

GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

November 2010, Cancún

The international climate change negotiation process and climate change policies at the national level must adopt the principles of gender equality at all stages, including research, analysis and design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Expert Group, Commission on the Status of Women, 2008

Key messages

- Adapting to and mitigating climate change are critical to women's and men's enjoyment of economic and social rights
- Climate change policy and financing must seek to promote sustainable development as the grounding for gender equality, women's empowerment and poverty eradication
- Global, regional and national climate financing policies and projects must ensure positive synergies between adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and gender and social equity
- Gender analysis, gender perspective and women's effective participation must be assured at all levels of the climate policy and climate change financing architecture

Why focus on gender in climate change?

In most all economies, women's care-taking role, their access to resources and information and their level of participation in society leaves many women at a disadvantage when climate change related weather events such as storms, floods and droughts occur. In almost all developing countries women are more dependent than men on the agricultural and informal sectors, which are more vulnerable to extreme weather than traditional male-dominated sectors.

Differentiated impacts of climate change

Climate change and extreme weather impact both men and women, but its adverse effects are likely to be more acute for women, especially poor, rural women and indigenous women. A London School of Economics study analyzing the aftermath of extreme weather events shows that "natural disasters (and their subsequent impact) on average kill more women than men or kill women at an earlier age than men".

The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report notes that "climate change is likely to directly impact children and pregnant women because they are particularly susceptible to vector- and water-borne diseases, e.g., malaria is currently responsible for a quarter of maternal mortality". And climate-related conflicts over resources predispose women more so than men to both domestic and community violence.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Current approaches to climate change may intensify the effects of pre-existing gender gaps such as gender segmentation in credit and finance and information asymmetry (in terms of credit, technical assistance and transfer of technology) between men and women.

While the old forms of asymmetries led to long-term chronic problems such as endemic poverty, the new forms such as asymmetrical information sharing regarding early warning and disaster preparedness are a matter of life and death.

Shared vision

It is therefore important that global climate pledges by developed countries adhere to their commitments of the Kyoto Protocol, and advance a shared vision that enables gender equality and strictly maintains the global goal of keeping increase in global mean surface temperature substantially below 1.5 or 1 degree – levels which are critical to avoid potentially massive adverse impacts to vulnerable groups including women.

Adaptation

Adaptation strategies and policies must be supportive of women's practical and strategic interests by enhancing the role of local innovation and context specific knowledge as captured by participatory research. They would also need to address the obstacles to women's participation, (such as poor infrastructure and limited time). Adaptation must hence focus on:

- The different needs of men and women in prescribing funding goals, criteria and delivery mechanisms.
- Funding mechanisms should hold to a less than 'burdensome criteria' for both developing countries as well as women's projects.
- Ensure that there are appropriate easily accessible mechanisms for compensating men, poor women and other vulnerable groups impacted by climate change.

Mitigation

Gender friendly mitigation should stress the provision of decentralized renewable energy in rural areas and promote the conservation, sustainable livelihoods and natural resources management practices of women and indigenous peoples. Adequate financing, technology and capacity must be provided to enable mitigation actions in developing countries that enhance gender equality and empower women.

Technology

Technology funding and projects must seek to facilitate the elimination of the substantial barriers to entry (i.e., credit, information gaps) and the adoption of technology faced by women. Women's—more so than men's—acquisition of technology is blocked by upfront purchase prices or administrative costs. Within the context of the

present negotiations framework it is important to:

- Establish within funding mechanisms, special or thematic windows dedicated to capacity building and the development of projects among cohorts of male and female actors who have been traditionally marginalized.
- "Enhancing the endogenous technologies and capacities of developing countries" in a manner that enhances the empowerment of women and indigenous men and women

Climate financing

It is important that gender equality and women's empowerment and social equity priorities are included as key drivers of climate change financing. Ultimately, poverty reduction, sustainable development, the financing of gender equality and women's empowerment outcome-sensitive adaptation, mitigation and technology development and transfers necessitate:

- Inflows of new, additional, non-debt creating and predictable funds. Developing countries cannot meet critical poverty reduction and gender equality targets if they are burdened with financing climate related adaptation and mitigation.
- No diversion of current ODA flows from social and development imperatives towards climate change financing.

- Adequate scale of financing to meet the agreed full incremental costs of the adaptation and mitigation measures required for protecting and maintaining the lives of women and men in developing countries and in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.
- New Fund under the Convention and the control of the COP. This new fund must integrate gender analysis and priorities into all of its aspects.
- A gender and social impact analysis of carbon markets and emission reductions projects currently implemented in developing countries.

Outcomes

The outcome from climate negotiations must reflect a clear gender analysis and perspective and women's effective participation must be assured at all levels of the climate policy and climate change financing architecture.

Successful fair and equitable climate change policy and finance that promote sustainable development will safeguard women's and men's lives. Likewise, implementing sustainable gender equality interventions that enhance women's empowerment and overall social equity, can have large, sustainable development dividends that can be immensely beneficial to the achievement of global climate change policy.

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Arab NGO Network for Development
Asian Indigenous Women's Network
Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale (CRBM), Italy
Friends of the Earth International

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

International Forum on Globalization
International Rivers
JS - Asia/Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JSAPMDD)
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Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)
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