

ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

From principles to practice

The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change established the first global goal for adaptation to climate change, highlighting the links to human rights, poverty eradication and sustainable development. It also upped the ambition on gender in climate action, acknowledging the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment and calling for gender-responsive approaches to adaptation and capacity building.

Now that these principles have been agreed upon by the global community, how do we put them into practice?

TAKING A GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO ADAPTATION IS ABOUT:

WHO MATTERS?

Consideration of gender differences and marginalized groups in decision making promotes climate change adaptation investments that are used effectively and targeted where they are needed most.

In many countries, there are still considerable gender gaps in access to education, literacy and income-generating opportunities, placing many women and girls at a disadvantage, particularly when it comes to accessing information and investing in adaptation actions. For women and girls to realize their potential as agents of change in adaptation, these gaps must be overcome.

People's adaptation needs differ depending on their gender, socioeconomic status and how they sustain their livelihoods, among other factors. There are socially determined differences in roles, responsibilities and decision-making power, all of which influence vulnerability to climate change. Without an understanding of these dynamics—which are often influenced by gender—there is a risk that the people with the greatest need for adaptation will be left out.

Women remain under-represented in decision making in climate-vulnerable sectors, from the local to the national level, with marginalized groups facing additional barriers to participation. This has implications for how gender-responsive adaptation action in these sectors will be.

When adaptation is approached as a technical issue, the importance of including diverse stakeholders and actors working on sociocultural issues such as gender may be overlooked, as they may not be viewed as important to the process. Bringing in the knowledge of women, gender actors and representatives of marginalized groups to adaptation decision making is key to ensuring effective and inclusive adaptation action.

WHO DECIDES?

Equitable participation and influence by women and men, including representatives of marginalized groups, in climate change adaptation decision making builds capacities and creates the conditions for inclusive implementation.

The implementation of adaptation actions will not necessarily yield benefits for all members of society, and what constitutes effective adaptation differs depending on the perspective. Too often, the definition of results ignores the perspectives of women and of other groups whose voices are excluded.

Too much focus on quantitative measures of success is also unhelpful, because it may obscure social dynamics and processes of change and how these do or do not reduce vulnerability to climate change. Consideration of who is benefiting from adaptation investments, as well as why some people are left out, can help to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities and improve equity in outcomes.

WHO BENEFITS?

Assessing climate change adaptation results for women, men and marginalized groups promotes equitable benefits and brings unintended consequences to the surface.



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Gender-responsive climate change adaptation goes beyond consideration of women and men—it explores how views about gender and social norms influence vulnerability to climate change and how they intersect with other factors, such as age, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Adaptation efforts should promote gender equality and actively challenge practices that lead to inequality and marginalization.

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