

# **Message from Japanese Women To Reduce Risks by Natural Disaster**

**We BPW Japan submit this message with our  
Resolution  
To BPW Jeju Congress**

**extracted ENG version**



**BPW Japan**

## **Beginning:~Earth Quake~**

It happened at 2:46 pm on March 11, 2011, when we were discussing about women's empowerment at the conference room of Fusen-kaikan in Tokyo. The first attack was so strong as to stop the meeting and continued for several minutes. Someone checked the quake information by PT and said the hypocenter to be Tohoku Area, 450km away from Tokyo.

We restarted the meeting, but could not continue the meeting and closed it. However, when we went out, we found every transportation system was out of service for the safety check. This was the start of Mega Disaster of 3.11 in 2011.

## **To this Mega Disaster~What we should do~**

This Mega Disaster affected human lives and living conditions. Supporting victims, we thought that we should make reports about what we did and what we should do for the risk reduction. Then we published a book titled "3/11 We Women Dashed Round" in Japanese.

To this book, we were asked to publish English version, but it was not easy. Because it was required not only to report of this Disaster but to write what women should do for the risk reduction and work for legislation.

## **Draft for English Version**

For the BPW Congress, we prepared English Version Draft. At UN CSW58, we organized the side event titled "Disaster Risk Reduction and Empowerment of Women" and Japanese government submitted a resolution on "Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters".

From answers of the questionnaire at the side event, we found their expectation to know information about disasters and women.

## Contents

1. What women did at the mega disaster of 3.11
2. On earth quake
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4. Activities of women who worked heard at disaster struck areas
5. Message from/to overseas
6. Conclusion—on UN CSW58



May 2007

Before an earthquake disaster



March 2011

After an earthquake disaster



May 2013

Two years later

# 1. What Women Did at the Mega Disaster of 3•11

At 2:46 p.m. (Japan ST), on 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 2011, an earthquake deformation occurred in the offshore of the Pacific Ocean near Tohoku area in Japan, and the area was attacked by a very strong earthquake and a gigantic *tsunami*. Also it destroyed the Fukushima Atomic Power Plant owned by Tokyo Electric Power Co., Inc. The number of death and missing caused by this disaster is nearly 20,000, and its disaster victim including refugees from radioactive pollution was once 400,000. According to the data published by the Reconstruction Agency, there are still 289,611 refugees as of August 2013, two and a half years after the disaster.

Formidable disasters, especially the *tsunami*, were broadcasted live inside and outside of Japan. Even distantly-positioned for about 400 kilometers from the epicenter, Tokyo experienced intensity 5, and the quake made the capital become gridlocked with traffic. Many commuters couldn't get home on that day.

Though three years have passed since the quake occurred, the exact data of damages have not published yet. It is due to the collapse of the atomic power plant that its damage is so big and inestimable.

Such a rare natural disaster taught a great number of lessons to different levels of our lives; individual, community, society, and country. Through such a disaster anybody has never experienced before, women's NGOs also learned a lot. These lessons should be handed down to following generations. This is why we published a book.

Through our experiences and activities, we realized women's dignity and human rights were almost ignored. Furthermore we realized that they

were put into inferior positions in being hired or reconstructing their businesses. Women's activities were not only cooking or cleaning at evacuation sites but also reconciliation of landownership conflict which regarded less typical.

From these experiences we submitted demand papers to government, Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet, and insisted "Gender Equality to be inevitable for decision making councils and deliberations.



## **2. Earthquake and support**

If we see the TV scene of the Day, we will be shocked by the destructive power of nature. If the Nature snarled us with his fangs, what we can do to protect ourselves. Only a moment of time, a choice of road and a judgment of action will divide their destiny. In order for the more persons to meet the goddess of destiny, what the Disaster left us as lessens.

### **1) The Possibility of Occurrences of natural disaster**

We should acknowledge amounts of the occurrences of natural disasters such as earthquake, flood, eruption of volcano, typhoon and tornado which destroy and/or give damages to lives of people. Though the scale of damage is depend on situation of the area.

According to “Monthly Report of Earthquake and Volcano” by the Bureau of Weather Observation, 16 earthquakes of over M6.5 were recorded during one month of September, 2013.

