

GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

AN OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

August 2018

Background

With both its catastrophic and slow-onset impacts, climate change has become a defining challenge of the 21st century. As generally understood it is, however, not a scientific and technocratic issue alone. Climate change has socio-economic implications. Both bio-physical (climatic) and socio-economic (non-climatic) factors determine climate risk and vulnerability. The non-climatic factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, income, among others play an important role in determining one's risk and vulnerability to the impact of climate change. The potential risk and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change fall differently on the people and communities because of their different roles and status, which is known as differential risk and vulnerability. Therefore, these social relations and differentiations are fundamental in understanding vulnerability.ⁱ

The socio-economic factors as mentioned above shape the differential vulnerability. Because women constitute the majority of the poor with lack of resources to equip themselves to address the impacts of climate change, they face more disproportionate impacts of climate change than men. This shows that the impacts of climate change are not gender neutralⁱⁱ and are experienced differently by men and women because of different social roles, determined by cultural norms, the gendered division of labor, historically rooted practices, power structures and persistent inequalitiesⁱⁱⁱ suggesting that the impacts are more detrimental to women than men^{iv}. This demands recognition of gender specific risk and vulnerabilities.

Natural resource base is climate sensitive. People dependent on these resource bases are sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Rural women, particularly in developing world, are highly dependent on natural resource base and they are also the majority of the poor and resource deprived population in the world. Women's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, therefore, is two-fold: their dependence on natural resources and their lack of access to and control over resources such as financial, land, education, information etc^v. As financial resource base, skills, knowledge

and information are pre-conditions for men and women to address impacts of climate change, lack, limits their capacity to adapt to the impacts. As women poverty is highly backed by their lack of education and information required to address the impacts of climate change, women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, the three major types of factors within socio-economic attributes- demographic (gender, caste); income (poverty); decision-making, and access to and control over resources- affect the overall capacity to respond to risks and vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change.

The Government of Nepal has identified gender equality as an important pillar of development. It is recognized both as a goal and a pre-condition to achieve inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-a set of globally agreed goals and targets- has identified gender equality as a goal on its own right^{vi} and also as a pre-condition to achieve other goals. Meanwhile, the Government of Nepal has envisioned and prioritized climate change as a matter of public policy and it^{vii} is also one of the goals of SDGs that Nepal has agreed to^{viii}. Hence, both gender equality outcomes and climate resilience are the government's public policy goals.

Against this backdrop, this paper sheds light on the gender and climate change nexus, gender mainstreaming as a tool to address gender inequality, gender and climate change policy landscape both at international and national level, gaps and way forward. The paper is also expected

The impacts of climate change are not 'gender neutral' and are experienced differently by men and women



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to initiate a discourse on gender-responsive climate financing to tackle dual problem of gender inequality and climate change impacts.

Climate Change and Gender Nexus

Mostly, rural population in Nepal is dependent on natural resources such as land, forest and water. Because of male outmigration women are by default the stewards of natural resources. Majority of women workforce engage in agriculture^{ix} and more than 70% of the poor people living under the poverty line are women. Moreover, the socio-economic discrimination based on gender limits women's capacity to exercise their rights and abilities to utilize the resources on their own right^x. Their lack of access to and control over resources such as land, forest, education, information and their limited participation in decision-making process double victimize women. Despite their higher engagement in agriculture, the social structure stipulates that women are the last ones to eat in the family impacting on women's health and nutritional requirement in case of food shortages^{xi}. Research shows that women and children are likely to be hit fourteen times harder during disaster events^{xii}.

Climate change affects and impacts women more disproportionately and it also reinforces and escalates the existing gender inequality. This causal relationship creates a vicious circle-in which gender inequality becomes both cause and consequence of disproportionate impacts of climate change. This can be further illustrated by the engagement of women in agriculture. The already existing socio-economic roles require women to spend more time than their male counterparts in agriculture (more so given the outmigration of male members), climate change generates more stresses on the agriculture sector in the forms of changing rainy pattern drought, flood, increased coverage of invasive plant species, pest infestation etc. that increase women's drudgery. Furthermore, women have poor access even to resources and information available in agriculture offices in their areas, which would help them, for example, to address additional stresses in agriculture. When it comes to making decisions in the family, it is considered a male domain; women are hardly allowed a say or influence even in decisions that affect them directly. This ultimately results in exacerbation of women's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change in terms of increased workload, additional stresses on the agriculture that affects them directly, lack of access to required resources and information to address them, and denial of a say in decision-making.

