



Integrating Gender into understanding Climate Change

**GenderCCSA - Women for Climate Justice
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What is Climate Change?

- ✓ The climate of the Earth is always changing and several centuries ago the causes of this change would have been primarily natural in origin.
- ✓ Nowadays, although natural changes in the climate continue to occur, the term 'climate change' is generally used when referring to changes in the Earth's climate which have been identified since the early part of the 1900s.
- ✓ Many of the causes of these changes are related to humanity's emissions of 'greenhouse gases'.
- ✓ Rising levels of greenhouse gases, such as Carbon dioxide, are already changing the climate and are expected to continue to do so throughout the 21st century and beyond.



What Causes Climate Change?

- ✓ The global climate system is driven by energy from the sun. Several gases in the atmosphere act to trap the energy from the sun, thus warming the earth.
- ✓ These gases are called *greenhouse gases* and the process is the *greenhouse effect*. Without this there would be no life on earth.
- ✓ Human activities over the last 200 years, particularly the burning of fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) and the clearing of forests, have increased the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- ✓ This is likely to lead to more solar radiation being trapped, which in turn will lead to the earth's surface warming up - called the *enhanced greenhouse effect*.



Disparities within Countries



Urban - Rural



Young - Old



Female - Male



Disparities within Countries

- ✓ Vulnerability to climate change is not only related to environmental forces, but to social conditions, too.
- ✓ It is not countries that are more or less vulnerable, but certain groups of their population.
- ✓ Due to their low capacity to adapt, the poor are the most vulnerable group within various countries.
- ✓ Women, with their disproportionate share of the poor, are therefore among the most vulnerable groups.



The Challenge

❖ *Seeing the poor as a heterogeneous group*

There are differences in poverty within communities who cannot simply be “lumped” together into one homogenous mass.

❖ *Gender and vulnerability*

Within poorer communities, women are often a great deal more vulnerable than their male counterparts both during and after disasters.

❖ *Age:*

The very old and the very young are some of the most vulnerable.

The physiology of children and the elderly makes them more at risk than other groups.

Children and older people are often more susceptible to diseases and ailments related to the environment, such as poor quality or infected water, air pollution and significant changes in temperature.



Women are more vulnerable during disasters?



- ✓ A report on the circumstances of women during and after the 2004 Tsunami has shown the disproportionate impact that the event had on women in the affected countries.
- ✓ In Aceh, India and Sri Lanka more women died in the tsunami than men, almost 80% of the dead are women.
- ✓ The tsunami has not only killed more women it has produced some very gender-specific after shocks, ranging from women giving birth in unsafe conditions to increased cases of rape and abuse.
- ✓ In Sri Lanka, dead bodies were sexually abused and women were dragged out of the rushing water and raped as payment for being saved.
- ✓ In Thailand, women are discriminated even in death: the government assistance for funerals provided twice as much money for a man's death than for a woman's".



Women Still Disadvantaged?

- ✓ In many parts of the developing world, climate change threatens to unravel women's lives undermining decades of efforts aimed at improving women's lives and livelihoods.
- ✓ Unfortunately, women in rural areas lack knowledge on the imminent dangers posed by climate change.
- ✓ The frequency and severity of climate extremes often leave women unable to cope due to the fact that women often have to juggle their reproductive roles and productive roles.



Women still disadvantaged

- ✓ By comparison with men in poor countries, women face historical disadvantages, which include limited access to decision-making and economic assets that compound the challenges of climate change.
- ✓ Women are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change.
- ✓ Some of the factors that influence the higher vulnerability of women to disasters include lack of means and assets to ensure their own safety in situations of flooding, landslides and storms.
- ✓ With changes in the climate, traditional food sources become more unpredictable and scarce. This exposes women to loss of harvests, often their sole sources of food and income.

Why women's livelihoods are at greatest risk?

