

Women's Major Group Intervention
Informal Dialogue #2 between Co-Chairs and Major Groups
September 18, 2014
(delivered by Leah Kimber)

Good morning Co-Chairs and distinguished colleagues,

The Women's Major Group is working together to respond to the pre-Zero Draft and make specific recommendations. Because today is the first session to discuss Section D - we would like to share some general ideas about the focus and tone of Section D. We will also make more specific comments about the sections up to 21.

First, we welcome the opportunity to continue these dialogues and exchanges and we look forward to seeing our comments reflected in the Zero Draft.

We also welcome the multi-stakeholder approach in this section, recognizing that there is local level knowledge that is useful for risk reduction.

Overall, we feel it is important to ensure that the document is people centered. It must explicitly place people at the centre of all policies, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations, the main aim being people's safety and improved well-being. Here specifically, it is important to understand vulnerability in relation to Disaster Risk management capacity of the area and people, and not just as a product of hazards.

In such a people centered approach, gender should be more fully and explicitly discussed within all areas of policy. This includes the recognition of **gender inequality as one of the root causes of vulnerability** on the one hand, and the recognition of **actions to achieve gender equality as key for building resilience and successful DRR implementation** on the other hand. Women's policy making capability should be recognized and their active participation in policy formulation and implementation should be supported and ensured.

We welcome the call for **data to be disaggregated by sex/age/disability** in 14a (on understanding disaster risk in all its dimensions and accounting for disaster loss and social impact at local/national level), but we stress this needs to be explicitly mentioned throughout the document, as women currently seem invisible in it. There are a number of areas where this is particularly important (namely 15b on monitoring, 18a on methodologies for risk assessment, monitoring, etc at all levels, and 17a on safety nets).

Recognizing the '**gender specific**' nature of the data (14a) is also a well -received addition, and could be more explicitly defined. In particular the document should include the need to recognise women's sexual and reproductive health rights and the right to live free from violence. Those two areas should be monitored pre, during and post event.

As already noted by the WMG in the previous consultation, it is necessary to ensure all **3 aspects of sustainability** are included. It isn't just the economic and social aspect, but environmental aspect as well (this should be reflected in 14a and 15a, 16 preamble and d).

When discussing expertise it is important to recognize **all knowledge**, and not just that of scientists and academics nor just quantitative empirical research. We need to respect and learn from women's situated knowledge as well as that of indigenous peoples (this is applicable to 14 f and h, & 17 i and k), as well as understand risk from a community perspective. Furthermore, it is

important to recognise the value of qualitative knowledge for providing insight and depth of understanding, e.g. in hazard mapping and risk profiling (16f).

Language throughout the document must be **inclusive** - stressing consideration and participation of ALL persons (14b) and of all ages, **but also recognising differences and the differential impact** (eg 14c) of disasters based on multiple, intersection factors. The document expressly uses the term 'vulnerable' but it should also incorporate consistent and specific mention of the term marginalised (e.g. in 16a). Indeed, it should be put in addition to vulnerable because they are not synonymous. Vulnerability is often a result of marginalization.

We have 2 recommendations toward the end of paragraph 14 that addresses **training and education**. First, A bottom-up approach needs to be taken to promote Community-Based Training (14g) since initial response and action following any disaster comes primarily from community people. And, while incorporating DRR into formal and informal education (14j) the curricula should explicitly include the anatomy of disaster as well as coping techniques.

An **inclusive approach** is particularly important when discussing Governance (para 15). Inclusive governance, for example, means ensuring information in local languages and strengthening civil society's capacity to enhance public participation in the monitoring systems (15b), where the focus is not just on communities but rather on individuals and households (15d). The aim is to promote not just local leadership, but gender balanced and diverse leadership (15f).

Accountability and transparency within governance is absent from the document, but explicit discussion of it needs to be addressed as a key to good and inclusive governance. We recommend a mechanism to ensure accountability to the implementation of gender-responsive DRR policy, with support through gender focal persons. The role an active civil society can play in ensuring accountability and transparency also needs to be highlighted, with further explicit mention of support to CSOs, including women-led and women/gender-focused CSOs. .

The outcome document, especially the governance section should have a **more clearly articulated rights focus** (eg include in 15g in addition to roles and responsibilities), and policies should explicitly protect rights during crisis, including protecting the right of women and girls to live free from violence, among other human rights (15b, 17d). A rights ethos should also inform the social safety nets approach (17a). There should be explicit mention of **land and tenure rights**, recognising this as key to sustainable land use – and reducing risk - for all, particularly women (17i). We note that 17m encourages a consensus based approach to update, implement and monitor codes, and there we propose a participatory and rights-based approach.

The focus throughout the outcome document should be on the ultimate aim –reducing loss of human life and livelihoods and improving the well being of people, and this needs to be made central. In terms of para 16 with regards to early warning, **strengthening early warning systems** should ensure full and equitable access to these. Evidence shows that women need to be an explicit target and if not, and by default men are the targets, then information may not reach women and/or they may not feel able to act on this without the agreement of a male. Studies show **that when women are targets of warnings they act on it**, if they are recognised in the community and household as having authority to do so, and when they act on warnings this saves lives. Actions should be taken to ensure women are more visible in DRR and early warning to ensure they have the recognized authority to act independently in their households and communities and in this way save lives.

We have examples of language changes that could be made, which we will include in the written submission to visibilize women and girls, allow differentiation and ensure inclusivity. (For example, in 16a '.....of all social groups – [add: *particularly women and girls*].....'/ 16b '[add:to ensure equitable coverage - with a specific focus on women and girls....' / and in 16c '....access – [add: *for all*] - to essential food.....')

As I conclude, I'd like to focus on **resilience**. Addressing potential and known risks supports resiliency. For example, post-event risks for women and girls, including under displaced persons programs, may be more from persons than from exposure to natural hazards. This is particularly true of gender based violence, as well as social and economic exploitation of women and girls. As such 17d should be reworded to ' Endeavor to ensure, as appropriate, that programmes for displaced persons do not increase risk and vulnerability to – [add: **natural**] - hazards, [add: and that such programmes seek to actively mitigate against the risk of gender based violence and social and economic exploitation of women and girls.']

Finally, CSOs, and especially women and gender CSOs should be recognised for contributions to resilience - as an important source of local knowledge, as active contributors to sustainable management of eco systems (17i and k) and local capacity as well as policy inputs.