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When it comes to discussion on gender and climate change, a plethora of literature demonstrate, predominantly, women as vulnerable subjects^{xiii} to the impacts of climate change and also as agents of change^{xiv}. However, women's effective and meaningful engagement in decision-making positions either to change their fate from vulnerable to resilient people and rewarding on being 'agents of change' are missing^{xv}. It is important to depart from the 'victimization' concept in the context of gender and climate change where many studies focus on the right based agency approaches to these discourses^{xvi}.

Devising climate change adaptation measures is to increase resilience of people and the system by reducing their risk and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Gender is a defining factor in determining the risk and vulnerability of people and community. Recognition of the linkage between gender and climate change would allow devising gender responsive policies and actions that help bring both equitable and effective outcomes. If gender specific vulnerabilities and actions are not taken into consideration while devising response measures, the response would be ineffective and outcomes undesirable.

What is Gender Mainstreaming?

Impacts of climate change have gendered implications with disproportionate impacts on women. However, it is important that women should be in the frontline of adaptation and resilience building measures. Both the 'disproportional vulnerability' and 'agents of change' role of women call for incorporation of voices of men and women in the climate change adaptation and resilience measures. Integration of voices of both men and women reflecting particularly the latter's specific needs, interest and concerns in climate relevant laws, policies, programmes and projects with budget factored in for addressing them is the key to gender mainstreaming in climate change. It is a policy tool to address gender inequality, which, in the context of climate change, is fundamental in achieving twin goals of climate resilience and gender justice. Gender mainstreaming in climate change regime therefore implies that it is a win-win approach that can bring policies and actions in synergies, for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming, therefore, is justified both in terms of equity and efficiency of climate adaptation programmes.

The government has initiated gender mainstreaming as a strategic tool to address gender inequality in different sectors in the country.

The Ministry of Finance has formally brought to practice gender responsive budget code since fiscal year 2007/2008. It is aimed at integrating gender perspective into policy making and budgeting, and ensuring gender equality in decision making about public resources and allocation of government budget. Similar efforts are under way in the international arena to mainstream gender in climate change context. For example, gender considerations in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) mandates and decisions, and gender mainstreaming in the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Gender and Climate Change in Global Policy Context

When gender mainstreaming in climate change policy and actions was nowhere around the corner, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action BDPFA (1995) was the first international declaration to recognize the links between gender equality and climate change by identifying Women and the Environment as one of the twelve critical areas of concern^{vii}. It was well placed to help bridge this gap so as to address gender equality in the climate change and different policy endeavors for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in climate responses at global level. It has set out three strategic action points.¹ Nepal has since promoted gender equality as well as meaningful participation of women in all sectors by creating equitable opportunities and compensating for women's social disadvantages through specific gender mainstreaming strategic and action plans. In line with the BDPFA strategic action points, Nepal's then Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE) endorsed National Indoor Air Quality Standard and Implementation Guideline, which emphasizes gender friendly environment in the household (improved cooking stoves, using energy for lighting purposes, setting adequate ventilation systems, selecting and using fuels, improving personal behaviors inside the house). The Ministry also adopted Climate Change Policy 2011 and is currently drafting 'Climate Change and Gender Strategy and Action Plan'. Similarly, the Ministry of Agriculture developed long term 'Agriculture Development Strategy' whereby gender mainstreaming has been considered as one of the key strategies^{viii}.

Gender Equality Issues in UNFCCC

Gender considerations within the UNFCCC negotiations and decisions have increased over time. The UNFCCC first addressed "Gender Equality" in 2001 aiming to increase women's participation in the negotiations. A 2005-study^{xix} indicated that countries with higher proportions of women in their national legislative bodies are more likely to approve environmental agreements. In the 2014-COP20, UNFCCC launched the 'Lima Work Programme on Gender' to support implementation of gender -responsive climate policies and mandate across all areas of the negotiation.

The Paris Agreement adopted at COP21 in 2015 was an important milestone in the direction of considering gender inclusion within the UNFCCC. The Paris Agreement also calls for gender- responsive and participatory approach to adaptation and capacity building actions. In compliance with the Paris Agreement, countries submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). According to a 2016 report,^{xx} as of April 2016, 161 countries submitted INDCs to UNFCCC secretariat. Out of the 161 INDCs, only 65 countries included reference to women or gender equality. As a 2016 research^{xxi} found women and gender equality mentioned only in relation to adaptation (27 countries), mitigation (12 countries), implementation of global commitments (9 countries), and capacity building (5 countries) gender as a cross-cutting issue (22 countries). It shows that many INDCs refer gender as a cross- cutting issue in all climate change actions, policies and strategies. Only Liberia and Peru have developed their INDCs addressing the intersection of climate change and gender. Nepal's INDCs describe women as "vulnerable group" and refer gender as a cross-cutting theme in the country's climate change strategies and policy.

