

Women's Leadership on Climate Justice: Planning for Cancun and Beyond

Friday 17th September 2010
Roosevelt House, Hunter College, New York City

MEETING REPORT

Context for the meeting

A primary reason for holding the meeting was to establish an informal network on **Women's Leadership on Climate Justice** focused on the lead-up to COP16 in Cancun. The structured discussion was designed to facilitate coordination and interaction of activities by a significant grouping of women in a way that would complement and bolster existing activities, while identifying strategic issues and determining if a common message and additional collaboration would be helpful.

As an important element of a proposed longer-term process by The Mary Robison Foundation – Climate Justice, and following extensive one-on-one networking efforts, the meeting brought together women from different regions and perspectives to form an informal network, or "patchwork quilt", on women's leadership and climate justice. The network also includes many who could not attend the meeting but whose input and participation is actively encouraged. The majority of network communications will be electronic.

The meeting was scheduled immediately prior to a week of international meetings in New York, including the UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Clinton Global Initiative, the UN General Assembly and the UN review of the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island States, and associated civil society side events. This scheduling allowed the invited participants to be drawn from those gathering in New York at that time. It also allowed participants to bring the priorities and messages of women's leadership on climate justice into other events throughout the following week, hoping to reach a larger audience of policy-makers, businesspeople, global civil society, activists and the media.

The meeting and network on women's leadership on climate justice builds from events Mary Robison has participated in and/or co-hosted previously, such as the panel discussion "*Global Women Take Action on Climate Change*" in New York in September 2009 and the panel "*Women Leading the Way on Climate Justice – A Global Perspective*" during COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Participants

A goal of the meeting was to bring together individuals and organizations working at different levels and in different sectors, to consider strategic issues and points of convergence as we move towards COP16 in Cancun. Therefore, participants were invited from all relevant sectors - the UN, government, civil society, philanthropy and the private sector. A round-table format was chosen to facilitate maximum interaction and the numbers were confined to 35 invited participants. There was an excellent level of contributions to what many described as a stimulating and productive discussion.

Attendees included individual women leaders, representatives of key organizations that have taken a leading role in addressing climate change and promoting women's leadership or organizations with a growing involvement in the area. The meeting was attended by representatives of:

- State Permanent Missions to the UN including Finland, Ireland, Republic of Maldives and the Pacific Small Islands Developing States.
- Relevant UN organizations including UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Women – represented by UN-INSTRAW and UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) – and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- Various Civil Society organizations including International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF/FIMI), Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), CIVICUS, Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and African Gender and Climate Change Network.
- Funders including Global Fund for Women, The Rockefeller Foundation and Buffin Foundation.
- Special Interest groups including Climate Wise Women, Nobel Women's Initiative, UN Foundation and business leaders.

Agenda

Session 1.

Mary Robison welcomed all participants, acknowledging the considerable experience of many in the room; everyone briefly introduced themselves. She noted that this was the first event of her newly launched organization The Mary Robison Foundation – Climate Justice, and was convened with the organization that has been her primary focus for the last seven years, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, which is coming to a planned end in December 2010.

Mary then set the scene explaining the concept of climate justice. She shared the working definition she was using:

"Climate Justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centered approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its resolution equitably and fairly."

While climate justice as a concept is understood by different groups in different ways, there is wide support for the validity and value of the concept itself and the importance of using a climate justice approach as the appropriate response to climate change.

Mary continued by outlining the key issues for ensuring women's leadership. She emphasized the need to reframe the narrative on climate change, placing people at its center, and creating a positive message of action. She highlighted the need to mainstream women's participation on climate change, and encouraged participants to think about how to build on what is already being done, how to effectively promote climate justice and gender messages, and what immediate opportunities would arise at various meetings during the following week.

Mary also drew attention to the paper distributed at the meeting, *"Climate Change Impacts on the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: Can We Afford Not to Integrate?"* produced by Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, GCCA and GCAP.

Session 2.

This was the substantive part of the meeting and was divided into two sub-sessions - Climate Justice and Gender - with short, five minute presentations on key topics followed by discussion. Sharon Jackson, The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, acted as Rapporteur for this session.

The **Climate Justice sub-session** was moderated by Heather Grady, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative.

"Climate Finance": presentation by Kelly Rigg, GCCA

Kelly Rigg noted that UNFCCC talks are in a precarious state, but must deliver on 'fast start' and longer term financing commitments. Private financing will be essential. Key opportunities in 2010 include COP16 decisions on fund governance and finance planning, and the report of the high-level UN Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing (AGF) due on October 30th, which may signal government positions. In the G20, France's presidency in 2011 may allow more progress. Funding of fossil fuels by the multilateral development banks far outweighs efficiency and renewables, and thus the World Bank energy strategy review and its possible role in governing UNFCCC climate funds will be important. Immediate opportunities for influencing outcomes include the US on public finance, the AGF on innovative funding sources, the World Bank on energy policy and G20 on financial tax and fuel subsidies.

