global, regional and national actors. Adequate financial investments and tangible commitments are urgently required to pursue gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction at the operational level.

Regional Progress

Africa: In 2009, nearly all national reports from the region referred to women's or gender issues. Africa has a Regional Plan of Action and Guidelines for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Assessment into Development in which the importance of gender is discussed. Not all countries, however, are at the same stage of development vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming.

The Americas: Most countries have institutions dealing with gender issues at national level, but there is no consistent link with gender equality laws and DRR.

Asia and the Pacific: In Asia, some progress has been made in producing information, guidelines and capacity building on gender and DRR. Such progress, however, can be considered to contain implicit references to the gender, as these countries commit to the HFA and the Millennium Development Goals, which are explicitly committed to gender issues. These implicit commitments, however, have not resulted in regional policies, legislation and practices that mainstream gender issues.

Europe: Gender equality has been actively promoted in Europe for decades and European countries often consider gender to be covered in DRR by default, through existing equality laws, education and generally gender-sensitive practices. As such, gender issues are not specifically integrated in all DRR plans and programmes. France's DRR plan is notable in this field for specifying that it must reach both men and women. Women are also not equally represented in national DRR platforms.

National Reports: In general national reports generally reflect a poor degree of mainstreaming at country level. There are gaps in dealing adequately with gender issues in their policies, legislation and strategies. And although in some countries gender equality is defined by law, links with DRR have not been achieved. Poor understanding of gender issues in DRR is widespread among most countries, showing that it is high time for governments to take more action.