

## Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2007

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent the concerns of civil society organizations. As representatives of civil society from both the Global South and the North, we offer here, our insights and suggestions based on many years in working with communities directly affected by disasters.

The challenge before us now is to create new compacts and partnerships which work for those who are forced to live with disasters and disaster risks.

### ENGAGING AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

If we are to succeed in the implementation of this agenda, much greater emphasis has to be given to engaging local communities. In practical terms this means professionals must work in partnership with communities to understand local vulnerabilities and capacities (which are the basis of effective mitigation strategies).

Many effective solutions and strategies for resilience-building emerge from the practices and knowledges of risk prone communities and of women living in these communities. Governments must invest in strengthening and scaling up effective grassroots solutions for disaster risk reduction.

Recognizing that vulnerability stems as much from economic and social marginalization as from physical, structural and geographical factors, DRR policies and programmes must:

- empower women and men in poor communities to counter their exclusion from decision making; and
- support community innovators and women leaders to bring their priorities, practices and to local, regional, national and global decision-making fora such as this.

Here I must mention the role of grassroots women whose vulnerabilities are acknowledged. But what is less visible is the fact that these women play a crucial role in leading and sustaining community based solutions for resilience. Yet women are excluded from all levels of decision making – local, regional and global. We need to change this.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The successful implementation of the HFA will only happen if we set standards that we can hold ourselves accountable to. We need clear targets, benchmarks and timeframes, to increase accountability among stakeholders. The priorities and practices of communities living with disaster risk and women in these communities must inform the frameworks for monitoring and evaluation that Governments, Inter-governmental agencies, donors and NGOs use to mark milestones and measure progress.

## LINKING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION TO DEVELOPMENT

Disaster risk reduction must go hand in hand with sustainable development. Any effective strategy to reduce disaster risk must incorporate both climate change mitigation as well as adaptation. We must also remember that for disaster-affected and disaster-prone communities, the most effective disaster risk reduction measures are those that advance development priorities: such as food security, secure incomes and livelihoods, safe housing, improvements in infrastructure and effective governance. In addition we must take care to ensure that development policies and programmes do not create or exacerbate vulnerabilities.

As Civil Society organizations we are committed to partnerships that engage local communities and women to strengthen and scale up local solutions, ensure high standards of accountability and protect development gains.

With the Hyogo Framework, you - National Governments - have already proved your commitment to the agenda of disaster risk reduction. Now I ask on behalf of civil society organizations here, that you keep this commitment by making this First Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction a real platform to launch the effective solutions so desperately needed, by Governments, NGOs and by the communities facing the risk of natural disasters.

Thank you very much for your attention, Ladies and Gentlemen.