

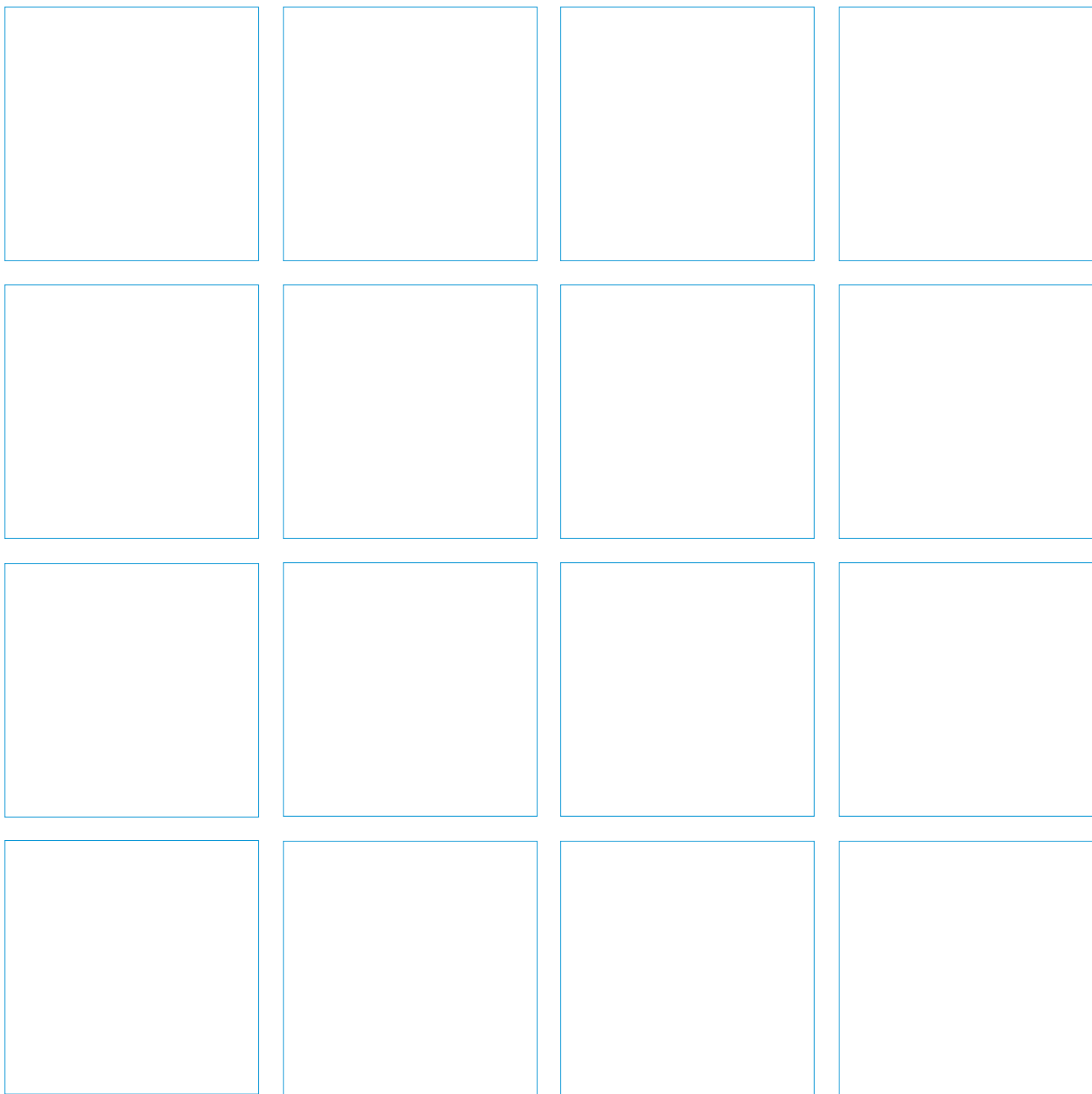
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

An Enabler of Climate Justice

FIRST EDITION: NOVEMBER 2015



**Mary Robinson
Foundation**
■ Climate Justice





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Executive Summary

The impacts of climate change are different for women and men, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty. However, climate policy in general has not addressed the different ways in which climate change affects men and women. To ensure climate justice for women, their participation in decision-making processes is required. The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (the Foundation) is working to contribute to the development of gender-responsive climate policies. At the international level this is policy which sets out commitments to address the gender dimensions of climate change and which provides guidance on how best to do this.

This policy brief demonstrates the positive impacts of women's participation on the design, planning and implementation of climate policy and in doing so highlights the benefits of supporting women's participation in the development of gender-responsive climate action. Overall the evidence base on the benefits of women's participation in the design and implementation of gender-responsive climate policy and climate action is limited. There are two conclusions to be drawn from the lack of evidence, *firstly* that there are not enough efforts to enable women's participation in climate actions and *secondly* that not enough is being done to document best practice where actions are taking place to enable women's meaningful participation in climate actions. However the evidence that is available indicates that the inclusion and involvement of women in decision-making results in positive outcomes for men and women.

