

Women are Agents of Change

- “Women’s voices, responsibilities and knowledge on the environment and the challenges they face will need to be a central part of the adaptive response to a rapidly changing climate” UNEP *Women at the frontline of climate change - Gender risks and hopes*, 2011
- “A study by the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) of community water and sanitation projects in 88 communities in 15 countries found that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more effective than those that do not. This supports an earlier World Bank study that found that women’s participation was strongly associated with water and sanitation project effectiveness.” UN Water. *Gender, Water and Sanitation: A Policy Brief*. 2006.
- “Social and financial investment along with policy support to improve women’s access and control over water resources will reduce vulnerability to poverty and enable women to secure sources of food and livelihoods, and to maintain the health of themselves and their families.” UN Water. *UN World Water Development Report*, 4th edition. 2012.
- A higher proportion of women participants in local institutions of forest governance is related to significantly greater improvements in forest conditions and conservation. Agarwal, B. *Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women’s Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry*. 2010.
- “Women in the South are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of disasters due to skewed power relations and inequitable cultural and social norms. At the same time, women are essential for developing sustainable adaptation options due to their knowledge, multiple and simultaneous responsibilities and as well as roles in productive areas”. ” UNEP *Women at the frontline of climate change - Gender risks and hopes*, 2011
- In OECD countries, women are also more likely than men to recycle, buy organic food and eco-labeled products and place a higher value on energy-efficient transport. OECD, *Gender and Sustainable Development, maximizing the economic, social and environmental role of women*. 2008.
- “While growth and stability are necessary to give women the opportunities they need, women’s participation in the labor market is also a part of the growth and stability equation. In particular, in rapidly aging economies, higher female labor force participation can boost growth by mitigating the impact of a shrinking workforce. Better opportunities for women can also contribute to broader economic development in developing economies, for instance through higher levels of school enrollment for girls”

IMF. Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity. 2013.

Women in leadership and decision-making

- Women’s involvement in decision-making has important implications for climate change – a recent study of 130 countries found that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more prone to ratify international environmental treaties. Norgaard and York, Gender Equality and State Environmentalism. *Gender and Society*. 2005.
- The percentage of female delegates to the UNFCCC increased overall from 1996-2009, starting at 15 percent and surpassing 30 percent in 2008. In contrast, over the same period, the representation of female heads of delegation never surpassed 20 percent, but remained around 15 percent. Women for Gender Justice, *In Retrospect: Gender in COP15*. 2010.
- Women continue to be underrepresented in national parliaments, occupying on average only 21.7 percent of seats. Inter-parliamentary Union, September 2013.
- “Women’s representation in executive or ministerial positions is even lower than in parliaments. In 2012, women accounted for just 16.7 per cent of ministerial positions worldwide. Only 27 countries had surpassed the 30 per cent threshold for women ministers. In 144 countries, women occupy less than one quarter of the ministerial posts and tend to dominate in portfolios related to social, family and women’s affairs, education, employment and the environment.” UNGA *Measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation: Report of the Secretary-General*. 2013 (Based on data from IPU and UN Women).
- The African Union (AU)’s constitutive act includes the promotion of gender equality as one of its principles. At the 2002 Inaugural Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union, the AU 50/50 Parity Principle to apply in all structures, operational policies and practices of the AU was adopted. Five women and five men are currently appointed to the AU Commission. African Union. *African Union Gender Policy*. 2009.
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC)’s Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) commits to ensure “the equal representation of women and men in the decision making position of Member States and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least thirty per cent target of women in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005.”¹ At the 2005 SADC Summit, this target was raised to 50%. In 2008, Parties signed the Protocol on Gender and Development where they agreed to place affirmative action measures with particular reference to women, to

¹ Paragraph H(ii)

eliminate all barriers that prevent them from participating meaningfully in all spheres of life and create a conducive environment for such participation.² Southern African Development Community. *SADC Framework for Achieving Gender Parity in Political and Decision Making Positions by 2015*. 2008; *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development*. 2008.

