



© Josh Estey/CARE

#SheLeadsInCrisis

PUTTING GENDER JUSTICE AT THE CENTER OF THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The double injustice of gender inequality and climate change

The poorest half of the world's population - 3.5 billion people - is responsible for just 10% of greenhouse gas emissions that trigger global warming, while the richest 10% of people in the world are responsible for around 50% of global emissions¹. Yet, developing countries are the most affected by climate change impacts and are already bearing up to 80% of the costs of climate change² - including through food insecurity, forced migration, damages to property and productive assets, and diminished livelihoods. The world's poorest also have the fewest resources to cope with extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and decrease in food production. The COVID-19 crisis serves as a reminder that building resilience before crises hits saves more lives and reduces the need for costly humanitarian responses.

Gender inequality is a long-standing and pervasive social injustice. Gender gaps continue to exist worldwide in education and employment opportunities; access to, use of and control over resources; and participation in decision-making between women, men, girls and boys. Not a single country has achieved gender equality.

The double injustice is that gender inequalities – as far removed as they may seem from a problem that started with greenhouse gas emissions – are deeply related to the unequally distributed causes and impacts of climate change on people living in poverty. Climate change impacts are different based on one's gender. Three key factors explain why women and girls are more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change:

Climate change is not gender neutral

- In 2018, world hunger rose for the third year in a row, reaching 821 million people⁸, and is particularly acute in agrarian countries that are dependent on rainfall or experience drought. When food is scarce, women and girls suffer most - often being the last to eat, and carrying an increasing burden as climate change impacts rural livelihoods.
- On average, 26 million people are displaced by disasters such as floods and storms every year. That's one person forced to flee every second⁹. 80% of people displaced by climate change are women¹⁰.
- Women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during a disaster¹¹. 96% of fatalities in the 2014 Solomon Island floods were women and children¹².
- The average representation of women in national and global climate negotiating bodies in 2015 was below 30%¹³.
- Only 0.01 % of all funding worldwide supports projects that address both climate change and women's rights¹⁴.

1. **The climate crisis exacerbates gender inequality and makes it harder to achieve gender justice.** A knock-on effect of climate change is that children, predominantly girls, are often kept out of education to help with increasingly onerous domestic tasks. In addition, when a family's income from farming plummets due to droughts or floods, parents can no longer afford school fees and, thus, opt to marry off their girls early so that there's one less mouth to feed.

2. **Social and cultural norms and barriers mean that women are less likely to be involved in decisions about how to cope with climate change.** Within the household and in communities, decision-making over use of household income, assets and time is often led by men, often without women's involvement or space to raise their needs or priorities. Also, women are less likely to have access to and control over the resources they need to prepare for and adapt to climate change, to recover from its impacts and to transform their lives. In many contexts, ownership and decision-making over financial, natural and household resources is held by men, and women's roles and responsibilities often act as barriers to their involvement in public life (e.g. unable to attend community meetings because they are caring for children).
3. **Women and girls do most of the subsistence farming in poor countries and are the primary providers of food, water and fuel, which become scarce due to climate change.** Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for up to 80% of economically active women in least developed countries. Some 70% of Africa's food is produced primarily by women, while in Asia women contribute up to 70% of rice production. Women are central to food security of entire continents, and it will be critical to support their productive capacity to help sustainably recover from the additional food insecurity the COVID-19 crisis is likely to generate. Since they often do not have the economic resources to install irrigation systems, women smallholder farmers are dependent on rain. When there is a shortage of rain, families have less food, less money, and women tend to eat the least in order to save more food for their children. With increased water scarcity linked to climate change, women have to travel greater distances to collect water.

Climate justice starts with HER

Women play a central role in the response to the climate crisis by developing creative and effective solutions to build the resilience of their communities to climate shocks and stresses. Their knowledge and know-how should be better acknowledged, valued and supported. Women's rights organizations have faced many challenges in accessing climate finance, thus, it is critical to simplify funding requirements for them to scale up and replicate successful pilot models. Increasing women's participation and leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate responses will ensure that resulting policies both reduce climate-related risks and reduce barriers to full equality, thereby enabling longer-term recovery and social justice for affected populations. Nationally and globally, women's meaningful participation in climate

decision-making and negotiations needs to increase, both by aiming for gender parity and more women in leadership roles on government delegations, and by engaging with women's rights organizations who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

From Peru to Vietnam, Mali to Vanuatu, CARE's programmatic experience has demonstrated time and time again that putting communities, particularly marginalized populations such as women and indigenous communities, at the heart of adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives has long-lasting impacts on communities' capacity to absorb climate shocks and brings about social justice. For example, in Mali, women living in rural areas face obstacles that often hinder development, including inability to earn income, high workload, low participation in decision-making, and lack of access to land. In order to address these barriers, CARE's Harande Project implements gender-focused activities through its different program components which has led to remarkable changes at the household and community levels, such as empowering women to own, farm and manage land through Farmer Field and Business Schools.

CARE's call for gender-just climate action

Climate change threatens to push an additional 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030³, eroding decades of progress in social and economic development. The humanitarian consequences of climate change will only escalate if global warming is not kept below 1.5°C, as committed by world leaders in the Paris Agreement in 2015.

In 2020, countries will revise their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), the national climate action plans under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This timeline prevails despite the postponement of COP26 and the COVID-19 crisis. Current climate commitments are inadequate, leading to global temperature rise between 3°C and 4°C above pre-industrial levels with devastating effects⁴. The world cannot afford to ignore the severity of the climate crisis any longer, just as it cannot afford to ignore the COVID-19 crisis. Instead, we must shift to a response commensurate to these challenges in a way that people, particularly marginalized populations such as women and indigenous communities, are the center of climate policy and action. The good news is that such measures, including response and recovery measures on COVID-19, have the potential to bring massive socio-economic benefits in terms of safer environments, cleaner air, reduced poverty and greater equality. In order to tackle the climate emergency and achieve gender equality, CARE International calls on:

- 1. All governments to submit much more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2020, in line with the 1.5°C limit:** Many mitigation solutions, such as renewable energies, have become much cheaper and more widely available than 5 years ago when the Paris Agreement was established. Governments must promote this through revised NDCs and should commit to their fair contributions of at least halving global emissions by 2030. Unfortunately, current NDCs from major economies are largely insufficient and put the world on +3°C pathways. NDCs must include the use of nature for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Economic stimulus and recovery measures in response to COVID-19 should be consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and are a key opportunity to build low-carbon resilience. Governments must also conduct meaningful and comprehensive multi-stakeholder engagement, including women and girls, in their NDCs' update process.
- 2. Developed nations to scale up public finance for climate action for developing countries, while directing at least 50% of investments towards adaptation:** Many countries and communities are insufficiently prepared to adapt to the adverse impacts of the climate crisis, which already results in human suffering, economic hardship, social disturbances, and cultural losses, with the poor and marginalized being particularly vulnerable. Without adaptation, climate change may decrease growth in global agriculture yields up to 30 percent by 2050⁵, most severely affecting the 500 million small-scale farms around the world. The Global Commission on Adaptation states that investing \$1.8 trillion globally from 2020 to 2030 in early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, improved dryland agriculture, mangrove protection, and in making water resources more resilient could generate \$7.1 trillion in total net benefits. More than ten years ago in Copenhagen, at COP15, developed countries agreed to mobilize USD100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries deal with the impacts of climate change, and for those resources to be balanced between adaptation and mitigation. Yet global public climate finance from developed to developing countries remains woefully inadequate;

it amounted to USD 54.5 billion in 2017⁶ and the proportion of that finance for adaptation is less than 20%. Furthermore, new innovative finance sources, such as levies on fossil fuel exploration and aviation, should complement the finance from developed countries.

- 3. Donor countries to step up financial support to gender-just climate action by ensuring that at least 85% of climate adaptation funding also aims to achieve gender equality (based on OECD markers⁷):** Increasing and accelerating climate action will also require channeling finance in the right direction. Developed countries need to continue increasing finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage action beyond 2020, and this must support actions which integrate climate action and gender equality[6], including climate action undertaken by grassroots women's organizations. Given their central role in local responses to the climate crisis, it is critical for women-led and women's rights organizations to receive the required resources to fulfill their mandate.
- 4. Governments, at local, national and international levels, to systematically engage women and girls in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ambition-raising public policies and actions on climate change:** Climate and disaster risk reduction policies must be informed by rigorous gender analysis to ensure that they address existing gender inequalities and other forms of social exclusion. Policymakers must commit to increase the meaningful participation and representation of women and women's groups with a wide range of expertise, including youth representatives, in all global climate negotiations and negotiating bodies and in national climate plans. Gender responsiveness can be enhanced through better alignment between international commitments and national policies, increased institutional coordination between environment and women's rights ministries, capacity building, collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender information, and dedicated financial resources.



CARE's programmatic approach

In fiscal year 2019, CARE reached more than 780 million women and girls across the world, through projects focused on food and nutrition security and climate change.

CARE's community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction projects prove that it is not only possible but also necessary to tackle gender inequality and climate change simultaneously, and that men and women can play complementary roles in building communities' resilience to climate impacts. The better our understanding of how gender dynamics influence people's vulnerability to climatic changes, and what options they have to deal with these changes, the more successfully we can target groups and design adequate action. CARE aims to ensure that women are empowered to become decision-makers and leaders in efforts to address the climate crisis, and that all policies, plans and practices to address climate change, reduce disaster risks and increase resilience take into account and challenge gender dynamics and social norms. CARE has also played a key role in advocating for gender-responsive policy and action at national and global levels.

HER LAND, HER FUTURE REORGANIZING COMMUNITY GROUPS TO SECURE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND IN MALI

The Inner Niger delta and the Sourou basin in Mali form a great green oasis on the edge of the Sahara Desert and support the livelihoods of two million people. Yet, the valuable natural resources the wetland provides are under threat, in turn threatening the life and culture of the people depending on it. Farmers, pastoralists and fishers all rely on the resources of the delta and basin but have different needs that can lead to conflicts over land use. Over the past few years, yields and production have decreased because of overexploitation of the basins, unsustainable fishing practices, environmental degradation, and excessive droughts and floods. This situation is making the local people, particularly women, children and the elderly, vulnerable to increased levels of poverty, leaving them exposed to shocks and stresses and forcing some of them to leave their homes.

Partners for Resilience (PfR) Mali has facilitated a process of reorganizing existing community groups into coalitions from the village and municipality up to the provincial level. Since land is the main means of production and its access guarantees control over food and non-food resources, the PfR program focused on building civil society organizations' capacity to solve land-use conflicts. It invested in training the coalitions in the land tenure system and relevant laws, particularly focusing on women who were not allowed to cultivate a piece of land following their husbands' passing. With this new knowledge, the coalition members were taught how to advocate for the proper application of these laws. As a result, they successfully lobbied for elected officials, traditional chiefs and land owners to not only allocate land to women, but also translate this allocation into certified local title deeds. As a result, female community members have invested in plots for vegetable gardening, allowing them to diversify sources of income and directly interact with elected officials. Women have gained confidence, begun

making their own decisions, and some of them have even set up women's unions in their villages or joined municipal councils. When women have rightful ownership of land, they can securely invest in it, and communities become more resilient.

WHERE THE RAIN FALLS EMPOWERING ETHNIC MINORITIES AND WOMEN TO LEAD COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION IN INDIA AND THAILAND



Climate change-induced environmental stresses and extreme weather events disproportionately affect smallholder farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Ethnic minorities and marginalized community members, such as women, are particularly vulnerable. In this context, CARE initiated the Where the Rain Falls (WtRF) project in 2011 which started out as research conducted in 8 countries and resulted in the launch of community-based adaptation pilot projects in India and Thailand. The project led to the creation of inclusive community working groups, with equal gender representation and inclusion of individuals from ethnic minorities. These groups developed Community Action Plans whereby they identified the communities' main issues and priorities in terms of climate change adaptation, including sustainable agricultural practices, natural

resource management and livelihood diversification. In parallel, training on climate change impacts was imparted, and access to and interpretation of climate information was facilitated to help guide farmers' agricultural decisions with respect to climate extreme events.

This approach allowed co-ownership among community members and raised the interest of local governments and NGOs, increasing solidarity among community members who organize themselves to obtain access to resources, services, and markets. WtRF also worked on enhancing female farmers' resilience by building their capacity training on agricultural techniques, literacy and leadership; empowering women by promoting their active participation in local governance organizations and facilitating their access to inputs, markets and services; and generating supportive relations within the communities and households, thus facilitating equitable decision-making. Compared to villages where the project was not implemented, the perception of women's role in the communities had positively changed, women's confidence in raising issues in public and their participation in communities' decisions increased, and women's participation in public forums and independent decisionmaking were also enhanced.

CONTACTS

SVEN HARMELING

CARE International Global Policy Lead, Climate Change and Resilience
CARE Climate Change and Resilience Platform (CCRP)
sharmeling@careclimatechange.org

CAMILLA SCHRAMEK

CARE International Global Communications Lead, Climate Change and Resilience
CARE Climate Change and Resilience Platform (CCRP)
cschramek@careclimatechange.org

www.careclimatechange.org

Endnotes

- 1 Oxfam (2015) Extreme Carbon Inequality https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/mb-extreme-carbon-inequality-021215-en.pdf
- 2 Jonah Busch (2015), Climate Change and Development in Three Charts, https://www.cgdev.org/blog/climate-change-and-development-three-charts#_edn1
- 3 World Bank (2015), Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22787/9781464806735.pdf?sequence=13&isAllowed=y>
- 4 UNEP (2019), Emissions Gap Report 2019- Global progress report on climate action <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/emissions-gap-report/2019/>
- 5 Global Commission on Adaptation (2019), Adapt Now: A global call for leadership on climate resilience: https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf
- 6 OECD (2018), Climate finance from developed to developing countries: 2013-17 public flows, OECD Publishing <https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/Climate-finance-from-developed-to-developing-countries-Public-flows-in-2013-17.pdf>
- 7 The most practical measurement available are the OECD gender equality markers, despite their weaknesses. An appropriate target would be

- to envisage 85% of all funding target gender equality with marker 1 (significant objective), and at least 20% with marker 2 (principal objective): <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>
- 8 WFP (2019) The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI): Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2019-state-food-security-and-nutrition-world-sofi-safeguarding-against-economic>
 - 9 Norwegian Refugee Council: <https://www.nrc.no/what-we-do/speaking-up-for-rights/climate-change/>
 - 10 UNDP (2019) <https://twitter.com/UNDP/status/1121507679782961154>
 - 11 UNDP (2013) Gender and disaster risk reduction: <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB3-AP-Gender-and-disaster-risk-reduction.pdf>
 - 12 FAO (2018) Tackling Climate Change through Rural Women's Empowerment <http://www.fao.org/3/ca0178en/CA0178EN.pdf>
 - 13 Mary Halton, BBC (2018) Climate change impacts women more than men: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-43294221>
 - 14 UNDP (2016) Gender and Climate Finance Policy Brief: <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/UNDP%20Gender%20and%20Climate%20Finance%20Policy%20Brief%205-WEB.pdf>