

2008 Climate and Gender Update

A Report for U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

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Climate and Gender

The United Nations is formally committed to gender mainstreaming within all policies and programs. However, gender equality is not yet realized in any society or part of the world. Gender differences are observed in every stratum of social institutions ranging from the family to religious groups or caste systems; political and legal structures; economic and educational institutions; and the mass media. All are permeated with norms and values which inform the economic, social, institutional, and legal constraints which affect women and men's rights to own land, control resources, access technology and education, and thereby also influence the attitudes, contributions, impacts, and individual potential to adapt to climate change.

A number of issues signal the crucial role of gender in understanding the causes of climate change, efforts to mitigate it, and working towards successful adaptation to inevitable climate variability and change¹:

1. Women and men— in their respective social roles – are differently affected by the *effects of climate change and variability*;
2. Similarly, women and men – in their respective social roles – are differently affected by *climate protection instruments and measures*;
3. Women and men differ with regard to their respective *perceptions of and reactions to climate change and variability*;
4. Women's and men's contributions to climate change and variability differ, especially in their respective *CO2 emissions*;
5. Climate protection measures often fail to take into account the *needs* of large numbers of poor, women, children and elderly members of society, in terms of infrastructure, energy supply, etc;
6. The *participation of women in decision-making* is very low in climate policy and its implementation in instruments and measures.

The articulation of a functional relationship between gender and climate change is one of the most pressing challenges to effective adaptation and mitigation. This requires, a new paradigm for advancing gender equity in climate change dialogue, action, and policy. The intent of the chapter and working group is to summarize, and expand upon, the gender-climate dialogue, while making recommendations on how to mainstream gender into climate-related processes and decision-making.

Shifting the Gender-Climate Paradigm

Although the "climate and gender" discourse is often focused solely on women's roles, impacts, and rights, women are only half of the gender-climate dialogue, gender analysis must also explicitly target and include men, and mainstreaming in climate must address **gender relations** in terms of **power structures and power distribution** that cause imbalance, marginalization, suffering and conflict. Risk associated with climate change and variability is, in part, determined by nature but also contingent on economic, cultural, and social relationships².

It is important to avoid a simplistic portrayal of women, children, the elderly or the poor as *victims*. Women are not vulnerable because they are "naturally weaker": women and men face different vulnerabilities due to gender roles, which for many women impose conditions of social exclusion. For example, in many Asian and Latin American countries, skills such as swimming and tree climbing are taught mainly to boys; these skills help them survive and cope better during floods. Furthermore, dress codes can restrict women's ability to move quickly, while behavioral restrictions can hinder ability to relocate without a husband's, father's or brother's consent. Conversely, women are often the primary source of food and medicine gathering and other basic life sustaining skills in situations of extreme deprivation—a skill-set which is often overlooked when not actively recognized as a knowledge resource.

Due to climate change and variability, traditional, socially-based roles and responsibilities, as well as, learned skills result in differences in self-rescue, adaptation and mitigation strategies, and opportunities³. The absence of attention to

¹ Roehr and Hemmati, 2008

² Hannan (2002)

³ Neumayer and Plümperw (2007)

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gendered knowledge, skills, gender-differentiated perceptions, and analyses reduce the range of technological and social options in climate policy.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Vulnerability to specific impacts of climate change will be most severe when and where they are felt together with stresses from other sources” (IPCC, 2007). These “non-climatic stresses” include variables such as poverty, resource allocation, access to education, disaster risks, and workload.⁴ Women represent 70% of the world’s 1.3 billion poor and inequitably carry the stress of poverty and, subsequently, vulnerability to climate change impacts. Through gender-climate justice, equitable policy development and on-the-ground action we can avoid leading “already marginalized sections of communities into further deprivation.”⁵ Policy development must embrace gender-specific components of development, analysis, facilitation, and monitoring.

Women are often more adversely affected by climate change where gender discrimination is more widespread before the onset of disaster events.⁶ Existing discriminatory biases tend to be reinforced and exacerbated in post disaster periods. Inequities often take the form of access to climatic information or warning systems. Education and public awareness is important to understand the causes, effects and measures to slow down or reverse negative effects on the environment, and also plays a critical role in building capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change: as literacy levels increase, vulnerability to climate change and variability decreases. Lower literacy levels of women compared to men, particularly in rural areas, must be addressed through appropriate, gendered education.

The Gendered Impacts of Climate Change and Variability

Climate change and variability threaten to significantly undermine efforts towards achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to eliminating poverty and hunger and promoting environmental sustainability⁷. The IPCC has predicted that “climate change impacts will be differently distributed among different regions, generations, age classes, income groups, occupations and genders” and that “the poor, primarily but by no means exclusively in developing countries, will be disproportionately affected.” Gender inequalities are directly linked with poverty,⁸ and the vulnerability of poor men and women to climate change and variability will aggravate inequities in health and access to food, clean water, and other resources. These diverse impacts include:

Energy production and demand are closely linked to mitigation of climate change and variability. Furthermore, a lot is known about energy from a women’s perspective in developing countries: the lack of access to energy; the need for affordable energy supporting women’s income generating activities; the high number of victims of indoor air pollution and the need to replace inefficient biomass stoves; the physical burden of collecting firewood and the impacts on women’s time; and so on⁹; Gender aspects in the energy sphere have been insufficiently studied in industrialized countries, compared to developing countries. Greater attention to the energy needs, concerns and ideas of women in developing countries can improve the effectiveness of energy policies and projects, and also promote overall development goals such as poverty alleviation, increased employment, and improved health and education levels. (UNDP, 2000). Furthermore, women and men’s energy consumption differ in the amount and the purposes of energy use, as well as in their attitudes towards energy saving measures and mechanisms. These disparities need to be taken into account when developing energy strategies at all levels.

Nuclear energy is discussed as a solution for climate change and variability mitigation, despite the known hazards of negative consequences on the environment, human health, and future generations. Studies from all over the world show gender differences in perceptions of nuclear energy use: men are much more in favor, while the majority of women reject it. There is a generally higher risk perception among women, due to the health impacts of radiation, but also due to unresolved problems such as nuclear waste storage, uranium mining and nuclear power plants as targets for terrorist attacks.

Bioenergy: There are many risks associated with *bioenergy* – environmental, economic and social – as well as potential opportunities. Understanding and managing these risks in a gender-sensitive way is fundamental to ensure that the opportunities presented by bioenergy benefit both men and women. There is concern that the promotion of international

⁴ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Working Group II Report "Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability", 2007, available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/ar4-wg2.htm>

⁵ Denton, Fatma *Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts, and Adaptation: Why Does Gender Matter?*, Gender and Development, Vol. 10, No. 2, Climate Change (Jul., 2002), pp. 10-20 (article consists of 11 pages)

⁶ Dre’ze and Sen (1989); Bolin et al. (1998).

⁷ <http://www.undp.org/climatechange/adap01.htm>

⁸ World Bank World Development Report (2008); Holmes and Slater (2008)

⁹ Hemmati, Roehr 2007 (Women’s Environment Magazine)

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biofuel markets based on first-generation feedstock, with the associated environmental and social risks, will overshadow the potential of community-scale biofuel futures - and the associated empowerment of women.

Water: Climate change and variability is already exacerbating existing shortages of water. Women, largely responsible for water collection in their communities, are more sensitive to the changes in seasons and climatic conditions that affect water quantity and accessibility that make its collection even more time-consuming.¹⁰ The World Health Organization estimates that the energy used to carry water may consume one-third of a woman's daily calorie intake. In areas where water is in particularly short supply, calorie use may be even greater, compounding the risk of malnutrition in resource-poor settings. As more work is required of women to supply water from more distant sources, in many parts of the world girls miss school in order to help meet family water needs. The use of water for irrigation is in many societies highly gendered, as can be the sectoral use of water resources, as well as the decision-making required to sustainably manage water systems in the context of multi-sectoral, often transboundary and conflicting demands for freshwater and marine resources.

Agriculture: Climate change and variability is reducing crop yields and food production particularly in developing countries, thus affecting women's livelihood strategies and food security, and therefore their right to food.¹¹ Some researchers note that climate change and variability can result in a 10-fold increase in the number of hungry and malnourished people, "consequently, women are likely to experience a decrease in nutritional health, as they are often the first to go hungry in an attempt to protect their families."¹²

Use and harvesting of living resources: In many cultures, men have primary responsibilities concerning livestock farming, fishing, and animal husbandry. Subsequently, changes in fishing yields and livestock survival/health rates due to climate change and variability lead to shifts in the gender power balance of families and communities.

