

# Combatting Climate Change and Gender Inclusivity in the UNFCCC Process

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When one speaks of climate change, gender does not appear as one of the key components of focus. It could be due to the fact that when climate change related policies are developed, the focus lies in reduction of emission targets of nations. However it is vital that we acknowledge that gender plays a key role in finding solutions to adverse effects of climate change. This is mainly due to the fact that “gender” plays an important role in a day-to-day manner in how we affront hardships created by climate change.

When the UNFCCC was agreed upon, gender was not one of the issues that were addressed. Even after the 4th World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995 established gender as a basic requirement in integrating national policy formulation, the accords on the Kyoto Protocol ignored gender. Articles 3,4,5, 15 and 16 of the Beijing Declaration stress on the need of women's inclusion in development and equal treatment of men and women in development. In addition article 27 of the same provides that in the development of developing countries, the inclusion of the women in the process is needed, and highlights the need for participatory development where women are not side-lined by their male counter-part.

Decision 36 of COP 7 in 2001, further highlights the need to focus on gender and women. Referring to the Beijing Declaration of 1995, the Decision goes to lay down the importance of the inclusion of women delegates in the UNFCCC process, and other form of entities that take action on climate change. This is based on the need for effective communication of women's needs which can be most clearly stated by those who are affected due to their absence.

COP18 held in Doha can be considered as one of the COPs where gender was highlighted, and with positive outcomes. It saw the acceptance of a new gender decision introduced by the EU towards the end of the 1st week of CO18. This decision can also be seen as a reaffirmation of the gender decision of the Marrakesh negotiations of 2001. The decision focuses on women's participation as a step towards

greater gender equality in climate change policies and programming.

The final decision entitled “Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol” (Advanced Unedited Version) will put in place several key actions and changes:

- UNFCCC Secretariat will collect and report on sex-disaggregated data
- Gender will be included as a standing COP agenda item (gender was formerly included as part of “Other business” on the agenda
- UNFCCC Secretariat will invite submissions on gender balance from parties in Sept 2013, and compile these results
- The UNFCCC Secretariat will organize an in- session workshop at COP19 to address (1) gender balance in the UNFCCC process, (2) gender- sensitive climate policy and (3) capacity- building activities to promote the greater participation of women in the UNFCCC process

This development needs to be appreciated given that it has recognized gender as an element that needs to be highlighted. The recognition of gender

as a pivotal element is needed due to the fact that mistakes in climate policy making may lead to consolidating or even extending inequalities between men and women. In order to avoid that, structures and factors that cause or sustain discrimination must be identified and addressed.

Furthermore it is important to integrate gender into climate change negotiations as men and women contribute differently to the causes of climate change. Based on gendered roles and responsibilities in most societies, and on gendered access to resources and political influence, men and women tend to react differently to impacts of climate change. Such differences are reflected in their choice of

solutions to mitigate the consequences of climate change. Another reason for creating gaps between men and women can be allocated to the lack of basic gender-disaggregated data.

Factors that cause or sustain discrimination need to be identified and addressed. In order to prevent the consolidation or even expansion, of inequality by climate policy, structures. Keys to analysis and change include: the important gender-dimensions of care work, the distribution of and access to all forms of resources, and the gender position in planning, decision making and societal power relations. Most negative consequences of climate change are strongly connected to gender equality issues. Decreased availability of clean water, decreased

agricultural productivity and increased risks of famine are examples of impacts that disproportionately impact women who have been “resisting, mitigating and even reversing the impacts of climate change, primarily at the local level. Moreover, not only do women tend to care for the environment, but they do so in a way that reflects how it is connected to the economy and livelihoods, health and social well-being.” (AWID)

In order to have policies that are gender inclusive, we need to recognize the vital need for gender equality in addressing issues related to climate change, and also ensure that women participate in all decisions related to climate change. There is also the need to mainstream all institutions which are dealing with climate change, to collect and publish gender disaggregated data and to analyse gender inclusivity in policies on climate change.

In conclusion it should be said that the need to focus on gender does not mean that women need to be prioritized, and men neglected when seeking solutions to address climate change. Recognising that both men and women are important actors in designing conscientious climate policies is pivotal in creating an inclusive process. Another strategy to be avoided at all means is to blame one part of the population or romanticize the other. This would only result in aggravating the situation in existence rather than finding a solution on which we need to focus.