✓ **Agriculture and Food Security**

- The IPCC predicts that climate change will reduce crop yields and food production in some regions of Africa, particularly the tropics
- Women are responsible for 70-80 % of household food production in sub-Saharan Africa and climate change will systematically affect women due to their reliance on subsistence farming activities.
- Due to the patriarchal inheritance, women's access to and control over land is often limited, and if they own or control land, it is often less fertile.
- Women's income from their livelihoods and other economic activities will become critical thus making them poorer, climate change will thus further exacerbate a vicious cycle of injustice.

✓ **Depletion of natural resources and agricultural productivity**

- Women use vegetation and forests for medicinal plants, food and fuel as well as for income generation, but these ecosystems rely on a healthy water supply.
- Depletion of natural resources and agricultural productivity places additional burdens on women who will have to spend more time scavenging plants and cultivating their crops for subsistence and local markets



Why women's livelihoods are at greatest risk?

✓ Water and resource shortages

- Climate change may exacerbate existing shortages of water due to erratic rainfalls and more frequent events such as floods and droughts
- Women are largely responsible for collecting, storing, cleaning, and maintaining water systems in their communities, and anything that will affect water quantity and accessibility that make its collection even more time-consuming will impact them negatively.
- In some cases, girls are likely to not attend school to perform chores while their mothers get water or engage in other income-generating activities when existing water-dependent tasks such as farming are threatened.

✓ Health

- Climate change may affect human health in a variety of ways, including increased spread of vector- and water-borne diseases, etc.
- Climate variability also contributes to disease outbreaks in which women are most affected.
- Women more often have less access to medical services than men and their workloads increase when they have to spend more time caring for the sick.



How Climate Change Responses Impacting Women



▶ Mitigation Solutions

- ✓ Usually focus on high risk solutions e.g. nuclear power, CCS, GM that are not favourable to women and the poor
- ✓ Priorities: technologies that often inappropriate versus lifestyle changes
- ✓ Policy options and their impacts: e.g. market based options discriminate women (income gap, less access to markets)



What GenderCCSA is learning through its work?

- ✓ Many if not all of the women who participated in the capacity building workshops have not heard anything about climate change, so we needed to start with the basics of what climate change is and what impact it will have on them and their livelihoods.
- ✓ Many of these women have been noticing the rapid change in temperatures, rainfall patterns, crop harvest, availability of natural resources, etc.
- ✓ They are very keen to understand what it is and how it will affect them.
- ✓ Their challenges are almost similar, lack of service delivery, frustration with local government politicians and officials.
- ✓ Lack of access to land and other amenities for their income-generation activities.



What is Needed to ensure gender-sensitive Responses



- ✓ **Communities' participation in decision-making planning and governance, prioritising women**
- ✓ **People-centred solutions that are context-specific, participatory and use local indigenous knowledge**
- ✓ **Reduce vulnerability by diversifying income sources**
- ✓ **Access to information and education critical**
- ✓ **Access to funding for projects**



What is Needed to ensure gender-sensitive Responses

- ▶ Provide practical solutions to enhance women's adaptive capacity and livelihoods including alternative agricultural practices, equitable employment opportunities, access to credit, labour-saving technologies and equipment, safe shelter and facilities, energy and water supplies and services.
- ▶ Invest more into strengthening the capacity of women and gender activists on climate change issues and apply affirmative action principles to draw women into climate change institutional structures and policy-making arenas.
- ▶ Invest in gender training programmes to support processes of change towards gender equality, sensitizing national governments on the importance of gender analysis in the climate change mitigation and adaptation work that they are doing.



IN Conclusion.....

- ▶ **Gendered vulnerability to climate change at a local level needs to be researched so that solutions meets the specific needs on marginalised groups within the community.**
- ▶ **Urging all governments to give women and the poor an equal say in how funds given to poor countries to help them adapt to climate change, are managed and spent**
- ▶ **The local climate change response strategies should ensure full participation of men and women and gender experts, access to information and capacity building.**
- ▶ **In conclusion..... local governments should acquire capacity in mainstreaming gender into climate change.....a critical step to a just and equitable climate change response.**



Thank You

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