



## 2015 and beyond: Action for a just, gender-equitable and sustainable future

**This briefing paper outlines CARE's recommendations for promoting gender-equitable and sustainable development in the face of climate change for the ongoing 2015 policy processes, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the UNFCCC negotiations, and the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework.**

### Executive Summary

Gender inequality is one of the most widespread and persistent barriers to securing a world of hope, tolerance and social justice. As one of the greatest injustices of our time, climate change amplifies the risks faced by people who are already poor and marginalised, with widespread negative consequences primarily for women and girls, and for society as a whole.

Social inequality and the injustice of climate change not only reinforce each other, but have common roots – in various forms of domination by powerful elites and in a development model which too often puts human rights and the environment second and economic growth first, compromising the well-being of billions for the benefit of a few.

In 2015, governments will seek to agree three major international policy frameworks with long-term implications reaching at least into 2030. These include the post-2015 sustainable development framework, a future UN climate

change agreement, and the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. Within these negotiations, governments have taken their vital first steps towards addressing gender inequality, which has built on progress achieved over the last 15 years under the Millennium Development Goals, and specifically Goal 3.

Now is the moment for governments to make truly historic choices to globally shift course towards far more equitable and ambitious sustainable development and to tackle the underlying drivers of vulnerability and climate injustice. Tackling climate change and reducing gender inequality are not optional extras. They lie the core of building a fair and sustainable world for all.

To adequately tackle climate change, CARE is calling for:

- **Urgent action now to significantly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions**, consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels in an equitable manner, including phasing out fossil fuel emissions and investments and a just transition towards

100% clean, renewable energy.

- **Building the resilience of poor and marginalised people and communities** to climate-induced risks and loss and damage, through addressing climate change in all relevant policies and practices.
- **Ensuring food and nutrition security for vulnerable populations** in the face of climate change, through sustainable, equitable agricultural policies and practices (and related policies and practices).
- **Those most responsible for causing the greenhouse gases that drive climate change to provide sufficient and equitable funding** to help the poor and marginalised address climate change and its impacts.

**In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Sustainable Development Goals, governments must:**

- **Gender goal:** Commit to further strengthen the proposed SDG on gender equality and ensure it is applied to all levels of action related to climate change.
- **Climate change goal:** Commit to a stand-alone climate change goal and include a target which ensures that climate planning and action at all levels is rights-based, participatory and gender-equitable.

**In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in the UNFCCC process, governments must:**

- **Strengthen the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment** across the UNFCCC negotiations and its institutions.
- **Post-2020 agreement:** Include gender equality as a guiding principle in the post-2020 UNFCCC agreement planned for adoption in 2015, and commit to climate action in a rights-based, equitable, fully transparent and participatory manner.
- **Climate finance:** Promote gender equality at all levels and institutions related to climate finance.

**In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 disaster risk framework, governments must:**

- **Participation and leadership:** Ensure gender equality in decision-making, budgeting, and planning processes related to disaster risk reduction at all levels.
- **Strategies and actions:** Strategies and actions for DRR must recognise the resilience and strength of women and girls, and support them as key actors in all phases of DRR to ensure that their skills, knowledge, and capacities contribute to DRR.

**Data and Monitoring and Evaluation:** Targets and indicators for monitoring and accountability must address socioeconomic and diverse dimensions of risk, with the collection and reporting of sex-, gender- and age-disaggregated data.

## Climate change is happening in an increasingly unequal world

Climate change is real and is happening now. The latest instalment of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report confirms that global temperatures are increasing, sea-level rise is accelerating, oceans are warming and acidifying, glaciers and Arctic sea ice are in rapid decline and rainfall patterns are changing. Its conclusions clearly show the link between climate change and major sustainable development areas.<sup>1</sup> Human activity is the dominant driver behind the recorded global temperature increase.<sup>2</sup> These changes are disrupting global weather patterns resulting in more intense, more frequent, less predictable and longer-lasting floods, cyclones and droughts. The world needs urgent and ambitious action to support adaptation where possible and to limit global warming by reducing emissions. Without such action, the world is now on a path towards increased "likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible [climate change] impacts". These include increasing risks of death, injury, and ill health, of disrupted livelihoods; risk of food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems, particularly for poorer populations; and the loss of rural livelihoods due to increased water scarcity.<sup>3</sup>



