

# Gender, DRR and Climate Change CEDAW's perspective

# Simple Introduction to CEDAW

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women.
- It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination
- Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years on.

# Rationale for Recommendations

- Disasters and Climate Change exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, the application of human rights' standards, including equality, participation, capabilities, etc., will strengthen DRR and promote Climate Justice.
- The CEDAW Committee decided to develop guidance (a General Recommendation) to States and other actors on existing obligations under CEDAW - the widely ratified human rights instrument. This will:
  - Ensure attention to gender-responsive DRR and climate change;
  - Provide consistency in policy, inform legislation, budgets and other measures to counter the negative human rights impact of climate change and disasters.
- The Sendai framework also places importance on human rights, gender equality and climate change adaptation.
- The Paris agreement on CC put an emphasis in its preamble on Gender Equality
- SDG's 5 and 13: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"

# Role of the Convention in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience

## Article 1: Substantive Equality

### Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- Multiple, intersectional discrimination
- Disproportionate numbers of women affected by disaster (BUT does not necessarily mean women are vulnerable)
- Addressing the multiple/intersecting factors that promote notion of women as “vulnerable” e.g. age, disability, health, employment status, care-giving responsibilities ...

### Potential Remedial Actions

- Reverse stereotypes and disproportionate impacts through programs and policies (that utilize women’s networks, draw on their strengths and existing competencies).

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

**Article 2:** Core obligations on states to ensure equality in national constitutions, legislation, and laws, to take all appropriate action to abolish existing laws, regulations and practices that discriminate against women and to adhere to international commitments (GR 28).

## Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Address laws, customs and practices (including restrictions on women's mobility, care-giving roles) that impede women's ability to overcome disaster risks
- Strengthen the relevant institutions

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

**Article 3:** Advocates gender mainstreaming, i.e. the integration of women in all fields; role of National Women's Machinery (NWM) and NHRIs).

## Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- NWMs and women's NGOs not routinely included in key decisions on climate change and DRR programs, which are usually dominated by males.

## **Article 4:** Temporary Special Measures (TSMs)

## Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- TSMs can be used to bring women on board, design programs to address the inequalities women face.

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

**Articles 5 & 6:** Social and cultural patterns of conduct; violence, trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

## Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- Negative impact and heightened risks for women/girls connected with displacement, population movements and migration occasioned by disasters and climate change.
- The Committee addressed violence in the Haiti earthquake crisis in January 2010, and remarked that:  
*“sexual violence is common in humanitarian crises and may become acute in the wake of a national disaster”*.

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

**Article 7 & 8:** Equality in political and public life, policy formulation and participation in NGOs; participation at the international level.

## Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Increase women's **leadership** and participation at all levels in gender-responsive climate change adaptationS and DRR.
- Promote equal participation in:
  - planning and program design in all sectors that reduce risk (e.g., agriculture, urban planning, economics, government, health, education, environmental resource management)
  - **disaster preparedness** (training, relief coordination) and equal access to preparedness and recovery resources and opportunities)
  - policy and decision-making processes (natural and **water resource management, public health, drought-prevention, agriculture** etc.)

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

**Articles 10 -14:** Guarantee equality in Education, Employment, Health; and issues applicable to Rural women

## Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

**Education/capacity building/information** is critical for ensuring that:-

- Women take up disciplines related to understanding and addressing DRR (including Science, Technology Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine, agriculture, water resources management, law, technical and vocational hazards fields), especially areas prone to rising water levels (SIDS)
- TSMs (art.4) should be used to rectify the gender balance in DRR employment, in order to reflect and respond to women's needs.
- Equalize women's economic situation *before* the disaster to avoid lower incomes and pensions, loss of specific assets, low take-up of insurance, social security and access to microcredit contributing to their disproportionate casualty figures.

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

## Article 14: Rural Women: The particular needs of rural women

### Problematic Issues in Gender and DRR:

- The geographical situation of rural women, water and fuel-wood collection responsibilities, food preparation compromises their capacity to cope with climate change/ disaster impacts
- Unequal access to the monetized system, resources, education, and participation in development and decision-making

### Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Utilize women's indigenous/informal knowledge in natural resource management and conservation as they are critical actors in these fields.

# The Convention's Role in Mainstreaming Gender-responsive DRR (Cont.)

## Article 15: Equality before the Law/Access to Justice (GR 33)

### Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Removal of barriers to accessing justice

## Article 16: Equal rights in marriage and family relations

### Potential Remedial Actions in Gender and DRR:

- Equal rights in marriage and family relations become particularly important in disasters, where surviving partners may not have legal rights to land, property and may experience increased hardship and inability to recover from disasters; discriminatory laws as to headship of families.

## Guiding Principles:

- Disaster risk reduction and Climate Change resilience requires an **all-of-society** engagement and partnership. It also requires **empowerment** and **inclusive, accessible and non discriminatory participation**, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters... A **gender**, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and **women** and youth **leadership** should be promoted

➤ ***CEDAW is a powerful mechanism for ensuring the inclusion, engagement and empowerment of women in member states***

- Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation requires a multi-hazard approach and **inclusive** risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of **disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability**

➤ ***CEDAW's reporting obligation is an important mechanism for ensuring compliance; monitoring through the constructive dialogues which incorporate the articles, and an evidence base of gendered DRR data.***

# Other Areas, Pointers for Attention

The roll-out of effective, and sustainable policies addressing climate change requires placing the reduction of existing gender inequalities and women's empowerment at the center of the analysis and action undertaken.