

UNFCCC COP 18 – GENDER, FORESTS AND AGRICULTURE

By Vera P. Weill-Halle, Chairperson of the Board, WOCAN

OVERVIEW

I attended on behalf of WOCAN the UNFCCC COP 18 conference in Doha, Qatar. In short, COP 18 reached agreement on Kyoto Protocol for a second period until 2020, as well as a basic work plan for negotiating a new global climate pact to be finalised in 2015 and implemented from 2020. There was a lack of significant commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this decade and the conference had no target for climate finance from developed countries for 2013-2015.

GENDER DAY

On 27 November, I had the opportunity to participate in the first ever ‘Gender Day’ at the UNFCCC. A new publication entitled “Women Adapt to Climate Change” was launched by the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC along with other women leaders. The book was written by the former President of COP17, and the current Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. The book includes case studies and photos showing examples of women in global effort and perseverance to adapt to climate change.

There were two back to back side events on gender. The first was on Gender and Climate Innovation: Breakthrough Changes for Gender Equality, and the other on Gender and Climate: Moving beyond the Rhetoric, organized by the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The second event was attended by distinguished women, including Her Highness Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees – Qatar Museums Authority; Ms. Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice; Ms. Elena Manaenkova, Assistant Secretary General of the World Meteorology Organization; Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN Director General; Ms. Nawal Al-Hosany, Director of Sustainability at Masdar, Abu Dhabi; and Mrs. Julia Duncan-Casell, Liberia’s Minister of Gender and Development. The gender issue received considerable attention and it was highly profiled at COP18.

A decision improving gender balance and the participation of women in the UNFCCC process became the focus of the women’s network and gender coalitions. The decision was adopted on 30 November after the culmination of a year’s work initiated by the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRFJ) at COP17. In Durban last year, MRFJ circulated a briefing note on 36/CP.7, a decision from 2001 that calls for improving the participation of women in the representation of Parties in the UNFCCC. However, a very obvious gender imbalance still exists in various UNFCCC bodies, with women’s representation as low as 10% in some instances. Following on from COP17, and working with various supportive parties, most notably the

Government of Finland, members of the Troika+ of Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change and UN Women, worked to strengthen decision 36/CP.7 and put gender firmly on the agenda at COP18.

The COP 18 decision will strengthen women's representation and participation in COP proceedings, an important step towards achieving gender equality. The decision will have far reaching consequences for the participation of women in the UNFCCC.

In addition to inviting Parties to adopt a goal of gender balance in bodies and institutions and to strive for gender balance in their delegations, the decision adds gender and climate change as a standing item on the agenda of sessions of the COP. It also calls for the Secretariat to organise a workshop on gender balance in the UNFCCC process, gender-sensitive climate policy and capacity building activities at COP19 in Warsaw next year. One thing is certain – Gender is now firmly on the Agenda of the UNFCCC. WOCAN should explore how it could contribute in the future workshops on capacity building and gender trainings at UNFCCC.

While at COP 18, I had the opportunity to meet delegates and other participants at the conference and highlight the work of WOCAN as well as distribute informational materials produced by the organization. During my breakfast meeting with the Minister of Environment of Mozambique she expressed interest for WOCAN to organize an in country gender training. She is seeking a tailor made training package with materials also produced in Portuguese language. In addition, the Executive Director of the Uganda's women's network rugada (www.rugada.net) is interested in working with WOCAN. Under a separate cover, contact information for both individuals will be sent to WOCAN for follow up. The second week, I was given the opportunity to distribute WOCAN's announcement on the forthcoming launch of the Women's Carbon Credit Standard. The concept/project idea received great interest from the member delegations, NGOs, and private sector participants. A list of contacts will be sent to WOCAN so that further follow up can be pursued with interested parties. An initial contact was made with the host country delegation, Qatar, and ideas were raised on the potential engagement for WOCAN to organize gender training workshop in the region. A concept note/proposal for such a workshop in the region should be prepared and shared with interested parties in Qatar and UAE. I also attended a number of side events, including an event on the private sector responses to the climate change and the UN system discussion of food security and dry lands. A side event on the role of women in the energy sector highlighted the need to have more women graduates coming from the engineering schools.



UNFCCC's side event "Gender and Climate: Moving beyond the Rhetoric" at COP 18 in Doha.

FOREST and AGRICULTURE DAYS -- AN INTEGRATED LANDSCAPES APPROACH

30 November and 1 December 2012



Focusing on landscapes allows for broader, multi-sector approach.