The first ever UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted at COP23 in 2017. It recognizes the need for gender responsive climate change policy, adaptation and mitigation activities, climate finance, capacity building, and technology development and transfer at the regional, national and local levels. However, out of the thematic areas of UNFCCC (adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology and capacity building), most of the gender related decisions are on adaptation and capacity-building. A very little

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¹ Three strategic action points are: K1- involve women actively in environmental decision making at all levels, K2- Integrate gender concerns and perspective in policies and programmes for sustainable development and K3- Strengthen or establish mechanisms at national, regional and international level to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

mention of gender has been made in the areas of mitigation, finance and technology. There is no guiding mandate for gender-sensitive mitigation either. Therefore, a deduction can be made that gender finds a 'mention only' when it comes to impacts of climate change on women purportedly categorizing women as mere 'vulnerable group'; women's agency role is yet to be recognized.

policy has committed to contributing to gender equality and low emission and climate resilient development pathways. Additionally, it helps to ensure that GCF interventions and financing equally benefit women and men during any adaptation and mitigation activities. The Gender Policy is supported by a three-year Gender Action

Year	Gender equality milestone in the UNFCCC
2001 COP7	The first stand- alone decision on enhancing gender balance and women's participation. It integrates gender equality as a guiding principle for National Adaptation Programmes of Action.
2010 COP16	The Cancun Agreement under which decision on adaptation, REDD+ and capacity building includes references to gender, and the Shared Vision outlines gender equality as equally important in all aspects of climate action.
2011 COP17	This COP adopted decisions on finance and technology including gender considerations namely in relation to the GCF and the CTCN.
2012 COP18	A second stand- alone decision on enhancing gender balance and making gender a standing agenda item of the COP.
2013 COP19	The Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) including a mandate for collection of gender- disaggregated data.
2014 COP20	Two-year "Lima Work Programme on Gender" to further enhance gender balance and provide knowledge and capacity building on gender- responsive climate policy.
2015 COP21	The Paris Agreement concluded including gender equality in its preamble as well as references in adaptation and capacity building.
2016 COP22	Three-year extension of the Lima Work Programme on Gender.
2017 COP23	Two-year Gender Action Plan (GAP).

Source: Burn.B(2017). *Pocket Guide to Gender Equality Under The UNFCC.ecbi.*

Gender and Green Climate Fund

Green Climate Fund is the pioneering international financial instrument that has taken some steps towards mainstreaming gender into its operations as an essential element of its decisions on funding proposals. The promotion of gender equality in GCF is to mandate gender balance for its staff and Board. For example, gender balance has improved from 79:21 (male to female ratio) at the twelfth meeting of the Board to 57:43 by the sixteenth meeting of the Board^{xxii}. It has developed a manual on gender and climate finance in collaboration with UN WOMEN.

GCF's gender-responsive approach is captured in the GCF interim Gender Policy and Action Plan which was adopted in March 2015. By adopting gender responsive approach, the GCF gender

Plan (2015-2017) in which targeted actions are proposed to put the gender policy's six principles into practice in GCF operations. The policy is being reviewed and a new Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and Action Plan has been drafted. The objectives of new gender policy are: i) advance gender equality and women's empowerment through climate change mitigation and /or adaptation actions, ii) minimize gender related risks and safeguard women's rights in all climate change action^{xxiii}.

Although, the GCF has made it mandatory to integrate gender into the design, implementation and monitoring of climate projects or programmes, there are still challenges in its implementation in practice. A study in 2017 found that despite clear mandate for addressing gender equality in climate policy and action, gender considerations tend to be sidelined or watered down at national programme levels^{xxiv}.

