

Climate Talk held by Minu Hemmati and Ulrike Roehr, LIFE & WECF
Gender and Climate Change: Why it Makes a Difference
at the Climate Change Kiosk, Dec. 8, 2005, Montreal, UNFCCC COP11 & COP/MOP1
(see: http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_11/climate_talk_series/items/3555.php)



Thank you – our presentation is addressing questions of gender and climate change. We will talk about why gender aspects should be taken into account when working towards climate protection and adaptation to climate change.

But first, let me introduce ourselves:

Ulrike Roehr is an engineer and sociologist by background, and has been working on gender issues in planning, Local Agenda 21, building, energy, climate change, and broader sustainable development issues since the late 1970s.

Myself, **Minu Hemmati**, I am a psychologist by background and have been working in UN processes on environment and sustainable development since 1997. I am now also working with Ulrike on gender and climate change.

We are both working with **genanet** - “**focal point for gender justice and sustainability**”, which Ulrike set up in 2003. Genanet is a project of LIFE, a women’s environment organisation based in Germany. genanet works to raise awareness of gender equity in environment and sustainability policy, to implement gender mainstreaming in environmental policy-making. If you want to know more, please visit our website.

At the European level, we’re working with Women in Europe for a Common Future.

Q: So – why are we talking about gender and climate change?

The climate change debate needs to be set firmly into the context of sustainable development. Its three pillars - environmental, social and economic - and the Principles of the Rio Declaration should serve as the overall framework for developing fair and effective policies for mitigation and adaptation.



Despite its status and development within the United Nations international system, climate change policy-making has failed to adopt a gender-sensitive strategy.

This failure not only generates concern in terms of respect for gender equity at the international level, it also leads to shortcomings in the efficiency and effectiveness of climate related measures and instruments.

Without a gender-sensitive method of analysis, it is impossible to determine the full set of causes and potential effects of climate change.

Furthermore, studies have shown that women and men experience climate change differently in terms of their adaptability, responsibility, vulnerability and aptitude for mitigation.

Therefore, the international climate change negotiation process – as well as climate policies at regional, national and local levels - must adopt the principles of gender equity at all stages: from research, to analysis, and the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Otherwise, climate related policy-making will be unable to achieve true legitimacy or relevance.

This applies in particular to the process towards a post-2012 climate protection system or “regime”, in whichever shape or form it is about to begin.

Q: This sounds a bit abstract ... what does gender mean in the context of climate change?



Looking at mitigation through a “gender lens”, for example, we can ask:

- Who is causing how many emissions, and for what purpose?
- How can we best inform women and men about the connections between their behaviour and climate change?
- How can we help women and men to change their behaviour and cause fewer emissions?
- What impacts do mitigation policies have on women and men in their work and their daily lives? Will rising energy prices, for example, affect women and men differently?

Q: But can we answer these questions??

Differences in energy use between women and men: in terms of purposes (caring work, income generating work, leisure) and amounts (men driving cars, and bigger ones).

Transport systems: designed with a view to middle-aged full-time working men, and neglecting women's higher dependency on public transport and their specific needs when they look after children and elderly.



We are just beginning to learn more about these questions... for example:

Relating to the different roles they fulfil in society, there seem to be significant differences in energy use between women and men. Existing data, and gender roles, suggest that men produce more emissions, and more “selfish” ones – that is, related to maintaining and exercising their social status, whereas women produce emissions when caring and catering for other people (children, elderly, sick).

For example, men more often drive cars, and bigger ones, and more often use them for work outside the home and for leisure.

In the case of mobility, substantial work has already been done to analyse the gender dimension of policies and measures.

Existing transport systems in many countries have been designed with a specific view to middle-aged full-time working men, neglecting women's higher dependency on public transport and their specific needs when they look after children and elderly. Integrating a gender perspective would make transport systems both more user-friendly and more climate-friendly.

Q: So, this is in relation to mitigation... and what about adaptation?



Vulnerability and adaptation are largely social issues.

We are learning, for example, how natural disasters affect women and men.