The case studies presented in this resource highlight women's participation in climate action, covering both mitigation and adaptation, at various levels of civic engagement:

- In El Salvador, Julia Antonia Menjiva has engaged in effective adaptation action in her community and municipality, and is now helping to shape a gender-responsive national climate change plan
- In Chile, Celia Reyes demonstrates how women's participation in a local neighbourhood organisation can bring about robust adaptation and mitigation action that responds to the needs of all in the community
- In Vietnam, an assessment of the gender dimension of REDD+ finds that the value of incorporating a gender analysis into the design of mitigation action is diminished without also enabling the meaningful participation of women.

From these case studies the following five recommendations can be drawn:

1. Increase the participation of women in climate actions at all levels
2. Understand the context in relation to women's ability to participate
3. Shift the emphasis from women's representation to meaningful participation in climate actions
4. Invest in training and capacity building to enable meaningful participation
5. Document the good work that is going on to enable women's participation.

Women's Participation and Climate Justice

“Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.” *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*¹



On the first Gender Day ever held at a COP, during COP18/CMP8 in Doha, Qatar, Cate Owren, former Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization, Alcinda Abreu, Minister of the Environment, Mozambique, Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary, Climate Change Secretariat, UNFCCC, and Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (left to right) discussed gender issues at a panel discussion. Doha, Qatar, 27 November 2012 (Photo: COP18/CMP8 - Sallie Dean Shatz)

Climate Justice

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

Climate justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world's resources. The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)² highlights that climate action is critical to sustainable development and poverty reduction; that those who have contributed least to the causes of climate change are most vulnerable to the impacts; and that mitigation and adaptation raise issues of equity, justice, and fairness.

Climate change is undermining the enjoyment of human rights, especially for people on the frontline of the climate crisis - those who have contributed least to the causes of climate change.

Gender and Climate Change – A Double Injustice

The work of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice is guided by seven core principles. One of these principles is to **Highlight Gender Equality and Equity**. The gender dimension of climate change, and in turn climate justice, must be highlighted. The impacts of climate changes are different for women and men, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty. Women's voices must

be heard and their priorities supported as part of climate justice. They are critically aware of the importance of climate justice in contributing to the right to development being realised and can play a vital role as agents of change within their communities.

Women constitute 50% of the world's population and the majority of the world's poor. Over 60% of the people living on less than one US dollar a day in Sub-Saharan Africa are women, and poverty increases vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Climate change exacerbates existing social inequalities, leaving women disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts. For example:

- Women are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change³
- Women are often constrained in their response to sudden onset disasters such as floods and cyclones. During natural disasters, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men⁴
- Women farmers are disproportionately affected by climate change because of their limited access to natural resources and limited access to information and services about climate resilient and adaptive agricultural strategies and technologies⁵
- Women face additional social, economic and political barriers that limit their participation and coping capacity.



Women constitute 50% of the world's population and the majority of the world's poor



Over 60% of the people living on less than one US dollar a day in Sub-Saharan Africa are women



During natural disasters, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men

Acknowledging that men and women are impacted differently by climate change and enabling equal participation in the design, planning and implementation of climate policy can contribute to the development of gender-responsive climate policies which are ultimately better for people and planet. However, the evidence base on the benefits of women's participation in the design and implementation of gender-responsive climate policy and climate action is limited. While the importance of women's participation at multiple levels of decision-making, and of integrating gender into climate actions is well documented, there is a dearth of documented

follow-up on the impact of such participation. This is in part due to the fact that women's participation remains limited in many aspects of life but in addition there is a need to document the impact of women's meaningful participation on the effectiveness of climate actions.

Nevertheless, there are examples of positive actions that seek to include the differentiated needs of men and women in climate actions and that actively promote the inclusion and involvement of women in decision-making. The case studies from El Salvador, Chile and Vietnam included here add to this body of knowledge.

Gender Equality and International Processes

There has been recognition that women's empowerment and gender equality are development objectives in their own right since early 1990⁶. This was consolidated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 and the Millennium Development Goals 3 and 5⁷. Today, two key fora for women's engagement in climate action are the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Under the UNFCCC

Women's participation in the context of the climate change Convention did not garner political attention until 2001 when the decision was made to formally address women's participation and representation in bodies established under the UNFCCC (Decision 36/CP.7). In subsequent years the debate on gender differentiated impacts of climate change and the need for gender equality in climate action gathered pace. The UNFCCC has continued to recognise the need to address gender equality and women's participation in its work as evidenced by COP Decisions 1/CP.16, 23/CP.18 and 18/CP.20.

The Lima Work Programme on Gender (decision 18/CP.20) adopted in 2014 aims to advance implementation of gender-responsive climate policies and mandates across all areas of the negotiations. In establishing the work programme Parties recognised that *“gender-responsive climate policy still requires further strengthening in all activities related to adaptation and mitigation as well as decision-making on the implementation of climate policies”*⁸.

Post 2015 Development Agenda

The Sustainable Development Goals also contain a commitment to address gender equality. Goal 5 aims *“to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”*. In addition, goal 13 *“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”*- addresses women's participation in climate actions with a target (13b) proposed to *“Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities”*.

