



Gender Differentials in Climate Change: Vulnerability to Adaptation

SEVENTH SHARING & LEARNING SEMINAR
Gender and Adaptation to Climate Change

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Gender inequality and existing inequities result in differential experiences of men and women to climate change.

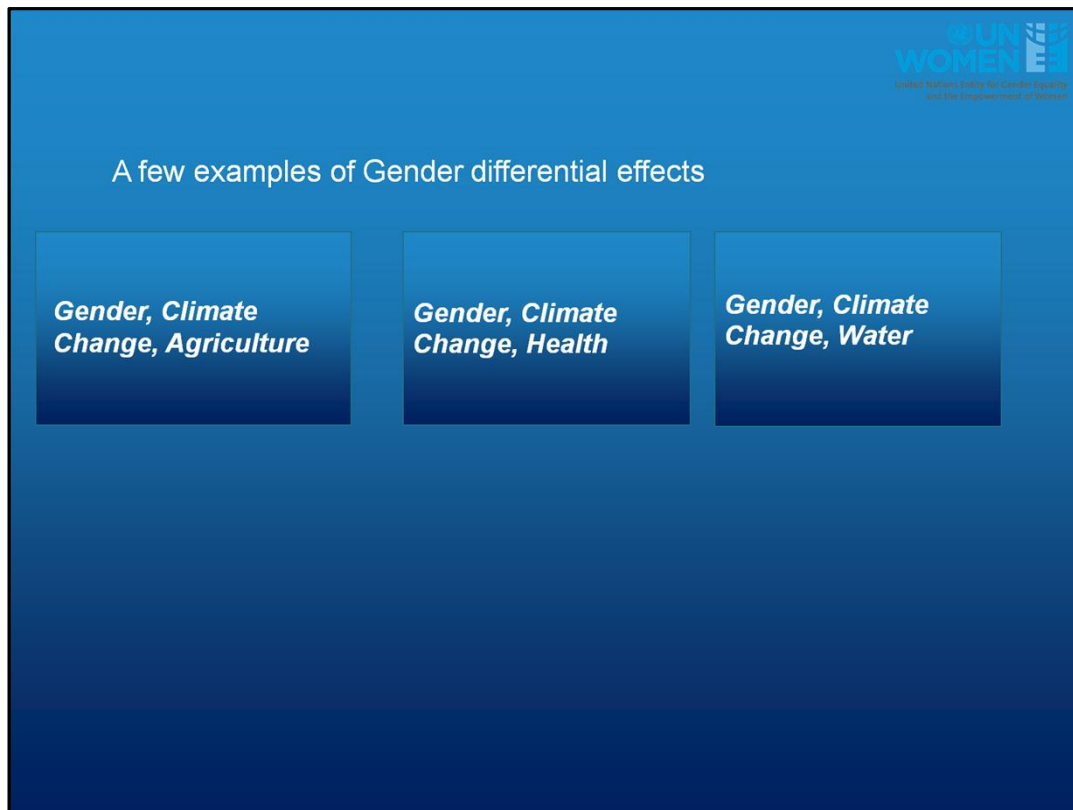
¶The linkages between gender and climate change are most easily understood by looking at the impacts of natural disasters. And here the statistics are quite shocking:

¶For every 1 men that dies in a natural disaster 4 women perish. This was shown by a study from the London School of Economics that analyzed disasters in 141 countries. It was found that when women's rights are not protected, more women than men will die from disasters.

¶What I don't have to tell you here is **that this ratio is not due to women being naturally weaker than men but due to the division of gender roles in society. Gender inequalities intersect with climate risks and vulnerabilities as was underscored by the 2007 Human Development Report and the International Panel on Climate Change. These reports stated that climate change impacts will be differently distributed among different regions, generations, age, classes, income groups, occupations and genders.**

¶An classic example for this region that you might have heard before is from the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, which killed 140,000 in Bangladesh, 90% of which were women. Cultural and societal reasons bars women and girls at times from going to public places where early warnings are posted, rendering them unprepared for raging disasters. Women and girls are also not taught how to swim due to cultural reasons which may further impact on their chances of survival.

It is also important to bear in mind that women are not a homogenous groups and across age, race, ethnicity and other identities the impacts of climate change are different. For e.g. indigenous people co-exist with land, forest, water and nature, with their livelihood and habitat and life revolving around these elements. When there is a slight change in the climatic conditions (e.g, rise in temperature leading to floods), their lives and livelihoods are more impacted than urban people..more over indigenous women for generations have been the store house of knowledge on cultural and environmental preservation systems which actually mitigate impacts of climate change.



Agriculture

There are numerous significant linkages between gender and agriculture. In many countries women's access to land is limited. Patrilineal inheritance customs regulate land ownership and property rights and thereby influence control over land and food sovereignty.

At the same time, women make up% of the agricultural labour force in Asia Pacific.

There is an evident interdependence between rural poverty and climate change related effects like desertification and degradation. Because of their labour- and time-intensive work in order to care for their families, the share of women hit by poverty is unproportional high.

Their responsibility for using and preserving land for food and fuel production and the resulting dependency on the soil make them vulnerable for climate change effects and consequences such as desertification, erosion and soil degradation. Decreasing crops and livestock, less productivity and lower income follow these effects and impact particularly women.

Depletion of natural resources and decreasing agricultural productivity increase women's workloads, diminish their crops, their livestock and therefore the income, place additional burden on their health and reduce time available to participate in decision-making processes and non-agricultural income generating activities.

Health

Climate change has significant impacts on human health. Global warming, rising sea

levels and extreme weather events, alongside with increasing rainfalls in some regions and higher frequency and intensity of droughts in other parts of the world cause a multitude of effects on public health.

Women and men can be harmed in different ways. Because male and female bodies are differently vulnerable, the resulting needs for health services and health care can be gender-specific.

Changes in temperature and rainfall patterns give disease vectors the possibility to increase. Children and pregnant women are particularly susceptible to diseases that thrive in such conditions such as diarrhoea and cholera.

Existing inequalities reduce possibilities of women and girls from getting access to public healthcare , which would be further exacerbated due to cultural restrictions on mobility of women and girls. Women and girls in their roles as caregivers may also find themselves susceptible to diseases on one hand and unable to seek /prioritise health care on the other at times of disasters and crisis.

Water

In many developing countries of Asia, women are primarily responsible for **water management for household use including its collection**, storage and use. Besides women also use water in subsistence farming, livestock rearing as well as for home based small enterprise work .

Water scarcity means, women have to spend additional time collecting water, walking long distances which has health hazards as well as in some countries, increases their vulnerability to harassment and violence.

Flooding apart from bringing health hazards also increases the burden on women due to additional cleaning and caring for sick family members.

Besides the double burden to women, according to the World Health Organization 80 percent of all **illnesses** in the world are attributable to unsafe water and sanitation. Water-borne diseases kill millions of people every year, many more are sickened with diarrhoea, malaria, hepatitis and other diseases because of the absence of clean sanitation facilities.

The lack of female-only toilets impedes girls from school attendance in some regions.

Women's reproductive functions make their immune systems more susceptible to contamination, which means that their health may be impaired more severely than that of men.

In many cases, access to water is linked to **land rights** while in many parts of the world women's right to own or inherit land is prohibited or restricted. If women do have access to land, the plot is often poor quality soil or does not provide sufficient access to irrigation.

Due to climate change clean water will become more scarce.

Privatisation may add further pressure to a just water distribution. Low-income households, particularly those headed by women, struggle to pay large lump sums for water connections and additional monthly payments. Therefore, women have been central in the struggle against the sale of public water services to transnational companies.

Water scarcity is increasingly becoming a trigger for **conflicts**. The growing number of conflicts and wars leads to increasing numbers of displaced people and refugees, the majority of which are women and children. The loss of land and water sources causes even more insecurity among refugees, and puts an extra burden on women. Securing access to land and safe water are major challenges for the resettlement of women refugees and their families. Moreover, most violent conflicts aggravate the existing unequal opportunities for access to water.

Although women manage most of households water issues and have important knowledge and experience in saving water they are seldom consulted and their needs are less considered. Like studies of water supply governance shown, the whole gender dimension is excluded in debates on **participation** schemes and policies. Because of the significant gender differences in use, access and management of water, women's participation is essential for successful water management and adaptation planning.

Climate change and Migration



When Men migrate:

- Women assume traditional male responsibilities without having equal or direct access to technical, financial and social resources as men have. So women have more responsibilities without having more rights, especially land and property rights. An increased burden of household and agricultural work may put a strain on women in the absence of men.

When Women Migrate:

- Due to women's reduced access to educational and employment opportunities women find jobs in sectors considered traditionally "for women" like domestic work or manufacturing sector. The situation of work for women in these sectors are usually hazardous with long working hours, low pay and little or no health insurance.

Climate change is likely to increase human migration. Some causes could be Soil degradation, water shortages, rising sea levels, and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

These may force people to sell off their assets and migrate when traditional coping mechanisms do not suffice.

Migration as Mitigation Strategy



Internal Migration

Remittances to fill shortfalls in essential goods

“Climate-induced migration will affect poor and vulnerable people more than others. In many places, those least capable of coping with severe weather and environmental degradation will be compelled to move with few assets to an uncertain future. Those who stay in their communities will struggle to maintain livelihoods in risk-prone settings at the mercy of nature’s whims.”

Bart W. Édes, Director of ADB’s Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division

Migration- Impact on Urban area

In the face of climate-related environmental change, such as the decline of productive agricultural land, people in rural area may be forced to migrate in search of work. Migrants who find work often remit portions of their salary back home. Their families in the home communities may use the remittances to buy substitutes for goods previously produced or harvested from the local environment. For example, store-bought food may substitute for food previously grown on homestead plots.⁷

Migration is one of many survival strategies used in times of environmental stress.



Despite these facts, women have not been afforded an equal opportunity to participate in decision making related to adaptation and mitigation policies and initiatives at the international and national level related to climate change



Women have to play key role in mitigation and adaptation

- Equal access to resources, including credit, extension services, information and technology, must be taken into account in developing mitigation activities.
- Women - effective agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation.
- Stewards of natural resources
- Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change
- Women in development of new technologies.
- Inclusive agendas women's NGOs and CSOs

Gender inequalities in access to resources, including credit, extension services, information and technology, must be taken into account in developing mitigation activities.

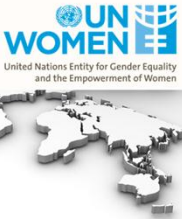
Women - effective agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation. Women have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies.

Women's responsibilities in households and communities as stewards of natural resources has positioned them well for livelihood strategies adapted to changing.

The active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives is critical, particularly at local levels. Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change is needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building.

Women's involvement in the development of new technologies can ensure that they are user-friendly, effective and sustainable.

Consultation with and participation of women in climate change initiatives must be ensured and the role of women's groups and networks strengthened



LEGAL MANDATES FOR LINKING GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Gender equality: ECOSOC 2005/31, Beijing Platform for Action
2. Disaster Risk Reduction: the Hyogo Framework for Action
3. Sustainable Development: Agenda 21, CBD, CCD

There are, however, innumerable global mandates calling for integrating a gender perspective that apply to climate change. This includes instruments that deal with human rights, gender equality, sustainable development and environment, and disaster risk reduction

Gender Equality:

ECOSOC Resolution 2005/31

Beijing Platform for Action (4th World Conference on Women 1995)

Disaster Risk Reduction:

Hyogo Framework for Action (World Conference on Disaster Reduction 2005)

Sustainable development:

Agenda 21 (UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992)

Convention on Biodiversity (1992)

Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)



Expanding women's voice, leadership and participation
Ending violence against women
Strengthening implementation of the women, peace and security agenda
Enhancing women's economic empowerment
Making gender equality priorities central to national, local and sectoral planning and budgeting