RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security

CGIAR CCAFS

Info Note

Gender and international climate policy

An analysis of progress in gender equality at COP21

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Key messages

- Gender is not well integrated into climate change policy in relation to agriculture.
- Policymakers need to take into account the differential vulnerabilities of men and women farmers to climate change.
- In spite of their vulnerabilities to climate change, rural women can be important agents of change and innovators. This potential can be best tapped into by co-designing climate-smart technologies and practices with women.
- Gender receives attention in about 40% of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted ahead of COP21, none from Annex 1 countries.
- Gender references are confined mostly to impacts of climate change on women and women as “vulnerable populations”, with less emphasis on supporting women to actively address and participate in adaptation and mitigation actions.
- The use of the term ”gender-responsive” in the Paris Agreement is a big step forward, however the Agreement fails to move beyond the attitude of women as victims of climate change in need of capacity building.
- Stronger steps need to be taken for real gender equality in climate policies, including better monitoring and evaluation of the progress.

Closing the gender gap in climate change

While women play an important role in agriculture, environmental and natural resource management, they have greater financial or resource constraints, and lower levels of access to information and extension services than men (Tall et al. 2014). Because of these gender inequalities, women appear to be less able to adapt to climate change (Huyer et al. 2015). Rural women’s workload, e.g. biomass and water collection, is affected by natural disasters and the changing climate with consequences on family nutrition, childcare and education. Cultural norms related to gender roles may limit the ability of women to respond to or make quick decisions in the face of climate events. For example, in some households where men are working off-farm in cities, women may lack the power to make timely farming decisions or to convince their husbands to agree to new practices (Asfaw et al. 2015; Goering 2015).

Without recognition of the role women play in mitigating emissions, the 1.5 C degree global target will be that much more elusive. Failure to support women to adapt to climate change impacts or to cope with the effects of disasters may contribute to an increase in global gender inequalities (Dankelman 2010), including the global gender gap in agriculture.

Figure 1: Accessing climate information services in India. When women have access to information on adaptation and mitigation practices, they are just as likely as men to adopt them. Photo: P. Vishwanathan (CCAFS)

Women as agents of change

Women are active agents in developing responses and adapting to the impacts of climate change (Denton 2002; Dankelman 2010).

Figure 2: Testing bean varieties in Honduras. Photo: J.L.Urrea (CCAFS)

We know that engaging women in technology design and management decisions improves community outcomes and is a central component of gender justice (Edmunds et al. 2013), while their local knowledge is a resource for adaptation and mitigation along with recovery (UN 2015; Dankelman 2010). For example, in Honduras, women have re-designed eco-stoves and developed improved agroforestry management systems (Hottle 2015).

Threats to food security posed by climate change require a transition to sustainable and equitable food systems. This will involve shifts in diets and nutrition, food trade and access, agricultural production areas, and cultures of consumption and waste. Transformative change in all these areas will be dependent on women's active participation, access to assets, and participation in decision making.

Gender parity and inclusion in national and global climate frameworks

Climate change policy and negotiations have become more gender-inclusive over the years, but there is still a way to go. Climate change policies have to better take into account gender differences, roles and capacities, particularly in relation to agriculture, and women's participation in climate change-related decision-making processes at national and global levels is low (Acosta et al. 2015; Thuy et al. 2015; Gumucio and Tafur-Rueda 2015).

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) first addressed gender equality in 2001, when Parties agreed on the first text of gender equality and promotion of women's participation in decision-making in the Convention (Decision 36/CP.7). In 2009, the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) was established as one of the nine stakeholder groups of the UNFCCC, made up of 15 women's and environmental civil society organizations and networks.

More recently, at COP20 in 2014, UNFCC launched the 'Lima Work Programme on Gender' to improve gender balance and sensitivity in all activities under the Convention. It also aims to train and raise awareness of gender-responsive climate policy among party delegates. The two-year work programme also includes: a review of all gender-related mandates; training and capacity building for women delegates; two in-session workshops on gender in mitigation, technology, adaptation and capacity building (in May of 2015 and 2016); guidelines for implementing gender in climate change activities; and a senior focal point on gender at the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Women's representation is slowly improving, but we are still far from gender parity. In 2015, participation in UNFCCC bodies varied from a high of 40% on the Joint Implementation Supervisory Committee and the Compliance Committee facilitative branch, to a low of 6% on the Advisory Board of the Climate Technology Centre and Network. A third of Heads of Party delegations to governing body sessions were women.

