



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Delegation to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY MS. ELYSE MOSQUINI,
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
TO THE 55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
NEW YORK, 28 FEBRUARY 2011**

Mr. Chairman,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). IFRC welcomes the renewed energy and the new commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women following Beijing+15, the MDG Summit, and the creation of UN-Women. As 2015 approaches, it is essential that we channel this momentum to accelerate progress toward the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 3 – as well as to look beyond 2015.

Crucial to reaching our common development goals is improving women's access to health and increasing the participation of women in health-related initiatives. But reaching marginalized women, whether in remote or urban areas, remains a major challenge. IFRC, with its expansive membership network and community-based volunteers, is uniquely-positioned to directly engage with women in diverse situations around the world.

I would like to share with you a best practice from one of our member national societies. The Afghan Red Crescent Society has since 2009 been running a community-based health and first aid programme that engages women as agents of change. As a key strategy of the programme, women are recruited and trained as trainers themselves. Supported by mentoring and armed with new skills, these women travel to remote areas to train female volunteers locally within communities. Recent reports show that these volunteers are playing a vital role in improving the health of their communities. They are delivering key health messages on hygiene, antenatal and post-natal care, and providing first aid. In part thanks to this programme, the Afghan Red Crescent Society now boasts more than 2000 active female volunteers in 34 provinces across the country.

This programme is just one example of how involving women as active participants can have important benefits not just for women, but for their communities more broadly.

Mr. Chairman,

A second, and often neglected issue, is the challenge of addressing intersecting vulnerabilities. The UN Secretary-General, in his recent report "Access and participation of women and girls in

education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work" recommended that the Commission call on governments, UN actors, civil society and other actors to "take into account in policies and programmes the many factors that intersect with gender, including social class, age, ethnicity and disability."

As stated in IFRC's 2007 World Disasters Report, women and girls who face intersectional discrimination – whether poor, elderly, adolescent or disabled – "are often at greatest risk because they have fewer personal, family, economic and educational resources from which to draw protection, assistance and support." IFRC, in its commitment to assisting the most vulnerable, takes special care to reach out to those who are faced with multiple and often compounding vulnerabilities.

A recently-concluded programme in Vietnam, carried out in partnership between the Spanish and Vietnam Red Cross Societies, is just one example. Through this integrated programme, the national societies provided medical aid, vocational training, and micro-credit to disabled youth and their families in order to support income generating activities and socio-economic integration. Women and ethnic minority populations were prioritised; and gender was mainstreamed in the project from start-to-finish, through the involvement of gender expert staff and training to all staff at headquarters, provincial and district levels. In the programme's 4 years, 1000 persons with disabilities were reached, 50% of whom were women with disabilities, and 10% of whom were ethnic minorities.

Mr. Chairman,

In livelihoods protection, as in all areas of our work, IFRC is committed to programming that benefits men and women equally, according to their different needs, and with their input and equal participation at all levels. Allow me to highlight that livelihoods support, as vital to both humanitarian response and development assistance, is an increasingly prominent component of IFRC's programming. It is an essential complement to build resilience and reduce the underlying causes of vulnerability. Drawing on the experience of Spanish Red Cross, which has carried out more than 100 livelihoods projects in 24 countries in recent years, this year we established the IFRC Livelihoods Resource Centre based in Madrid. Over the coming months, the Centre will be working with IFRC's membership to build a network of livelihoods specialists and practitioners and to channel technical assistance to support programming effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, this session of the Commission has been truly engaging, from the numerous successes (and challenges) shared in the general discussion, to the many thought-provoking panels and side-events. The renewed energy brought by this session of the Commission will be critical to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women – and vital to accelerating progress toward the achievement of the MDGs and beyond.

Thank you.