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Everyone is impacted by climate change either directly or indirectly. However, climate change is happening in a world where the richest 80 people control the same amount of wealth as the 'bottom' 3.5 billion, whilst inequality is on the rise in poor and developed countries alike.<sup>4</sup> Subjected to this imbalance of power and wealth, the world's poorest populations, who have done the least to produce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, are the most severely affected by its impacts. This includes, for example, increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather events, as well as more gradual climatic changes that can destroy people's livelihoods over time. Climate change, both in terms of its causes and effects, is strongly linked with the deep inequalities between the Global North and South, and between rich and poor populations across the regions, and inequalities between gender groups. Climate change exacerbates the risks facing people already marginalised by the inequitable distribution of resources and denial of rights, and increases these inequalities further.

#### CARE'S DEFINITION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality - or equality between women and men - refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life changes are not governed or limited by whether they were born male or female.

## Persistent gender inequalities

Gender inequalities form a key part of many such unfair power relationships. Women and girls worldwide are still facing deeply entrenched disadvantages particularly when it comes to resource ownership and control. These disadvantages are often closely linked to ethnicity, race, caste or class, assuming positions of power, influence and self-determination.

The continued and widespread prevalence of violence against women and girls is shocking, whether it occurs in public or private spheres, as documented in a recent CARE report.<sup>5</sup>

Everyday sexism remains an accepted form of behaviour in many poor and wealthy contexts alike, compromising women's and girl's life chances and opportunities.

Although they make up at least half of the global population, women are widely underrepresented in political decision-making functions, whether in parliament, ministerial posts or UN bodies.<sup>6</sup> Despite the progress that has been made to close the gap in primary education (see Box 1), persistent inequalities in education continue to be a major barrier to sustainable development. Women and girls still continue to receive less training in the sciences and other fields necessary to facilitate their participation in sustainable development planning and decision-making.<sup>7</sup> Overall, social norms and expectations around the roles and behaviours of women, girls, men and boys place limitations on everyone's ability to act in the face of changes and adversity, including the challenge of responding to climate change.

#### MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3 – 'PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN'. WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

- The world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved this target at all levels of education.
- Women's political participation is increasing. In January 2014, 46 countries had more than 30 per cent female members of parliament in at least one chamber.
- In many countries, gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination in terms of access to education, work and economic assets, and participation in government. For example, in every developing region of the world, women tend to hold less secure jobs than men, with fewer social benefits.
- Violence against women continues to undermine women's efforts to reach their goals.
- Poverty is a major barrier to secondary education, especially amongst older girls.
- Women are largely relegated to more vulnerable forms of employment.

Source: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml>

Women are not one homogenous group, nor are they universally poor and vulnerable, or in need of the same resources and support. Power imbalances and a lack of accountability affect all members of society in varying ways, while poverty and vulnerability are a function of gender as well as other factors, such as livelihood, age, ethnicity, race and class. Women and girls are often starting from a very different position when compared to men. A lot remains to be done to ensure their voices are heard, and that their agency and control over resources, institutions and behaviours, and their ability to challenge discriminatory social norms, are fully recognised. Overcoming these inequalities requires the empowerment of women and girls, e.g. through economic development, education, leadership and life skills training. This is a challenge for the whole of society, and is critical to CARE's efforts in related areas of work, such as fighting gender-based violence. For example, working with men and boys as champions of change – by enabling them to challenge gender norms and enjoy more equitable relationships in their own lives – is critical to overcoming gender-based violence. This applies at all levels, from the community to global policy-making level where women continue to be far less present and influential than men.

## Gender inequalities and climate change

Inequalities in the distribution of resources, power and in the fulfilment of rights are at the root of poverty and vulnerability to climate change. Neither can be tackled or reduced effectively without taking action to understand and address these inequalities. Gender roles and relations also play a critical role in determining power relations – both on a personal level, within households, as well as in the public policy arena – and often to the detriment of women and girls. These inequalities put many poor people on the frontline of harmful climate change impacts while at the same time constraining their ability to take action on climate change.