"National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs)": presentation by Cate Owren, WEDO and remarks by Rachel Nampinga, Eco Watch Africa.

Cate Owren noted that the key issue is implementing adaptation effectively, with the provision of necessary funding. While UNFCCC's main function is to tackle mitigation, this dramatically affects adaptation, so both must be addressed. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are funded by UNFCCC to create a NAPA, covering areas such as adaptation projects, water, forestry, early warning systems and agriculture. While meant to complement a country's PRSP (Poverty Reduction

Strategy Paper), the NAPA distinguishes between development and adaptation; increasing countries' concerns that funding will be cut for existing development projects or for new development problems created by climate change. A 2007 WEDO review of existing NAPAs found that one third did not mention women or gender, one third mentioned it in a tokenistic way, and one third had a good gender component, although gender analysis was lacking and women were largely excluded as stakeholders. Opportunities include supporting countries in the lengthy and expensive NAPA process, and ensuring that implementing agencies adhere to gender responsive plans.

Rachel Nampinga emphasized bringing positive local and community practices into national processes. Equity issues are present internationally but less so at national level. Government budgets must address poverty, development and climate change in a complementary fashion. Women leaders need to engage to actively inform NAPAs and national policy.

"Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD)": There was no formal presentation but remarks were offered by Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, The Rockefeller Foundation and Elsa Stamatopoulou, Columbia University.

On REDD, the importance of equity and community tenure issues was noted, such as who owns the land and the carbon. There is little work so far on gender dimensions of REDD despite the gendered impacts of REDD projects. While indigenous groups are divided in their acceptance or criticism of REDD, it is crucial that indigenous people, who have often safeguarded forests, contribute meaningfully to REDD debates. High levels of consultation and strong guidelines, such as those in UNREDD, can provide good examples.

The **Gender sub-session** was moderated by Elsa Stamatopoulou, Columbia University.

"Gender Dimensions of Climate Change": presentation by Tracy Raczek, UNIFEM

Tracy Raczek noted the overall lack of research on gender and climate change, with an over-reliance on case studies. Legitimacy is weakened when arguments move too quickly over evidence to reach policy recommendations. Research is essential but may be seen as a 'luxury' that must be fought for in the current economic climate. On messaging, complex and compelling reasons need to be matched to audiences, without allowing the cross-cutting nature of climate change to weaken arguments. There is high demand for resources, pledges must be honored without threatening development assistance, and mainstream dedicated mechanisms on gender and climate change are needed. The response must include improved research and messaging, more and better utilized gender experts, increased capacity on the ground, and avoidance of an exclusive focus on international policy. There was a comparison of gender in UNFCCC and other major environmental agreements, and summary of gender language recently added to the UNFCCC negotiating text.

"Appropriate and Green Technology for Women": presentation by Kristine Pearson, Lifeline Energy
Kristine Pearson focussed on renewable energy to benefit women and children in developing countries, and presented the solar powered wind-up Lifelayer MP3-enabled radio. It allows uploading of audio content e.g. on climate change or environmental stewardship, suitable for

illiterate users, and it can also be used to charge phones. Access to electricity is extremely limited in many developing countries, meaning that expensive and poor quality batteries are widely used, creating large amounts of toxic waste. Kristine emphasized developing products in consultation with women users in order to meet their needs, such as lights for using in the dark, alarms, and chargers to avoid dangerous journeys to charge devices. Renewable power sources reduce the (often gendered) financial barriers to accessing information and devices can also facilitate micro-businesses, such as shared charging facilities.

"Current Impacts of Climate Change on Women in Developing Countries": presentation by Yassine Fall, UN-INSTRAW.

Yassine Fall brought recently collected evidence and testimonies from Senegal on the impact of flooding and malaria, both set to increase in severity with climate change. Personal testimonies by Maguette Sakho, Sokhna Aminata Bocoum and Racky Dia described destruction of houses, shops and schools by floods, loss of belongings, inaccessible roads, increased risk of malaria to children due to mosquitoes and dirty water, and fire and health risks due to temporary unsafe cooking arrangements. The deaths due to malaria of Pape Mor Toure's parents left him responsible for six siblings. Yassine emphasized that such knowledge and the people who are finding solutions as leaders in their own communities should be brought into the international policy arena. These leaders are living with the direct effects of climate change. Women need access to technology, and to have their voices heard. Existing international development commitments have not been met and the financial crisis tells us not to be 'nice' any longer. Financing, political will and direct support to communities are required.

Session 3.