Since 1900, in Japan we experienced 15 mega disaster which recorded over 100 death or missed and half of them with tsunami. This is the reason why we are paying attention to the disaster of earthquake.

### **2) Report at the moment**

On March 11 afternoon 2:45, 2011 the Earthquake started from the point of N38°06' 2" and E142°51' 05" where is about 80 km from the sea shore and at the depth of 24 km. The wave of earthquake diffused through out Japanese Island within several minutes and gave various impact to almost all of Japanese. How they did and how they felt is important data to think about measures to deal with issues. Even those who were near the focus felt different emergency and showed various reaction.

So we asked members where and what and/or how you did at the

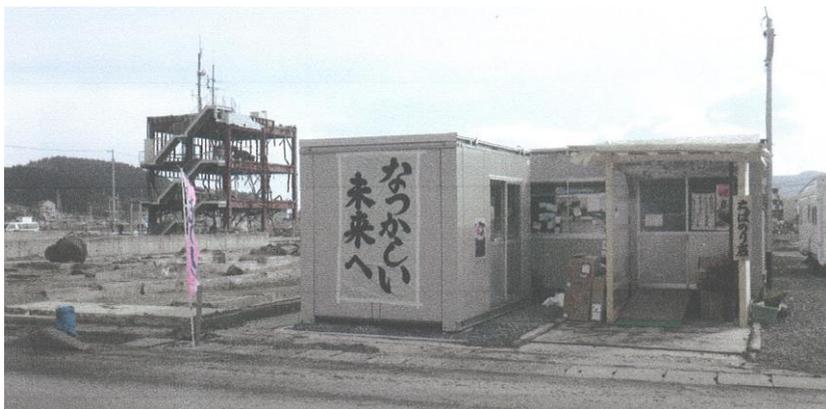
moment.

### **3. Disasters and Women's Role**

Women's participation in support system has been expected to preparation for foods and distribution of care goods according and/or sweeping of shelters. But we could see new women's role model such as intercession of land slide.

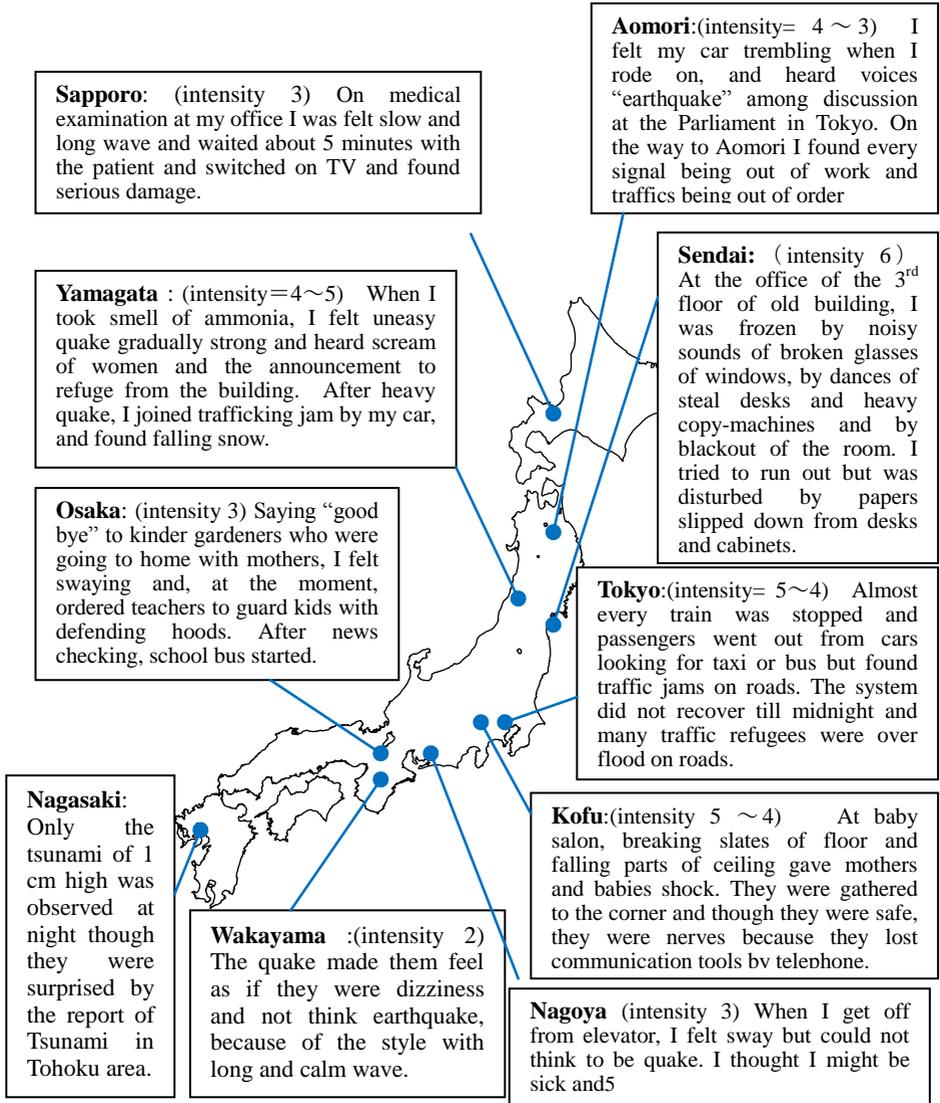
Importance of Internet was proofed to inform what are needed and wanted and many women helped to operate this. Because, with the outbreak of earthquake, telephone became out of work but internet was used as information tool. This was useful to appeal what were needed at the area. Many members of our organization sent their report to BPW office by e-mails which were useful to make our supporting plan