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GCF's six gender policy principles
a. Commitment to gender equality and equity
b. Inclusiveness in terms of applicability to all the Fund's activities
c. Accountability for gender and climate change results and impacts
d. Country ownership in terms of alignment with national policies and priorities, and inclusive stakeholder participation
e. Competencies throughout the Fund's institutional framework
f. Equitable resource allocation so that women and men benefit equitably from the Fund's adaptation and mitigation activities

Source: <https://www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/mainstreaming-gender/gender-action-in-practice>

Gender and Climate Change in National Context

Nepal is currently in the process of implementing its new federal constitution that has devolved the authority to make necessary laws and policies to provincial and local governments. This provides all the three layers of government an opportunity to work in such a manner as to align the ambitions with the globally agreed goals, targets and commitments as outlined in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Paris Agreement. The Constitution of Nepal guarantees gender equality and justice from right based perspective^{xxv}. The Government of Nepal has, accordingly, recognized gender equality and women's empowerment as a most important inclusive development imperative. This is evidenced by such initiatives as integration of gender considerations in the country's periodic and sectoral plans, implementation of gender responsive budget code and designation of gender focal points at all sectoral ministries. Despite these positive macro indicators, gender inequality, however, persists as the country's socio-economic and human rights challenge. Meanwhile, it is highly imperative that the provincial and local governments, now mandated with law and policy making independently, also ensure gender considerations in the laws and policies they formulate and their effective implementation in such a manner as to contribute to the country's global commitments including those related to climate change.

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laws, policies and mechanisms related to climate change, address the gaps and encourage and support provincial and local governments to prioritize climate change with strong gender considerations in their law and policy making process. This is also an opportunity for the government to attune its national gender specific objectives to climate change specific objectives and design harmonized actions so as to address these twin challenges. As gender and climate change mainstreaming is a process-oriented governance issue it requires continuous and sustained engagement to bring the expected results.

Nepal devised National Climate Change Policy in 2011. The policy clearly depicts Nepal as one of the countries most disproportionately vulnerable to climate change. The policy has prioritized participation of women in implementation of climate adaptation and climate related programme^{xxvi}. Although, the policy is silent on gender specific climate vulnerabilities and needs, it recognizes the importance of women's engagement in implementation of climate adaptation programmes^{xxvii}. This implies that the policy has recognized women as 'vulnerable group' thereby reinforcing the victimization concept which negates women's agency role.

National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)^{xxviii} and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) have identified 'gender' as the cross-cutting theme. NAPA^{xxix} has recognized the gender differentiated impacts of climate change and taken account of gender-related issues in developing priority projects on adaptation. Similarly, with the realization of the weakness of the existing vulnerability assessment framework in adequately recognizing the nuances of gender differentiated vulnerabilities, NAPs has developed a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Framework with separate set of gender and diversity indicators. This has provided a strong foundation for designing gender responsive adaptation programmes and projects.

Meanwhile, the Government of Nepal is formulating a Climate Change and Gender Strategy and Action Plan. Once brought to practice, this strategy is expected to further support gender mainstreaming in climate change policy programming and, thereby, development of gender-responsive climate change programmes. The government is yet to make public the strategy.

The existing policies and plans on climate change

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have incorporated gender considerations as a key element in climate change programming. The projects and programmes have considered gender-differentiated needs and designed activities accordingly. This has proven effective in addressing gender specific needs to some extent. However, what is missing is women's meaningful participation in these programmes and projects design processes. Proactive effort from women's organizations for influencing climate change policy and programming processes is also quite rare. For a gender-responsive climate change programming to materialize it is essential that women's groups and organizations participate in such processes including budget preparation process and monitoring without limiting them only to implementation. A case of Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP) below further illustrates this problem.

Guided by the constitutionally guaranteed right-based approach, proportional representation of men and women in the governance structure, and efforts to ensure accountable public expenditure and improved gender equality is progressing moderately.² The systemic socio-economic exclusion of women further escalating their vulnerabilities still remains a persistent problem. Mere recognition of rights and entitlements in the law without substantive and meaningful participation of women in all spheres and adequate resources to address their specific challenges and vulnerabilities would not help much in achieving the expected gender equality goals.

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GENDER DIMENSION: NEPAL CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Gender and Climate Change Mainstreaming- some insight into implementation of Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP) 2013-2017

Working through government structure and system, NCCSP aims at supporting mainstreaming climate change adaptation at the local level by developing and implementing Local Level Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPAs). NCCSP is working in 14 highly climate vulnerable districts identified by NAPA.

