

UNISDR Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction

A. Purpose

This policy aims to provide clear guidance from UNISDR Senior Management on gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction (DRR), and to detail a set of actions required to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The policy builds on the joint publication of UNDP, IUCN and UNISDR in 2009, *Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender Sensitive: Policy and Practical Guidance*, which has benefited from experts' inputs and multiple stakeholders' contributions since 2006.

B. Scope

This policy guides the work of the UNISDR Secretariat as a whole. It describes a set of actions in line with the roles and responsibilities respectively of UNISDR Geneva and its regional offices. The policy requires gender concerns and needs to be integrated into the planning and implementation cycle of UNISDR's work, based on gender analysis of the Government Reports on the HFA's implementation. The policy builds on existing mandates that UN agencies have received from UN Resolutions and International Conventions, which have been widely used to guide gender mainstreaming in the UN system (see Policy References below).

C. Rationale

This policy is based on the underlying principles that follow.

Promoting gender equality is a shared mandate and responsibility of all UN agencies. Gender mainstreaming is central to the achievement of peace and sustainable development that the United Nations has been committed to since its establishment. Specifically, the UNISDR secretariat has the mandate and responsibility for gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted by 168 countries at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005 (see Policy References below).

Gender and DRR are both cross-cutting developmental issues. Without successfully addressing these two issues, it is difficult to achieve sustainable development in any society. Likewise, it is impossible to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters without the equal and active participation of men and women in DRR. To this end, the UNISDR secretariat needs to increase its efforts to make DRR gender sensitive

— from policy-making to programme planning and implementation. Being aware that women have been in a disadvantaged position in DRR work, a special strategy and effort are required to empower women in DRR, through knowledge development and capacity building.

Gender mainstreaming in DRR offers a win-win strategy for adapting climate change and achieving sustainable progress in gender equality and disaster resilient societies. The HFA's five priorities underline how DRR needs to be addressed through a comprehensive combination of political, social, technological, developmental and humanitarian processes. Making disaster risk reduction gender sensitive will secure the equal participation of men and women in policy making and policy implementation in DRR, making it possible to achieve disaster-resilient nations and communities — an overarching goal of the HFA.

D. Policy

To translate its commitment to making DRR gender sensitive into action UNISDR Secretariat policy consists of these four elements:

- *Allocate* human and financial resources in the UNISDR Secretariat for facilitating gender mainstreaming in DRR, especially in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- *Integrate* gender mainstreaming in all areas of the UNISDR Secretariat's work, with an emphasis on work planning, monitoring and reporting;
- *Advocate* implementation of policy and guidance on the principles for making DRR gender sensitive in the ISDR system; and
- *Empower* women in DRR through knowledge and capacity building in a partnership of country based UN agencies, governments and civil societies.

E. Focus Areas

To implement the Policy, the UNISDR Secretariat will focus its efforts on promoting gender equity and equality in five focus areas, again matching the five priorities of the HFA:

1. *Promote* gender sensitive policy on DRR and women's participation in national platforms, in collaboration with national authorities;
2. *Specify* the needs for establishment of gender specific data on the impact of disasters, carrying out gender-sensitive vulnerability, risk and capacity assessments, and developing gender-sensitive indicators, in partnership with country-based partners;

3. *Increase* women's understanding, knowledge and capacity on disaster risk reduction, and of its links with other development sectors;
4. *Encourage* ISDR operational partners to empower women in the integration of DRR into community development planning and programmes, through secured participation and financial support; and
5. *Facilitate* women's participation in relief and recovery planning and programmes.

F. Mainstreaming Gender in UNISDR work programme and work processes

1. Global Assessment Report

The Global Assessment Report (GAR) will include analysis of global trends based on gender disaggregated data. Where this is unavailable, GAR will include provisions to commission such analyses to support the bi-annual report. Case studies based on gender disaggregated data will be featured prominently in each report.

