



SDC's Comments on Draft General Recommendation No. 35 on the Gender-related dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction in a Changing Climate

Global Programme Climate Change

We would like to thank the Committee for a very comprehensive and well-structured draft General Recommendation on gender-related dimensions of DRR in a Changing Climate. We think that this paper includes most relevant aspects and is reaching for an ambitious implementation of DRR and climate resilience policies and measures. We therefore support the approach of this draft GR.

We commend the Committee to highlight the important contributions made by women and the importance for full and effective participation by women, positioning women as actors rather than as part of "a vulnerable group" (paragraph 6).

Further, we would like to highlight the importance of coherence: Given that disaster risk reduction action and climate change adaptation action address the interlinked challenges of disaster risk, sustainable development and climate change, it should be made sure that this is reflected in a coherent way throughout the entire Draft General Recommendation No. 35. It should be made sure that DRR and climate change resilience measures are integrated in the text in a coherent and balanced way. For example, in paragraph 30, the chapeau mentions both DRR and climate resilience activities, however, the recommendations a. e. listed under paragraph 30 only refer to DRR but not to climate resilience or adaptation measures. The same applies for example under paragraph 36 b) where the recommendation only refers to disaster risk reduction plans and policies and does not refer to adaptation planning and policies.

Finally, paragraph 13 is referring to the Lima Work Programme on Gender. Further, reference should be made to the Decision made at COP 22 in Marrakech on the continuation and enforcement of the Lima work programme for a period of 3 years and to develop a gender action plan promoting gender equality within the UNFCCC, see: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/marrakech_nov_2016/application/pdf/auv_cop22_i15_gender_and_climate_change_rev.pdf

Humanitarian Division/DRR-Team

Overall, we support the scope and direction of the General Recommendation, but we find it quite ambitious, in particular for certain contexts such as Afghanistan (see additional comments of our SDC office on the ground).

Additionally, the following study of IFRC (co-financed by Switzerland) could be helpful for the drafting committee: Unseen, unheard: gender-based violence in disasters: http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201511/1297700_GBV_in_Disasters_EN_LR2.pdf

In order to be comprehensive, we suggest to include under „III. The CEDAW Convention and other relevant international frameworks (page 6)“ next to reference to Sendai, SDG's, Paris

Declaration, WHS, etc. also make a reference to „Financing for Development Conference“ from July 2015 in Addis Abeba. The Conference brought about a number of important documents (Final Report, Action Agenda, UN Resolution) and ideas/commitments for financing (see Link <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/>), which amongst others also make the link to development, climate, natural catastrophe, economic, social and political rights of women as well as „empowerment of women and girls“ in general.

Some paragraphs found in the above mentioned documents are the following:

“We encourage consideration of climate and disaster resilience in development financing to ensure the sustainability of development results.”

“We reaffirm that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and the full realization of their human rights, are essential to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. We reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies. We recommit to adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation and transformative actions for the promotion of gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment at all levels, to ensure women’s equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy and to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in all its forms.”

Further, a link to the Platform for Disaster Displacement (the former Nansen Initiative) could be made: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/human-rights/humanitarian-policy/nansen-initiative.html>

Although, it does not take an explicit gender focus, the overall protection approach is mainstreamed into key outcome documents, including the Protection Agenda. (An Input to the Nansen Initiative by Dr Bernadette P. Resurreccion, Senior Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia Centre on “Gender and the Feminization of Migration in the Context of Climate Change and Disasters in the Asia-Pacific Region” led to a specific recommendation in the summary of conclusion from the meeting, namely (2.) Develop a better understanding of the differential gender impacts of climate change and disasters).

Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan

The Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan does recognize the importance of the role women must play in disaster risk reduction and addressing risks and hazards linked to climate change. We also agree on the importance of the proper understanding and consideration of the gender dimension and the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women for the development of appropriate disaster risk reduction strategies, policies and programmes.

While the recommendations on the Gender-related dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction in a Changing Climate are well comprehensive, many seem to be quite ambitious, some even unrealistic - at least in the short-/medium term - to certain developing countries or in war countries like Afghanistan, where state structures and decisions making processes are still largely underdeveloped and highly unstable, and policy with regard to disaster risk reduction still very limited.

This remark applies in particular to the recommended actions to ensure that women are provided with equal opportunities to participate in disaster risk reduction and climate

resilience activities at all levels (p.9, para.30). Particularly ambitious seem to be, for the Afghan context, the recommended strengthening of national gender machineries, institutions, civil society and women's groups and provision to women with adequate resources, skills, and authority to lead, advise, monitor and carry out strategies to reduce disaster risks (p.10, para.30, point d), but also the proposed allocation of adequate resources to build women' leadership capacities and create an enabling environment to strengthen their active and substantive role in disaster risk reduction at all levels and across all relevant sectors (p.10, para.30, point e).

In this same regard, the conservative nature of some countries (like Afghanistan) with regard to the position of the woman in the society and within decision-making processes has also to be properly considered.

Equally ambitious is the provision of access to justice for women whose rights have been affected by disasters so that they are provided with adequate and timely remedies (p. 10, part C), considering the fact that the majority of Afghan women do not have access to justice to claim their most basic rights. In this same regard, while access to social protection to help women adapting to or recovering from disasters (p.18, part D) may be relevant to some contexts, it is unrealistic in others like Afghanistan, where the overall concept of social protection and relief payments – from any risks - does not exist.

The Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan agrees that *'low income climate vulnerable countries face particular challenges in developing, implementing and monitoring gender responsive disaster risk and climate change policies and programs due to the limited availability of national public finance and development assistance'* (p.12, part C). Considering the limited available finances resources, the call towards an increase of allocated resources towards gender-responsive prevention, preparedness and recovery seems again to be unrealistic. In this regard, we do emphasis the importance of national ownership in defining the allocation of the national available resources and the support of international aid in accordance with the national priorities.

Therefore, the Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan calls for a **more realistic and context-specific approach** with regard to the development and implementation of responsive disaster risk and climate change policies and programs.

On a positive note, the Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan welcomes the inclusion of women's rights perspective into the design, implementation and monitoring of all of States', international organizations' and other entities' disaster risk reduction programs (p.10, part C, para. e). It also welcomes the emphasis put on policy coherence and the call for an increased coordination between gender equality, climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development policies (p.11, para. 35). In this same regard finally, the Swiss Cooperation Office in Afghanistan also supports the inclusive approach promoted in the document and the recommended involvement of different sectors (health care, education, social protection, agriculture, environmental protection, urban planning, etc.) in disaster risk reduction policy.