

## MEDIA RELEASE

19<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Today 'Women's voices from the floodplains' will be heard.

A report that explores the economic issues and challenges facing women during and after the 2011 floods in Queensland and Victoria will be released today by the Hon Ms Gai Brodtmann Member for Canberra, at the National Rural Women's Conference being held in Canberra this week.

'*Women's voices from the floodplains* was commissioned by economic Security4Women (eS4W) to develop some initial thinking and discussion on how the economic empowerment of Australian women can be better supported in disaster affected areas and how their work can be recognised and built upon' said Sally Jope from eS4W.

'In disaster affected areas the needs of women are often ignored or dismissed as emergency responses take effect and the "tyranny of the urgent" prevails; nor are they usually considered in the post disaster period. However, they shoulder a heavy burden of the effects and they play a key role in community rebuilding' said Ms Sandra Cook, Chair of (eS4W).

'As a result, they have less opportunities than men to look for employment outside the disaster affected areas and this disruption to their economic activity impacts on their economic security as well as local industries and economies, including small businesses owned and operated by women. On the positive side, women's disaster response efforts can provide them with new skills they can carry over into the job market, giving them a unique opportunity to challenge and change their gendered status in society. Despite this, gender concerns are usually overlooked'.

The report by JERA International was funded by the Office for Women through the Gender Equality for Women Program.

'When disasters hit overseas, international actors often support development strategies that promote market-based opportunities for women, for example by strengthening women's associations and advocating for gender-sensitive business environment reform. In Australia, however, these strategies are not employed and until today, little has been made public about the specific economic impacts of disaster affected areas on women', stated Judith van Unen, Director and Joint CEO, JERA International.

eS4W will be using this report to join an emerging national discussion about linking local knowledge with a broader framework of disaster response.

The full report and a background paper are available at  
<http://www.security4women.org.au/projects/voices-from-the-flood-plains>

#### **About eS4W**

economic Security4Women (eS4W) believes that lifelong economic wellbeing is a high priority for Australian women – it empowers women to make choices and live independently. It enriches all aspects of women's lives including their education, health, employment, personal, safety and financial security over their life time. [www.security4women.org.au](http://www.security4women.org.au)

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