

This Declaration is the outcome of the CSOs Session entitled “Consultation on Civil Society Involvement in DRR in Arab States and Recommendations for a post-2015 Framework for DRR” at the 2nd Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, 14-16 September 2014, convened by the Arab Network for Environment & Development (RAED) with the involvement of World Vision International (WVI), Global Network of CSOs for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) and the Norwegian Refugee Center (NRC).

Civil Society Priority Recommendations

- 1) Involve Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the formulation of DRR policy, strategy and planning at the local and national level
- 2) Recognize the role of CSOs among multi-stakeholder groups in preparedness operations at the local level
- 3) Improve the collation and accessibility of information including two-way exchange of local and traditional knowledge
- 4) Enhance policies to support communities vulnerable to climate induced displacement and policies to support internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Countries and people of the Arab Region have a lot in common and are naturally united by a number of well-rooted elements such as language, geographical topography, culture, values and traditions. Countries and people of the Arab region are also suffering from shared problems and common concerns, like high rates of illiteracy, low quality of education, poverty, unemployment, uncontrolled population growth, over exploitation of natural resources, un-sustained use of natural capital, environmental degradation, disasters resulting from climate change among others.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played important roles over the years in the disaster field. Starting from the traditional approach of response and relief, the emphasis has gradually shifted to disaster risk reduction. From regional NGOs to national and local NGOs, all stakeholders have recognized the significance of and need for community-based risk reduction. In their different capacities, they have endeavoured to establish links to the policy options at the local and national levels.

Although it is recognised that civil society organizations are essential in building community disaster resilience and supporting local-level implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, local CSOs face significant challenges in terms of human, financial, and technical resources that limit their ability to support and strengthen local Disaster Management capacities. There is also significant lack of coordination on DRR within some governments, which results in weak involvement of CSOs in policy making in the Arab region.

Furthermore, displacement induced by disaster and climate events or risks increasingly has become policymakers' concern in both poor and rich countries. From 2008 to 2012, 144 million people were displaced by disasters in 125 countries. Arab CSOs among all concerned stakeholders, after being provided with sufficient knowledge and capacities, can play a greater role in prevention of and response to displacement by providing support to evidence-based policies and helping to enhance community resilience.

There is an increasing need for the Arab states to enhance policies and support communities vulnerable to climate induced displacement and policies to support internally displaced persons (IDPs). The effect of internal displacement on IDPs themselves, as well as on the local authorities and communities that host them, can be devastating. Most obvious, IDPs immediately become dependent on others for basic needs such as shelter, food and water. Moreover, the longer displacement continues, the greater is the risk that traditional family and social structures break down, leaving IDPs dependent on outside aid and vulnerable to economic exploitation. Such dependency, in turn, reduces the chances of durable solutions

and sustainable reintegration into society once political and security conditions have changed to enable such solutions to take place.

We, as civil society organizations working in the Arab countries, would like to recommend the following:

- 1- Activating the partnership between CSOs and governments in policy formulation and implementation of these policies to effectively reduce the risk of disasters.
- 2- Enhancing the role of CSOs in building the resilience of local communities, especially women, youth & children in order to reduce their impact of disasters, especially caused due climate change.
- 3- Emphasizing the importance of effective and meaningful local, national, regional and global partnerships to manage disaster risk would contribute to further evolution of strong and predictable system for cooperation.
- 4- Launching an Arab campaign to raise the awareness, including the design of education and training programs, on disaster risk reduction, specifically those resulting from climate changes with the participation of CSOs in Arab countries.
- 5- Supporting CSOs in conducting public awareness activities and training & education programs on disaster risk, with the assistance of volunteers from local communities.
- 6- Engaging CSOs not only in the formulation of local and national plans and strategies, but in monitoring and following up on the implementation of these plans.
- 7- Disseminating success stories, especially those carried out with the participation of CSOs.
- 8- Integrating the concepts of DRR into local, national and regional action plans, which involve all stakeholders with specific clear roles and responsibilities for each actor including CSOs.

- 9- Urging the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and all concerned regional and international organization to participate in developing the capacities of Arab CSOs to enable them to be a significant actor.
- 10- Establishing a regional fund to finance programs and activities to be carried out by CSOs to reduce the risk of disasters and confront potential risks of displacement in different Arab countries.
- 11- Involving CSOs in decision making, implementation and designing policies that work best for the affected communities, including the displaced people and those at risk.

In conclusion, we, the civil society organizations working in Arab countries, are committed to continuing our efforts on the path of disaster risk reduction & sustainable development, and to developing a serious and positive position of the Arab civil society towards HFA2.