

## Women's Major Group contribution for the Seventh Session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (OWG7) *Climate Change, and Disaster and Risk Reduction*

### **Ambitious human rights and socially just pathways to address climate change, disaster and risk reduction, and sustainable development**

#### **Analysis and key recommendations by the Women's Major Group<sup>1</sup>**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide concrete feedback on the different issues that will be discussed during the upcoming session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The Women's Major Group would like to provide some inputs on the proposed SDGs on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Our analysis of the information and proposals contained in the TST Climate Change and Disaster and Risk Reduction brief paper is that the document rightly affirms the importance of climate change and disaster risk reduction as crosscutting issues that influence achievement of sustainable development and extreme poverty reduction. Indeed, without tackling the causes of climate change in a genuine, human rights based and socially just framework, Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved and inequalities that currently exist will be made worse.

While the TST brief also recognized the various global efforts that are carried out under diverse schemes, these efforts are clearly not sufficient to guarantee sustainability in the long term. Therefore it is important to recognize cross-cutting impacts and call for greater communication between the different U.N. Bodies, international agreements and initiatives on the issue of climate change.

Parties have already agreed to ensure that global warming should not exceed 2° C<sup>2</sup> but current commitments are not enough to achieve or hold this safe limit. Far too much negotiation time is spent on neo-liberal approaches like carbon markets that have failed to truly address to the problem to date. The strong influence of polluting industries over the negotiation process has contributed to lack of political will to implement the necessary measures to ensure that the temperature stays under the safe limit, made patently clear by the recent devastating rollback of Japan, Canada and Australia at the COP19 in Poland, for example. And "business as usual" by other States is leading us to scenarios where the average temperature may even double the proposed maximum value.

Science shows that climate action that will put the world at 2° degrees is no longer enough to avert the ferocity of impacts of climate change; therefore we must put a particular emphasis on disaster and risk reduction strategies as well as loss and damage, made clear by the majority of south States at COP19.

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<sup>1</sup> This briefing paper was elaborated by members of the Women's Major Group on Sustainable Development, <http://www.womenrio20.org/>. It is based on a more comprehensive report with recommendations for the post-2015 agenda by WMG members: [http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/Womens\\_priorities\\_SDG.pdf](http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/Womens_priorities_SDG.pdf). For more information, please contact Carmen Capriles <carmen\_capriles@bolivia.com>

<sup>2</sup> Decision 1/CP.16 The Cancun Agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

It is clear that adaptation measures alone will not provide the needed support in order to deal with the scale of impacts the planet is already facing. The OWG6 has already sufficiently highlighted the current situations in all States, and including attention to specific realities of LDCs, SIDS, Africa, LLDCs, and middle income countries, as well as others. Any SDGs and P2015 Development Agenda must have overarching vision, goals, targets and Means of Implementation that soundly reflect global realities, as well as specific needs. Otherwise any sustainable development agreement is simply un-implementable.

In 1987, the last year where the annual average of CO<sub>2</sub> level in the atmosphere was less than 350ppm<sup>3</sup>, the same year the Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as development *that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*<sup>4</sup>. As real solutions to global warming continue to fail to this day, the ability of current and future generations to meet their own needs has already been compromised; this should be a wakeup call for us to realize that a different approach is needed if we do not want to deal with the worst scenarios.

It is inconceivable that after 19 years of international climate negotiations and even older sustainable development and economic agreements, we don't see enough efforts to tackle the root causes of climate change. The IPCC 5th Assessment Report<sup>5</sup> has already pointed out that two significant human activities are the main causes of increasing greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere: the burning of fossil fuels, and also deforestation. We therefore call for sustainable development, climate change and DRR goals, targets and indicators that are complementary with a UNFCCC legal and binding framework - integrating social, economic and ecological rights and justice. As WMG has repeatedly emphasized, this also expressly requires a goal on gender equality, as well as gender equality lens across any global development agenda.

Although within the UNFCCC conferences, especially during the COP18 (2012) some efforts have been made to highlight the impact of climate change on women and has been a major topic of discussion with a strong call for gender focus within climate policy, and for actions to increase the role of women in the UNFCCC process, very few advances have been made to really incorporate this within the negotiations.

Delegations are still male-dominated, with a need exist to build the knowledge base – both scientifically and politically – to successfully engage women into the policy development and decisionmaking processes at all levels ranging from local communities to the multilateral negotiations. Capacity-building for women is noted as a recommendation in the draft document, but mostly in regards to adaptation.

*“Women are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, such as droughts, floods and other extreme weather events, but they also have a critical role in combating climate change (UNFCCC, 2012)”*<sup>6</sup>

We strongly believe UNFCCC negotiations and implementations would be more effective if women were had a stronger role in setting benchmarks for mitigation and adaptation. Maintaining the status quo of using women as burden bearers instead of as mapmakers, navigators, and leaders of climate change negotiations, ensures that the world will be led off the precipice of climate stability into the cauldron of climate chaos.