During the final session, the focus was on the identification of areas of strategic focus – for individuals and their organizations. Participants identified a large number of ideas, good practices and specific opportunities for collaboration before COP16, as well as side events and training during COP16. The meeting atmosphere was collaborative and cooperative, with open sharing of information, requests to collaborate, and suggestions for shared activities.

There was a shared desire to build on what is already happening and to be more effective. It is important to find more ways to be 'at the table', to reach different audiences and to be leaders in different ways. Participants indicated a range of upcoming events to which they would bring the climate justice and gender message.

Key messages

Key messages to come out of discussion at the meeting included:

- Climate justice must be linked with development, including issues such as food security, health (especially malaria), energy, income, water and sanitation. There need to be greater connections made between climate change and the MDGs, and between NAPAs and PRSPs.
- The gender dimension must be explicitly included and considerably strengthened within sub-topics of climate change policy such as financing (including climate funds), NAPAs and REDD.
- Women need to have a stronger voice and greater representation, particularly within national and international policy arenas on climate change. Women have developed solutions and are taking action, but this is not sufficiently recognized. Women can and do make a difference, and are not solely 'victims' affected by climate change, as they are often represented. In developing countries, women are particularly active as leaders within their families, communities and schools. Women have a right to be involved in decision-making and directing action on climate change, and it is also smart to involve them.
- The capacity for individual women, and women's organizations, to engage on climate justice needs to be strengthened. Institutional capacity is a core problem. Concrete support, including funding, training and information, is required to allow women to engage. Getting grassroots women more involved is particularly important.
- It is helpful to provide examples of good practices, local and national solutions and promising initiatives. Increased sharing of such examples, including on-line and through databases, would be useful.
- There was a strong call for positive messages on climate change, rather than the 'doom and gloom' that still dominates media reporting and, sometimes, civil society campaigning. There was a determination to reframe the climate change story. For example, rather than political will, which can become political 'won't', emphasize political 'can', what can be done. It is also important to avoid giving excuses for inaction or for cutting funding.
- There was a need for community knowledge, local leaders, stories, case studies and locally-generated solutions to be brought to the attention of other local groups (including those geographically distant), national policy-makers, business, and international policy-makers.
- Developing countries have knowledge of the real and likely effects of climate change and its impacts and are already generating solutions. The experience and knowledge from developing countries needs to reach the international policy space with greater impact than it has so far.
- Technology for women needs to provide answers for what are often unrecognized and unmet needs.
- The importance of research with a strong evidence base was repeatedly emphasized. There is a need for more research and knowledge generation in some areas where there is an information gap and a need for greater care in the use of existing information so as not to undermine arguments, such as the effects of environmental degradation versus climate change.
- Messages on climate justice need to be simple, unified, and positive. There is an opportunity for large networks and groups to get behind a single 'manifesto'.
- In developing countries, relatively strong national civil society organizations tend to be

focused on national climate change issues, but insufficiently networked with international civil society and global policy; while in developed countries, national and international NGOs often tend to focus on global policy while remaining disconnected from less-recognized domestic organizations working on local environmental issues.

- Ensuring survival for extremely vulnerable countries, such as small island states, can also include addressing the gender dimensions of climate change, simultaneously and in a complementary fashion. However, trying to address both can place severe strains on the capacity, resources and population of small countries, and this needs to be addressed.
- Consumption, in both developed countries and among the wealthier developing countries, needs to be mentioned more and addressed directly in climate change discussions. Differences may be less between global North and South than between rich and poor around the world.
- Greater solidarity between countries and individuals was encouraged, and a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support, rather than allowing a politics of division to succeed. Highlight what we have in common, and share in one another's successes.
- Mitigation and adaptation need to be balanced in terms of attention and funding, as currently the vast majority of both go towards mitigation. It also needs to be understood that mitigation is part of the climate justice approach alongside adaptation.
- More efforts should connect to the national level - in terms of international policy recognizing national needs, while also having international policy translated into real national actions, and in terms of local and community needs and civil society inputs being taken into account at national level. Need to build both 'ground up' and 'top down' bridges.

There will be a side event at COP16 in Cancun in December 2010 on women's leadership for climate justice, following up on this meeting and the larger network. The side event is being co-organized by Green Belt Movement, Nobel Women's Initiative, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, Climate Wise Women and The Mary Robison Foundation – Climate Justice.

All the participants agreed to share their email addresses to facilitate direct communications including sharing information and materials, and possibilities for collaboration with the network, particularly as all participants focus on strategic opportunities in the lead up to Cancun.

Considering the emphasis of the meeting on climate justice, human rights and women's leadership, it was particularly apt that this event was one of the first to be held in Roosevelt House, the newly restored first home as a married couple of Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt, and now part of Hunter College. The meeting concluded with a short tour of Roosevelt House given by historian Deborah Gardner, and was followed by a small reception.

Meeting report prepared by: Sharon Jackson, 5th October 2010