

Lessons learnt from the Community Based Adaptation in Africa (CBA)

# GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

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## Why gender and adaptation?

When we talk about the gender element in climate change and adaptation we are referring to the different ways in which men and women contribute to climate change, the different impact that climate change has on men and women, the different ways that men and women respond to and are able to cope with climate change, and the differences in how they are able to shift from short term coping mechanisms to resilience.

We are talking in this briefing about poor men and women although interesting work is coming out of Europe about the differences between middle class men and women in their use of transport, patterns of consumption and willingness to change in the face of climate change (Råty and Carlsson-Kanyama 2009).

We need such studies to be done in Africa too, so that we understand the differences better. Climate change tends to exacerbate existing gender inequalities, so that women tend to face larger negative impacts than men. Policies and practices should be careful not to consolidate or extend these inequalities.

Women are not just victims but active agents of change and possess unique knowledge and skills that should be acknowledged and tapped into to develop resilience.

## The impact of climate change on small scale farmers and women in South Africa

There is as yet little documented evidence from South Africa on how climate change is impacting on poor people in general and on small scale farmers and women in particular. We do know that the primary impacts are being felt in changes of weather patterns: that familiar patterns of wind, rain and temperature are no longer predictable and farmers, many of whom are women, are searching for new ways to respond and farm differently. But we need studies that look at men and women separately to be able to develop sound policies.



## Definition of adaptation

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines adaptation as "... adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects of impacts. This term refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change." Source IPCC, 2001.

## Definition of gender

Gender refers to the relations between men and women: the significant differences that exist in most societies between the rights and opportunities of men and women, including rights to land, resources, work opportunities and wages, and participation in decision making processes. Ensuring that men and women have equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, ie gender equality, is something which most countries have signed up to through a number of international and national agreements and accords.

## Definition of resilience

"The ability of a community to resist, absorb, and recover from the effects of hazards in a timely and efficient manner, preserving or restoring its essential basic structures, functions and identity"

## Definition of vulnerability

"Vulnerability is the degree to which a system is susceptible to and unable to cope with adverse effects"  
Source IPCC, 2007.

Sharon Shewmake and Gina Ziervogel have done some work in South Africa in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga looking at food security and livelihoods in the face of climate change but their data is not disaggregated by gender. Bettina Koelle has interviews with 18 farmers who experienced the 2003 drought in the Suid Bokkeveld which may still be analysed in terms of the different impacts on men and women, or on their different survival skills, and could produce useful insights. If you are engaged in implementing a project it is important to document the gender differences in climate impacts and adaptive capacities.

In most cases climate change impacts are linked to gender issues and women's vulnerability. Decreasing availability of clean water, decreasing agricultural production, decreasing access to crop residues and biomass for energy, and increasing risk of famine are all areas where women take primary responsibility and are to experience severe negative impacts. There is a need to capture the positive effects of choosing adaptive investments which take the different needs for men and women into account.

### **Adapting to climate change and changing gender relations**

Kamarunga Banda and Agnes Babugura have done some work on gender, climate change and adaptation in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal respectively as part of a four country study on the gendered impact of climate change. They reported on the different ways in which men and women were reacting to climate change, and the changes that were occurring in gender roles and relations to accommodate socio-economic and environmental changes. For example as men lost their jobs, women have diversified their activities from homestead gardening and have become involved in activities to generate a cash income. Women in the study community have largely been able to decide how to spend the cash and this has shifted the power relations in the community. Men in this community have been drawn into discussing the changes and building a co-operative community although much of the care giving and the impact of HIV/AIDS both in still falls to women.

Two of the most important recommendations to come out of the four country study are:

- Government officials and decision-makers need to interact with rural communities including with women and involve women in decision making
- Facilitators and communities need to develop sensitization programmes to eliminate gender stereotypes where they create obstacles for opportunities for women, men and children to work together towards sustainable societies.

### **Climate adaptation and gender indicators**

Indicators which highlight the differences between men and women are useful to ensure that the most vulnerable are being included in all interventions and assistance programmes. But data should be disaggregated by gender to this. For example Shewmake's study found 'there is no statistically significant impact of droughts on income'. This was partly because the study group was generating a low

cash income. She also found that the produce declined during droughts:

'Households that do not own livestock and households that rely on rain-fed agriculture were also more vulnerable than other households'

The factors underlying this vulnerability may be gender related. It may be that because women generally have fewer assets that they are the ones who don't own livestock (or only small livestock) and did not have irrigation systems; so they are most vulnerable to variable rain and have little to fall back on. But we need gender disaggregated data to examine this hypothesis and many more studies that include different indicators and that focus on the differences between men and women's responses so that we can develop more appropriate systems of resilience.

