

Chapter 22

Towards a More Gender– Inclusive Climate Change Policy

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is a reality, and poses a serious long term threat to society and to the environment. Much has been written on the negative effects of climate change across the globe focusing on the greater vulnerability of least developed countries and developing countries. Numerous studies back up the argument that “countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change tend to be poorer with a wider gender gap. In contrast, countries that rank high in environmental performance and gender equality, are among the richest nations of the world” (Samy, 2011, p. 100). Women are often denied of their basic rights due to discriminatory social practices and gender blind policies. Impacts of climate change affect life and livelihood of women, and diverse work responsibilities of women augment their exposure to climate hazards. Due to less access or rights to financial and productive resources, information and services that may help them cope with impacts of stresses and shocks, are not present as a result of the gaps in policies, development agendas, thus leaving women in a greater vulnerable condition. Primarily, these are the reasons slowing the progress on achieving overall gender equality. The objective of this paper is to look at the Post 2015 Arrangements. These are numerous international frameworks and agreements ie SFDRR, SDG and the Paris Agreement, that will determine sustainable development for humanitarian response and climate politics as well as policies for the next fifteen years. They focus on development from a climate change and gender equality point of view, in particular how the policies are enabling ‘gender equality’, taking common but differentiated responsibilities, and equity, justice and fairness as principles.

INTRODUCTION

When we think of climate the tendency is to think of weather. Climate is usually defined as the “average weather” in a place. It includes patterns of temperature, precipitation (rain or snow), humidity, wind and seasons. Climate patterns play a fundamental role in shaping natural ecosystems, and the human economies and cultures that depend on them. Rising levels of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping

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gases have warmed the earth and are already causing wide-ranging impacts, from rising sea levels, to melting snow and ice, to more drought and extreme rainfall. Scientists project that these trends will continue and in some cases accelerate, posing significant risks to human health, our forests, agriculture, freshwater supplies, coastlines, and other natural resources. Nation state and societies around the globe need to reduce human-caused greenhouse gas emissions to avoid worsening climate impacts and reduce the risk of creating changes beyond our ability to respond and adapt.

Climate change is a reality, and poses a serious long term threat to society and to the environment. Much has been written on the negative effects of climate change across the globe focusing on the greater vulnerability of least developed countries and developing countries. Numerous studies back up the argument that “countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change tend to be poorer with a wider gender gap. In contrast, countries that rank high in environmental performance and gender equality, are among the richest nations of the world” (Samy, 2011, p. 100).

Gender equality is a basic human right for all women and men, and it refers to equality between the two sexes. “Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys...Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity among different groups of women and men.”

Women’s vulnerability often linked with unequal power relations in societies, which pervades all aspects of their lives and denies their basic rights, from access to education to participation in community governance ((Turnbull, Sterret, & Hilleboe, 2012). Women in general are found more vulnerable than men to climate change especially in time of disasters due to their socially constructed roles and responsibilities in addition to lack of adequate power and assets (Neelormi & Uddin, 2012). The 1991 Cyclone the death toll (Bern et al., 1993) was 138,000 where an astonishing 90 percent of the deaths were that of women (Global Humanitarian Forum Geneva, 2009). Gender inequality is one of the major factors contributing to the increased vulnerability of women and girls in disaster situations where women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during a disaster (United Nations, 2009). Since the change in climate will increase the frequency and intensity of hydro-metrological shock and hazards¹, analysis suggests that women’s vulnerability will, therefore, be increased.

The objective of this paper is to look at the Post 2015 Arrangements. These are numerous international frameworks and agreements, i.e., SFDRR, SDG and the Paris Agreement, that will determine sustainable development for humanitarian response and climate politics as well as policies for the next fifteen years. They focus on development from a climate change and gender equality point of view, in particular how the policies are enabling ‘gender equality’, taking common but differentiated responsibilities, and equity, justice and fairness as principles.

Women are often denied of their basic rights due to discriminatory social practices and gender blind policies. Impacts of climate change affect life and livelihood of women, and diverse work responsibilities of women augment their exposure to climate hazards. Due to less access or rights to financial and productive resources, information and services that may help them cope with impacts of stresses and shocks, are not present as a result of the gaps in policies, development agendas, thus leaving women in a greater vulnerable condition. Primarily, these are the reasons slowing the progress on achieving overall gender equality. Adding climate change to the scenario makes it even more difficult as the women living in poverty are taking on extra burden every day. In order to address the problem, over the last 15 years (MDGs in 2000), progress has been made at policy level as well as on implementation level. However, many have seen the progress yet to be gender sensitive as women’s role remains limited to participation level only.

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