Women living in vulnerable communities are frequently discriminated against in the distribution of resources that are critical for adaptation and resilience (such as land, credit and information). In addition, they are often underrepresented in decision-making processes that seek to address climate change. A recent report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that such discrimination and additional factors, such as lack of government support, poor urban infrastructure and insecure land tenure, also increase people's vulnerability to climate change.<sup>8</sup> Climate change therefore amplifies the risks facing people who are

already marginalised due to inequalities and the denial of their rights, and so increases social inequality even further. For example, as the majority of the female labour force in developing countries works in food production, the consequences of adverse impacts of climate change, such as loss of harvests or food price increases due to weather disasters, hit women particularly hard. The fact that women often own poorer quality land and only receive a small share of agricultural services, only serves to exacerbate the situation further.

In many societies in the developing world, women and girls are largely responsible for collecting water for their families, and they spend a significant amount of time fetching water from water sources that are often located in remote and distant locations. The water they do collect is often insufficient to meet their household needs and also frequently contaminated. Resulting health problems affect women and children in particular whose health is most at risk from poor sanitation. With climate change expected to reduce overall water availability in many poor regions, and to make water availability more erratic, women will face an even greater burden when it comes to ensuring sufficient access to clean water.

Climate change is also expected to lead to an increase in loss of life as a result of heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts. According to the IPCC, there is also increased likelihood of undernutrition resulting from diminished food production in poor regions.<sup>9</sup> As women make up the majority of the world's hungry, and given the existing gender inequalities described above, it is likely that women could become even more undernourished as average global temperatures rise.

Action on climate change, including measures to help people adapt to adverse climate impacts, cannot be expected to overcome such widespread inequalities in one go. But, such measures will fail altogether if they do not seek to take gender inequalities into account and work to overcome them. Findings from different countries, including India, show that "gender analysis enhances our understanding of what farmers perceive as risks and how they respond to climatic changes"<sup>10</sup>, thereby helping to identify the most suitable adaptation options.

CARE's own work in the area of community-based adaptation (CBA) also shows that integrating gender equality and women's empowerment approaches into development programmes can help to ensure that adaptation outcomes are both effective and sustainable. Integrating gender equality from the outset also helps to ensure that project activities do not exacerbate

other inequalities and vulnerabilities but meet the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups.

CARE's approach to CBA promotes the equal participation of both men and women in the decision-making and implementation phases of all activities. It also aims to create lasting transformative change in gender relations – beyond just adaptation to climate change – on a personal level and in formal decision-making, as part of building the adaptive capacity of the whole community.<sup>11</sup>

### CASE STUDY: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ADAPTATION IN NORTHERN GHANA

In Saamini, Northern Ghana, where women traditionally stay at home to pursue domestic chores, gender roles have been shifting. In recent years women have increasingly become involved in agriculture and other activities such as petty trade, collecting shea nuts, producing shea butter and selling charcoal. While increased women's empowerment has ensured some men are taking up new roles such as childcare and food preparation, women's workloads have still been growing rapidly. Women now have to work harder to provide food for their families while cultural barriers continue to limit their control over productive resources, including access to the most fertile land. The Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa (ALP), in collaboration with Partners in Rural Empowerment and Development (PARED), is supporting the Saamini community to enhance agricultural livelihoods, ensuring women in Saamini are actively involved in community leadership and that they can play a key role in promoting adaptation initiatives. The community has a history of fostering women's participation and leadership. Saamini is one of two communities in the district headed by a woman chief, known as "Poa Naa".

In the context of community-based adaptation work in Saamini, programme activities encourage discussion about how gender affects family decision-making and livelihoods and women's empowerment as a whole. CARE is seeking to promote changes in attitudes to increase support for women's ownership and control of productive resources in the long-term. Training and capacity building in advocacy, and lobbying skills for male and female gender champions, also promote gender equality as part of a vision for a climate resilient future.