Enabling Meaningful Participation for Women

Increasing women's participation in the design, planning and implementation of climate actions can lead to improved environmental and development outcomes for all. At a political level, women's participation results in greater responsiveness to citizen needs, often increasing cooperation across party and ethnic lines and delivering more sustainable peace⁹. Female parliamentarians tend to prioritise social issues such as childcare, equal pay, parental leave and pensions, physical concerns such as reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development matters such as poverty alleviation and service delivery¹⁰. In fact countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties¹¹.

This translates to the local level also; evidence shows that women's inclusion in leadership positions results in improved outcomes. Women's greater participation in the governance structure of an institution protecting a community resource, such as a forest, leads to better resource conservation and regeneration and women's presence on executive committees of community forest management groups assists in improving forest quality due to more acceptable rules of extraction and protection¹².

Too often women are categorised as vulnerable with little acknowledgement that they can and already are offering solutions - they offer hope for successful adaptation and low carbon development through their critical knowledge,

experience and the unique role that they play in agriculture, food security, livelihoods, income generation and management of our natural resources. Enabling women's participation is not only the right thing to do, it also is the smart thing to do. As the case studies from El Salvador and Chile highlight, women's participation results in actions that are more appropriate to their needs and the wider community.

Policies and projects produced without women's meaningful participation can reinforce, or even exacerbate, existing gender inequalities. As the case studies from El Salvador and Vietnam highlight, understanding the different needs of men and women and the sociocultural issues are essential in designing gender-responsive climate actions. Involving women in the planning and design of policies and programmes not only ensures better climate and development outcomes but can also have wider impacts supporting women's social and economic empowerment. The act of enabling women's participation, changes cultural perceptions of women's capacity to make decisions: in turn prompting the formation of other initiatives and cooperatives for women, allowing them to become more active outside the home. Projects that fail to enable the meaningful participation of women in the design and planning stages risk reinforcing existing social structures and negative traditional norms of decision-making thus weakening women's ability to participate within or influence the project¹³.

It must be acknowledged that participation alone does not guarantee gender equality. The presence of women at the decision-making table on its own is not enough to change cultural or institutional biases. There is strong evidence which shows that the barriers do not disappear once women reach the decision-making table. Women's participation can be categorised into three levels, as follows;

- 1. Presence:** Women are present in decision-making fora but lack any agency or voice to affect change. Women are not supported with capacity building or networking to strengthen their knowledge or confidence. The environment is not conducive to gender equality.
- 2. Partial Participation:** Women are present in decision-making fora and have some agency or voice to affect change in limited areas particularly on topics traditionally associated with women such as women's health or childcare. Women may be supported with capacity building or networking to strengthen their knowledge or confidence. The environment is somewhat conducive to gender equality albeit in a limited way and as long as it does not negatively affect the powerbrokers (men).
- 3. Meaningful Participation:** Women are present in decision-making fora and have agency and voice to affect change in all areas of decision-making. Women are supported with capacity building, networks and access to resources to strengthen their knowledge or confidence. The environment is conducive to gender equality and men are allies and partners in this process.

Women's ability to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives hinges on a multitude of factors and barriers to participation ranging from structural (including explicit and implicit gender bias at organisational level), political marginalisation, restrictive cultural norms and informal discriminatory practices such as holding meetings in places or at times that render women's attendance more difficult. There is need to avoid just counting numbers of women, or allocating women gender stereotypical roles such as organisers and coordinators, rather than real decision-making power.

This is especially true for the participation of women at grassroots level, where women's participation is predominantly in supporting roles rather than positions of power or influence. Even where women are more involved at community level in decision-making, this is often an outcome of 'top-down' empowerment imposed by donors in an effort towards gender mainstreaming. Power brokers in the community may include women in decision-making structures but there is a danger that without other supporting behavioural change and gender transformative initiatives, this may become a 'tick the box' exercise rather than facilitating the meaningful participation of women. Addressing this, as highlighted in all the case studies, requires capacity building. In order to fully support women's participation in decision-making processes, resources, knowledge products and training should be targeted to women especially at local level.

CASE STUDY 1

Empowering women to participate in climate action elevates expertise from the local to the national level¹⁴



Julia Antonia Menjiva from the community of Guadalupe in El Salvador, has become involved in gender-sensitive programmes on climate change adaptation that have empowered her and other women to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, which has improved traditional power imbalances in their community. El Salvador, 2015 (Photo: Trócaire/ UNES)

In El Salvador, specific measures have been taken to empower women by building their capacity to participate in environmental decision-making and advocate on their own behalf. The story of Julia Antonia Menjiva's meaningful engagement in adaptation planning, both locally and nationally, illustrates how an enabling environment for women's participation can enhance climate action.

El Salvador is highly vulnerable to climate change and severe climate events are set to increase between 2010 and 2030¹⁵. El Salvador is one of the most deforested and densely populated countries in Latin America and while progress has been made in recent years, 29.6% of households still live in poverty¹⁶. In 2011, El Salvador was affected by a cyclone called Tropical Depression Twelve-E, which caused a 70% loss in corn production and a 90% loss in bean production in some regions. In 2014 regions of El Salvador were also affected by a drought, which resulted in the loss of local production.

