



(Source: PACE SD EU GCCA Project)

Why Gender?

Climate change impacts will affect all countries, yet its impacts will be differentially distributed among different regions, generations, age classes, income groups and occupations. Crucially, climate change will not affect women and men in the same way.

In some communities in the Pacific Islands, men and women have specific roles that are defined by their gender. Men are often the builders (construction and maintenance), while women are responsible for securing the food and water for their family and livelihoods.

With declining food and water security (as a result of climate change impacts), the strain on women sharply increases. For instance, rising ocean temperatures and coral bleaching episodes could see a loss of key marine resources that are important resources for the sustenance of women's livelihoods – through consumption, fishing or tourism activities.

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

"Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

To put it another way:

"Male" and **"female"** are sex categories, while **"masculine"** and **"feminine"** are gender categories

Source: World Health Organisation

Here are some basic facts that reflect the situation for women globally:

- Women are the main producers of the world's staple crops
- Women struggle to cope with year-to-year variability of a variety of crops (such as maize, sorghum and millet)
- Women are more vulnerable to nutritional problems
- Women's workloads increase as they spend time caring for the sick, which is projected to increase with various human health impacts from climate change.
- More women and children die from natural disasters than men (a function of different economic and social rights)
- Key decision-making institutions (related to climate change) have a largely male-dominated hierarchical structure

As a result, all aspects of climate change – adaptation, mitigation, policy and decision making – must comprise a gender perspective.

Women Hold Significant Knowledge

Women are not just “helpless victims” of climate change – they hold significant knowledge and skills of successful adaptation and mitigation and hold community knowledge. The leadership of women is critical to manage the impacts of climate change and increase resilience.

Women can provide different and fresh perspectives on climate change impacts, experiences and appropriate responses. A recent UNDP (2009: 58, 78) report on gender and equality highlights that women “are not passive, and can become agents of change... and should be active participants and decision makers in mitigating and adapting to climate change”.

Women play a key role in energy consumption, water management, population growth, agriculture and economic growth. They play a vital role in policy development and decision-making.

What can we do to encourage women’s participation in climate change adaptation?

- Raise awareness on the value of women's traditional and/or local knowledge
- Facilitate more equal participation of women in decision-making that concerns climate change adaptation and mitigation at all levels (local, national, regional and international)

- Ensure that any adaptation actions or activities take into account gender perspectives
- Conduct research into gender-specific: resource patterns; experiences of climate change (among women); adaptation and mitigation responses; and patterns of vulnerability
- Provide support to women where necessary to enhance their adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate change



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Reference

United Nations Development Programme (2009) Resource Guide on Gender and Equality, UNDP, New York.

Climate Change

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