- Women still do not have full access to the sharing of power and decision-making. Gender balance in decision-making, in political and economic life and in the public and private sectors, will help Europe shape more effective policies, develop a gender-aware knowledge-based society, and create a stronger and more prosperous democracy. European Commission. *A Women's Charter*. 2010.
- In the context of the private sector, gender balance is found to maximize innovation potential of professional teams. London Business School. *Innovative Potential: Men and Women in Teams*. 2007.
- The proportion of women in management teams was also found to be correlated to company performance, suggesting that gender diversity in management teams creates a competitive edge to tackle global challenges. McKinsey & Company. *Women Matter*. 2008.
- “Empowering women to take leadership positions is important for economic growth and a competitive internal market. Indeed, there is a clear business case for greater gender diversity in corporate boards both from the microeconomic perspective – ie. In terms of individual companies’ performance – as well as from a macroeconomic perspective – i.e. in terms of higher, sustainable rates of economic growth” European Commission. *Women in Economic Decision-Making in the EU: Progress Report: A Europe 2020 Initiative*. 2012.
- “A study of gender equality in political and business decision-making in the five Nordic countries³ concludes that raising awareness and maintaining a social-political debate have been crucial to improving gender balance in decision making. In particular, the report notes the importance of enduring pressure from women’s organisations and widespread media coverage of gender issues. Women’s organisations, therefore, continue to be important actors in promoting change in the EU.” European Commission. *Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the European Union 2013*. 2013.

² Article 5

³ *Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries – with focus on business and politics*. Kristi Niskanen (Ed.), Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK), 2011.

Impacts on Women

- “The poor are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on \$1 a day or less are women.” UNFPA, *State of World Population 2009: Facing a Changing World, Women, Population and Climate*. 2009.
- “The current ecological crisis and, especially, climate change impacts, are foreseen to affect women disproportionately. The prevailing mechanisms of intra-household allocation are expected to result in increasing undernourishment of women and girls as food prices go up. Additionally, given their predominance as small-holder agricultural producers, women will be particularly hard-hit by climate change due to their lower bargaining power and discriminatory practices in the agriculture sector. Declining yields will diminish their ability to feed their families, or will result in loss of purchasing power, particularly for the poorest rural households who are net food buyers. Many of the households survive by combining food production for their own consumption with income-generating activities.” ADB. *Gender equality and food security – women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger*. 2013.
- Another factor contributing to the marginalization of women and girls is their time poverty resulting from the triple burden of combining production responsibilities, household chores and care responsibilities, and community care work. Time poverty may increase with climate change, as it could well be more difficult for women to secure water, food, and fuel for cooking and heating⁴. Climate change will reduce food security, not only because of the reduced availability of productive resources and its effect on food supplies, but also because of expected reductions in time for caring practices⁵. The anticipated increase in burdens on women and girls implies a diminishing of their capacity to exploit opportunities for income-generating activities or education⁶” ADB. *Gender equality and food security – women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger*. 2013.
- Worldwide, women are responsible for half of the world’s food production and produce between 60-80% of the food in most developing countries. FAO, *Women and Sustainable Food Security* <http://www.fao.org/sd/fsdirect/fbdirect/FSP001.htm>; IUCN, UNDP, GGCA, *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change*. 2009.

⁴ Parikh, J. K. and F. Denton. 2002. Gender and Climate Change at COP8: A Forgotten Element. In *Is the Gender Dimension of the Climate Debate Forgotten? Report of the Engendering the Climate Debate Side Event, Eight UN Conference of the Parties (COP8)*. New Delhi. 29 October; UN WomenWatch 2009. *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

⁵ Tirado, M. C. 2011. Enhancing Women’s Leadership to Address the Challenges of Climate Change on Nutrition Security and Health. Center for Public Health and Climate Change at the Public Health Institute, World Food Programme (WFP), UN Standing Committee on Nutrition and Action Against Hunger (ACF). New York. United Nations.