Julia Antonia Menjiva, a 50 year old mother of 12, is from the community of Guadalupe in the Municipality of San Julian. After the 2011 12E storm, her family lost animals, seeds, and all of their agricultural production. Ever since then, she has been engaged in efforts to enable her family and community to adapt to climate change. Julia benefits from a programme which is implemented by Trócaire and the Salvadoran Ecological Unit (UNES) on climate change adaptation¹⁷.

Information collected at the beginning of the project showed

that 50% of men felt that they should have the final say in the family and the community. In contrast, 80% of women felt negatively affected by machismo and did not agree that women should be subordinate to men. Women felt that they should have equal say in their homes and in the communities and have equal access to resources and opportunities. As part of the needs assessment for the project women requested assistance to develop a higher sense of self-esteem and strengthened leadership to enable them to participate in decision-making processes in their communities. In response to this, the project was designed to encourage men to change their negative behaviour and to strengthen the participation of women in community activities.

Community level response

Julia, along with people from other rural families in Guadalupe, is being helped to carry out actions that will enable her to adapt to the impacts of climate change, adopt agro-ecological production practices, and achieve food security and increased income for her family. The needs assessment for the project identified the need for behaviour change in relation to men's negative attitude to women's rights. As a result the project focuses on promoting more equitable decision-making within families. This involves training to improve women's levels of self-esteem, consistent communication to encourage active involvement, and complementary work with men to promote a culture of respect for women's empowerment and autonomy.

Initially Julia doubted her ability to participate because she was illiterate and didn't think she would understand anything at training sessions. However, Trócaire and UNES developed a tailor made training for Julia and the other women in the community. Julia now says *"they have empowered us, the women of San Julian. They have taught us how to produce and how to fight for our rights. Now we know how to defend ourselves. We know who we have to go to in order to make things change. We know how to report problems, and we've held people accountable"*. As a result of the trainings the women of the community have organised themselves and are seeking solutions to their collective needs.

Municipal level

Julia, along with other community members, is working to influence local decision-making processes that affect their lives. The community is lobbying the San Julian Municipality to develop a Municipal strategy for climate change adaptation. Her community is one of six that form the Association of United Communities for the Development of San Julian (ACUDES AJ). The Association advocates with, and demands that the Municipality takes responsibility for, the protection of the environment and its people. Women from Julia's cooperative have taken a leading role in defining and pushing forward the agenda of ACUDES AJ, effectively challenging the traditional and masculine balance of power.

Julia and her colleagues have been powerful agents for change in the community. One of Julia's victories included the closing of a pig slaughtering house that over the course of many years had been polluting their river. The community organised themselves effectively and directed complaints to the police, the health department and local authorities until the decision was made to close the slaughtering house. The impact of closing the slaughter house meant a significant reduction in pollution of the river. Closing the slaughter house was a huge win for the women, proving that their efforts in advocacy and their capacity to make their voices heard could have tangible effects. This victory has encouraged women to continue advocacy actions to improve the management of the natural resources.

National level

The ACUDES AJ is a member of the Network of Environmentalists in Action. This is a national space that brings together male and female community leaders from across the country to network and collaborate to lobby for legal and policy change at the national level. Representing the interests of women like Julia, Julia's mentor, Carolina Amaya¹⁸, is actively involved in promoting reforms, developing a National Plan for Climate Change, and holding fora with representatives of the legislative assembly to lobby for a national climate change law. One achievement of the Network is an Advisory Committee on Climate Change created by the Government, in line with UNES's recommendations. This

Committee includes the participation of women, indigenous peoples and youth, with the belief that each of these groups should have a voice in climate change decisions.

Julia acknowledges that the women from her community are carrying out significant work at the social and advocacy levels, in addition to assuming domestic work in their homes. But she is happy to work hard if she can influence real change. She believes that on the whole the State institutions at national level don't pay much attention to what is going on in the rural villages of El Salvador, which is why the women feel the need to organise. Julia would like to see more men getting actively involved in the protests and advocacy, as well as wealthy people, since she believes every person in society (regardless of age, class, or sex) has a vested interest in the environment.

For Julia, ensuring that the environment is protected is an absolute necessity. She feels that women are disproportionately affected by environmental contamination:

“That’s why we’re the ones doing the advocacy. The men help too, but the women are leading the initiatives since we’re the ones responsible for bringing water to the house and washing the dishes. If the water is contaminated, if we’re chopping all the trees, then we’re increasing our risk”. She feels that her grandchildren have a right to enjoy the environment, the land, the trees, and the water and believes that if these resources are depleted, then the younger generation will suffer. In Julia’s community, women’s increased participation has provided them with a space to address the environmental problems that directly impact them. The training they have received has a tangible impact on improving their livelihoods and making them more resilient in a complex context. Thus, women who participate in training acquire the confidence, knowledge, and skills necessary to make their challenges heard and as well as seeking solutions to the obstacles to enjoyment of a healthy environment and making them more resilient to the impacts of climate change in the long term.