At the first stage, they wanted foods, wares and sanitary goods. But at the second stage, some of them expected how to keep their income and someone needed to be cared their psychological pains. The third stage was to support for them to start business. We did this using the donation funds by BPW International members.



# “What were you doing at the moment?”

## from reports of BPW Members



### **3. Activities of women at disaster-struck areas**

Here are some stories of women a side of supporters promptly.

#### **1) . Building network of supporters scattered in the whole country.**

**Yuko Kusano, Representative of Miyagi Jo-net**

I was working on the fourth floor of a building in the city center of Sendai when the quake occurred. As soon as I felt the tremor, I tried to secure my way out. I had been known that there would be high chances to experience big quakes sooner or later in the area, so I secure all the doors of the fridge and the cupboard not to open all the time. This time it helped a lot, but still there were many books and even contents of Buddhist alter fallen and missing.

The lifelines were completely out of order. But my family had an access to water by opening an emergency tap of a water receiving tank at home. We decided to share it with neighbors. Although we were lucky with water, we did not use the precious water for toilet since we did not know how long the situation be continued.

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#### **2.) Open a disaster consultation center based on my 13 years experience as a member of city council.**

**Wakako Sato, a member of Sendai City Council**

I started a consultation center for victims, because I found that the information for victims was not spread thoroughly. There were many

elderlies who did not know there was financial support to restart their lives if their home was destructed more than half of it, and those who did not know how to apply for certificate of sufferers. I made a brochure of the collected information about various support people can receive and distributed it to the entire household in Sendai City.

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### **3) Work hard to build supporting system**

**Miyuki Yusa, a member of the Miyagi Prefectural assembly**

#### **One year after Tohoku Earthquake.**

Below are the problems and solutions concerning woman and/or child victims at disaster sites through activities I got involved with.

#### **Problems**

1. Lack of changing areas for women, milk and underwear for babies, and places to play for children at shelters.
2. Fear of increasing domestic violence to children after the disaster.  
Lack of systems to support such children by professional groups.
3. Lack of recognition of the importance of the presence of women in decision-making on disaster prevention of local plans and reconstruction planning.
4. Lack of positions of job for women who lost their jobs because of the disaster.
5. Lack of gathering data of internal exposure to radiation for children and expecting women as measures against radiation.

#### **Solutions**

1. Women's participation to reconstruction plans

2. Dealing with domestic violence and child abuse
    - Fifty support centers adjacent to temporary housing with a tight cooperation to consultation centers.
    - One-step application for receiving public support
  3. Including various needs and opinions of women, children, elderly and disabled people in revised local disaster prevention plans
  4. Supporting female/young entrepreneurs or NPO leaders in new public projects
  5. Conducting health check of children and expecting women
- It will still take time to get back to normal. But in order to do so, I'd like to do my best to realize the reconstruction of women's lives.

**4.) Support of the mental health for victims**

**Yasue Nunoshiro, Clinical Psychotherapist and Associate Professor of Bunkyo University**

In disaster-stricken areas, many people's clock of their hearts has stopped on the day of the earthquake. Their real clock ticks without mistakes, but their clock in their hearts doesn't let the time pass. We shouldn't forget that there are many people who are suffered from the gap between their reality and their clock which doesn't go further than the day of the disaster. Housing is usually referred to as the symbol of hearts, and scenery as the identity of residents. In other words, losing their houses means their heart being severely broken, and the scenery being changed completely means a crisis of identity. As a psychotherapist, I have been trying to work out with people's mental care in Sendai.

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**5) . Challenge of delivering relief supplies**

**From Yamagata, a hub of support, to Sendai, the disaster site**

**Mitsuko Tanada, an administrative scrivener and Vice  
President of BPW**

Right after the quake, the logistic system stopped not only in the center of the disaster but in the eastern part of mainland. Residing in Yamagata which is the neighboring prefecture of Miyagi, and having many of our members' relatives and friends in the center of disaster, we decided to gather supplies within Yamagata and deliver them by our own cars. It was hard to get hold of enough gasoline to drive, but we managed to do it. I decided to deliver children's bags hand-made by one of my friends. There were more than 130 bags and I am sure that the children in Sendai felt happy with them.

**6) New Purpose in Life : Support from Boston**

**By Fish Toko Atsuko Board member of Fish Family  
Foundation**

**Immediate Alarm**

I could not believe my eyes when I first saw the damage from the Great Eastern Japanese Disaster. My heart was tearing apart as I watched my beloved home country being devastated by massive waves of water.···

Determination to go Tohoku  
Resilience of Tohoku People  
On the way to Ofunato  
The power of Volunteers  
Moving experience

## **4. Report from the Field**

### **1 Relationship of women and disaster**

It says "many women are always the victims of disaster," but, why?

A disaster problem expert professor Kawata Yoshiaki emphasized the importance of participation of women in the measures and research. He says that we can not be disasters zero but reducing is possible. Pursuing the realization of the mitigation is the most important goals.

### **2 Information exchange means of e-mail**

With the recovery of the Communication environment in the affected areas, information was brought by our associates in the affected areas. That information was reported from various perspectives. Moreover reportedly live. Therefore it was precious. In accordance with this, the basic policy of support activities of BPW was determined below. "Decision must be based on the request from the fellow in the affected areas" .

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### **3 Cooperation of our fellow - to the affected areas from Yamagata**

For transportation of goods to the disaster area, Yamagata city was chosen as the city of stopover logistics of relief supplies. The city is relatively close to the affected areas and less damaged from the disaster. Day-to-day life began to return in three days after the earthquake. And if we ensured gasoline, transport of relief supplies to Sendai district was also made possible from Yamagata. So, fellow of Yamagata exchanged information with each other, to collect the information of the road. After that, fellow of Yamagata who could secured gasoline was conveyed supplies to shelter people.

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### **4 Efforts to a variety of problems - in the affected areas Miyagi**

Along with the support of goods and sharing of information, we

decided to address also psychological support. More specifically, we campaigned for support each other to the concerns of women who spend in shelter. In addition, in order to cheer up people who are depressed by the earthquake, we planned an event at the "zelkova tree-lined" the symbol of Sendai city. When the war ended, Sendai city was destroyed by the air raid, and this "zelkova tree-lined" was planted by citizens as a roadside tree. Though they were small seedlings at that time but becoming a wonderful tree-lined now. That was planned a wish that will stand up again.

## **5 Two months and half had passed from disaster. Light and dark.**

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## **6 Women's issues in disaster. BPW National Conference of disaster.**

The BPW National Convention 4 to 5 June 2011, was held in Kofu, is taken up as a major theme of "problems of women and the Great East Japan Earthquake" in a hurry, we have proposed a countermeasure to the challenges of the future.

(1) Issues at the shelter

(2) Issues related to women and the economy

- "Economic independence of women." as a goal of BPW.

(3) other

- In the shelter, DV incidents against women tend to occurs.

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## **7 Request to the Cabinet Office**

## **8 "Road to recovery starting from a woman" Participation to international conference with our vest.**

Also national convention after the end, it was established the slogan

"Road to recovery starting from a woman(Recover, Rebuild, Renew) ".

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## **9 Dialogue with women. "Seeing is believing" Tour**

For the events of "Dialogue with woman" from a woman volunteer organization of Sendai, there was an offer of a "want to become a co-sponsor." "Seeing is believing" tour was planned as the wake of this.

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- ① Women who have reopened in the wilderness of rubble
- ② In Minamisanriku, temporary housing - sisters made new Move to resume business
- ③ In Minamisanriku-Woman grown by earthquake.

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This tour, We met a lot of women started to move energetically in search of tomorrow. However, We felt strongly that our culture is not grown up enough yet to take advantage of the energy of women like this. With the feeling the need to leave their message as a record, we recorded it and also quickly organized a meeting to think about what they need in the future.

## **10 Connected with Skype. "Chatroom for women"**

July 24, 2011, events in the call for women who have continued to help victims has held. The main venue was set at the Metropolitan Hotel Sendai, and image communication via the Internet, connected by Skype between the disaster area.

## **11 The request to the Cabinet Office about woman's business activities support.**

## **5.Messages From/To Overseas**

### **1 . Messages from overseas one after another**

Since the day immediately following the day the great disaster occurred, we have received one message of sympathy after another from our worldwide sisters. The following lists are the names of the sisters, their titles, and the date that we received the messages. The date stands for Japan Standard Time.

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### **2. Thank-you note for those who sent us messages and supporting fund**

#### **● On March 21, 2011**

President Matsubara of BPW Japan sent a thank-you email to President Benham of BPWI and Sisters of BPW around the world as follows:

Dear President Benham, and Sisters ,

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I will report to you that, under such critical conditions, we, members of BPW Japan, are cooperating and working together in order to support the people who are suffering from especially heavy damages.

We embrace your warm support from all over the world in our memory and we ask you for urgent support to the affected people .

Sincerely yours,

Toshimi Matsubara  
President of BPW Japan

### **3. The Report From Japan**

The Report from Japan to the Office of BPW International

One month has passed since the attack of the Earthquake, Tsunami and Radioactive Contamination to the East Part of Japan occurred. The victims of these disasters are going to recover. The warm messages and financial support from you have encouraged us very much.

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The invisible terror of radioactive contamination, which caused the collapse of the nuclear power plant cannot but give a great influence to a policy concerning energy problems in other countries such as France and so forth.

The next day we sent this report to President Benham of BPW International, and she replied saying that they would upload this report in the homepage of BPW International and that she instructed the office of president to campaign raise-funds for Japanese victims.

### **4. The report on the support fund from sisters worldwide, the purpose for which fund is going to be spent of**

The 27<sup>th</sup> BPW International Congress was held in Helsinki in June, 2011. We expressed our gratitude to the sisters who gave us the heartfelt sympathy and supporting funds, and we explained that we are going to support women's victims to be as independent as entrepreneurs, and also to give the report at 56<sup>th</sup> CSW on "Disaster and Gender" through what we experienced this year.

The report of the Great East Japan Earthquake was published in the newsletter of BPWI from our report to BPWI.

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### **5 A Speech at the side event at UNcSW 56 (2012 9**

The first opportunity to realize what we promised above came on March 1, 2012 at the cosponsored event. This event which is held by cosponsored by UN organization/each government and NGOs, will be held at UN headquarters, cohosted by NGO and government, for the holding CSW. The title of the speech is “Disaster and Reconstruction from Gender Equality of View through the Experiences of Great Earthquake and Tsunami at East Japan”. NGOs of here consist of The International Women’s Year Liason Group, The National Women’s Committee of the United Nations NGOs, and Japan Women's Watch.