We should also point out that the Hyogo Framework of Action<sup>7</sup> (HFA) prioritized gender approach stating that: *“gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessments, early warning systems, information management, and education and training.”* A strong gender equality principle should be realized in any goal on Disaster and Risk Reduction.

We appreciate the UN recognizing Pachamama's female identity, but calling her “Mother Earth”<sup>8</sup> alone

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<sup>3</sup> Source Annual CO<sub>2</sub> Data: Scripps Institution of Oceanography: CO<sub>2</sub> Program <http://co2now.org/current-co2/co2-now/annual-co2.html>

<sup>4</sup> Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, Chapter 2 <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>

<sup>5</sup> IPCC 5th Assessment Report - <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

<sup>6</sup> UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change [http://unfccc.int/gender\\_and\\_climate\\_change/items/7516.php](http://unfccc.int/gender_and_climate_change/items/7516.php)

<sup>7</sup> Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: ISDR International Strategy for Disaster Reduction International Strategy for Disaster Reduction <http://www.unisdr.org/2005/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 April 2009 [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/63/278](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/63/278)

does not ensure female participation in UN processes like the SDGs and the UNFCCC negotiations. Incorporating more original nations in negotiations would give a greater opportunity to observe and emulate intergovernmental processes that promote female leadership in public policy.

We have just begun to articulate in analysis, policy and project the exact relations between extreme weather events and climate change. The extent of the great social, economic and ecological cost that an event like Hurricane Sandy, typhoon Haiyan and others in the developing world, both causing immediate destruction and displacement and having a great cost in terms of longer-term social, economic and ecological systems, food sovereignty, livelihoods, and land and sea. Severe storms mean sewage and other contaminants are spread over wide areas by flood waters and/or storm surges. But a less obvious impact is the need to avoid widespread contamination through appropriate storage of products and wastes containing persistent organic pollutants and/or heavy metals.

A most severe consequence of course, is that we are still only seeing the “tip of the iceberg” if we take into account medium and long term effects of other climate related events such as droughts, coral reef die-off, glacier retreat, change of precipitation patterns and so on, if we do not see the emergency to deal with these outcomes as an urgent priority for the entire planet. We are in a unique position to assess, report, and analyze climate change impacts and disaster recovery plans; in that sense building capacity under a gender approach is one of the needs we have to start incorporating within the new policy frameworks.

Another identify consequence of the failure of the global effort to deal with climate change are the increasing occurrence and severity of natural weather related hazards and disasters demanding effective strategies toward protection of human lives and human settlement based on disaster and risk reduction. This is certainly at the heart of the right to development, and therefore must be strongly reflected in all Post-2015 development agenda agreements. As extreme weather events increase, preparing the most at-risk sectors of the population becomes a necessity. And in that sense the role of women must be recognized at all levels as core stakeholders in building the resilience needed to deal with major impacts, and with fewest casualties and financial losses.

Despite the effects global warming has in the atmosphere influencing directly the climate, warmer temperatures cause chemicals contained in land filled waste products to change into toxic and volatile congeners that are more likely to pollute soil, air and water, and in the food chain, becoming immediate threats to food security, and ultimately the overall social, economic and ecological systems. Another potential threat is the warming of ocean temperatures, which means faster methylation of mercury to form methyl mercury, the organic form that can potentially affect marine wildlife as well as the complex food web.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that persistent and rising inequalities are a great barrier that we have to overcome through all the Post-2015 agenda. As such inequalities increase due to the impacts of climate change, it is imperative to acknowledge the need to reduce the gender based gaps in all aspects of development. It is a fact that women use less energy in almost all societies around the world, but on the other hand suffer most from the impacts of climate change, especially the ones related to access to clean water sources and food sovereignty. Based on the estimates, in developing countries women are in charge of almost 70% of food production. In most places they are heads of household decision-making, and are the ones that deal with realities of already unequal, threatened and devastated social, economic and ecological systems. The nature of persistent gender inequalities across the world necessitates specific political attention in the Open Working Group to gender equality and human rights, including SRHR, ending all forms of sexual and gender based violence, and ensuring rights to development, for all.

Without the needed support and action many people may be forced to become outsiders in new environments as they become climate-forced migrants as well as newly marginalized populations, where the worst effects will be faced by women caring for their families. Therefore policies must be raised in a gender-equal and right-based participatory manner without marginalization of social groups and taking into account the respect of dignity for all and relying on the knowledge and skills of local people.

Building this capacity relies on greater skill-sharing and educational opportunities for women around the planet. It also demands that we find ways to enable more women into the science and technology fields. Social educators, scientists and development workers as well as civil society and social movement advocates must be engaged in policy development related to climate change and sustainable development and find ways to generate community-based dialogue between diverse and

heterodox “experts”, including constant dialogue with local communities. In this sense we must highlight how women devote a disproportionately high percentage of resources to community care: feeding, nursing, teaching, and nurturing children, elders, the disabled, and the disenfranchised.

