

WOMEN AS PART OF THE SOLUTION

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE



KEY MESSAGES

- Women are differently impacted by climate change because of social and economic barriers that limit their capacity to cope in a changing world.
- Women are not only victims of climate change, they are also active agents of change and have knowledge and skills that can be used for adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Women's participation in climate governance processes is essential in ensuring that climate change solutions in both mitigation and adaptation are gender aware and will fit and respond to the different vulnerabilities and capacities of women.

"The absence of women, particularly those from the global South, from national and international discussions and decision-making on climate change and development must change. The battle to protect the environment is not solely about technological innovation – it is also about empowering women and their communities to hold their governments accountable for results."

-Mary Robinson and Wangari Maathai

INTRODUCTION

We cannot solve climate change without half of the world's population. Climate change is not a gender neutral issue. While it affects humanity as a whole, women are differently and disproportionately impacted by climate change. Many women don't have access to resources, information, and decision-making processes.

However, part of the problem is that women are mostly seen as victims to be helped, rather than active agents of change. Women have knowledge, capacities, and skills that can help in solving climate change. What we need to do is recognise that women have the right to be included in climate change related decisions and to benefit from them equally.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT GENDER NEUTRAL

Climate change affects the poorest, those with fewer resources to adapt to its impacts. Of those who are affected by climate change below the poverty line, women are the majority. In fact, two thirds of the poorest people on the planet are women.

On the whole, women, especially those in developing countries, who are highly dependent on natural resources and are responsible for securing water, food, and fuel, are more disadvantaged compared to men. Coupled with climate change responses and policies that are gender blind, women only become more vulnerable to climate change.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND SECURITY

Women farmers account for 45-80% of all food production in developing countries. With climate change, women face loss of income as well as harvests. The problem is exacerbated because women are often excluded from decision-making on access to and use of land and resources. In addition, food security problems also threatens more women, as scarce resources are rarely equally distributed.



WATER

In most developing countries, women and girls are tasked with collecting water for their families. Many of them spend time fetching water in far distances. With climate change affecting the availability of water, women and girls spend more time walking, posing security threats as well as affecting their time to go to school.

ENERGY

1.6 billion people still don't have access to energy. Women, who are tasked to gather fuel and who rely on wood-burning stoves, spend much time collecting fuel for cooking. In India, women spend two to seven hours for collecting fuel. It also impacts women's health. As climate change threatens the availability of traditional fuel sources, women should start having access to clean and cheap energy.

DISASTERS

Women are 14 times more likely to die during disasters. Unequal access to information, resources, and limited mobility make women more vulnerable to disasters than men. In some cultures, women aren't taught how to swim, leaving them immobilised when floods come.

PARTICIPATION



Women's participation in the design, planning, and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategic can lead to better environmental and development outcomes. Women's participation and inclusion both in local and national leadership has shown improved outcomes and leads to better resource conservation and regeneration. Women's participation ensures that any action is appropriate to their and their community's needs.

The Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice lists three levels of participation:

Presence - women are present in decision-making fora but do not have the agency or voice to affect change.

Partial Participation - Women are present in decision-making fora and have some agency or voice but may be limited to areas where women are traditionally associated to, such as women's health or childcare.

Meaningful Participation - Women are present in decision-making processes and have agency and voice to affect change in all areas of decision making



What we want to aim for is women's meaningful participation in climate governance. There is danger that women's participation only serve as an item in a check list of ensuring gender mainstreaming in climate change policy and projects. To address this, women's capacity to lead should be supported through allocation of resources, knowledge products, and trainings targeted to women, especially those in the local level.

"Climate change policies will neither be effective nor fair unless they become gender aware, including the right to be included in climate change related decision making and to benefit from them equally."

EMMELINE SKINNER, 2009



CASE STUDIES

EL SALVADOR

In Guadalupe, El Salvador, most men believe they have the final decision making power in their families, and women feel negatively affected by this machismo. Being highly vulnerable to climate change, agricultural production become a problem for the community. A project by Trocaire and the Salvadorian Ecological Unit helped in enabling women become decision-makers in families. As a result, women are now able to adapt to impacts of climate change and help achieve food security. With this improvement at the local level, women had the confidence to participate in and influence municipal decision-making processes. For example, they were able to encourage the health department to close a slaughter house that has been polluting their waters.

CHILE

La Aguada, Chile, has experienced climate change impacts such as drought that has led to water scarcity and desertification. The community can no longer produce crops. A local organisation, Junta de Vecinos La Aguada, has helped women and men participate as equals in community development. Women's participation has helped their community in protecting their right to food and water. They were able to implement projects such as the Rainwater Harvest Project which utilised both traditional techniques and technical skills. As a result, women are able to grow vegetable gardens and are able to secure food for their families.

INTERNATIONAL

The Women and Environment Development Organisation (WEDO) has mentored and trained women from frontline communities and has built their capacity to share their local stories of resilience and innovation. They have also worked on training more women to participate in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change through their Women Delegates Fund. With 400 women delegates trained, there has been an increase in women's participation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These women have become voices inside the negotiations and have helped shape international climate policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Highlight women's agency and capacity in adapting to and mitigating climate change, integrating their knowledge, skills, and experiences in policy making and decision making processes.

Build capacity of women and enable them to participate in climate change processes at local, national, and international level and ensure they are involved in decision making. Women must be adequately represented in decision making processes but must also have meaningful participation in these discussions.

Learn from people-focused and gender-aware approaches that are already happening at the local level. There are already many local projects on the ground that need to be documented and where lessons can be implemented on a larger scale.

Implement different gender-focused participatory approaches that are gender aware and inclusive for women.

Practice Community-based adaptation. Focussing on local realities promote gender-aware solutions and policies that acknowledge the different roles men and women play within their communities. It builds on local knowledge, experience, and participation.

Build women's leadership capacities. This can be a bottom-up approach to actively promote women's status and participation in decision making processes.



WE CANNOT SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE WITHOUT HALF OF THE
WORLD'S POPULATION.



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