**ActionAid - Oral Statement at the DRR Global Platform 2011**

It is now widely acknowledged that disasters play a central role in contributing to destructive cycles of hardship, increased vulnerability and growing poverty. The past two decades have seen a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of disasters – particularly climate-induced disasters – and prompted much discussion around the convergence between disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). ActionAid welcomes this opportunity to share our experience and to highlight areas where we believe renewed efforts are required if the global DRR community is to rise to the mounting challenges posed by climate-related and other hazards.

ActionAid’s work on DRR in 16 countries across Asia, Africa and the Americas plays a key part in our fight against poverty. In eight countries across Asia, we have been implementing risk reduction and disaster preparedness programmes since 2004. These programmes have focused on building national and sub-national capacity to address the risks faced by communities, facilitating community-centred and managed DRR through social mobilization and placing DRR at the heart of national development policies. Our pioneering five year Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools (DRRS) project, implemented in nine countries[[1]](#footnote-1), sought to institutionalise DRR efforts within communities by using schools as a locus for working with children, teachers, parents, local officials and other key stakeholders. This innovative approach also provided strategic opportunities to integrate the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) priorities within national education systems.

Our experience on DRR has highlighted the success of two areas of work which we believe require greater investment and commitment of DRR efforts at local, national and international levels. These are:

* **The need to build comprehensive resilience.** Comprehensive resilience can be understood as stemming from an analysis of **all** factors driving vulnerability and how these can be mitigated and managed. It takes into consideration the political, social, cultural, economic and physical hazards, shocks and threats which face communities, and it seeks to join up the multiple layers – local, national, regional and international – which impact vulnerability. If communities are to become safer, the full range of vulnerabilities they face must be addressed, not solely those related to natural hazards.
* **The need to put women’s leadership at the centre of resilience building and DRR initiatives.** Disasters have a disproportionate impact on women. Structural inequalities, existing gender discrimination and unequal power relations mean they are often hardest hit, take longer to recover, and may not recover as fully. Similarly, the way women experience vulnerability is very different to men. Lack of access to, and control over, resources, and exclusion from claiming basic entitlements increase women’s vulnerability and undermine their ability to cope with the impacts of disasters, including those induced by climate change. However, the role of women as leaders in emergency response and resilience building must not be overlooked. Resilience building initiatives must acknowledge the breadth of experience women already possess in relation to DRR and CCA, and build on this through participatory methodologies which increase their empowerment and facilitate their leadership.

**Recommendations:**

In light of the above, ActionAid calls upon UNSIDR, national governments, multilateral agencies, local authorities and civil society networks to invest in comprehensive resilience programmes and initiatives which promote and facilitate women’s leadership as a central component of DRR work.

1. **In order to build comprehensive resilience, the global DRR community must:**

* Ensure in-depth analysis of the multiple underlying causes of human vulnerability and thus the root causes of disaster – as well as an appreciation of past action and opportunities for future intervention so that communities are able to draw up actionable plans and demands.
* Engage a variety of key people and groups (CSOs, local government, political leaders etc) in the process of identifying and addressing vulnerabilities whilst keeping vulnerable communities at the centre.
* Tackle vulnerabilities at different levels, from local to national to global, ensuring interventions always focus on the needs, demands and knowledge of the most vulnerable.
* Promote initiatives which seek to combine local knowledge with climate science, enabling communities to identify sustainable measures to reduce their vulnerability based on an appreciation of the latest available scientific information.

1. **In order to promote and facilitate women’s leadership, the global DRR community must:**

* Recognise that women are on the front line of the impacts of climate change, and acknowledge their existing capacities and experience for actively contributing to and leading DRR/CCA initiatives
* Ensure women’s concerns and experiences are voiced through their participation in vulnerability assessments and the implementation of identified priorities for action
* Ensure that women are formally represented in implementation and decision-making forums for DRR/CCA initiatives, eg. Disaster Management Committees, and any actions which arise out of these
* Dedicate and allocate funding for DRR/CCA initiatives which promote and protect women's human rights whilst facilitating their role as leaders in their communities

Thank you

1. 1 Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Malawi and Nepal (projects funded by DFID, UK government) plus DRC and Zambia (projects funded by Hellenic Aid, Greek government) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)