2. HFA Monitor

The HFA monitor will include indicators on progress in mainstreaming gender in national DRR programmes. Training in HFA monitoring will include sufficient capacity building to enable national focal points to recognize and measure progress in gender mainstreaming.

3. Global and Regional Platforms

Efforts will be made to ensure:

- 1) Gender-balanced selection of participants (particularly those supported by UNISDR);
- 2) Panels that are gender-balanced, with at least one panelist in each session who can comfortably address issues of gender mainstreaming; and
- 3) Targeted sessions on gender mainstreaming or related gender issues featured in the Global Platform program, where possible.

4. National Platforms

National platforms will be encouraged to promote gender balance in their platform, with participation of agencies, organizations and institutions that support gender-based approaches to development. Capacity development tools for national platforms will include modules that assist national platform members to recognize and promote gender

mainstreaming and will introduce tools, data and technical resources available to support gender mainstreaming initiatives.

5. Publications and Reports

Publications – including policy guidance and the Secretary General’s Reports – and communications products will include key messages informed by a gender-based approach to DRR. Where good practices are included, efforts will be made to feature practices that have addressed gender concerns. UNISDR authors and editors are encouraged to inquire of the authors of case studies to what extent DRR practice addressed issues of gender. Publications that do not meet the above criterion will be subject to further review by the publications review committee.

6. Advocacy

In public events where UNISDR is asked to present, speakers are encouraged to include gender perspectives, data that highlight differential impacts of disasters on men and women and the roles of men and women in delivering DRR. A selection of slides with basic information will be made available on the common drive, for you to adapt as possible. UNISDR also undertakes to promote further partner commitment to gender-based DRR and will regularly inquire with partners as to their progress. In addition, each year, the SRSG’s calendar will prioritize a number of high-level events that focus specifically on advocacy for gender-mainstreaming.

7. Campaigns

Current and future campaign kits will include specific messages and tools that facilitate gender mainstreaming. Particular emphasis should be placed on disseminating tools that support the integration of gender-based approaches in each of the HFA priority areas relevant to the campaign. Participants in technical meetings, advisory groups and related campaign events should reflect a gender balance and include expertise on gender-based approaches.

8. Managing a global and regional knowledge platforms

Preventionweb and regional websites will include space for gender related concerns and will flag those general DRR publications that address gender or have adapted a gender-based approach to project implementation.

9. Biennial Work-planning

Efforts will be made to include, (cost plans and budget), resources in support of the commitments as described above, specifically activities to advocate for gender mainstreaming and investment in gender-based DRR, to improve the global knowledge base on gender sensitive DRR, to encourage collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, and to support networks of practitioners that will advance the mainstreaming and application of gender-based approaches.

G. Implementation Strategy

To secure the implementation of the policy, the strategy requires high-level management commitment and the support of each staff member of the UNISDR Secretariat.

UNISDR Secretariat staff members should familiarize themselves on gender issues in DRR and DRR related sectors. Staff members should build gender policy implementation on the extended capacity of the member organizations of the UNISDR system, through ownership and partnership building, in particular with governments and country-based intergovernmental organizations and community-based organizations.

The Gender Focal Point of the UNISDR Secretariat will facilitate setting up a Task Force for gender issues. The first job of the Task Force should be to develop a '*gender sensitive DRR check list*', based on the nature of UNISDR's work for the easy reference of the Unit Heads and Heads of Regional Offices, for annual review.

H. Monitoring and Compliance

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for the HFA implementation will provide strategic guidance to UNISDR secretariat for the implementation of this policy on gender and DRR.

The Heads of Units and Heads of Regional Offices of UNISDR will be responsible and accountable to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the policy.