The Forest Day saw the introduction of the new debate about forests. The speakers emphasized the "landscapes approach", a more multi-sector approach to sustainable forest management. To truly employ a landscape-based approach it will require a massive shift in how we view and manage our natural resources. The stand alone days on forest sector may be waning and the Forest Day 6 will be the last one to be held at COP. Since Bali, the preceding five COPs have been a critical meeting point for the forestry specialists and, accordingly the forestry days brought a profound attention to the forestry issue. The new message is: 'only when water, agriculture, mining, and other relevant sectors and industries are brought to the same table'

there will be a chance of stemming the drivers of deforestation. To remain within the silo of forestry will ultimately curtail the sustainable management of forests.

Ever since 2007 when REDD+ first appeared on the table in Bali forests have benefited from a profound image makeover. For five years now, forests have been the hero of the climate change discussions taking place everywhere from the gleaming convention halls of the UN Conference of Parties to local government offices fielding interest from the private sector and NGOs in establishing REDD+ projects. The inter-sectoral approach was hailed as a solution to forest management with calls for strengthened inter-sectoral collaboration in REDD+. Participants unanimously echoed a common theme: to protect forests, we need to improve cooperation among the sectors.

What does this mean for local communities? It remains to be seen, but is possibly a step in the right direction. Not only is a more integrated understanding of forest ecosystems helpful in and of itself, it is equally important in relation to the communities living in and around forests. There are some [250 million to 1 billion people](#) worldwide, depending on which numbers one uses, who are classified as 'forest dependent'. And yet this sectoral classification risks simplifying these people's relationship to the natural environment and the multiple other systems with which they engage (e.g., socio-political and economic). Communities have a range of dynamic livelihood and subsistence strategies; single sector classifications can limit their ability to adapt to changing contexts. However, it would be most difficult to find any 'forest communities' that do not practice some form of agriculture for subsistence purposes. Perhaps the time has come for a more nuanced and integrated view of both land-use types and the communities that engage with them.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture did not fare as well at COP 18. Farmers, researchers and policy makers were disappointed with the lack of progress achieved in including agriculture in the U.N. climate talks. Nineteen international organisations, including agricultural research, water management and farmers' groups, have called for climate negotiators to establish a formal work programme on agriculture, to advance scientific and technical understanding and inform decision making on food security and climate change.

Largely the differences came over whether to include the role of agriculture in reducing – or mitigating - greenhouse gas emissions.

Many developed countries have expressed their willingness to assist developing-country farmers to adapt. But they also want to include mitigation in any agreement to start work on agriculture under the UNFCCC.

Some of the developing countries did not want any mention of mitigation because they don't believe there should be any targets that affect their food security.

Others nations argued that provisions on agriculture under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) should focus only on how to help farmers adapt to more extreme weather and longer-term climate shifts.

A 'very delicate balance' between adaptation and mitigation measures in agriculture will need to be reached between developed and developing countries. Robert Carlson, president of the World Farmers' Organisation, said sustainable agriculture actually requires few trade-offs between climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Agriculture is responsible for 14 percent of global climate-changing emissions, a figure that rises to 19 to 29 percent if all the processes of food production - from farming and storage to transportation and refrigeration- are included.

If nations commit to limiting emissions from their farm sectors, they fear they may have to cut further and faster than they are prepared to, damaging their ability to increase crop production to feed growing populations.

Others argued that one area where there should not be much of a disagreement is that there is a lot of waste and inefficiency within agriculture. If you cut that waste, even by half, there will be a lot of mitigation without jeopardising food security and without jeopardising adaptation.

In many developing countries, farmers' associations, research institutes and development groups are already promoting a switch to techniques that can reduce carbon, nitrogen and methane emissions from agriculture. These include minimum tilling of the soil, planting trees alongside crops, using less water in rice cultivation, restoring degraded land, preventing burning of vegetation, and limiting excessive fertilizer use.

In Malawi, aid donors have provided funding for farmers to plant more than 70 million trees. Some 37,000 farmers there are also practicing conservation agriculture, in which the earth is not ploughed and crop residues are used as mulch on the soil, increasing carbon storage and water retention.

Dyborn Chibonga, chief executive officer of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), said his organisation promotes "climate-smart" agriculture, which boosts yields and resilience to climate stresses, while cutting emissions. Demand among farmers wanting to take up new methods is high and hard to meet, he added.

Lack of an agreement on agriculture at the U.N. climate talks will make it harder for large scale direct flows of climate finance to be going to the sector.