The IPCC and civil society realize that the technical information of the IPCC Assessment Reports<sup>9</sup> and the SREX<sup>10</sup> report needs to be translated into plain and accessible language for stakeholders at the local and regional levels, including into vernaculars. The body of knowledge related to risk reduction in infrastructure and health systems, resilience factors, and adaptation in agriculture and conservation is growing, but key information still does not adequately reach implementers of local and national policy and planning workers (local government, city and rural planners, farmers, emergency personnel, CSOs, etc.).

Likewise, effective practices are not always shared amongst those working on adaptation and first-responders to loss and damage. We must find ways in which academics and members of local civil society and social movements including indigenous groups can share and translate technical information for a range of stakeholders. Doing this at the local level allows for an understanding of unique regional concerns while respecting local knowledge, traditions, and environment. Efforts in climate adaptation and risk reduction should go hand-in-hand with technology and knowledge sharing for sustainable development as well as to follow indigenous models of community action addressing crises.

In the Americas we can find few examples that include community councils where elder women identify community needs and evaluate proposed solutions to the crisis. This process of viewing the issue from the perspective of long-term causes and long-term impacts through grandmothers’ eye, which so efficiently utilizes the skills and expertise of female leaders, is lacking in multilateral processes.

To conclude we see that a great opportunity stands in meaningful integration of climate change in the SDGs and Post-2015 Agenda, and one of the best multilateral opportunities to propose concrete, measurable goals and indicators to provide the needed political will to succeed in addressing climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.

## **Recommendations**

Some recommendations to take into account therefore on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction are:

- Designed goals and indicators on climate change and disaster risk reduction should be complementary with CEDAW, the UNFCCC and UNCLOS and respond to the HFA as well as other agreed multilateral commitments, and should acknowledge the importance of integrated approaches to mitigation and adaptation in building resilience and should be human rights-based, gender and socially just and coherent with ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation and restoration, as well as food sovereignty and security.
- Climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction goals must ensure gender equality. Women’s rights are fundamental cross-cutting issues and should be consistent - especially with the objectives for sustainable cities and agriculture, healthy oceans and sustainable food, energy and education in order to face the climatic crisis and really achieve sustainable development. We also continue our unequivocal call for a stand-alone gender goal.
- Climate change goals should take into account common but differentiated responsibilities from a gender perspective; women have a lower impact on the environment and are being disproportionately impacted by climate change. As long as equity and equality are not achieved, we must recognize that women have less responsibility. Gender, climate change, human rights and social justice should be included aspects of the gender goal and other goal and targets. Women-led organizations and networks should receive adequate MOI to enable them to develop initiatives for adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage, and to be full decision makers in such processes.
- Climate change goals, targets and indicators should acknowledge measurable protection and restoration of the global commons; should ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources (land, deserts, oceans, rivers, forests, water and soils); promote and ensure nationally-focused agriculture, women-led agro ecology and guarantee food sovereignty. They must affirm

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<sup>9</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) <http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX) <http://ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/report/>

and reinforce local knowledge in order to reduce human rights violations, risk and marginalization, especially in urban poor, rural and remote areas.

- Climate change and energy related goals should explicitly exclude inefficient approaches to climate change mitigation that have proven to be inequitable, ineffective, dangerous and otherwise unsustainable. Also fiscal measures like carbon trading, and carbon tax, large-scale bioenergy production, large dams, forest carbon offsets, geo-engineering and nuclear energy cannot be applied without a clear understanding of their overall social, economic and ecological impacts, and if there is any doubt, long-agreed Agenda 21 principles including the precautionary principle must apply.
- Goals should promote education, skill and capacity sharing and building of women to facilitate the development and use of adaptation technologies to drive mitigation commitments, build resilience and manage disaster and risk.
- Disaster and risk reduction and climate change goals, targets and indicators should recognize and take into account women's specific needs and roles, and women's human rights, that can be further exacerbated in times of disasters and post-disaster situations. This includes development and implementation of clear contingency plans to address climate change, extreme weather events, sea-level rise including effects of king tides, ocean acidification, increased natural disasters and other associated risks including water supply, food sovereignty - as well as the deepest risk of loss of one's entire homeland for many small island states.
- Climate justice, disaster and risk reduction should transform communities towards renewable energy and carbon reduced paths of development, away from profit oriented development models; and must protect, rebuild and sustain ecosystems, within safe planetary boundaries.
- Climate, disaster and risk reduction goals should maintain and strengthen firm tenure, access and control of community resources, and should correct gender and other imbalances in access to (inter alia) land, ocean and water, deserts, and forests.
- Climate, disaster and risk reduction should contribute to build the resilience of communities to address devastation caused by climate change and extreme weather disasters, recognize the key roles women perform and empower them to perform effectively these roles.
- Disaster and risk reduction and preparedness strategies should be guided by Agenda 21 and human rights frameworks that emphasize community sovereignty, local democratization and meaningful participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of programs, and with a strong underpinning of effective, accountable and multilaterally agreed global governance systems.
- Local to global governance structures and mechanisms should be guided by international law, including long-agreed principles of historical accountability, common but differentiated responsibility, transparency and accountability.