Source: [http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP\\_Ghana\\_Saamini\\_Nov2011.pdf](http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP_Ghana_Saamini_Nov2011.pdf)

## Gender and climate change in the global policy arena

Climate change was initially understood as a biophysical problem and the many links between greenhouse gases and social inequalities took some time to emerge. Today, at a time when the Sustainable Development Goals are being negotiated and the world is working towards a new, global climate change agreement in 2015, the link between climate change and social development, justice and equality is no longer a side issue.

In fact, the role of gender equality in the global response to climate change has gained increased recognition. Its advocates have achieved a number of successes, many of them thanks to the leadership of a growing global constituency of nearly one hundred organisations led by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance and its allies across civil society and government. At the 18th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP18), governments took a landmark decision that elevates gender equality to the formal agenda of the ongoing negotiations, and which initially focuses on promoting gender balance in the UNFCCC process itself. Gender considerations have also increasingly gained ground in the governing principles of the climate funding mechanisms, including the Adaptation Fund and the emerging Green Climate Fund, which is in the process of drafting a specific gender policy. The Climate Investment Funds (CIF) managed by the World Bank also recently approved a gender action plan.<sup>12</sup> UN processes, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, are also increasingly highlighting the role of gender-equitable climate finance.<sup>13</sup> While there is a long way to go to ensure that gender equality is at the heart of every UNFCCC outcome, the COP18 gender decision sent an important signal that the issue of gender is gaining momentum. At the same time, the women and gender constituency is also at the forefront of demanding more ambitious climate action, both in the UNFCCC and SDG processes (e.g. by demanding that policy-makers limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels)<sup>14</sup>, but also in national debates such as the ongoing issue of the US/Canadian Keystone pipeline.<sup>15</sup>

Since the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, there has been a growing tendency in policy-related dialogue to ascribe a primary role for women and girls in protecting the environment, ensuring food security, and lifting entire communities from poverty. However, the empowerment of women and girls should not translate into unfair burdens on time spent on unpaid labour, adding unjust burdens to those that women already carry in many societies. A focus on "investing in women and

girls” that emerged in the gender, environment and climate discussion particularly around Rio+20 has not only resulted in a patronising conversation portraying women as ‘capable actors’, but also facilitates a degree of ‘victim blaming’ – a way of diverting attention from the responsibility for transformational change which lies, above all, with those in power – be they men or women.

Overcoming the inequalities described requires the empowerment of all women and girls, whether through economic development, education, leadership and life skills training. These are challenges for all of society. This is why CARE’s efforts in areas such as fighting gender-based violence include initiatives to work with men and boys as champions of change – enabling them to challenge gender norms and enjoy more equitable relationships in their own lives.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, global and national climate and development policy has yet to fully convey that gender equality is first and foremost about equal rights, opportunities and life chances, which are independent from whether someone is born a girl or boy, whether they are young and productive, or elderly and in need of care and support.

## Policy Recommendations

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

2015 provides a unique opportunity for governments and the world as a whole to redirect development pathways towards truly sustainable and equitable global development. This opportunity must be seized for the sake of current and future generations to eradicate poverty and to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Urgent action now is required to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C in an equitable manner. This requires a phase-out of fossil fuel emissions and investments in the long-term and a just transition towards 100% clean, renewable energy.

Ensuring food and nutrition security for vulnerable populations in the face of climate change, through sustainable and equitable agricultural and other policies and practices, is also of particular concern to CARE. In addition, those most responsible for causing climate change must provide sufficient and equitable funding to help the poor and marginalised address climate change and its impacts.



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The agreements negotiated under the UNFCCC, the post-2015 SDGs and the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, as well as the action that follows, must promote gender equality, seek to reduce existing inequalities and promote human rights in a coherent and consistent manner. The negotiations must be undertaken in an inclusive, transparent and accountable way.

These agreements must not merely restate existing commitments on gender and climate change, but rather trigger the transformation of structures, institutions and societies towards equitable and sustainable, low-emission and climate-resilient societies through the removal of barriers that are impeding this form of development. These agreements must also result in substantial additional action, particularly to build the resilience of vulnerable and marginalised people and communities, and must not undermine one another. The diversion of funds that have been allocated for poverty eradication to help pay for climate action (or 'double-counting' such funds) is unacceptable. In addition, these agreements must seek to mobilise individuals, communities, business and other institutions, and their individual skills, towards greater action on gender equality and tackling climate change, including the mitigation of harmful emissions and measures to help people poor and vulnerable people to adapt.

### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE SDGS

The zero draft of the SDGs, the document concluded by the so-called Open Working Group (OWG) of governments, is a good start. However, much work remains to further strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment measures within the SDGs. A recent CARE report makes a number of suggestions to help improve the SDGs to ensure ambitious action on tackling climate change.<sup>17</sup> CARE also wants to see a specific gender equality goal and the integration of gender into the other SDGs. Such general agreements on gender equality – not specifically targeted at climate action – can and must be relevant to climate change policy-makers and institutions due to their universal applicability. Governments must also:

- **Gender goal:** Maintain and further strengthen the proposed goal on gender equality and ensure it is applied at all levels of action related to climate change; ending forms of discrimination and eliminating violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in decision-making, and giving women equal rights to economic resources – as envisaged in the latest OWG document on the SDGs. Such action could significantly enhance gender equality and contribute to effective climate change policy and practice.

- **Climate change goal:** Keep a stand-alone climate change goal and include a target that ensures that climate planning and action at all levels is rights-based, participatory and gender-equitable. Such a target must help to ensure a tangible reduction, rather than a continuation or increase in, gender inequalities in access to and control over resources for climate change adaptation. The target must also seek to reduce unfair burdens on vulnerable women or men, and ensure gender balance in climate and disaster-related decision-making processes at all levels.

### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE UNFCCC

The COP18 decision on gender was an important milestone, but as yet has been limited to the question of 'membership of women', essentially the numbers of women, participating in UNFCCC bodies and within the UNFCCC process. The current draft negotiating text for a future climate change agreement in 2015 lacks a clear commitment to promote gender equality. Further action is therefore required by governments, including:

- **UNFCCC process:** Ensure the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment across the UNFCCC negotiations and its institutions (resources, capacity, political will) and in all guidance on national adaptation planning and practice, including by reducing existing inequalities in existing decision-making processes.
- **Post-2020 agreement:** Include gender equality as a guiding principle in the post-2020 UNFCCC agreement planned for adoption in 2015, and commit to actions which reduce emissions, build adaptive capacity and protect forests in a rights-based, equitable, fully transparent and participatory manner.
- **Climate finance:** Promote gender equality at all levels and institutions related to climate finance, in particular in decision-making, project development, identification and implementation, financial allocation, monitoring and evaluation; collect socially disaggregated data throughout the project cycle; promote activities with co-benefits to ensure long-term viability; ensure public finance meets the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

### GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE POST-2015 DISASTER RISK FRAMEWORK

The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR) will have an important role to play in guiding action to reduce the risks from disasters, including from climate-related disasters, and is therefore also relevant for adaptation and resilience building. The co-chairs' pre-zero draft for the future framework, released in August 2014,<sup>18</sup> already reflects a degree of awareness of the need to promote gender equality,

but needs to be strengthened further.

- **Participation and leadership:** Ensure gender equality in decision-making, budgeting, and planning processes on disaster risk reduction at all levels.
- **Strategies and actions:** Strategies for and actions on DRR must recognise the resilience and strength of women and girls, and support them as key actors in all phases of DRR to ensure their skills, knowledge, and capacities contribute to effective DRR.

**Data and Monitoring and Evaluation:** Across these three policy frameworks, and in their domestic implementation,

targets and indicators for monitoring and accountability must address socioeconomic and diverse dimensions of risk, with the collection and reporting of sex-, gender- and age-disaggregated data throughout the activities implemented.

In 2015, governments have an historic opportunity to act, and shift course towards far more equitable and ambitious sustainable development, whilst also tackling the underlying drivers of vulnerability and climate injustice. The bottom line is clear: development must work for people and the planet, not at the expense of the planet and its citizens. Tackling climate change and reducing gender equality are not optional extras – both are essential to ensuring a sustainable world for all.

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