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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Aid Organization, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 June 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **‘Aid Organization’ (Ao) submission to the panel discussion on “Women’s rights and climate change: Climate action, best practices and lessons learned”**

Climate change is a phenomenon which poses challenges to all of humanity. Yet among the majority of the world’s poor are women, and in their state of vulnerability, women are disproportionately affected by climate change. Human Rights Council Resolution 38/4 has made note of this disparity, citing the inordinate affects of climate change on women and girls, “emphasizing that sudden-onset natural disasters and slow onset events seriously affect their access to food and nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, health-care services and medicines, education and training, adequate housing and access to decent work”. The Resolution noted that “women are not only victims but also agents of change, and that the integration of a gender-responsive approach into climate policies, including by conducting gender analysis, ensuring women’s right to participate, [facilitating better] access to education and training and access to and control over adequate resources, such as clean energy and technology, would increase the effectiveness of climate change mitigation and adaptation”. The resolution further noted that, “gender-responsive climate policies continue to require further strengthening in all activities concerning adaptation, mitigation and related means of implementation, such as *finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building*”.

Whereas we at Aid Organization are a new Member of the NGO community of the Human Rights Council, we at Aid Organization have a long experience – since 1998 - in providing technical support and assistance to needy women and vulnerable individuals and groups in Bangladesh. Aid Organization also seeks to provide humanitarian and social assistance to the Rohingya Refugees on Bangladesh territory. Aid Organization welcomes the importance that the Human Rights Council places on technical assistance as a modality for supporting inclusive and participatory development and poverty reduction. It is with this appreciation that we introduce Aid Organization, as a twenty-one year old NGO, founded in 1998 to operate on a “skills, education and development based” framework focused on human rights. Aid Organization has also been active in working on the area of climate change as a civil society and technical actor as a part of a wide-ranging set of programs. Aid Organization activities have been extended to 25 Upazillas of 9 Districts in Bangladesh, whereby impoverished persons have been extended assistance, training, including educational and skills training, comprising aid provided to about 42,975 poor families. Aid Organization’s current work connects 2244 thousand disadvantaged people, mostly women and children, in a rapidly expanding series of development programs.

Climate change is a matter of human rights, but also physical safety in Bangladesh. According to U.S. water policy expert Robert Glennon, in his writings in the magazine *Scientific American*, a three-foot rise in sea level around Bangladesh would submerge almost 20 percent of the country and displace more than 30 million people-and the actual rise by 2100 could be significantly more.<sup>1</sup> Such vulnerability is not a problem unique to Bangladesh. In May 2019, Forbes magazine stated that *climate change* is exacerbating extreme weather events, recognizing that the world’s most vulnerable children will bear the brunt of these disasters.<sup>2</sup> In this same light, Henrietta Fore, UNICEF’s Executive Director has stated that climactic events such as “cyclones, droughts and other extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity. She noted that “poorer countries and communities are disproportionately affected”, and that “for children who are already vulnerable, the impact can be devastating.” Fore highlighted the climate’s effects on Bangladesh’s poorest communities, noting that climate effects create risks for access to

<sup>1</sup> The Unfolding Tragedy of Climate Change in Bangladesh, By Robert Glennon, Robert Glennon is one of United State’s preeminent experts on water policy and law. on April 21, 2017 <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/the-unfolding-tragedy-of-climate-change-in-bangladesh/?redirect=1>.

<sup>2</sup> 75,236 views May 3, 2019, 05:30pm Deadly Cyclones Are On The Rise And Climate Change Is To Blame UNICEF USA Sarah Ferguson <https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2019/05/03/deadly-cyclones-are-on-the-rise-and-climate-change-is-to-blame/#535d35f54cbb>.

food, health and education. In Bangladesh and around the world, climate change has the potential to reverse many of the gains that countries have achieved in child survival and development. UNICEF's Senior Advisor on Climate Change, Gautam Narasimhan, "in the short term, the most vulnerable children are at risk of drowning and landslides, deadly diseases including cholera and malaria, malnutrition from reduced agricultural production and psychological trauma - all of which are compounded when health centers and schools are impacted. In the long term, cycles of poverty can linger for years and limit the capacity of families and communities to adapt to climate change and to reduce the risk of disasters."

Aid Organization is an NGO focused on, and principally staffed by, women, is focused on empowering women through training and assistance to be better able to achieve their full human rights. In this context, Aid Organization notes that women are also most at risk in climate disasters. Women responsible for 60 to 80 percent of subsistence agriculture, hence climate change affects their ability to put food on the table. For a number of reasons women are often not taught to swim, and their mobility is limited by caregiving responsibilities and traditional dress. The lack of reproductive health care compounds these problems because it is associated with poor health outcomes for women and children, and higher rates of poverty. These challenges make women vulnerable, but they also mean that women are the key to creating solutions.

Aid Organization has addressed climate change in a series of projects. One of the projects has been run under the umbrella of a "Tree planting program for disaster mitigation. This project involved training for the community on climate change issues and its effects, disaster management, environmental awareness, tree plantation, livestock and poultry management during disasters, cultivation of flood resistant crops including disasters, school based programs, set-up and update of data bases on climate changed disaster vulnerability, development of contingency plans, generating funds for protection from climate change effects, training on disaster management issues, of risk and rewards mapping, on the establishment of early warning centers at community levels, the provision of workshops on the role and responsibilities of local administration and line ministers on Climate Change and the training of community leaders, schools and civil society on climate change effects.

Since 1999, Aid Organization has runs projects on the Supply of Safe Water and Sanitation Management. This has comprised working in the field of water and sanitation for keeping the rural and urban poor away from the water born diseases with the support of NGO Forum and other organizations. The main objective of the project is to ensure that the safe water supply free is from arsenic and to assure 100 per cent sanitation for the poor people in the rural area. The working area for the year 2018 comprised the 14 Unions of Muladi and Babuganj Upozilla under the Barishal District. Aid Organization's projects have organized visits to hundreds of homes, providing project beneficiaries training on the importance of safe drinking water, on personal hygiene, and on prevention and mitigation of water born diseases. Aid Organization also works with the government of Bangladesh to assure that safe drinking water is available, including project work to install tube wells in communities which have need. Aid Organization provides "WASH", or Water and Sanitation, Health and Skill Development Training assistance, in coordination with the Ministry of Health & Family Planning, and with the Ministry of Labor and the local United Nations Office and several partner NGOs.

Aid Organization has a standing program of Life Skills Training for women, and a Young Women Leadership Development Training program. This service is provided to young women in Barisal Sadar Upazila of Barisal district; this done with the objective of establishing a better understanding of women's rights and to provide a working standard to empower women. Aid Organization has used a 'train the trainers' model, whereby training was provided to groups of 10 disadvantaged and needy women, who returned to their communities. These committee founders received training about technical education, primary knowledge about health and healthy lifestyles, training about reproductive health care and pre- and post-natal health care. These women are therefore better able to raise their voices against child marriage and other acts of oppression so that women are better enabled to play active roles in decision-making. Aid Organization has used this same model to address maternal mortality and child mortality by training and educating pregnant

mothers and children. All of these efforts have spillover effects for the ability of women to be more responsive in negative climatic situations.

Aid Organization calls to attention the words of the Paris Agreement which stated that “parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity”.

Today, Aid Organizaion is honored to present this written intervention, this being our first written intervention to the Human Rights Council. We wish to thank the Government of Bangladesh, the Government of the Philippines, and the government of Viet Nam for organizing this panel discussion.

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