



Integrating a Gender Perspective in Climate Change and Development

- A Synopsis -

By Mariama Williams, Ph.D.

Senior Programme Officer, South Centre

With decision 23/CP.18 (2012), the Conference of the Parties sought to address gender equality in the UNFCCC by further deciding 'to enhance decision 36/CP.7 by adopting a goal of gender balance in bodies established pursuant to the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, in order to improve women's participation and inform more effective climate change policy that addresses the needs of women and men equally.' This decision, generally referred to as the 'gender decision', thus significantly advances the issue of gender balance in the UNFCCC by inviting parties to commit to the goal of gender balance, by inter alia, nominating women to bodies established under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol with the aim of a gradual but significant increase in the participation of women towards achieving the goal of gender balance. It also invites parties to strive for gender balance in their delegations to sessions under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

The gender decision recognizes 'women's equitable participation as a procedural right, while gender equitable outcomes of UNFCCC decisions would be recognized as a goal in its own right'. The decision set in motion a number of concrete steps to promote gender balance (which are discussed in the South Centre's Note 1: *The implications for the recent COP 18 Gender Decisions for Developing countries Parties*). However, the Decision does not specify pathways and strategies for how to improve the participation of women in UNFCCC institutions or how to promote gender sensitive climate policies, a thread running through the Decision. Rather, the decision left these matters to be addressed by the Parties through submissions as well as to be further discussed in the context of an in-session workshop on gender for COP 19 and in future discussions on gender and climate change as a standing item on the agenda of the Conference of the Parties.

Decision 23/CP.18 has clearly identified a twofold set of issues:

- 1) *the issue of the under participation of women in climate governance in the UNFCCC process and*
- 2) *highlights the broader issue of ensuring more effective climate change policy that addresses the needs of women and men equally.*

The latter points to a comprehensive approach to gender and climate change, including further examination of, and enhancing the understanding of the gender dimensions of climate change. These include understanding the impacts of climate change and climate variability and the outcomes of the strategic responses to

climate change in the form of adaptation and mitigation on women's and men's lives and livelihoods, gender equality and the overall empowerment of women. Significantly addressing the issue of gender balance and women's participation in climate governance and ensuring that climate change policy addresses the needs of women and men equally also must explicitly focus on the issue of the flow of adequate and predictable financing for climate change strategies at both the international and the national levels.

Section I: Gender and Climate Change: Making the link

Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, threats to water and food production, all have differential impacts on the lives of women and men. Women and men have different capabilities, opportunities and access to resources to facilitate the adaptation to changing climate which adversely impacts the availability of food, fuel and water. Women, as a group, relative to men, as a group, have different possibilities for recovering from frequent and intensive periods of droughts, floods and hurricanes.

Women and children die disproportionately more than men from extreme weather events such as floods, hurricanes and storms (Neumayer and Plumper, 2007). The IPCC's AR4 notes that climate change is likely to directly impact children and pregnant women because they are particularly susceptible to vector and water-borne diseases. WHO argues that pregnant women are more susceptible and die from malaria and water-borne diseases than the general population.

Women, due to historical discrimination and biases in both the formal and informal labour markets as well as cultural and social practices, have less assets, income and savings to deal with the loss and damages from extreme weather events. Climate change-related events that impact water resource to communities place increasing burden on women's care and social reproduction work. In some countries, the effects of climate change also place women and girls at greater risks for bodily injury, rape and harassment when they must travel further and further away from home to secure household drinking water, fuel and food.

Climate strategies that call for radical emissions reductions and societal transformation will impact men and women differently. Climate change policies must tackle areas such as public transportation, the accessibility of individual, household and business to clean energy and their responsibilities for energy efficiency, waste handling and consump-

tion. Commitments to reduce emissions and transition to low carbon paths that underlie nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) all have implications at individual, household and firm levels and have different burden and benefits for men, women, female headed/male headed households, women-male farmers, and women and men owned and operated micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Gender issues are important in climate change policies, specifically in the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies, for at least three main reasons:

1) Structural gender inequalities are affected by climate change and the losses and damages it generates: The effects of extreme weather events as well as the long term chronic impact of climate change on water, agriculture and natural resources impact pre-existing structural gender inequalities. Climate change-related induced crises of health and food systems and the measures implemented to mitigate these can enhance or worsen the situation for gender equality and women's social and economic empowerment.