A review of the project design and progress reports shows that gender has been an important dimension of NCCSP. Gender considerations are ensured in its rationale, objectives, program output, implementation strategies and target groups. It has also provisioned gender parity in institutional setting, sex disaggregated data generation, and gender specific outcome monitoring and evaluation. What it seems to be missing out are gender specific vulnerability analysis, gender analysis, gender auditing, gender specific budget lines, gender specific M&E obligations and outcome criteria. Vulnerability analysis and women-specific programs may be considered during implementation but this would be on an ad-hoc basis unless they are part of the project design.

Gender parity in institutional setup: The project has provisioned 17% women's representation in District Energy Environment and Climate Change Coordination Committee (DEECCC) (position based) and 48% in Village Energy Environment Climate Change Coordination Committee (VEECCC)

Target in beneficiary level: The project has envisioned at least 50% women in its target groups and it increased to 51% in 2017. It aims to ensure 17% women's representation in decision making bodies in DEECCC, 38% in V/MEECCC and 34% in executive positions in user committees.

Capacity building- The project provided GESI training to DEECCC and VEECCC members focusing on disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and ways to mainstream GESI perspectives in adaptation planning. A total of 4,946 D/E/MEECCC members (43% female) received training in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and using GESI tools and approaches at all levels.

Target programs: Women specific programmes under the project focus on reducing workload of women, and ensuring their access to clean water, energy, new agriculture technologies, etc.

Achievements from programs: Some of the achievements include improved access of women to clean water and sanitation, clean energy, improved livelihood with new agriculture technologies and other non-traditional livelihood practices such as Improved Water Mill (IWM). In addition, Improved Cooking Stove (ICS) has improved women's health.

Funded by: DFID, EU; Project Period: 2013-2017; TA: UNDP

Implementing Agency: Ministry in collaboration with Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) and its local level structures, and Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPIC).

Policy linkage: NAPA, LAPA, Climate Change Policy, Periodic Plan

Source: NCCSP (2017). Annual Progress Report. Available at: http://www.np.undp.org/content/dam/nepal/docs/2018_undpnepal/UNDP_NP-NCCSP-APR-2017.pdf

²The Human Development Index and Gender Empowerment Index shows that Nepal in the 145th position among 188 countries and 121st position among 136 countries respectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender is drawing increased attention in international climate change negotiations. With the adoption of GAP, the countries have affirmed their commitment to strengthening gender in the UNFCCC negotiation processes. International climate finance instruments such as GCF policy on gender have provided much needed impetus to addressing gender specific vulnerabilities through gender-responsive climate change programmes and projects. Now, it is high time that countries initiated addressing gender specific issues through national and sub-national legal, institutional and financial mechanisms related to climate change. Nepal has already taken a step ahead in this direction with National Climate Change Policy, NAPA and NAPs prioritizing gender as a cross cutting theme, mainly in adaptation.

Gender mainstreaming is an important tool to ensure gender-responsive climate change programming. Several programme and projects have adopted gender mainstreaming while formulating climate change programmes and projects. However, present practices have no room for meaningful engagement of women and their originations in design processes of the programmes and projects, hence women are considered ‘vulnerable group’; they may be consulted but are denied a stake in the project’s decisions. Therefore, in order to realize the gender equality goals envisioned by the government and address gender specific climate vulnerabilities, it is crucial to mainstream gender in climate change related laws, plans, policies, programmes as well as in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Climate finance provides a unique opportunity for developing countries like Nepal to resolve long-standing problems of gender inequality and address climate change impacts. By ensuring gender considerations in climate change programmes and projects, problems of gender inequality and discrimination can be addressed implicitly or explicitly. Gender-responsive climate change programming is the key to achieving this dual objective of addressing gender inequality and climate impacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Nepal needs to contextualize and roll out UNFCCC’s Gender Action Plan championing the gender considerations in climate change policy and actions. Development and implementation of gender strategy would be a crucial step in this direction.
- The Government of Nepal needs to finalize the gender strategy on climate change that is currently being drafted through wider consultations with environmental organizations, women’s rights organizations and other civil society organizations. The strategy should provision engagement of women and their organizations not only in adaptation, but in all major themes of climate change i.e. adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology and capacity building in order to dispel the notion that women are mere “vulnerable group”.
- The donor agencies and the Government of Nepal should make it mandatory to mainstream gender in climate change proposals, their projects and programmes implementation, and also in monitoring and reporting. In order to effectively translate these desirable outcomes into reality the government should focus on making climate finance more gender responsive.
- National and international civil society organizations must support to strengthen women’s and their organizations’ capacity to engage in policy discourses related to climate change and climate finance.

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