

Grassroots Women Share Views from the Frontline: Evaluating Local Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in India



From December 2008 to January 2009, grassroots women from six districts in Tamil Nadu assessed the state of DRR in their communities and governments and shared insights on how the implementation of DRR strategies has or has not been a priority at the local level. Grassroots women led the completion of a survey, created by the Global Network for Disaster Reduction to assess the local implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, signed by India and 167 other countries after the Indian Ocean Tsunami to achieve a “Substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives

and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries” by the year 2015. Commissioned and supported by Huairou Commission, Swayam Shikshan Prayog coordinated the HFA survey process with organizations Covenant Centre for Development (CCD) and Rose; women’s federations and self help group leaders actively led the process at the ground level, by facilitating the surveys with peers, collecting data and sharing insights with SSP. Materials & technical support were provided by the Huairou Commission team as part of the multi- country survey focused on Views from the Frontline from the grassroots. SSP and GROOTS had invested in developing a community trainers’ network as part of its global community resilience program. The survey process was linked to furthering capacities and leadership of women trainers on DRR and resilience. A total of 117 disaster prone communities in 6 districts of Tamil Nadu were engaged in this survey. As part of the survey process, women also approached local government officials to assess their level of engagement in protecting communities from hazards and in the implementation of the HFA.

The survey generated both quantitative as well as qualitative information; its utility did not stop at simply informing the Global Network of national and sub-national implementation of the HFA, but also engaged grassroots women leaders in a process of reflection from which they emerged with a clear set of priorities for building resilience in their communities. Women reported that the survey gave them an opportunity to: 1) Evaluate their work in building their communities’ resilience to disaster; 2) Help them formulate ways in which to approach local government officials on their communities’ needs in DRR; 3) Improved their method of assessment/evaluation of their initiatives; 4) Become aware of the responsibility of communities in DRR; 5) Regenerate their interest in DRR and generate new ideas/priorities for action and/or remind themselves of their existing priorities for action in DRR. Amongst many priorities, women highlighted the importance of creating and maintaining a women managed and government supported early warning system at the village level, the formation and strengthening of village level disaster task forces, diversification of livelihoods, identification and implementation of traditional risk reduction/climate change adaptation practices, reduction of deforestation, specific risk mitigation work such as the



construction of shelter belts and creation of community safe spaces, capacity building of women survivors to act as resources persons to other disaster prone communities and collaboration with government on all DRR initiatives.

- Disaster Watch, April 2009