2) Participation & Democracy: The gendered nature of the economic and financial architecture that dominates the responses to climate change has implications for the participation of men and women in decision-making and affects men's and women's lives in different ways. Hence it is important that women as well as men have a voice in decision-making on climate change policy, especially around adaptation and mitigation strategies. A high degree of integration of women's and men's participation and systemic representation (agency) across all aspects of climate governance is essential to ensure the most fair, equitable and cost effective solutions to the climate challenge.

3) Accountability & Monitoring: Monitoring the gendered outcomes of climate change policy responses is important for pinpointing reforms of the climate protection system so that adaptation and mitigation responses can promote gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development. Knowledge, experience, insights and capacities for contributing to the way forward require drawing on all the available resources to which a country has access in a climate constrained world. Women, indigenous peoples, as with other groups that have been historically marginalized, have knowledge, insights and practices that could be integrated in climate protection policies. They also need the upgrading of their knowledge and capacities for ensuring livelihoods, sustainable development and for contributing to local, national and global efforts to protect the planet.

Section II: Gender, Adaptation & Mitigation in Brief

Gender & Adaptation in brief

Women are dynamic actors in projects and programmes particularly related to adaptation, such as crop and livestock selection, crop shifting and soil preservation, the use of traditional water harvesting techniques and the efficient use of water. Women, as the managers of household energy and water supplies, must adapt to the changing climate conditions. Women, as farmers and major producers of

food, must also adopt production and growing practices that ensure food security, in spite of climate change.

In many cases, activities normally undertaken by women in order to secure their livelihoods and preserve natural resources also generate both adaptation and mitigation outcomes. Such activities, which include mixed and rain fed farming, agroforestry, rain water harvesting and re-charging well water, are not well recognized in the global carbon trade market, or, are often overlooked by government planners and funders. Many women are therefore undertaking adaptation and mitigation activities without access to credit or appropriate extension services.

Gender and Mitigation in brief

In seeking to mitigate GHGs the focus is on low carbon, clean and efficient energy development and the enhancement of both natural and man-made greenhouse gas sinks. While the former focuses on industrial production, energy generation and energy intensive end use sectors such as transportation, the latter revolves around a large number of activities such as agricultural production, deforestation, land-use changes that are important for the lives and livelihoods of men and women in quite distinct ways. Mitigation strategies, hence, are not gender or equity neutral. Mitigation within the context of sustainable development can help to promote gender equity and women's empowerment by addressing at least four issues: 1) women's and men's energy needs and uses; 2) women's and men's employment and entrepreneurship—though there are potential challenges and constraints in the agriculture, energy and power sectors; 3) incorporating women's and men's traditional knowledge and practices into mitigation strategies and policy frameworks; and 4) paying focused attention on ensuring gender equity in the use, conservation and management of forests.

Some mitigation actions, such as the provision of clean and modern energy services, save women's and men's time and lives and promote better health. However, other mitigation actions such as those implemented to affect land use, and land-use change can shift the balance of economic and social resource distribution between women and men and among different communities and hence can exacerbate inequality.

There is a need to rebalance priorities and to accelerate adaptation and mitigation programmes and projects in order to meet the immediate and medium term needs of women, men and children in communities while at the same time making the transition to low-carbon development pathways. As the next frontier in climate policy is pursued beyond 2015, there is much work to be done elaborating the vulnerability and risks that men and women face in developing countries and ensuring that policy frameworks and instruments more fully integrate gender and women empowerment perspectives. In this context, there will be need for careful calibration between adaptation and mitigation policies and outcomes.

Section III: Towards gender aware, gender sensitive and gender responsive climate and development policy

The trajectory towards gender sensitive and gender equitable climate governance policy, including adaptation and mitigation policy, involves developing activities around at least four important pillars: 1) improving women's role in climate governance, through gender balance in representation and

improved capacity building for climate negotiations for women; 2) programs and training for enhancing the skill set of women to undertake adaptation and mitigation and assessments; 3) timely and strategic interventions around climate protection and building resilience and 4) ensuring adequate climate finance, that is publicly sourced, non-debt creating and easily accessible, flows to developing countries; and ensuring gender equity in the flow of this finance.

Ultimately,

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, programmes and strategies must aim to support the elimination of gender and other social gaps and promote women's and men's well-being.

- Specific actions must be taken to enhance women's capabilities, capacities in order to enable them to take advantage of opportunities which may exist. Similar actions must be taken with regard to other groups who suffer from historical discrimination due to race and ethnicity, with particular emphasis and care and attention to the interests and concerns of Indigenous Peoples.

- These ethical, decent and just outcomes are predicated on two centrally important factors :1) the ratcheting up of higher (implemented) mitigation ambitions and commitments by developed country Parties to the Convention, which significantly modify longer term warming trends and 2) the rapid and accelerated provision of finance and technology transfer and development (along with the other components of means of implementation) that will help developing countries to successfully contribute towards the global effort of keeping global warming substantially below 2 degrees Celsius and more in the line of 1-1.5 degrees C.

Appendix 1: Options and ways to advance the goal of gender balance in the bodies established pursuant to the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol in order to improve women's participation

Increasing the representation of women and men in delegations and as resource persons and experts to UNFCCC bodies, culminating in gender balance at the UNFCCC level will require building the pipeline of women and men with the requisite skills to enable gender sensitive climate policies and effective climate governance. Actions, tactics and strategies toward this end must occur at multiple levels: local, national, regional and international level.

International level interventions

International level intervention will involve a) ensuring adequate resource for expanding delegation and training

male and female negotiators to contribute to gender sensitive climate policy formulation and b) ensuring that the UNFCCC Secretariat and its associated bodies are staffed with gender experts.

The UNFCCC Secretariat (with regard to its internal dynamics) will need to enhance its capacity – in terms of gender technical expertise and capacity with regard to data support system for collecting and assessing gender disaggregated data so as to promote the development of gender analytical tools and training.

The COP may need to take a more proactive stance with regard to: a) its bodies and organs and b) strengthening the capacity of Parties to deliver on their own operational mandates. Hence the COP may need to set in place mechanisms and processes to develop tangible strategies and initiatives aimed at improving the present environment in terms of:

- i) Funding for short and medium term efforts to finance gender balance/equality interventions both for Parties and at the level of the institutions; promote on-going professional development;

- ii) Increase frequency of workshops tailored to increase exposure to gender and climate issues;

- iii) The COP may thus need to issue guidelines to its financing mechanisms to ensure the availability of an adequate pool of funds for implementing its gender balance/gender equality agenda.

Appendix 2: Primer on Gender and Gender Analysis

Gender is the socially constructed relationship between men and women. It is different from sex which is biologically determined (as in male and female). Culture and society dictate what roles and responsibility men and women should perform based on their biological differences (as in feminine and masculine). These socially constructed roles evolve over time, shaped by historical, cultural, economic, and political factors, and are associated with differential access to tangible and intangible resources that works to the disadvantage of women, as a group relative to men – inequality. Ultimately, gender is a power relationship that pivots around access to resources and to political agency.

A gender perspective interrogates policies, programmes and projects from the view point of men and women. It is grounded in the premise that gender constructs, which permeates all institutions, can change. A gender perspective, hence, seeks to locate, compensate for or eliminate the differences (gaps) between men and women that are due to biases and asymmetries in access to resources and their ability to respond to temporary or permanent shocks and other factors such as climate change. A gender perspective should be integrated in all aspects of the policy cycle from agenda setting, to planning, and to implementation and monitoring. Gender analysis and gender mainstreaming are tools for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. In order for this to be undertaken effectively baselines on the status of men and women must be established, gender disaggregated data collected and analyzed and gender impact assessments of proposed and implemented programmes and projects undertaken.



**SOUTH
CENTRE**

Chemin du Champ-d'Anier 17
PO Box 228, 1211 Geneva 19

Telephone: (4122) 791 8050

Fax: (4122) 798 8531

E-mail: south@southcentre.int

<http://www.southcentre.int>