

**SPECIAL SESSION
WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN DISASTER
RISK REDUCTION**

**REMARKS BY
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**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2019 @ 1430
HOURS
(ROOM 4, GROUND FLOOR, CICG)**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and *Salam sejahtera*,

1. It is an honour for me to be here today to say a few words on women leadership in disaster risk reduction.
2. Worldwide risks from natural and man-made hazards are increasing and annually hundreds of millions of people are affected by various types of disasters.

Although disasters affect all in its wake, it tends to discriminate along economic and gender lines.

Studies analysing the impact of disasters have revealed that women and children face greater risks to their survival and recovery following a disaster.

This vulnerability is further aggravated by elements such as poverty and disability.

3. It should be stressed here that women and children are naturally vulnerable physically. Poverty and gender norms make them so.
4. For example, according to an Oxfam survey, four times as many women than men were killed in Indonesia, Sri Lanka,

and India during the 2004 tsunami because men were taught how to swim and climb trees at a young age while women were not.

Women made up 61% of those who perished during Typhoon Nargis in Myanmar according to the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment released by the tripartite group set up to respond to the humanitarian crisis that ensued.

5. During food shortages due to droughts, women again bear the brunt as they are more likely to consume less to give priority to men and children.

They also suffer from malnutrition due to specific nutritional needs while pregnant or breast feeding.

Distinguished members of the audience,

6. Reducing disaster risks requires an all of society approach as espoused by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Women should not just be seen as mere victims, because like men they possess the skills and capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, as well as in managing risks and building resilience.

7. Malaysia's approach to DRR is guided by our belief that women's roles are crucial in making the community more resilient and better prepared for a continuously changing disaster landscape.

They are the ones on the ground, and they are the ones able to mobilise their families and communities given the right tools, knowledge, and empowerment.

8. Malaysia has made notable progress in terms of gender equity and women empowerment.

Under the Federal Constitution, the supreme law of Malaysia, Article 8(2)

was amended in 2001 to prohibit gender discrimination.

Similarly, the National Policy on Women and the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women have resulted in more coherent and focused programmes to integrate women in development and to further elevate their status in society.

9. In Malaysia, women's roles and leadership in DRR have expanded by leaps and bounds.

The fact that I am here as the Minister-in Charge for disaster management is a testimony of this.

As of now, about 30% of those holding decision making positions in our National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) are women and we expect the number to increase further in the near future.

10. We believe that women are a force in resilience building and DRR.

As such, we need to leverage on this to include at least 50% of women in the formulation of disaster management and DRR programmes.

In view of this, the government of Malaysia is now working closely with our local NGOs to create more opportunities for women to be actively involved in resilience building and DRR.

One result of this engagement is the change in the design of our temporary shelters for disasters and in the provision of disaster diets for pregnant and nursing mother as well as those who need special attentions.

11. To empower and encourage women to be actively involved in DRR, their

access to education and health facilities need to be guaranteed.

In this context, the government of Malaysia via various mechanisms is ensuring that discriminatory policies that inhibit women's access to education and health are eradicated totally.

In 2018, our women education attainment was higher than men.

Last year, the women enrolment rate in tertiary education was 48 per cent compared to 38 per cent for men.

If we use life expectancy to show accessibility to health facilities, women

generally live longer than men in Malaysia.

The average life expectancy for women in Malaysia for 2018 was 77.2 years' which is 10 years longer than their male counterparts.

12. In conclusion, Malaysia will continue to strive to strengthen the role of women in disaster risk management – not to compete with men but instead to complement them.

This is also the global agenda. Hand in hand, we can ensure that 100% of the population are covered and benefit from risk reduction and resilience building efforts.

Thank you.