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Financing for Climate Change: Women and the Poor

The fact that Africa contributes an estimated 3% or less to GHG but is among the most affected by climate change means that Africa has a unique chance to avoid poisoning the environment by adopting cleaner production as far as possible.

The threat of climate change to Africa is not in doubt. What is usually not highlighted is that although both men and women will be affected, there are ways in which the poor, the majority of whom are women may bear a disproportionate share of the problems. Women are more vulnerable to climate change because they depend on threatened natural resources for their livelihoods. Therefore, financing to deal with climate change in Africa (that is comprehensive development strategies, programmes as well as community projects) has to be approached both at the level of countries and regions and at the level of segments of the population and their special needs and circumstances. The impacts of climate change will be distributed across practically all sectors of economic and social development, and thus will affect the attainment of Millennium Development Goals. This calls for coordinated national planning and UN systematic intervention.

It will be recalled that among the greatest manifestations of climate change is extreme weather events (droughts and floods), both of which have immediate impacts on especially poor rural communities, still a sizeable part of Africa's people. For the same reason, shifting agro-ecological zones or ecosystems as a result of climate change clearly will affect rural communities more immediately but whole countries will suffer food insecurity in some cases and loss of biological and genetic resources. These changes will also have impacts on disease vector patterns (malaria etc.) thus also becoming a health problem. They will affect both men and women, according to their sources of livelihood and capacity to cope.

The financing for climate change thus has to be sensitive to the differential impacts that the phenomenon will have on *physical security, food security, health, energy, and water supply and sanitation*. Women in their various capacities as mothers (who have to feed children and care for their health and

nutrition) become a frontline community as far as needs are concerned. The poor and underprivileged among both men and women, who tend to be most dependent on primary products and natural resources, must be enabled in sustainable management of these resources in a changing climate. The urban poor share many of the problems of the rural poor. The nature of the threats itself suggests the areas that need attention:

- Disaster preparedness for women; they are usually the face of destitution in floods and the struggles of communities to find food and shelter.
- Food security; drought resistant crops and management of water for agriculture for women's needs (not just for "commercial" farmers who tend to be men).
- Energy efficiency and access to renewable energy technologies (RETS) to save women from hunting for depleting energy (fuel wood) resources in rural and peri-urban areas, and even "power cuts" which are beginning to affect even urban women in many regions.
- Water programmes designed with women in mind, allowing for their stake in allocation and use of the resource. Women who go long distances for water may have to go even further in areas where the resource will decline, and suffer more where the resource will be excessive and unprotected. Cost effective programmes like rainwater harvesting close to homesteads should be looked at more seriously as a complement to river basin and groundwater resources management.
- Health impacts of climate change need more attention, to be combined with primary health programmes where mother and child needs have to be directly programmed.

My neighbour Bongi came to my house the other day. Bongi is on ARVs and she had not taken them for two days because she had nothing to eat. We shared what we had and that was it until we had fuel to travel some 60 kilometres to a relative who had some maize. Meantime, Bongi's mother had planted some maize seed picked from a hybrid crop, from a season earlier. The maize seemed to be doing well but then came torrential and nonstop rains. Some of this crop was washed away. The little that survived drowned and turned yellow. Bongi's mother tried to make bunds to drain the water to no avail. Advice was that she uses top dresser, an input that was not only unavailable but even if it was, she could not afford it. If it was available, it would have been some 25 kilometres away. She would need at least 4 million dollars for transport alone from her new salary of 15 million dollars living her with only 11 million dollars, just enough for a 15kg bucket of maize (if available). The family

needs at least 45kg of maize per month. Bongi and her family experience first hand, the effects/impacts of extreme weather events brought about by climate change exacerbated by poverty and her gender.

Access to information to make meaningful choices lacking; poor communication; no radios or batteries, sore eyes and coughs are some of the challenges that women face. Women can be empowered through information availability, income generating activities, coping strategies (food, water, alternative livelihoods) and employment creation.

How do the poor especially women change to low carbon, how can they finance this?

Opportunities

Use of pro-poor strategies that are comparatively inexpensive, are user friendly and amenable to exploitation by women.

Ownership and control of natural resources/ participation in decision making

Information, knowledge and skills

Disaster preparedness. Mozambique?

Access to climate mitigation and adaptation funds, usually at government level rarely trickle down to the poor especially the rural poor.

Funds available for climate change

- Least Developed Country Fund for financing the development of National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPAs). Not yet beneficial to women.
- Special Climate Change Fund: Priority I adaptation in developing countries. Has no gender perspective.
- Adaptation Fund, financed by emissions trading.

How can women and the poor advocate and lobby for what they do not know and even if they do know when they do not know it is their right to demand/lobby access to those funds etc.

The poor are those in whose name so much is done but for whom nothing is done

Needs

- Need for respect for all human and people's rights. The instruments are there but are not enforced (CEDAW, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Solemn Declaration on Gender and even the Campaign Gender is my Agenda. [WWW.genderismy agenda.com](http://WWW.genderismyagenda.com))
- Pro-poor and pro women strategies should not be as mere tokenism but as lasting and sustainable solutions with long term impacts.
- Need for skills and alternative livelihoods.
- Need for action and gender sensitive research for appropriate solutions.

Policy

Policy formulation does not always take into account the felt needs of the women and the poor. Often devised elsewhere.

Although women work land, produce food, manage water and fuel wood, they do not own or control these resources, they need to be empowered to govern these resources including finances for climate change.

Whenever we think of the impacts of climate change,

- We must think poor communities.
- We must think women
- we must think poor women in particular,
- we must think poor rural African women because for them, whatever the impacts of climate change are on them are multiplied several times and they live these impacts everyday of their lives not only in Bali, Kyoto or Monaco

As Civil Society working hand in hand with governments to ensure sustainable development, trust us to ensure that the policies you develop are implemented and monitored.