Following the cyclone and flood of 1991 in Bangladesh the death rate was almost five times as high for women as for men. Warning information was transmitted by men to men in public spaces but rarely communicated to the rest of the family. Many women are not allowed to leave their homes without a male relative, and they waited for their relatives to return home and take them to a safe place. Moreover, as in many Asian countries, most Bengali women have never learned to swim.

Another illustration of the differences in vulnerability is the fact that more men than women died during Hurricane Mitch in Central America. It has been suggested that this was due to existing gender norms in which ideas about masculinity encouraged 'heroic' – in this case: risky - action in a disaster.

Vulnerability and adaptation are largely social issues.

Gender aspects include:

- The **feminization of poverty**: mostly affected will be the poor.
- Gender **inequalities in education**: girls will drop out of school to fetch water and firewood.
- Gender **injustice in power and decision-making**: women are often not included in planning and community development.
- The **gendered division of labour**: women care for children, elderly and sick.



It is widely acknowledged that the negative effects of climate change are likely to hit the poorest people in the poorest countries hardest. Since women form a disproportionate share of the poor in developing countries and communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources, women are likely to be disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

More examples can be found when looking at the effects of drought or deforestation. In many developing countries, women are responsible for fetching water and firewood – tasks that become ever more burdensome and time-consuming due to widespread environmental changes. It is girls, more often than boys, who will drop out of school to fulfil these tasks. It is women who will be further limited in their opportunities to engage in work outside the home.

As evident in the latest, albeit still preliminary research presented here in Montreal, successful adaptation will have to be context-specific, and participatory. All members of affected communities must be part of a climate change planning and governance process. Without fully involving women in planning and decision-making, the quality of adaptive measures will be limited, and their successful implementation will remain doubtful.

Climate change will also affect people's health, and it is women who look after their children and elderly family members when they are sick. If such demands on women increase, they will, for example, be less able to pursue income-generating activities.

But - what actions can be taken to properly address gender issues?

climate gender justice



There are many actions that can and need to be taken – from research to policy to public information to funding.

What women have been starting to do here in Montreal:

We have begun to build our network and gather our expertise on gender and climate change issues. We need to pull together and share our knowledge to make it clear to policy-makers why they need to put gender onto the climate change agenda.

We're also working to provide information to women and men worldwide, for example through articles and interviews with various media. But much more needs to happen there...

So basically, in Montreal we have started to work together, as women and men concerned about gender issues – and we will be around over the coming years, growing our network and coalitions, and make our voices heard!

Take gender differences into account when developing and implementing mitigation and adaptation policies!

For example:

- Gender analysis: what do climate policies mean for women and men? Are there differences? And how can they be addressed to ensure gender and climate justice?
- Vulnerability: In what ways are women and men vulnerable to climate change? What are the strengths and skills of women and men that policies need to build on?



But you were asking what actions could be taken...

These are some actions that can be taken by governments, right in this process. We all know from experience in other UN processes, in national policy-making, in development, and so on, how we can begin to make sure that gender aspects are not ignored. For example:

- Conducting gender analysis by asking: what do climate policies mean for women and men? Are there differences? And how can such differences be addressed to ensure gender and climate justice?
- Or, regarding vulnerability: we need to learn in what ways women and men are vulnerable to climate change? What are the strengths and skills of women and men that we need to build on?

Q: So, in short, what do you think we should all do..?

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We need to address Climate Change with the utmost urgency – in solidarity, and doing justice to all people.

We can only achieve this bold goal if we come together as a global community, under the core principles of the United Nations – peace, justice and sustainable development.



We need to recognize this:

Climate change, in all its aspects, is a truly global challenge.

We need to address it with the utmost urgency, in solidarity, and doing justice to all people – young and old, South and North, East and West, women and men, girls and boys.

And we need to recognize that

we can only achieve this bold goal if we come together as a global community, learning from each other and with each other how to protect our climate within the framework and under the core principles of the United Nations - peace, justice, and sustainable development.

THANK YOU !