Lessons Learned

Understanding local power relationships and dynamics between men and women improves the design of climate change actions. Education and training are critical for women, but engaging with the men in the community to tackle traditional power imbalances through gender sensitivity training is also crucial.

Targeting participation simultaneously on micro, meso and macro levels in climate change interventions results in a broader level impact that transcends the local nature of many development interventions. Empowering women to play a key role across these levels is central to bringing their knowledge and needs to decision-making processes that impact on their lives.

CASE STUDY 2

Women's engagement in community based climate action can bring about better outcomes for men and women¹⁹



As a member of the local neighbourhood organisation *Junta de Vecinos La Aguada*, Celia Reyes from La Aguada, Chile, has become involved in decision-making processes and the design and implementation of climate action in her community. Building on her skills and knowledge, participating in training on solar energy and rainwater harvesting has enabled her to maximise benefits for her family. In this photo, Celia is participating in a round-table discussion on women's participation in Santiago de Chile in February 2015, convened by the Foundation and UNDP.

Chile has seen significant climate change impacts over the past decade. Since 2008 recurrent drought in the O'Higgins region has rendered many rural livelihoods impossible. Today, women are central to community efforts to adapt. The story of Celia Reyes offers one such example - by combining the knowledge of her family's needs with exposure to new technologies Celia was able to build resilience to climate change at a local level.

Since its transition to democracy in 1990, Chile has gone through significant social and economic changes. Enhanced participation of citizens has, amongst other things, contributed to increased prosperity but considerable gaps remain between the country's richest and poorest. Many of the country's rural communities in particular still face the challenges of poverty. These shifting fortunes are particularly evident in relation to women. Reports on women's participation in Chile tend to present a picture of a country in transition when it comes to cultural and societal attitudes towards women with differences in terms of levels of participation at the national and sub-national levels when compared with the community level.

Women's participation at community level

Celia Reyes was born in the rural agricultural community of La Aguada in the O'Higgins region of central Chile and lives with her husband Alex Nunez and their two daughters. Now in her late 30s, Celia has lived through the changing weather patterns, including increases in temperatures and

sharp decreases in rainfall that have altered the agricultural landscape of her community. Where mixed farms producing cereal crops, mainly lentils and wheat, and livestock were common 30 years ago, soil degradation, water shortages and desertification mean that it is no longer possible to produce crops and the land can now only sustain small livestock. The impacts of climate change on Celia and her family have been very real, threatening their ability to sustain a living from the land and increasing the prospect of migration to a town or city in search of alternative sources of employment.

Since 2008 La Aguada has experienced persistent drought. Today, Celia's family, like others in the community is dependent on deliveries of water by the municipal authorities for human consumption and household use. Every 15 days throughout the summer months municipal water trucks deliver 1500 litres of water to her home. Celia has a disability which limits her mobility and prevents her from working outside the home therefore increasing her vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Maintaining her fruit and vegetable garden and providing food for her family are core parts of Celia's familial responsibilities. In productive seasons selling fruit and vegetables has provided her with a source of income.

A community responds

Celia and Alex are both members of their local neighbourhood organisation, *Junta de Vecinos La Aguada*, with Alex serving as its President. Established with legal status in 1994, the

organisation has a membership of 27: 11 men, 7 women and 9 children (2 male, 7 female). Its stated purpose is to promote community development, protect the interests and rights of neighbours, and to collaborate with municipal and state authorities. Membership is open to all in the La Aguada community and men and women participate as equals.

Several families in Celia's community have migrated to towns and cities, no longer able to sustain a livelihood from the land. An unwillingness to leave the land where she was born and a determination to ensure a better quality of life for her two young daughters drove Celia and other members of her community with similar concerns to seek solutions to the two most pressing challenges they were facing: water shortages and desertification. In 2008 the neighbourhood organisation raised these issues with the municipal authorities in Navidad and together they approached the Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA), a government body, for technical assistance and advice. It was through these engagements that the community of La Aguada became aware of, and was successful in securing funding for, a number of projects under the United Nations Development Programme to Combat Desertification.

As a woman living with the realities of climate change Celia knows the issues her family face, from the provision of reliable sources of water and nutritious food for her family to access to sustainable forms of energy for cooking. Her participation in the decision-making process and in the design and

implementation of climate action at the community level has led to better outcomes for her, her family and her community, protecting their rights to food and water and supporting their right to development.

Building resilience to climate change

Through her participation in her neighbourhood organisation, Celia was able to help tailor the development of the Rainwater Harvest Project which was introduced on a pilot basis in 13 households in La Aguada, including Celia's, in 2009. The project was developed by the community of La Aguada in consultation with the Navidad municipal authorities, INIA and UNDP drawing on both the traditional techniques already used by the families involved and the technical skills and expertise of the partner organisations.

