

# POST 2015

## GENDER EQUALITY IN THE FUTURE WE WANT



*Inter-agency Group on Gender Equality and  
Women's Empowerment for Latin America and the Caribbean*

**Inequality and Gender  
in Latin America and  
the Caribbean**

**Population Dynamics  
and Gender**

**Education and Gender**

**Employment, growth  
and gender equality**

**Democratic Governance  
and Gender Equality**

**Disaster Risk  
Reduction and Gender**

**Health and Gender**

# Disaster Risk Reduction and Gender

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

## A. REGIONAL TRENDS

The disasters provoked by the occurrence of natural phenomena in the Latin America and Caribbean region (LAC) are among the most frequent and intense in the world. Lately, for example, they have intensified with a significant increase in the frequency of floods, droughts, and hurricanes (266%, 360%, and 521%, respectively)<sup>1</sup>, while 75% of the region's population lives in zones at risk to these types of disasters.

The accumulated impact of disasters in LAC between 1970 and 2009 amounts to \$356,672.4 million dollars, which represents almost 24% of the region's total GDP. In 2010 alone, they caused the death of 225,684 people and around 14 million people have been affected<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the tendency is for these disasters to center in the urban zones (between 4 and 7 out of every 10 disasters occur in urban centers with a population of less than 100,000 inhabitants).

Research and data show that the disasters reinforce, perpetuate, and increase the gender inequalities, widening the gap between men and women in the world's most unequal region. In spite of this, only 20% of the countries report advances<sup>3</sup> in incorporating gender into Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Only 23% report that they have adopted measures to incorporate the gender approach in recovery and 15% have vulnerability and capacity evaluations broken down by sex. Regarding the normative framework, only eight countries mention the gender theme in their Disaster Risk Management National Policies and they do so as a cross-cutting axis<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile in the region, only three women appear as responsible for the entities in charge of Risk Management.

However, advances are being made in the articulation of these themes. Some countries are in the process of implementing agreements between the National Equality mechanism and the entity responsible for Risk Management and/or Emergency Preparedness. Likewise, a road map is being formulated in Central America to apply the gender actions of the Integrated Disaster Risk Management Policy for Central America and the Regional Strategy of Climate Change.

<sup>1</sup> PAHO, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> ECLAC. 2010b. Disasters and Development: Its Impact in 2010, Disaster Evaluation Unit, SDHSD, ECLAC, Bulletin No. 2, December 16, 2010, p. 3, 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> GAR 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Bolivia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

## B. MAIN CHALLENGES

The negative impact of the risk depends on the characteristics and intensity of the threat and the vulnerability and capacities of those who are exposed to it. The gender differences and inequalities generate a strong positive or negative effect on the vulnerability and capacities of the people exposed to the threats. The gender relations will determine the magnitude of the risk, as shown in the following equation.

The number of women who die from natural threats is greater than that of men; a consequence of women's unequal socioeconomic status. Additionally, women face different levels of risk and have different coping vulnerabilities and capacities, originated by a series of gender-based political, cultural, and socioeconomic inequalities and differences. Likewise, women are not adequately represented in the decision-making authorities and the sociocultural attitudes and norms hinder their participation when it comes to decision-making.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a fundamental element of sustainable development and an important requirement to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), two areas where women and girls play a key role, which has been recently included in the final Rio+20 document(2012).

In spite of the fact that disasters reinforce and increase the gender inequalities, women's potential contributions toward risk reduction and the feminine leadership to face disasters are frequently ignored. Unequal development among countries regarding disaster risk management, women's mechanisms, and public policies is evident.

The current gender relations in DRR and the climate change adaptation processes deal with the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the home and in society. These roles result in differences regarding identity, social responsibilities, attitudes, and expectations; and these differences are in great measure unfavorable to women which leads to gender inequality in all aspects of the socioeconomic development, including inequalities in the vulnerability to disasters and different capacities to reduce the risk and respond to these. Basically, women's limited access to information and knowledge increases their vulnerability to disasters as well as that of their families.

The existing approaches to DRR are not only incapable of facing the gender-based vulnerabilities, but also hide women's abilities and capacities as individuals and as a group. The disaster preparation, mitigation, and response plans should take into account both the needs and the potential contributions of men and women. A gender-based approach in the study and analysis of the disasters is essential to achieve the goal of having safer communities that are resilient to disasters.

## C. IN 2015

- Permanent capacity building, giving special attention to training in disaster risk management and climate change with a gender-based approach, directed mainly at authorities involved with the theme, as well other authorities and actors.
- Women's presence and participation in decision-making spaces at the national and sub-national levels related to disaster risk management, climate change, and sustainable development.
- Women and girls fully contribute toward sustainable development through Disaster Risk Reduction, especially in the areas of environmental and natural resources management and governance, as well as urban, economic, social, and land-use planning - the main drivers of disaster risk.
- Gender perspective is mainstreamed into the DRR policies and the climate change adaptation processes, increasing community resiliency and considerably reducing the impact of disasters.
- Women and girls represent 52% of the world population; their experience, knowledge, and specialized skills are essential to climate change adaptation and DRR strategies and processes.
- Women and girls are effective information providers. The communication mechanisms are two-way and accessible for the equal inclusion of men's and women's opinions.

## D. RESOURCES

- World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan and the Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005  
<http://www.eird.org/mah/hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>
- UNISDR. Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, GAR, 2009.  
[http://www.eird.org/country-profiles/profiles/index.php/Global\\_Assessment\\_Report](http://www.eird.org/country-profiles/profiles/index.php/Global_Assessment_Report)
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992 <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/>
- The Future We Want, final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 20-22, 2012  
[http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20\\_outcome\\_document\\_complete.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf)
- The Third World Congress of Women in Politics and Governance and the Manila Declaration for Global Action on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, 2008  
[http://www.preventionweb.net/files/8731\\_maniladeclarationfor-globalactionongenderinclimatechangeanddisasterriskreduction1.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/8731_maniladeclarationfor-globalactionongenderinclimatechangeanddisasterriskreduction1.pdf)
- The founding of GROOTS in 1985 during the UN Conference on Women in Nairobi as a global network of women's grassroots organizations and the Huairou Commission established at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995  
<http://www.groots.org/index.html>