Forestry: Men and women often have different roles with regard to forest resource management in planting, protecting or caring for seedlings and small trees, as well as in planting and maintaining homestead woodlots and plantations on public lands. Men are more likely to be involved in extracting timber; Women typically gather non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for commercial purposes and to improve living conditions within their households, e.g. medicines, fodder for livestock, etc. Due to climate change and variability, these roles and the respective workload burdens and/or income generation capabilities create uncertainty in communities.

Disasters / extreme weather events: Gender roles often place women and men in locations that influence their vulnerability to hazards or climate change and variability risks¹³. Women's traditional roles (looking after children and the elderly) and cultural restrictions may hamper their self-rescue efforts in almost any type of disaster¹⁴. Dress codes can restrict women's ability to move quickly¹⁵ or in flooding conditions. In addition, due to capacities that differ between men and women, gender-based life skills and experiences, women and men may use completely different resources in the same environmental context, or they may use the same resources in different ways¹⁶.

Health: Gender is an important social determinant of health. The gender division of labor within the household, and labor market segregation by sex into predominantly male and female jobs, expose men and women to varying health risks. For example, in rural Bangladesh, the responsibility for cooking exposes women and girls to smoke inhalation from cooking fuels, etc. Patriarchal norms denying women the right to make decisions regarding their sexuality and reproduction expose them to

¹⁰ CIDA (2007)

¹¹ "Gender Aspects Of Climate Change", a joint contributions by the ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, LIFE/Women in Europe for a Common Future (LIFE/WECF), IUCN-The World Conservation Union, and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), in consultation with women's organizations throughout the world. Available at http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2007/03/7_gender_climate_change.pdf

¹² "Global Climate change and women's health", Women and Environments International Magazine, N74/75-Spring/Summer 2007, pp.10-11

¹³ Enarson (2004)

¹⁴ Beinini (1981); Schwoebel and Menon (2004); Oxfam International (2005)

¹⁵ Neumayer and Plümperw (2007)

¹⁶ Hannan (2002)

2008 Climate and Gender Update, A Report Prepared for U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, contact: tara@iesecologycenter.org avoidable risks of morbidity and mortality, which can be exacerbated in a climate change and variability regime. (Martens *et al.* 1999¹⁷).

Natural resource use and management: Women and men have different socially or culturally defined roles¹⁸. In many developing countries women remain predominantly responsible for food production, water and firewood collection. Due to climate change and variability, issues of availability, access and quality of these resources are greatly affected causing significant shifts in the tasks and dependence on local natural resources, often resulting in an increase in women's domestic burdens (collection of water, fuel and fodder) –Women's initiative and resourcefulness in finding sustainable alternatives will be key to adaptation in coping with scarcity of traditional resources.

Migration: Women (and children) refugees of disasters or conflicts caused by scarcity of resources are exposed to increased risks compared to male refugees, be it in refugee camps, resettlement areas, or countries where displaced people may seek asylum. Women and girls, in particular, are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Migration may be one response of people whose livelihoods are affected by climate change and variability. Climate may not be the sole, or even the most important 'push' factor in migration decisions, but in combination with other social, economic and political factors, climate shocks can become a trigger.

Gender and Climate Leadership

Gender aspects of climate change and variability relate to justice, human rights, and human security. For many years gender issues have been discussed in UNFCCC conferences, but progress in integrating gender into the negotiations is slow. During the 8th Commission on the Status of Women, a diverse panel of experts cited numerous studies showing that climate change is not a gender-neutral process. Governance structures determine the ways in which adaptation capacity can be utilized. Representation of women at all levels of governance is essential. Yet today very few women are in decision-making positions in energy and climate-related fields¹⁹. As a result women's experience and knowledge are not properly incorporated into negotiations, plans and strategies on climate change at all levels.

Major advocacy and education campaigns are needed. Gender-specific information and analysis for use in policy and high level planning as well as for immediate use on-the-ground are a high priority. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming studies should be supported with the maximum efforts of the UN and its agencies, in collaboration with governments and civil society organizations. Gender assessment and analysis should be driven by ground-identified needs and priorities and explicitly prioritize use of local knowledge and its practitioners.