We acutely felt the importance at this event to speak up to the world what we learned through severe experiences such as the great earthquake, tsunami, and radioactive contamination.

Fig.1 a ship on the road



Fig. 2 an interviewing member in red clothes



Fig.3 members preparing hot meal



Fig. 4 'Hassaku' orange



Fig. 5 photos of some families



Fig. 6 a picture of depicted vine on the homepage

A screenshot of the BPW International website. The page features a yellow header with the BPW logo and the text "BPW International International Federation of Business and Professional Women". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, About, Latest News, Events, Worldwide, PAY ONLINE, Contact us, Members, United Nations, Press Room, and Search. The main content area includes a news article titled "News from Japan" dated March 11, 2011, which reports on a donation of US\$7,500 from BPW Korea members to BPW Japan for emergency assistance. The article also mentions warm regards from Eunhee Hwang, President of BPW Korea. On the right side of the page, there is a "Crisis in Japan - You can help!" section with a green vine graphic showing a balance of 430,000 and a "Payment" button. At the bottom right, there is a red "CRISIS JAPAN DONATE NOW" button.

## 6. Conclusion

From our experiences we assure that the key to reduce risks by natural disaster is “Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. It was true from the first stage to the end, recover and rebuild of their lives.

So we appealed to government to promote legislation and to be dispatcher of the issues.

And we organized the side event at UN CSW58 on “Disaster Risk Reduction and Empowerment of Women” and our government submitted the resolution “Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters” which was supported by 79 countries.”

This stands for the voice of victims by the disaster in Tohoku Area.



# XXVIII BPW INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

JEJU ISLAND, KOREA 23 – 27 MAY 2014

## 8: FORM FOR THE SUBMISSION OF RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions may be submitted by Affiliates, members of the Executive, Standing Committee Chairpersons and Past Presidents, and must comply with the requirements as set out in Regulations [R17], [R18] and in the Procedure Manual [8.6].

Resolutions fall into 2 categories:

- Those which relate to the operation of BPW International and the needs of members and Affiliates: internal matters. These may include resolutions on financial matters such as dues.
- (X) Those which require advocacy by BPW International at national or international levels and relate to the needs and rights of women generally: external matters.

BPW Japan

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*(Name of Affiliate, Executive Member, or Chairperson of a Standing Committee)*

Submit for consideration by the Resolutions Committee this motion for debate at the XXVIII BPW International Congress 2014.

### MOTION:

#### Gender empowerment to reduce damages by disasters

- Recognizing earth-worm and plate tectonics will increase natural disasters such as mega earthquakes, tsunamis, mammoth typhoons and tornados and floods
- Recognizing the number of victims and the damage to people by these disasters are higher for females than males
- Recognizing the human rights and dignity of women victims at shelters and refugee- places are often neglected
- Recognizing gender gaps exist for job opportunities and access to support systems to rebuild women's lives

**BPW Japan moves that BPW Affiliates demand of their government gender equality in the decision making process of disasters which**

means women should be included on planning committees and on administration bodies, including:

- before the disaster, women should be included on committees to discuss disaster prevention measures, to reflect women's interests
- at the disaster, women managers should be assigned in addition to men managers at shelters to ensure women's human dignity
- women should be added to committees to discuss support systems for their economic independence, in order to prevent women's status being neglected

#### **RATIONALE FOR THE RESOLUTION:**

Japan experienced mega natural disasters and serious damage resulting from the East Japan disaster, earthquake and tsunami and were supported from our many friends and worldwide BPW sisters. This unprecedented disaster taught us the importance of gender equality to reduce damage by disasters, so we submit this resolution expecting reduced damage in the event of future disasters. It is said that the number of women victims is higher than men, so to decrease women victims and the damage to women will decrease the total impact of disasters on individuals.

### **International Federation of Business & Professional Women**

Founded in 1930, BPW International empowers Business and Professional Women in over 98 countries on 5 continents with General Consultative Status at ECOSOC/United Nations.  
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at UN CSW58 on “Disaster Risk Reduction and Empowerment of Women”



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