For Celia and Alex, who work as a team in farming their land, the benefits for their family as a result of participation in the Rainwater Harvest Project have been life-altering. Prior to the installation, the family relied on makeshift funnels and hoses to accumulate water for irrigation, a process which was labour intensive with relatively small rewards. The introduction of soil conservation practices – controlling soil run-off, creation of infiltration trenches and planting of native species of trees – will in time increase the productivity of the land. The construction of greenhouses and installation of underground pipes allows Celia, despite her disability, to use hoses to irrigate the plants in the greenhouse and her fruit trees.

The family produces tomatoes, lettuce, parsley, pumpkin, walnuts, vines and quilla – a native species used for medicinal purposes and as a food additive.

Celia is proud of the fact that they are now able to grow everything that they eat and that they eat healthily. Not only has this resulted in an estimated 50% saving in the family budget, they also have an additional source of income, selling the plants they produce in their nursery and surplus food at the local market. Participation in the project has meant that Celia and Alex can sustain a living solely from their farm. Celia's involvement in the design and implementation of climate actions ensured that they respond to her needs and those of her family.

Accessing the benefits of low carbon development

An opportunity for Celia to access the benefits of low carbon development arose when UNDP launched a new initiative to meet the emergency needs of communities in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. Celia and members of her community organisation saw the possibility to access solar energy as something that could lead to major improvements in their quality of life while also learning about energy efficiency. Celia and Alex participated in workshops, predominately attended by women, to learn how to build and service solar ovens, energy efficient stoves, thermal pots and fruit driers. Workshops on the environmental impacts of deforestation and desertification and the sustainable use of firewood

enhanced their appreciation for the diminishing natural resources at their disposal and the need to protect and preserve these resources.

Celia has primary responsibility for energy use within the household. She knows what the energy requirements of her family are; she knows how much time she spends cooking and how much of the family's budget is spent on energy. Today, Celia's home is a model home in the use of solar technology, she is immensely proud of this fact *"It's also really beautiful for me to see that my house is powered using solar, it's really nice to me to know that nearly everything comes from the sun: it has also changed the conditions of my family"*. Time spent cooking using the traditional firewood cookstove has been substantially reduced. This frees up Celia's time, she estimates a saving of 2 hours every day, and allows her to engage in other activities; travel to the market to sell her produce, spend more time with her family and have more free time for herself. It also brings increased health benefits as she spends less time cooking over the toxic fumes of her cookstove. Celia believes there is an estimated 50% reduction in the amount of firewood used on an annual basis and savings in money spent on the purchase of gas for cooking, with gas supplies lasting 50% longer than previously. It was Celia's knowledge of her family's energy needs and her involvement in the planning and implementation of the project to meet those needs that has enabled her family to reap the benefits of access to sustainable forms of energy.

Lessons Learned

In many communities, women are uniquely positioned to apply local knowledge to climate responses, leading to better outcomes for the entire community – women and men. Celia Reyes has lived with the realities of the injustices caused by climate change and she has worked with other members of her community to develop solutions that have not only increased her family's resilience to its impacts but enabled them to access the benefits of low carbon development.

Women need access to resources, knowledge and training to enable them to fulfil their leadership role at local level. While Celia was acutely aware of the impacts that climate change was having on her family she was unaware of the technical solutions required to deal with these impacts or of the positive outcomes that accessing the benefits of low carbon development could bring. Participation in workshops and training seminars where she learnt of the advantages of solar technology and acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to get the most from the rainwater harvesting system enabled her to derive significant benefits for her family.

CASE STUDY 3

Understanding the context is essential to enable women's meaningful participation in mitigation action²⁰



Vietnam is one of nine pilot countries of the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) Programme. Recognising the need to address gender equality in a comprehensive manner, the design of Phase 2 of the REDD+ programme included a gender analysis in order to identify how the programme could better incorporate gender considerations in its planning and implementation.

In Vietnam, efforts are ongoing to engage women in decision-making around forest conservation programmes. The challenge is to transition from participation to meaningful participation – transforming the role of women from a box-ticking exercise to one of active influence. The Climate Change Vulnerability Index ranks Vietnam in the highest risk category. Vietnam is at the forefront of global efforts to fight climate change and was one of the original nine pilot countries of the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) Programme. The UN REDD Programme was launched in 2008, and supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes informed and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including indigenous communities and other forest dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.

Forests occupy 13.1 million hectares or 38.7% of the land area in Vietnam. The forests of Vietnam are under serious threat as a result of deforestation and the effects of climate change. In 2013, it became the first of 47 UN-REDD partner countries to move into the second phase of a US\$30-million programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through improved forest and land-use management. In 2012 47% of total employment, in Vietnam, was in agriculture which includes hunting, forestry, and fishing. Women account for 58% of the workforce in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, responsible for delivering more than 60% of agricultural products.

A national framework for gender equality

Gender equality has been an objective of the Government since the foundation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The Government of Vietnam recognises the need to have greater representation of women in national and subnational levels of leadership in all sectors. The 2010, National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020, sets out clear goals for increasing women's participation in managerial and leading positions in order to gradually narrow the gender gap in the political field. It includes an ambitious target that by 2015, 80%, and by 2020, over 95% of ministries, ministerial-level agencies, government-attached agencies and People's Committees at all levels will have female leaders.

While many women work in the forestry sector in Vietnam they are largely confined to fulfilling subsistence needs. Despite the strong national framework for gender equality, their participation in decision-making at both national and subnational levels and their representation in leadership roles is limited. The challenge is that national commitments have yet to be translated into policy implementation. This has been particularly evident in the REDD+ programme. While Phase 1 of the programme did seek to take on board gender considerations it did not do so in a holistic manner and gender equality equated with the number of women participants as opposed to full and meaningful participation.

The role of gender analysis

Recognising the need to address gender equality in a comprehensive manner, the design of Phase 2 of REDD+ included a Gender Analysis. This was an important step to identify how the REDD+ programme in Vietnam could better incorporate gender considerations in its planning and implementation. This gender analysis supported the

development of a targeted gender action plan for REDD+. This included four gender mainstreaming targets which include:

- Ensuring that 100% of men and women REDD+ officers receive gender awareness training
- Setting a target of 30% of women membership of the independent monitoring board. The independent monitoring board is comprised of NGOs and research organisations from the Vietnam REDD+ Network. The board monitors the overall programme results of REDD+ in Vietnam

Not only did the gender analysis and gender action plan allow for the identification of actions to promote participation, it also ensured that this information is captured and monitored.

Undertaking gender analysis also facilitated the identification of the need for the REDD+ programme to incorporate capacity building as a precursor to meaningful participation. Even though women are participating in various boards this is often confined to what are perceived as traditional roles for women. Women holding senior positions in REDD+ in Vietnam consider that their participation is at the level of consultation (asked an

opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions) and as organisers of events (picking the topic for discussion, chairing meetings, and inviting stakeholders to participate in meetings) as opposed to meaningful participation. The REDD+ steering committee had only two women members in 2012, however in 2015, the committee set a goal that women should form 50% of the committee. It is too early to see whether an increase in women's participation will lead to increased power or influence.

Enabling meaningful participation by women requires capacity building on two levels. Firstly as identified by the REDD+ programme and the National Forest Strategy (2006-2020) there is need to provide training for forestry officials on gender issues. There is a lack of gender expertise in REDD+ teams; out of 52 organisations working on REDD+ in Vietnam only three had gender experts on their team. Secondly, there is a need to empower and build the capacity of women to engage in leadership positions so that this no longer constitutes an impediment to their participation.

Lessons Learned

The presence of women at the decision-making table on its own is not enough – capacity building is central to women's empowerment. In order to fully support women's participation in decision-making processes, resources, knowledge products and training should be targeted to women especially at local level.

Undertaking a gender analysis is a means to an end, but not an end in itself. It is of critical importance to close the loop by documenting the results and ensuring the findings of a gender analysis inform future design and implementation phases so as to remove barriers to women's participation.

Conclusion

This policy brief set out to identify the impacts and benefits of supporting women's participation in the development of gender-responsive climate actions, thus enabling climate justice. The evidence base on the benefits of women's participation in the design and implementation of gender-responsive climate policy and climate action is very limited. There are two conclusions to be drawn from the lack of evidence, *firstly* that there are not enough efforts to enable women's participation in climate actions and *secondly* that not enough is being done to document best practice where actions are taking place to enable women's meaningful participation in climate actions.

The opportunity to participate in decision-making processes which are fair, accountable, open and corruption-free is essential to the growth of a culture of climate justice. As women and men are affected differently by the impacts of climate change the policies developed need to take this on board and should be gender-responsive. Meaningful participation of women is central to the development of gender-responsive climate actions. To ensure climate justice for women their active participation in decision-making processes is required. Including women in climate decision-making at all levels is not only the right thing to do, it will also lead to climate actions that are more successful and better for people and planet.

Recommendations

Increase the participation of women in climate actions at all levels: Involving women in the design, planning and implementation of climate actions has positive benefits for men and women. While the evidence base is low, the case studies presented here showcase the positive benefits for people and planet when women are enabled to participate.

Understand the context in relation to women's ability to participate: Women's ability to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives hinges on a multitude of factors: structural inequality, political marginalisation, restrictive cultural norms and informal discriminatory practices.

Shift the emphasis from women's representation to meaningful participation in climate actions: There is evidence that the barriers do not disappear once women reach the decision-making table. There is need to avoid just counting numbers of women and ensure the meaningful participation of women in climate actions.

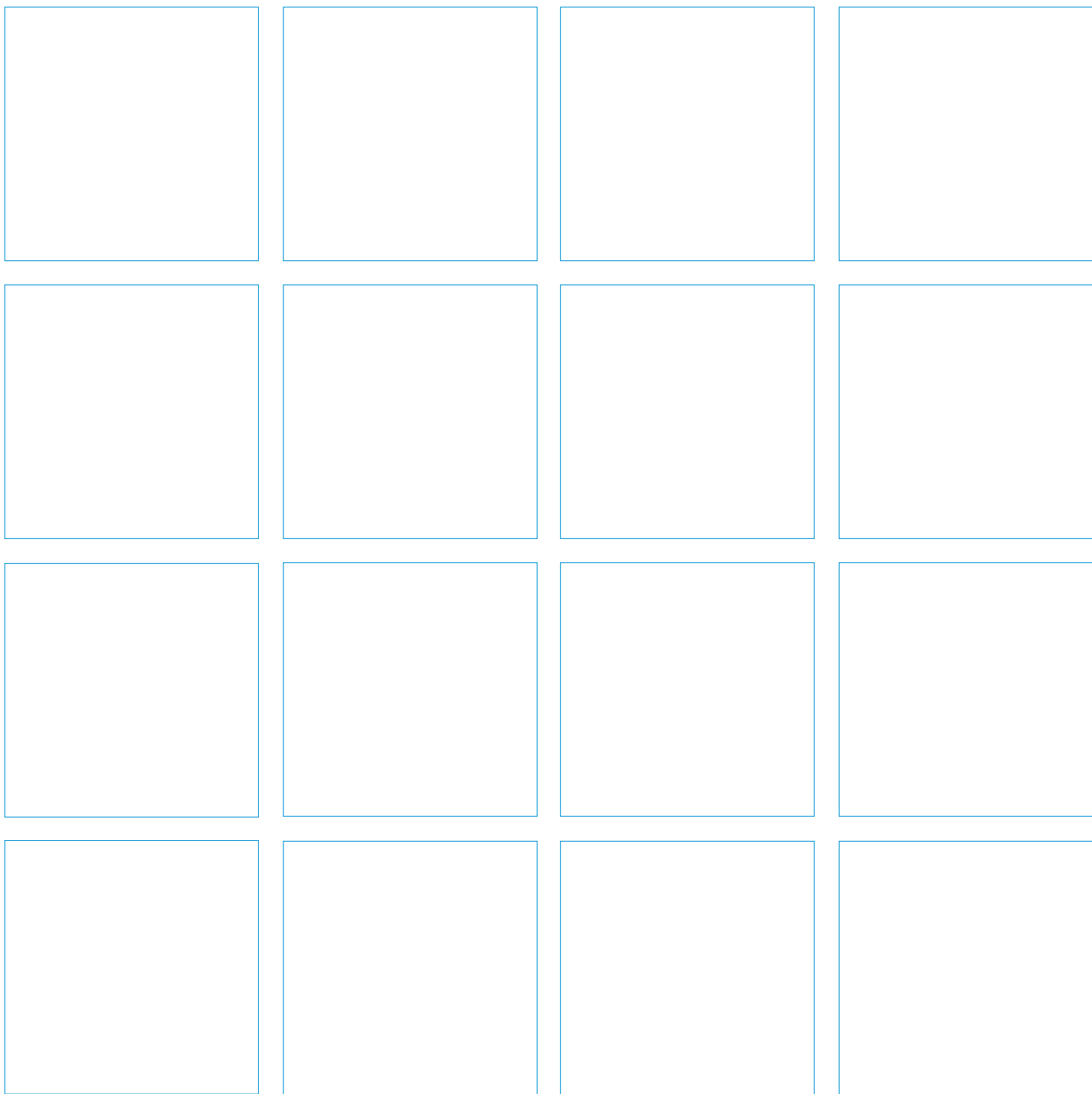
Invest in training and capacity building to enable meaningful participation: In order to fully realise women's participation in decision-making processes, women need to be supported with training, networks and access to resources.

Document the good work that is going on to enable women's participation: This research found that there is limited evidence of the extent of women's participation in climate action. In order to share lessons learned and establish good practice there is a need to document and share the impact of women's meaningful participation on the effectiveness of climate actions.

Annex

- 1 United Nations (1992), Report of The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Annex I Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>
- 2 IPCC (2014), Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers, available at https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf
- 3 UN Women Fact Sheet, Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change, available at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf
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- 13 Boyd, E. (2002), The Noel Kempff project in Bolivia: Gender, power, and decision-making in climate mitigation, Gender & Development, 10:2, 70-77, available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13552070215905>
- 14 Mr. Michael Solis and Mr. José Adan Cuadra (Trócaire) contributed to this case study

- 15 DARA (2012), Climate Vulnerability Monitor, available at <http://www.daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CVM2-Low.pdf>
- 16 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (2014) Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples 2013, available at <http://www.digestyc.gob.sv/index.php/temas/des/ehpm/publicaciones-ehpm.html?download=495%3Apublicacion-ehpm-2013>
- 17 The programme “Strengthening the Resilience of Poor Rural Families El Salvador Threatened by the Impacts of Climate Change” is implemented in fifty eight communities in sixteen municipalities of El Salvador
- 18 The mentor role is a trainer who leads the capacity building processes and works directly with the women. The women can also consult this person directly with respect to any climate change or advocacy issues that emerge in order to offer technical support to the women.
- 19 This study is based on research conducted by Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice in Chile
- 20 Pham Thu Thuy, Mai Hoang Yen, Moira Moeliono, Maria Brockhaus at CIFOR under project Global Comparative study on REDD+ funded by NORAD provided information for this case study





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