Recommendations

The current lack of attention to gender issues in climate policy is partly a reflection of the relative absence of social, behavioral and justice issues in general in the climate dialogue. Without a gender-sensitive method of analysis, it is impossible to determine the full set of causes and potential effects of climate change and variability, and it will be impossible to design effective measures for mitigation and adaptation²⁰. There is a need to act *now*, to put actions to commitments, to hold the scientific community and governments accountable for the deployment of gender mainstreaming as a crucial key to unlocking the talents and capacity of men and women to fully exploit opportunities for adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development.

Recommendations on Policy Development and Governing Institutions

To bring the full benefits of gender mainstreaming to fruition there is a need to refocus the discourse on climate change and variability to include a human rights perspective. Integrating a rights-based approach to adaptation recognizes and takes into account women and men's specific needs and gendered components of human rights. Gender must be mainstreamed as a "cross-cutting" issue and a key consideration in climate change and variability policy. Otherwise "the quality of adaptive measures will be limited and successful implementation will remain doubtful."²¹

¹⁷ Martens P, Kovats R S, Nijhof S, de Vries P, Livermore M T J, Bradley D J, Cox J and McMichael A J. 1999. Climate change and future populations at risk of malaria. *Global Environmental Change*. 9: pp. S89 –S107.

¹⁸ Hannan, (2002) and Briceño (2005)

¹⁹ "Causing, Mitigating, and Adapting to Climate Change: Does It Make a Difference If You're a Woman or a Man?" available at http://www.bcca.org/ief/conf10/conf10_04.pdf

²⁰ Future Climate Regime, Position paper Bali

²¹ "A Huge Challenge and a Narrow Discourse" , Women and Environments International Magazine, N74/75-Spring/Summer 2007, pp.5-9

A Bali position paper of the international network, gender-cc – women for climate justice, identified seven steps towards a gender just climate regime:

1. Recognize the vital urgency of gender equality in climate change and variability issues and demonstrate leadership through top-level support for gender mainstreaming.
2. Ensure that women participate in all decisions related to climate change and variability at all levels, in order to build a truly global and effective alliance for adaptation, mitigation and climate justice informed by a gender perspective.
3. Ensure gender mainstreaming – from UNFCCC to IPCC to national and local institutions dealing with climate change and variability – including installing a 'gender watch system' within UNFCCC and related processes.
4. Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data taken at every level and wherever possible.
5. Undertake gender analysis of all climate change policies, programs, projects and budgets – from research programs to mitigation measures and adaptation plans.
6. Agree measurable gender related targets and create practical tools to help integrate gender equality in adaptation and mitigation.
7. Develop gender-sensitive indicators to aid in national governments' local and international information sharing.

Gender-sensitive methods of problem analysis, situation description and impact assessment need to be developed for climate change and variability contexts. Instruments such as gender impact assessment can already be applied and further developed in the process of application. For all instruments and measures, in local areas and regions as well as at the national and international level, impact analysis should be conducted regarding the situation of women and men and how gender justice and adaptation or mitigation measures can be mutually reinforcing.

Recommendations for Funding Mechanisms & Technology Transfer

Since women, both in developing and developed countries, are disproportionately affected by poverty, have less income and possess less wealth, they are more heavily impacted by higher energy prices. Most of the mechanisms to mitigate climate change and variability (e.g. CDM, REDD, Emissions Trading, voluntary carbon offsetting schemes, etc) are market-based. Women and men don't have equal access to property, money, funds and markets, and women are less likely to benefit from CDM and JI projects. Creating markets geared towards GHG reduction tend to neglect other factors that constitute sustainable development, such as social justice, gender equity, or poverty reduction. The benefits of current market-based financing mechanisms exclude the majority of the world's poor, including women, and non-commercial sectors and applications. When analyzing REDD, CIFOR²² concludes that the most effective payments are not targeting actors like women and Indigenous Peoples who traditionally conserve forests, but actors who are responsible for significant deforestation and can be convinced through a relatively minor compensation to refrain from further deforestation. In terms of technology transfer: the needs of women and men regarding technologies often differ; priorities are closely related to gender roles in society. Since women often lack access to technologies and information or training about appropriate technologies and their use, their voices regarding technology needs are often overlooked.