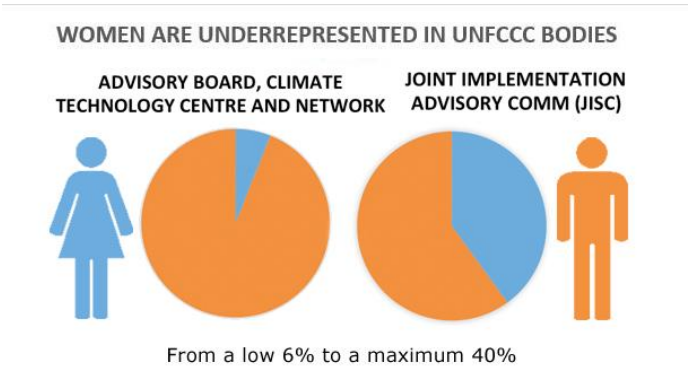

Figure 3: Far from gender parity in climate institutions

If we look at climate change policies, gender is not well integrated. On the positive side, we note that more than 50 decisions of the UNFCCC support the recognition and integration of gender considerations (IUCN 2015). The Paris Agreement signed in December 2015 calls for a

"gender-responsive" and participatory approach for any adaptation and capacity-building actions.

However, an analysis of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted by 160 Parties indicates that attention to gender and other social issues is less than might be expected, particularly given the impact that climate change is likely to have on vulnerable people and communities (IPCC 2014). Gender receives attention from about 40% of Parties (57 Parties), none of whom are industrialized countries. Submissions from about half (82 Parties) include references to social issues (e.g. poverty, inequality, human well-being, marginalization). Of these, poverty is the category of social issues receiving the most attention (70 Parties). However, social inequality, inclusion and human rights concerns are recognized by fewer Parties (37 Parties), as are the needs of vulnerable and marginalized communities (25 Parties). Only 27 Parties make reference to indigenous knowledge, practices or peoples.

Gender references are confined mostly to impacts of climate change on women and women as "vulnerable populations", with less emphasis on supporting women to actively address and participate in adaptation and mitigation actions. References to gender in areas where women play a substantial role – water, agriculture, environmental and natural resource management, energy, and health – are extremely low. Despite the high recognition of the importance of agriculture by almost all Parties (131), only 10 mention the role of women in agriculture and food security, with very few references also made to women and gender in relation to water (4), energy (6), and health (6).

Many INDCs identify gender as a cross-cutting policy priority or commit to mainstreaming gender into all climate change actions, strategies and policies, without referring to specific strategies or actions. Only 20 Parties make references to the integration of gender into national climate change policy and strategy. Three countries make reference to Gender and Climate Change Action Plans: Jordan, Liberia, and Peru.[1]

Conclusions and implications

The paucity of substantive references and commitments in the Paris Agreement and the INDCs to gender equality and women reflects the limited approach of the UNFCCC itself. While the use of the term "gender-responsive" in the Paris Agreement is a big step forward, the Agreement fails to move beyond an attitude of women as victims of climate change in need of capacity building support to strengthen their resilience. It doesn't recognize their capabilities for mitigation or for developing solutions to climate change. Climate policy processes should go beyond numerical representation of women to create active mechanisms to express opinions, take initiatives, and influence decisions (Huyer et al. 2015). A further concern is the lack of clarity on how decisions and mandates can be monitored and evaluated to bring real changes in gender and social inclusion.

Gender advocates are calling for the achievement of a "just and gender-responsive climate agreement" (WGC 2015). The WGC emphasizes integrating gender equality into climate change adaptation, mitigation and energy; addressing gender equality, human rights, and vulnerability; and ensuring "full, inclusive and gender-equitable public participation in decision-making". It also calls for sex and gender disaggregated data and analysis to be mainstreamed into all information, communication and reporting systems (WGC 2015).

Stronger steps need to be taken to integrate gender equality, human rights, and recognition of women's active role in addressing the stresses of climate change, particularly in relation to managing their impacts on environment and agriculture, in line with other relevant global policies such as Rio+20, the Beijing Platform for Action (for gender equality and women's empowerment), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Defining a gender component as a qualifying criterion to access international funding channels, such as REDD+, Green Climate Fund, Clean Development Mechanism, Global Environment Facility, Adaptation Fund, and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), and in national processes, such as the NEPAD Development Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (NEPAD-CAADP), will speed up the gender equality agenda.

Upcoming opportunities to monitor progress towards better gender inclusion include the June 2016 workshop of the Lima Work Programme on Gender; and country submissions to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice in May (SBSTA 44) on socioeconomic, environmental and gender aspects of their adaptation measures.

[1] Gender and Climate Action Plans been developed in Tanzania, Bangladesh, Nepal, Haiti, Liberia and Egypt (IUCN).

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