⁶ *Ibid*; Masika, R. 2002. Editorial: Gender and Climate Change. *Gender and Development*. 10 (2).

- A high dependency on land and natural resources for livelihood generation makes some women more vulnerable. In Viet Nam agriculture accounts for 64 percent of working women in rural areas compared to 53 percent of working men, so they are facing more risks of loss from drought and floods. UN and Oxfam in Viet Nam, *Policy brief, Gender equality in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in Viet Nam*. 2011.
- Despite agriculture being the most common source of work for rural women in most developing regions, they have less access than men to assets, inputs, and complementary services – for example just 20 percent of landholders in developing countries are women, and their landholdings are smaller than those of men. FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011*. 2011.
- Women and girls are primarily responsible for collecting water and taking care of the environment in their households and communities - women are responsible for collecting water in almost two-thirds of households in developing countries. WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water*. 2010 Update; UNDP, *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change*. 2009.
- Close to 80 percent of rural women in Asia, 60 percent in Africa, and 40 percent in Latin America are affected by a shortage of firewood. UNDP, *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change*. 2009.
- Indoor smoke from burning solid fuel is associated with nearly 2 million deaths a year, with women and children in rural areas suffering the most. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2011*. 2011. WHO, *Factsheet N 292 - Indoor air pollution and health*, September 2011.
- Gender differences are often most telling in the aftermath of a disaster, as in most cases, the mortality rates for women are higher than those of men: 61% were women killed in Cyclone Nargis, Myanmar 2008; 67% in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; and 91% in Bangladesh during cyclone Gorky in 1991. ASEAN, GOM & UN 2008, *Doocy and Rofi (John Hopkins and Mercy Corp) 2006, IFRC 2006*.
- The disproportional impacts of disasters on women are due to physical capacities (for example in some countries women are less likely to be able to swim), and the need to protect other family members such as children and elderly. Women also experience specific health vulnerabilities including malaria, cholera, impaired psycho-social health, and other health impacts. These not only affect women's health directly, but also increase their burden of care when looking after ill dependents and family members. World Bank, *Making women's voice count addressing gender issues in disaster risk management in East Asia and the Pacific*, 2012.

- In a sample of 141 countries over the period 1981–2002, it was found that gender differences in deaths from natural disasters are directly linked to women’s economic and social rights. In inequitable societies, more women than men die from disaster. Neumayer and Plumper, *The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002*. 2007; *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97(3), 2007, pp. 551–566.
- Evidence shows that during and after disasters, levels of sexual and gender-based violence often increase. After two tropical cyclones hit Tafe Province in Vanuatu in 2011, the Tanna Women’s Counselling Centre reported a 300% increase in new domestic violence cases. Kilsby and Rosenbaum, 2012. *Scoping of Key Issues in Gender, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management*. Internal Briefing Document for UN Women. September 2012.
- “Climate-related disasters such as flood, drought or famine may disrupt local security safety nets, leaving women and children unaccompanied, separated or orphaned due to the erosion and breakdown of normal social controls and protections. This makes them especially vulnerable to the exploitation of human trafficking”. UNEP *Women at the frontline of climate change - Gender risks and hopes*, 2011.
- Adolescent girls fare worst in disasters due to the double discrimination of age and sex. “For many adolescent girls, who have little power in society and may be valued less than their brothers, a major disaster simply adds to the disasters they have to face in everyday life – early marriage, discrimination, violence or abuse. (...) The chaos of a flood or an earthquake, or the slow undermining of health and livelihood brought about by chronic food shortages, puts adolescent girls at even greater risk. They are invisible because they remain in the background, sometimes confined to their homes in societies where this is seen as a protective – as well as a controlling – measure. In a disaster, this ‘protective invisibility’ may dangerously reduce girls’ ability to reach safety and limits their access to life-saving knowledge.” Plan International. *In Double Jeopardy: Adolescent Girls and Disasters*. 2013.