1. Develop gender analysis of market-based approaches aiming to examine effects on individuals and local communities, and promote the expansion of non-market based financing mechanisms for those populations lacking access to market schemes. (Position paper financing, CIFOR)
2. Increase equitable access of poor women and men to climate change and variability market-based approaches such as the Clean Development Mechanism.
3. Facilitate the exchange of technologies that offer ecologically sustainable and socially equitable solutions for women and men in developing countries.
4. Use Technology Exchange as both a *new term* and a *new strategy of co-operation*: technology transfer often implies one-way-transfer from industrialized to developing countries; women have a broad body of knowledge, capacities and experiences in technologies and their use, which are appropriate to their particular situations, and which is often not recognized or used.

Recommendations on Biofuels²³:

A gendered perspective in the analysis of biofuels is necessary to understand men and women's energy use and needs and to ensure biofuel initiatives fulfill, in an equitable manner, the community's energy needs. Energy services should respond not only to *which* kind of energy is best for men and women users, but also enable women to *choose* which option better suits their needs, context and possibilities.

1. Mainstreaming gender into planning and policy-making will ensure concerns and needs of both men and women are taken into account.
2. Biofuel production and use should maintain and enhance sustainability, and avoid negative impacts on the health and socio-economic status of women and other marginalized groups.
3. Public and private energy expenditure and investment programs with gender-sensitive budgets will ensure equitable targeting of policies and resources.

²² Wunder, S. 2007. "The Efficiency of Payments for Environmental Services in Tropical Conservation", Conservation Biology Volume 21, No. 1. 48 - 58, Society for Conservation Biology

²³ Araujo, A and Quesada, A. (2007) Gender and Bioenergy.IUCN

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4. Most poor women in developing countries cannot afford to pay for energy services and poor households spend 15–28% of their income on energy, while 2 billion people lack access to electricity. Empowering women to provide energy is a key policy for sustainable development. Extension services are needed, to promote sustainable planting and processing, and access to fiscal instruments such as micro-insurance and loans for purchasing seeds, plants, oil presses and generators, etc.
5. Women need training programs to enter the energy service sector, and to participate in decision-making, scientific development, technical implementation and practical use of biofuels and other alternative energy systems.

Conclusions

Climate change and gender inequality are inextricably linked. Notably, they share a similar role of creating obstacles to achieving poverty reduction and development goals. Gender must be universally integrated into climate adaptation and mitigation negotiations and policy making at all levels. The different needs, opportunities and goals of women and men need to be taken into account. Women must be involved in climate negotiations and decision-making at all levels. Representation by numbers is not enough: the involvement of gender experts is also necessary.

All measures, programs and instruments for mitigating or adapting to climate change and variability must be subject to gender analysis, and all climate change and variability-related data, scenarios, and analyses, should be disaggregated by gender. Furthermore, gender and climate research needs to be developed and financed. This requires gender experts and climate researchers to engage in the issues together, and it requires funders to prioritize support for gendered research projects.

If any climate adaptation or mitigation policy fails to address these recommendations, it would be counter-productive to goals of gender equity and should not be endorsed as sustainable. Climate change and gender inequity share a mutually reinforcing role in creating obstacles to achieving Millennium Development Goals: Climate change and variability exacerbates existing inequities and slows progress towards gender equality and poverty reduction, while gender inequities inhibit the formulation and implementation of effective measures to adapt to the impacts of climate variability and change, further exacerbating poverty and other constraints to sustainable development. Without taking gender aspects into consideration, the task of successfully mitigating and adapting to climate change will be impossible to achieve.

Selected Gender and Climate Resources

A more comprehensive database is available at <http://www.gendercc.net/resources/database-literature.html>

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Climate for Change – gender equality and climate policy: www.climateforchange.net/

ENERGIA –International Network Gender and Sustainable Energy www.energia.org

Genanet – Gender, Environment, Sustainability: www.genanet.de/?&L=1

Gender and Disaster Network: www.gdnonline.org

Gender and Water Alliance: www.genderandwater.org/

Gendercc – Platform for Information, Knowledge and Networking on Gender and Climate Change
www.gendercc.net

IUCN – Gender and Environment: www.genderandenvironment.org/

Siyanda / Bridge Annotated Bibliography on gender and climate change by BRIDGE www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/ and www.siyanda.org/

UN Environmental Programme – Gender and Environment: www.unep.org/gender_env/

UN Food and Agriculture Programme – Gender and Food Security: www.fao.org/gender/en/env-e.htm

UN Gender in Development Program www.undp.org/gender/

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