



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

FACT SHEET

Climate Change and Gender

Climate change impacts men and women differently due to differences in their traditional roles, societal expectations, and livelihoods. Women, who make up the majority of the developing world's 1.4 billion poor, generally have lower incomes, less access to credit and decision making authority, and limited control over resources, increasing their vulnerability to many climate impacts. The different societal roles and responsibilities of men and women also present different opportunities for incorporating clean energy alternatives into their lives. It is crucial to understand these distinctions in order to successfully integrate climate change into development efforts.

Climate change projects are more effective when gender is considered. For example, working on disaster risk reduction in South Africa, development experts found that men had greater access to radios, whereas women were more likely to hear forecasts and early warnings if they were delivered through extension workers. Women also have important skills, influence, and knowledge in areas like natural resources management and farming that can be used to improve project design and implementation.

Climate change impacts women in many sectors

- Women produce a significant portion of the food in developing countries. More frequent and severe drought, flooding, and pest damage due to climate change is expected to reduce crop yields, which could result in less income and food for the household.
- In many societies women have the primary responsibility for collecting water and firewood. As climate change exacerbates resource scarcity, women and girls may have to travel farther to collect water and firewood, increasing threats to their safety, decreasing productivity in other areas, like farming, and reducing time available for schooling and child care.
- Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. During and after natural disasters, a woman's role as family caregiver is intensified, potentially leading to exhaustion and illness. Studies have also shown an increase in levels of domestic and sexual violence following disasters.
- Women are already more vulnerable to undernutrition and have less access to medical services than men; climate change can exacerbate this situation. Changing temperatures alter vectors for diseases like malaria, higher sea-surface temperatures are correlated with cholera epidemics, and more frequent droughts and floods will worsen sanitation and hygiene.



[Celsias]

In Micronesia, women's ancestral knowledge of the islands' hydrology enabled them to identify good locations for new wells in times of drought.

Resources

Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change (GGCA)

www.waccglobal.org/images/stories/activities/climate_justice/training-manual-2009.pdf

Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change (UNDP)

www.wikiadapt.org/filestore/wikiADAPT/Resource_Guide_Gender_CC_UNDP.pdf

Climate Change Connections: Ensuring women contribute to and benefit from equitable climate solutions (WEDO, UNFPA)

www.wedo.org/category/act/climate-change-toolkit

USAID integrates gender and climate change

Both gender and climate change are cross-cutting issues and are incorporated into a broad range of USAID activities. For example, in Bangladesh and Mexico, USAID is promoting cleaner-burning fuel for household use, which helps to reduce air pollution and emissions, yields a 25% reduction in annual cooking costs, and improves women's health. In Peru, USAID is working with local partners to integrate gender in watershed management and adaptation to receding glaciers. In Ecuador, USAID is helping the government involve women in ecosystem services projects and community investment plans, mitigating climate change through forest conservation.

Interventions

The following are recommended approaches for integrating gender and climate change:

- Involve women in vulnerability assessments, to ensure that the evaluations do not focus solely on economic sectors dominated by men.
- Involve both men and women in the prioritization and design of climate change adaptation projects, and build on their indigenous knowledge.
- Reach men and women through industrial as well as household clean energy interventions.
- Make information, training, and technologies for climate change adaptation and mitigation accessible and relevant for all stakeholders.
- Take advantage of women's skills and knowledge – such as natural resources management and social networks – in community-based adaptation.
- Incorporate gender considerations into national climate change strategies and regulations.
- Ensure that the burdens and opportunities created by climate change adaptation work are equitable.

Incorporating gender considerations into climate change and disaster risk reduction projects can help ensure the projects' effectiveness and improve women's, and their families', resilience to climate change. By addressing gender, adaptation, and mitigation together, we can come up with approaches on the ground that have multiple development benefits.

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