

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change and Sustainable Development**  
**Voluntary Action Statement of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Stakeholder Group<sup>1</sup>, Arab States**

**Africa-Arab Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction**  
**Tunisia, 9-13 October 2018**

**Preamble**

- Guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change 2015, the SDGs 2015 and the UN Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (to be adopted in December 2018), as mutually reinforcing mechanisms that promote and protect gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response; climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and the sustainable development goals;
- Noting the gender-based differences in the ways men, women, boys, girls prepare for and reduce risks; are impacted by, cope with, mitigate and adapt to disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation;
- Acknowledging that these gender-based differences in impacts and contribution to survival are anchored in pre-existing gendered roles and attributes, sex and gender-based discrimination and inequality, and other interacting forms of marginalization such as economic status, age, disability, race and ethnicity, immigration status, nationality, geographical location and others, with disproportionate impacts on women and girls;
- Highlighting that these differences are manifested in varied ways across contexts, but that there are commonalities, demonstrated for example by greater female deaths on average in disasters, including older women, women and girls with disability who may be left to perish because of social stigma and a perception of them as liabilities; greater economic impacts on women than men; increased workloads, fatigue, loss in time and income-generating opportunities due to long hours of travel to forage for food, fuel and water; sexual and domestic abuse and violence; greater difficulties for women, especially pregnant women, older women, women and girls with disabilities to move to shelters; greater marginalization from access to material and non-material resources for relief, recovery and reconstruction; lack of representation on decision-making mechanisms;

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<sup>1</sup> Names of contributing organizations Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD), Association of Environmental and Sustainable Development of ILLIZI, Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), Help Age, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Organization for Migration Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa, Organization of Islamic Co-operation to the United Nations Office at Geneva, UNDP Egypt Country Office, UNISDR Regional Office for Arab States, University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene, UN OCHA, UN Women Regional Office for Arab States.

- Reiterating that this directly affects women’s resilience and ability to cope with disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation;
- Reinforcing that women and girls are not just victims of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, but are frontline first responders and key agents bringing their resources to drive family and community survival, preparedness, risk reduction, recovery and adaptation;
- Recognizing that S. 38 a (i) of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 calls for participation of women as critical to managing risk and designing and implementing disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programs and for strengthening women’s capacities for preparedness and alternate livelihoods post-disaster;
- Acknowledging that as women and girls are differently and disproportionately impacted in disasters from men and boys and are creative first responders, women and girls from a range of excluded groups are best positioned to represent their own interests and work with governments at all stages of the policy process to ensure that their priorities are addressed in formulating, implementing, financing, monitoring and evaluating prevention, preparedness and response interventions. This ensures tailored interventions, gender equality and women’s empowerment and maximizes the investment in disaster risk reduction and response, climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental depletion;
- Recognizing that women constitute half the population and in some countries more, including different categories of women and their priorities in developing and implementing well-resourced policies, plans and programs addressing disasters, climate change and environmental degradation will contribute robustly to sustainable development;
- Acknowledging that disaster risk reduction and response, climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental protection cut across various policy fields requiring intentional policy coherence, collaboration and co-ordination between institutions from multiple sectors, including ministries/departments of agriculture, environment, disaster management, national women’s machineries, CSOs and gender specialists in these areas
- Noting that human mobility is a crucial component of risk and resilience, and that effective climate change mitigation, adaptation interventions and DRR provide communities the choice to live where they are; Noting however that disasters, climate change induced events, environmental depletion have together with a range of other gendered development processes also been important drivers of migration;
- Also noting that women have in this context migrated independently, or with families as a survival strategy; and in some contexts greater numbers of men have migrated, leaving women and children behind;
- Recognizing that as migrants women face disproportionate discrimination at all stages of the migration process that includes lack of pre-departure information, inaccessible pre-departure training, fewer assets to move than men rendering them susceptible to exploitative recruiting agents, traffickers and debt-bondage; labour market discrimination in the form of fewer decent

jobs for women, contract substitution, lower wages than men; lack of access to social and financial services; lack of liberty and freedom of association; vulnerability to all forms of violence, for which services including life-saving assistance to survivors and risk mitigation for families and communities are often unavailable and inaccessible; lack of reintegration services and safe avenues for remittance transfer and productive investment; lack of support services for families left behind that also places burdens on women;

- Reinforcing that while human rights violations at all stages of migration and of displaced persons compromises sustainable development, well-managed gender-sensitive migration can reduce risks and build resilience, contribute to climate change adaptation and support sustainable development.
- Recognizing the past and current efforts of government and non-government actors to address DRR, climate change, eco system management and migration and the need for continuing support to these efforts

### **Voluntary Action Commitments**

The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Stakeholder Group, Arab States Voluntary Action Statement commits to supports governments in the region in the following ways:

### **Gender Sensitive data collection, research, tools for policy development and implementation**

1. Support identification of data and research gaps and support the generation and dissemination of data and analysis on the gender equality and women’s rights dimensions of disaster risk reduction, response, climate change mitigation and adaptation, including combining traditional knowledge with science and technology; linkages with female migration and promotion and protection of women’s and girl’s rights at all stages of migration.
2. Develop and provide governments with a strategic package of selected resources, including user-friendly checklists and guidance notes, case studies that help integrate gender equality and women’s and girl’s priorities into DRR, climate change, migration and SDG strategies, legislation, plans, budgets and programs.
3. Support gender sensitive risk mapping, including indicators for each risk as part of a resilience plan that will be shared between all African and Arab countries
4. Create cohorts of capacitated groups at national level to support governments to generate and report on sex, age and disability disaggregated data through the Sendai Monitor
5. Strengthen or support the establishment of co-ordination and reporting mechanisms at regional, national, local levels, including at community levels on DRR

### **Promoting women’s and girl’s participation in decision-making**

6. Create a data-base of civil society organizations working on the gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment dimensions of climate change, DRR and migration that forms part of the above strategic resource kit that governments can draw on.

7. Create a formal community of practice via email or website to share information and resources including best practices and lessons learned.
8. Advocate with governments and support the effective representation of women especially from affected communities, women migrants, and CSOs supporting these groups on decision-making mechanisms on climate change, DRR and migration.

**Advocacy and capacity strengthening to mainstream gender equality and women's rights into policy design and implementation**

9. Co-organize workshops with national and local governments to create awareness and build capacities to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment into DRR, climate change, migration strategies, plans, programs, budget allocations.
10. Co-organize with governments in the region a high level conference on climate change, DRR, SDGs and female migration

**Operations of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Stakeholder Group**

11. Develop terms of reference, workplans and indicators to measure progress of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Stakeholder Group