### **International instruments that promote gender equality or recognize the gender and climate change link**

- United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in effect since 2000
- Beijing Platform of Action (1995)
- Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Since the High level roundtable on 'Gender and Climate Change' in New York in 2007, gender and climate change advocates have had a high profile and major group status at the Conferences of Parties (Pozaan 2008).



Table 1: How gender may shape men and women's differential experiences of climate change

	Women	Men	Link to climate change vulnerability
<b>Roles</b>	Stay home to care for children and elderly and sick members of the family	Can migrate to access economic opportunities	Their ability to migrate in search of economic opportunities makes it easier for men to deal with crisis, and may result in benefits for the family as a whole. However male migration often increases women's workload, as they are left behind to manage the household in addition to usual tasks. It can also increase women's exposure to risks such as gender based violence and HIV infection
	Produce household crops and livestock products	Produce market crops and livestock products	Both crops and livestock are affected by climate change, with profound consequences for household food security. Men often claim safer/ more fertile land for growing market-oriented crops leaving women to grow household crops on less fertile land
	Are responsible for food storage and preparation	Are responsible for selling (valuable) produce and livestock	Climate change has implications for food preparation and storage (water for food preparation and the vulnerability of food stores to extreme events such as cyclones and floods). Harvests may be reduced or destroyed by changes in weather, floods or droughts. This affects market prices and the availability of surplus to sell –placing pressure on both men and women to identify other sources of income and reduce major expenditure (e.g. school fees). In times of shortage, women are often expected to feed other members of the family before themselves.
<b>Resources</b>	Have lower incomes and more likely to be economically dependent	Have higher incomes and are more likely to own land and other assets	Men typically have more money and other assets than women. Men's savings provide a buffer during tough times and along with other assets make it easier for them to invest in alternative livelihoods.
	Have less access to education and information	Have more access to education and information	Managing climate-related risks to agricultural production requires new information, skills and technologies such as seasonal forecasts, risk analysis and water saving agricultural practices. Men are more likely to have access to these resources, the knowledge and the power to use them, and are therefore better equipped to adapt. Women often have traditional knowledge that can inform adaptation efforts. Old and new information can be important in adapting.
<b>Power</b>	Have less power over family finances and other assets	Have more power over family finances and other assets	Without the power to decide on family resources and finances women's ability to manage risks, by for example, diversifying crops, storing food or seeds or savings, is limited.
	Have limited engagement in community politics	Have greater involvement in community politics and decision making	Men are likely to have more influence over local governance-promoting policies and programmes than women and may not support women's rights and priorities.
	Face many cultural restrictions/ prohibitions on mobility	Face few cultural restrictions on mobility	Mobility is a key factor in accessing information and services. It is also critical for escaping the danger posed by extreme weather conditions. Women are at high risk from such events, but men in heroic roles may also be at risk .

Source: Taken from CARE International Climate Change Brief: Adaptation, gender and women's empowerment [www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation](http://www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation)





## Tools for gender analysis

Gender disaggregated data  
Gender budgeting

Gender impact assessment  
Gender equality audit

These gender tools have been developed in the water, energy and agricultural sectors and exciting work remains to be done to test them in adaptation projects.

It is important to consider, through a gendered lens, who has access to, control over and benefits from the assets and resources in your home and community in order to build resilience, target information, and facilitate mobility.



## Gender and climate change – key messages

- There is a causal inter-relationship between climate change and gender: (1) climate change tends to exacerbate existing gender inequalities, (2) Gender inequalities lead to women facing larger negative impacts than men
- Women are not just victims but also agents of change and possess knowledge and skills
- Understanding the risks and different impacts of climate change on men and women is key in achieving sustainable development and the MDGs
- Ensure that women participate in all decision making related to climate change at all levels to build an effective alliance for community adaptation



**Adaptation**  
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## Resources

- Babugura A. 2009. Gender and Climate change: South Africa case study. Executive Summary. Heinrich Boll Stifting Southern Africa
- CARE International Climate Change Brief: Adaptation, gender and women's empowerment. October 2010 [www.careclimatechange.org](http://www.careclimatechange.org)
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