J. Policy References

1. Gender Equality Agreements

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). CEDAW, commonly referred to as a bill of rights for women, sets out that States Parties are bound to guarantee men and women equal opportunities in terms of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. States Parties agree to

incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitutions and/or other appropriate legislation, and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle. In a provision of much relevance to climate change, the Convention obliges States Parties to take “*all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development*” and, “*participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels*”, and “*in all community activities*”. CEDAW also recognizes that women should have equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (4th World Conference on Women 1995)
Strategic Objective K of the Beijing Platform for Action commits to securing the active involvement of women in environmental decision-making; integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and strengthening or establishing mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. The 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2005, also known as “Beijing+10,” called on Member States to enhance rural women’s income-generating potential; noting the importance of the agricultural sector, particularly in developing countries, and the importance of greater security of land tenure and property ownership for resource mobilization and environmental management. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html>

ECOSOC Resolution 2005/31

ECOSOC Resolution 2005/31 calls upon all entities of the UN system, including UN agencies, funds and programmes, to intensify efforts to address the challenges to the integration of gender perspectives in policies and programmes, through action plans, budgets, training, commitment by senior management officials, accountability systems, operational mechanisms, support to governments, monitoring and evaluation, and sharing of good practices and collaboration between all entities of the UN system. <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2005/resolution%202005-31.pdf>

2. Sustainable Development and Environment Agreements

Agenda 21 (UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992)

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 calls upon governments to make necessary constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, social, and economic changes in order to eliminate all obstacles to women’s full involvement in sustainable development and in public life. Agenda 21 is to be achieved through government policies, national guidelines, and plans to ensure equity in all aspects of society, including women’s “*key involvement*” in decision-making and environmental management. <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>

Convention on Biodiversity (1992)

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for

the full participation of women at all levels of policy making and implementation for biological diversity conservation. The CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice highlights women's practices, knowledge, and gender roles in food production. <http://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>

Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)

The Convention to Combat Desertification recognizes the role of women in rural livelihoods and encourages the equal participation of women and men in the implementation of the Convention. The UNCCD stresses the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries. It instructs national action programmes to provide for the effective participation of women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations.

<http://www.unccd.int/convention/text/pdf/conv-eng.pdf>

World Summit for Social Development (1995)

The World Summit committed states to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognizing and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development. The Summit also called for full and equal access of women to literacy, education and training, health care, and the right to own land and inherit property, as well as the equality of status, welfare and opportunity of the girl child.

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>

Millennium Declaration (2000)

The Millennium Declaration commits signatories to promote equality between the sexes and the empowerment of women as an effective means to combat poverty, hunger and disease, and promote truly sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals that emerged from the Declaration are of particular interest due to the parallel goals of poverty eradication (Goal 1), gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 3), and environmental sustainability (Goal 7). Taken together these establish a platform of fundamental interrelated values on gender, poverty, and environment. Reducing inequality is seen as an instrumental step in achieving the MDGs due to the fact that, according to the 2005 UN Human Development Report, gender continues to be "*one of the world's strongest markers for disadvantage*".

<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

Johannesburg Plan of Action (2002)

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation, adopted in Johannesburg, promotes women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels, on the basis of equality with men. It calls for mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the improvement of the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunities, land, credit, education and health-care services.

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/WSSD_PlanImpl.pdf

3. Human Rights Agreements

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the equal rights of men and women. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of civil and political rights set forth in the Covenant. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ensures the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

World Conference on Human Rights (1993)

The World Conference on Human Rights urges treaty monitoring bodies to include the status of women and the human rights of women in their deliberations and findings, making use of gender-specific data. It also urges Governments and regional and international organizations to facilitate the access of women to decision-making posts and their greater participation in decision-making processes.

[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(symbol\)/a.conf.157.23.en](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(symbol)/a.conf.157.23.en)

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

The Declaration requires states to give legal recognition and protection to indigenous peoples' rights over their lands, territories and resources, with due respect for the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of indigenous peoples. The Declaration specifically prohibits discrimination against women, and requires that all the rights and freedoms recognized in the declaration be guaranteed equally to indigenous men and women. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>

4. Disaster Risk Reduction

Hyogo Framework for Action (2005)

The clearest mandate on gender and disasters, which is easily extended to climate-induced disasters, is the Hyogo Framework for Action that emerged from the UN's World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The Hyogo Framework states that "*a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training.*"

<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm>