Gender and Climate Change Adaptation

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Vulnerability to Climate Change

- Health
- Disasters
- Agriculture
- Resource Scarcity

- NAPAs
- Population and Climate Change
“A gendered approach to climate change...”

- Should not simply be about women. Men and boys are also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, but often in different ways, and these need to be identified and communicated.

- Furthermore, women and girls are involved in relationships with men and boys and it is at the level of these gender relations and the social expectations influencing them that research needs to be conducted and change needs to happen.” (Bridge, 2008)
Gender and health

- Rising water levels associated with climate change will lead to an increase in water-borne diseases
- Higher rates of malnutrition due to food shortages
- Women and girls face barriers to accessing healthcare: lack of economic assets, and cultural restrictions on their mobility

- Gender discrimination in the allocation of resources may put girls at greater risk than boys
- Women and girls expected to care for the sick – less time for income generation
- Elderly are at highest risk from heat stress and malnutrition
- A decline in food security and livelihood opportunities can cause stress for men and boys; mental illness.
According to IUCN/WEDO, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during disasters.

- In the Asian Tsunami, the largest numbers of fatalities were women and children under the age of 15.
- Following the cyclone and flood of 1991 in Bangladesh, the death rate was almost five times as high for women as for men. Warning information was transmitted by men to men in public spaces, but rarely communicated to the rest of the family, and, as many women are not allowed to leave the house without a male relative, they perished waiting for their relatives to return home and take them to a safe place. Moreover, as in many other Asian countries, most Bengali women have never learned to swim, which significantly reduces their survival chances in the case of flooding. (Röhr, 2005)
Boys and men also experience particular gendered vulnerabilities in disasters; Hurricane Mitch, which hit Honduras in 1998 has been cited as encouraging “heroic” actions from boys and men, putting themselves at risk.

Effective mitigation strategies can result from gender-sensitive training; in La Masica, Honduras, there were no reported fatalities after Hurricane Mitch, because, after training, women had been involved equally with men in hazard management activities, and women took over control of the early warning system, which led to a quick evacuation when the hurricane struck (IUCN).
Gendered impact in the aftermath of disasters

- Gender Inequalities can be exacerbated in the aftermath of disasters.
- Household workload may increase substantially, forcing girls to drop out of school.
- Evidence that women and girls are more likely to become the victims of gender-based violence, particularly when living in overcrowded emergency or transitional housing where privacy/lighting is lacking.
Although rural women and men play complementary roles in guaranteeing food security, women tend to play a greater role in natural resource management and ensuring nutrition (FAO, 2003). Women often grow, process, manage and market food and other natural resources, and are responsible for raising small livestock, managing vegetable gardens and collecting fuel and water.

In South-East Asia, women provide up to 90 per cent of labour for rice cultivation and in Sub-Saharan Africa they are responsible for 80 per cent of food production.
Gender and Agriculture (cont’d)

- Men, by contrast, are generally responsible for cash cropping and larger livestock.
- Women’s involvement in an agricultural capacity is most common in regions likely to be most adversely affected by the impacts of climate change, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia; responsibility for adaptation is likely to fall on their shoulders, including finding alternative ways to feed their family (CIDA, 2002).
Statutory and/or customary laws often restrict women’s property and land rights, and make it difficult for them to access credit and agricultural extension services.

There is a link between rural poverty and climate change—related effects like desertification and degradation. The share of women hit by poverty is disproportionately high. Their responsibility for using and preserving land for food and fuel production and the resulting dependency on the soil make them vulnerable to 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, again disproportionately, affect women.
Gender, climate change and water

- It is estimated that by 2025, almost two thirds of the world’s population are likely to experience some kind of water stress, and for one billion of them the shortage will be severe and socially disruptive (WEDO, 2003)
  - Reducing burden on women caused by water collection
  - In Morocco, a World Bank Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project increased girls school attendance by 20% over four years
Resource scarcity (through dwindling forests, water and other natural resources) will also affect women disproportionately: they will have to walk further to gather these things. Not only does this take more of their time but also expose them to further risks outside of the home.
Gender in NAPAs

- Tanzania
  - Women have to walk very long distances to fetch water. This consumes a lot of their time which could be spent on other productive activities. The burden is more on women and school children particularly girls who seem to be the main water courier.

- Uganda
  - Climate change may affect men, women and the youth differently. Women have a key role of looking after the households. They spend long hours during drought in search of water and firewood depriving them of productive hours for other productive economic activities. During floods, water and sanitation-related diseases are more prevalent. The women spend more time attending to sick family members. This predisposes women to increased health risks and reduced income generation.
  - Famine marriage
  - In times of food crisis, some parents marry off their daughters to secure dowry for survival. In some cases women and men elope to avoid famine and poverty. Some rich men are often ready to take young women. This fuels early marriages, drop out of schools and exposure to sexually transmitted infections and related reproductive complications.
Malawi

Women bear most of the burden in activities that are most impacted by adverse climate, including collection of water, firewood and ensuring daily access to food. In addition, the changing demographics as a result of the impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, are leading to women taking up greater responsibilities as sole heads of households and taking care of the sick and orphans. Several interventions are proposed that target women in highly vulnerable situations, including: (i) empowerment of women through access to microfinance to diversify earning potential, (ii) ensuring easier access to water and energy sources by drilling boreholes and planting trees in woodlots, and (iii) use of electricity provided through the rural electrification programme.
Successful women’s adaptation coping strategies included: –

- Moving to safer places – higher locations
- Saving their assets: storing seed; moving livestock to higher places
- Dietary adaptations: skip meals, eat non-traditional foods, preserve food for lean times
- Energy-saving: use of alternative technologies
- Adapting agricultural practices eg switching to other crops, or to other animals
- Earning income or saving money
- Organizing and collective action
Priorities identified by women include: –

- Safety: a safe place to live
- Adaptation in agricultural practices, including crop diversification
- Better access to information
- Access to services such as doctors and pharmacists
- Development of their capacities through training and information
- Access to resources, including climate-related finances, improved access to credit
- Ecological restoration
Ethical Principles

- Principle of Individual Liberty
- Utilitarian Principle
- Principle of Justice

- Sustainable Development: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
Have to recognize the “Yuck” factor when mentioning population

- History of population/family planning; horrendous mistakes; global memories are long in respect of forced sterilization, transistor radios, coercion

- UN medium projections
- Assumptions that family planning programmes are in place
- People/donors “bored” with family planning
- Commodities
Population and climate link: critical, complex and controversial

- Population growth makes it more difficult to achieve MDGs
- Climate change affects poor people disproportionately
  - These factors combine to hinder efforts to lift people out of poverty
- Population growth in the South increases vulnerability, but climate change has been driven by the actions of the rich world. Even that is now more complex; China has recently become the world leader in GHG emissions, overtaking the USA, and the USA population is now increasing
Policy considerations

- How useful is the silence on population
  - Can we bring this issue in from the cold?
- Can we find a language that recognizes, reflects and addresses the need to emphasize resource consumption in the North at the same time as advocating increased access to sexual and reproductive health care services in the South on a basis that respects and protects human rights?
Non discrimination in action...?
“I’ve never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat”