



## REPORT

### **CSW56 Learning Circle: Gender and Climate Change co-sponsored by the GGCA and the NGO CSW Forum 2012**

March 5, 12:30-2pm at the Church Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
777 UN Plaza (44<sup>th</sup> Street & 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.)

*Special Guest respondents included Mrs. Mary Robinson, President,  
Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice and  
Hon. Lulu Xingwana, Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, South Africa.*

*WELCOME – Soon-Young Yoon, Chair, NGO CSW NY*

*OVERVIEW of Learning Circles – Nathalie Eddy, Coordinator, GGCA*

*INTRODUCTION to Gender and Climate Change – Eleanor Blomstrom, WEDO*

*Learning Circle topics:*

1. Mitigation (facilitated by Gail Karlsson, ENERGIA and Asha Singh, WOCAN)
2. Adaptation (facilitated by Lucy Wanjiru, UNDP)
3. Advocacy (facilitated by Rachel Harris, WEDO)
4. Finance (facilitated by Sarah Twigg, UN Women)
5. Risk reduction (facilitated by Loy Rego, UNISDR)
6. Grassroots community strategies (facilitated by Maite Rodriguez, Huairou Commission)
7. Health and food and nutrition security (facilitated by Cristina Tirado, Public Health Institute)



## REPORT –Learning Circle on Gender & Climate Change

Nearly 150 participants joined in the Learning Circles on Gender and Climate co-hosted by the GGCA and NGO CSW NY.

Eleanor Blomstrom, with the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) presented the fundamentals of gender and climate - highlighting that "we are working towards a paradigm shift in recognizing the leadership of women in responding to the climate crisis."



Mrs. Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, commended the strength and commitment of women leading the charge on climate change and gender. Mrs. Robinson highlighted the importance of implementation, building on the inspiration of Wangari Matthai and the progress achieved at events such as Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2012.

([http://www.mrfcj.org/news/2012/gender\\_is\\_my\\_agenda\\_campaign\\_gimac\\_19th\\_pre-summit.html](http://www.mrfcj.org/news/2012/gender_is_my_agenda_campaign_gimac_19th_pre-summit.html))

Hon. Xingwana, Minister of Women, Children & People with Disabilities for South Africa - calls for implementation of the gender provisions secured at COP17 in Durban, South Africa. Hon. Xingwana also reports that women make up 44% of ministers in South Africa.



*Learning circle facilitators prepared the following highlights from the learning circle discussions.*

**Adaptation - facilitated by Lucy Wanjiru, UNDP**



**Background** - Adaptation is a process by which individuals, communities and countries seek to cope with the consequences of climate change, including variability. The process of adaptation is not new. Throughout history, people have been adapting to changing conditions, including natural long term changes in climate. What is innovative is the idea of incorporating future climate risk into policy-making.

For example, Africa Adaptation Programme, implemented by UNDP with the support of the Government of Japan, is working in 20 African countries to integrate gender perspectives into the design and implementation of climate

change adaptation and national development plans. To ensure that adaptation projects address the needs of poor women and men equitably, it is vital that gender considerations are integrated in climate change adaptation policy and programmes from the onset.

***Key issues raised in the adaptation learning circle include:***

- **Land rights for women** - especially with the rising land grabbing crisis in developing countries, whereby foreign countries are buying large scale farms in African countries, and exporting workers instead of employing local workers – this is counter to development and adaptation. Participants questioned if this is being addressed.
- **Holistic approach to development** – It is crucial that we have a holistic approach to development. If women do not have access to land, they will consequently have no access to finances, and have no collateral for loans, etc. Accordingly, awareness raising, capacity building, and women’s empowerment in all these areas are crucial for women’s social economic advancement. At the same time, social and economic empowerment is only the start to empowerment (access to income, loans etc.). The adaptation learning circle participants challenged themselves to ask - how can we go beyond this (power holders often stop at this point)?
- **Include men in gender discussions** - Community Based Adaptation practitioners raised the perception that their efforts to empower women challenge men. Participants suggested including men in gender equality discussions and movements to avoid this perception.
- **Women don’t realize their full potential** – Participants noted that women are often not aware of the potential they have. The learning circle agreed that education is crucial to make women more aware of their potential influence and power. The role of information, education and communication cannot be overemphasized in the path towards women’s empowerment.
- **Independent action of women** – Participants discussed women’s capacity to independently handle situations regardless of government involvement. While policies are clearly important, women have learned to adapt on their own. There are many untold and undocumented stories of women’s adaptation. The stories of how women are adapting to climate change need to be collected so as to inform governments in developing their national climate policies, and programme planning. Such documentation is crucial.



- **Vast environmental knowledge of women** - Women possess a deep knowledge of environmental patterns and how to deal with climate impacts. The adaptation learning circle participants support the documentation of this knowledge. In addition to this documentation, it would be valuable to convene rural women to learn from each other and to consider cross-fertilization of these experiences into national and international climate planning.

### Climate Finance– facilitated by Sarah Trigg, UN Women

- **Urgent timeline** - The discussion began by emphasising that the time for action is NOW, and that in this regard the 2020 time frame for the new Green Climate Fund and the new and additional \$100 billion is a concern. This also stimulated discussion around fast start financing (the \$30 billion developed countries pledged annually) and the failure by many developed countries to meet those commitments.
- **Women’s access to financing** - In particular, this discussion raised questions about where can women go now to access financing for climate adaptation or mitigation projects. Some of the potential avenues raised in response to this included the GEF Small-Grants facility, CDM aggregation and the MDG Carbon Facility. However, it was also recognised that there is a lack of clarity around how individuals or groups actually go about accessing those funds – the process for doing so is extremely complex, bureaucratic and time-consuming.
- **Multilateral climate finance flows must fund projects on the ground** - There was general agreement that multilateral climate finance flows need to translate into projects on the ground – in particular there was a lot of discussion around using climate financing in similar ways to smaller, e.g. microfinance loans, so it can more effectively support the types of smaller scale business models and projects that women are more commonly involved in.
- **Monitoring and transparency of climate finance flows** - The discussion then turned to the challenge of monitoring and transparency of climate finance flows, and the perception by those on the ground that the funds are largely being hijacked by large institutional actors or are being consumed in needless bureaucracy or corrupt governance in many places.



### Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) – facilitated by Loy Rego, UNISDR

**Background** - Disasters affect women and men differently due to the gendered vulnerability to natural hazards. Some examples of this disproportionate impact are evident from the higher percentage of fatalities among women during cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008 (61%), the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 (67%) and the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone (91%). Disasters have an impact on women’s lives with increased burdens and workload during survival, response and recovery.

DRR has a well-established globally agreed Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) covering the period 2005 to 2015, entitled building the resilience of countries and communities to natural disaster risks. It has 25 years of organized effort since the start of the International decade for natural disaster reduction (IDNDR) in 1990, well developed tools and a body of practical experience including national mechanisms, actions plans and programs. The HFA has 3 goals i) DRR integration into sustainable development planning and programs ii) strengthening institutions , mechanisms and capacities for increased resilience, and iii) integrating DRR into emergency preparedness, response and recovery. A gender-responsive approach to the HFA is



described in the Women, Gender and Hyogo Framework for Action available at [http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/GDN\\_gendernotes1.pdf](http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/GDN_gendernotes1.pdf)

UNISDR's focus areas in making DRR more gender sensitive include:

- providing a platform for gender advocates and professionals and women's groups to share knowledge information and practice on gender sensitive DRR,
- increasing women's voice and visibility in DRR,
- encouraging active roles by national authorities and NGOs in developing gender balanced DRR policies and programs, and

- developing policy guidelines on gender and DRR, using friendly checklists and kits.

- **Disproportionate impact on women** – DRR learning circle participants identified the following key causal factors behind the disproportionate impact of disasters on women
  - limited supply and access to information and early warning,
  - cultural and social restrictions on physical activity,
  - underdeveloped survival skills,
  - limited access to resources, and land rights,
  - women's focus on protecting children and other family members during emergencies,
  - division of labour and space within the family, and
  - poor levels of nutrition, health and literacy.
- **Increased violence against women affected by disasters** - Participants also discussed the increased violence against women affected by disasters and conflict, in shelters, evacuation and refugee camps.
- **Women's leadership in disaster response and risk reduction** - Women have special capacities and can exercise significant leadership in disaster response and risk reduction. The learning circle noted the experience of women's roles in the follow key areas:
  - risk assessment,
  - contingency planning, and delivering early warning signals, especially to children and other women,
  - serving as repositories and communicators of indigenous knowledge on early warning and knowledge on natural resources and coping capacities, and
  - leadership roles in planning and implementation of recovery.
  - (Note was also taken of joint titling of property following a disaster as a gender empowerment measure.)

- **DRR and gender resources:**

- A gender responsive approach to the HFA is described in the Women, Gender and Hyogo Framework for Action available at [http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/GDN\\_gendernotes1.pdf](http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/GDN_gendernotes1.pdf)
- Information on Special resources for gendered dimensions of disasters and DRR were highlighted including the toolkit on “Making DRR more gender sensitive” by UNISDR, IUCN and UNDP available at [http://preventionweb.net/files/9922\\_MakingDisasterRiskReductionGenderSe.pdf](http://preventionweb.net/files/9922_MakingDisasterRiskReductionGenderSe.pdf), the Gender and Disasters network <http://www.gdnonline.org/> and its key online resources and the GFDRR guidance note on addressing gender issues in DRR available at [http://www.gfdr.org/gfdr/sites/gfdr.org/files/Guidance\\_Note\\_1\\_Making\\_Womens\\_Voices\\_Count\\_Addressing\\_Gender\\_Issues\\_in\\_DRM\\_in\\_EAP.pdf](http://www.gfdr.org/gfdr/sites/gfdr.org/files/Guidance_Note_1_Making_Womens_Voices_Count_Addressing_Gender_Issues_in_DRM_in_EAP.pdf)

**Mitigation - facilitated by Gail Karlsson, ENERGIA and Asha Singh, WOCAN**

- **The difference between mitigation and adaptation** - The first part of the mitigation learning circle discussed the difference between mitigation and adaptation. This discussion was sparked by a participant’s comment that corporations were more interested in adaptation activities (e.g. exploiting new markets for products that can be sold for profit, such as solar panels, etc.) than reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
  - Participants discussed how under the UNFCCC categories, mitigation would include building markets for renewable energy sources that would prevent greenhouse gas emissions by replacing some fossil fuel use, as well as promoting reabsorption of carbon dioxide by preserving forests, wetlands and other critical ecosystems, and planting trees. In contrast, adaptation would generally cover activities designed to build people's resilience to changes in the climate once they have occurred, such as adopting more drought-resistant agricultural practices, and protecting people and infrastructure from flooding and sea level rise.
- **Examples of mitigation activities** – Participants then offered various examples of mitigation activities involving women.
  - Nchedi Moripe from the Government of South Africa, mentioned that there is now an official Women, Environment and Climate Change Group within the Department of Environment through which women can present their problems and seek support. She described a hydro-electric project in SA's Free State where Bethlehem Hydro is using the water flow from a dammed river to produce electricity, replacing use of coal, which is the primary fuel for power generation in SA. Due to SA's economic empowerment policies, a women's group WOESA (Women in Oil and Energy South Africa) owns a large percentage of Bethlehem Hydro. She also gave other examples from Capetown, where women are using solar panels to provide power for recycling activities at dump sites, and installing solar hot water heaters.
  - Ananya Dasgupta from All India Women's Conference described a village in India with an ashram retreat run by women using only solar energy. There is a large-scale solar cooker that can serve 20,000 devotees, and solar pv panels for electricity.
  - Sally Ranney from Stillwater Preservation in the US talked about carbon sinks and sequestration, including public/private partnerships to purchase wetlands and restore them, providing protection of aquifers and biodiversity as well as carbon dioxide absorption (and preventing release of methane gas).

## Advocacy – facilitated by Rachel Harris, WEDO

- **Lack of rural women participation in international meetings** - The advocacy learning circle addressed the difficulty in bringing rural women to advocate on the issues that matter to them. Participants considered several ways to better support the contributions of the rural women at all levels.
  - An organization is doing a project on this in which they are working with women to develop their own research and document their expertise in order to create a platform from which they can advocate at local, national and international levels.
  - Participants highlighted the significant value rural civil society women would bring as part of their government delegations when attending international meetings.

- **Many important issues to women, especially rural women, are not addressed in the climate change negotiations** - While there have been many achievements on gender in the climate change negotiations, participants acknowledged that there are many key issues absent from the negotiations. Participants discussed options to bring important issues that impact women (rural in particular) to these negotiations. Unaddressed issues include:

- **Regulation of multi-national corporations:** there exist some corporate social *responsibility* standards, but these must be transformed into corporate social **accountability** standards so that multi-national corporations can not contribute to the land-grabbing and resource scouring that is destroying the livelihoods of small-holder farmers, often rural women. ILOs are advocating in the international climate change negotiations on some of these issues. These voices could be augmented and strengthened with other important stakeholders and organizations behind them
- **Internally displaced people due to climate change:** while this issue has not been directly tackled in the climate change negotiations, it is an important matter that may come up in the new 'loss and damage' workshops scheduled for this year. Also, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) is beginning to take up this issue in their discussions as they may explore how climate change is having an impact on not only trans-boundary migration but also on internal migration. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees does discuss this issue but not yet in reference to climate change. Perhaps through advocacy, climate change can also become part of their agenda.



## Climate change and gender, health, food and nutrition security – facilitated by Cristina Tirado, PHI

**Background** - Climate change has a significant impact on the health and nutrition security of millions of people around the world, and affects poor women and their children living in developing countries most acutely. At the same time, women serve as agents of change through their unique roles in family health, child care, agriculture, food and nutrition security, and disaster risk reduction, among other areas. According to FAO, by giving women equal access to productive agricultural resources—land, inputs, training, credit women’s farm productivity would increase by 20-30%, countries’ total agricultural output would increase by 2.5-4.0% and 100-150 million fewer people would be hungry. However, women remain



poorly represented in consultation and decision-making processes for the development of climate change adaptation strategies and policies, and they often do not have the knowledge and skills they need to lead their communities forward in more sustainable ways. By supporting these women leaders to work together as agents of change, they will ultimately reduce their communities' vulnerability to climate change.

**Key issues raised in the learning circle include:**

- **Food and nutrition security:**
  - 70 and 60% of employed women in S Asia and in Africa work in Agriculture
  - Women produce ~ 60-70% of the food consumed in households in Developing countries
  - 60% of chronically hungry are women and children
  - Lack of economic and land rights for women to access to land, credit, seeds, fertilizers etc. Only 5% of Agriculture extension resources go to women
  - Sub-Saharan Africa: droughts and food and nutrition insecurity are linked to AIDS/HIV pandemic
- **Health-** Women have increased risk of diseases such as malaria, heat extremes, wet season, higher risk and vulnerability to extreme weather disasters, migration and in refugee camps
- **Specific challenges for rural women in this context**
  - Rural women have less access to health care services, information (e.g. HIV/AIDS transmission), water and sanitation, and maternal health.
  - Rural children are twice as likely to be malnourished than urban children.
  - Malnourished rural girls become malnourished rural mothers which directly impacts child mortality rates (over 40% mortality rate under five years of age), health, mental and physical

development, future productivity and livelihoods.

- **Specific challenges identified by the participants in the learning circle in relation to health and food and nutrition security included:**

- The lack of access to health care services, including maternal health care, and the lack of awareness and information on health issues (including the transmission of HIV/AIDS) which is connected to the high rate of illiteracy in the rural context in Africa.
- Specific health issues in Africa were related to lack of water and water contamination and in SE Asia to exposure to pesticides from agricultural activities.



- **Success stories** - The group shared success stories and solutions that were achieved by women in relation to health and food and nutrition security and in particular, in the rural context. We discussed case studies including initiatives to collect water and irrigation projects in Nigeria, the establishment of mobile maternal health clinics in Uganda, and the promotion of green-houses to assure food and nutrition security of indigenous communities in Guatemala.
- **Rio+20** - Many of the groups represented in this learning circle will be at Rio+20 and are planning to raise the profile of women to address the challenges of climate change to health and food and nutrition security.