

Feminist proposals to reduce risk of Gender Based Violence incidence in disaster and climate change context and to address its consequences, supporting victims and ensuring justice

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Climate Change/ Disaster/Gender Based Violence

- ▶ The increasing effects of climate change further increase natural disasters and disaster risks, accentuate gender inequalities and the incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) especially against women, girls and LGBTBI population.
- ▶ In addition, environmental degradation, the loss of biodiversity and climate change tend to exacerbate existing gender inequalities and GBV affecting more disproportionately women and girls.
- ▶ It is important to appoint that it is difficult to research about GBV, particularly after disasters, because GBV is usually hidden and takes many forms (including domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, child/early marriage and trafficking).

Disaster and climate change affect women and men differently...

- ▶ **Disasters affect women, girls, boys and men differently.** Research shows that women and girls are most vulnerable to disasters and more likely to die than men in disasters—for instance, UN-Women reported at the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, women and children made up 77 per cent of the victims in Indonesia.
- ▶ **Women are also more likely than men to experience violence.** Some examples: after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 UN Human Rights Council reported numerous cases of rapes and femicides in urban shelters in Honduras and also in other countries such as Nicaragua that were reported by women organisations. In Haiti after the 2010 earthquake numerous cases of rapes, sexual violence and survival sex were reported by a large number of organisations. During 2005 Hurricane Katrina in USA many cases of GBV were reported on the shelters showing that it is not a question of economic development, it is an issue of gender and power relations.
- ▶ Researchers have found significant increases in GBV in high income countries during humanitarian crises due to climate change or other causes such as Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and USA.

A risk of Gender inequality and GBV during disasters and climate change context

- ▶ **Unequal access to livelihood**, property, financial resources, and decision-making power can create economic stress for entire households in times of crisis, **leaving women disproportionately exposed to climate-related security risk.**
- ▶ The latest research about gender, climate, security by UNEP, UN Women, UNDP, and the UNDPPA 2020 shows that in Chad, **gender-based violence and structural inequality limit the capacity of communities to adapt to climate shocks.** And also that report suggest that in Pakistan and Sierra Leone water shortages, heat waves, and extreme weather events can create new risks of gender-based violence and deepen inequalities.

My first proposals are related with the programs in humanitarian action to reduce, prevent and mitigate the risk of GBV incidence in disaster and climate change context with the following actions:

- ▶ ***Prioritizing women and girls on GBV programs*** due to their documented greater vulnerabilities to GBV, the discrimination they suffer and their lack of safe and equitable access to humanitarian assistance*.
- ▶ ***A focus more on gender equality than on gender inclusivity because*** there is not an equivalence of violence for males and for females that can be considered in the same overall framing of violence, nor even in the case of trans-and homophobic violence against LGBTBI populations*.

- ▶ * WARD, Jean: "It's not about the gender binary, it's about the gender hierarchy: A reply to "Letting Go of the Gender Binary". *International Review of Red Cross*, Vol:98 1 275-298. War in Cities. Cambridge University Press 2016. págs.275-298. ISSN: 1816-3831.Pag.281.

Programs in humanitarian action to reduce, prevent and mitigate GBV ...

- ▶ *It is necessary strategic partnerships with women's organizations and civil society organizations* in close coordination with local actors and communities to promote the needs and strategies to prevent GBV for women and girls in disaster and climate change contexts.
- ▶ *Ensure safe spaces* for women, girls, during humanitarian action to prevent GBV and *to reduce gender inequality, gender discrimination and gender-based violence* (GBV) through the active promotion of fundamental principles on gender and humanitarian values.
- ▶ *Emergency situations on climate-related security risks can also create new scenarios to highlight opportunities for leadership and inclusion of women* and marginalized groups *in decision-making process*.
- ▶ Ensure that environmental and climate-related security risks are appropriately integrated into the policy framework for women and LGBTBI population.

My second proposals are related with International Law and protection of GBV during disaster and climate change context...

GBV violates international human rights law, humanitarian law and principles of gender equality.

- ▶ **Under international human rights law**, acts of GBV are considered violations, as articulated in international conventions, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979 and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence 1993.

International Conventions and Resolutions Security Council

1979
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

1994
Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

1995
Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women

2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security

2000
Millennium Declaration and Development Goals (MDGs), especially MDG 3 (gender equality and the empowerment of women)

2008 UN Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence

2015
Sustainable Development Goals. Agenda 2030. ODS: 5, 6 and 11

How International Law can protect the population from GBV during disasters and climate change context...

- ▶ Under times of conflict International humanitarian law establishes protections for civilians, including women and girls, but protection for women and girls is related more with her pregnancy and motherhood, not as individual women. Sexual violence protection is more related with honor than women sexual rights. For this reason, international humanitarian law needs to be updated with a gender perspective.
- ▶ The only human rights treaty, considering universal instruments that ensure the protection and safety of persons, making reference to disasters or emergencies is the Convention on the Protection of Person with Disabilities 2006 (art.11)

International Law to prevent GBV...

- ▶ **Ensure that gender equality and gender based violence concerns are fully integrated into international instruments** in the context of emergencies and climate change providing measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons, especially women and girls, LGTBI and other marginalised people.
- ▶ **Promote a real inclusion of women and highlight opportunities for leadership during decision-making and planning process in climate change policy.** It is important the recognition that women are important actors and influencers on climate change as it is included in the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework** for Disaster Risk Reduction but women remain largely underrepresented and excluded.
- ▶ **Ensure that women and marginalized groups are fully included in the design and implementation process of National Climate Change Gender Action Plans** and gender provisions preventing GBV.

Integrate Hard Law and Soft Law in the context of climate change and GBV...

Humanitarian actors have an ethical imperative to prevent and respond to GBV during emergencies and in the context of climate change and have developed different standards, guidelines and minimum standards to prevent, mitigate and response to Gender Based Violence (Soft Law). Therefore, it is important the integration and inclusion of that soft law with the hard law.

Integrate Hard Law and Soft Law in the context of climate change and GBV...

Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings by Inter-Agency Standing Committee IASC.2015

The inter-agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming. UNFPA.2019

Minimum Standard Commitments to gender and diversity by International Federation of Red Cross. IFCR.2015

Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Global Protection Cluster Child Protection IASC/UNICEF. 2012.

The Sphere Handbook.Humanitarian Charter and Minimum standards in Humanitarian response.Sphere Association, 2018.

The Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action. IASC 2017.

Action against sexual and gender-based violence. An updated strategy. UNHCR, 2011.

Finally...

- ▶ The integration has to be from a feminist and transformative approach, including a more specifically human-rights component on Climate Change Risk Reduction policies, with the use of new technologies, the promotion of codes of conduct and gender plans, exemplary and dissuasive sanctions in the face of abuse and sexual exploitation during humanitarian actions for supporting victims and ensuring justice.

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- ▶ IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee). Guidelines for integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action. Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery 2015.
- ▶ FERRIS, Elizabeth (et al); PET, Daniel; and STARK, Chareen, Chapter 4: Disaster Risk Management: A Gender-Sensitive Approach is a Smart Approach. En: *The Year of Recurring Disasters: A Review of Natural Disasters in 2012*. The Brookings Institution - London School of Economics Project on internal Displacement. 2003.
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