

Gender and Economic Policy Discussion Forum

Climate Policy in India through a Gender and Equity Lens

FORUM VIII | 2 JULY 2013

BRIEFING NOTE 8

HIGHLIGHTS / KEY POINTS

- Poor people are more vulnerable to climate change due to their limited adaptive capacities and women comprise a considerable proportion of the world's poorest and disadvantaged population, suffering from various social, cultural, political and economic constraints that render them vulnerable.
- Women being the primary users of natural resources, however, have intimate knowledge of their natural environment and so can help in developing adaptive strategies.
- The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), comprising of eight national sub-missions, aims to achieve sustainable economic growth along with yielding the 'co-benefit' of addressing climate change.
- The NAPCC identifies women as vulnerable subjects of climate change and recommends that each adaption programme give special attention to gender. However, none of the programmes and missions under the NAPCC takes gender into consideration.
- The State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) have been found to be equally gender-blind and techno-managerial and without any scope for bottom-up planning as the NAPCC.
- There is a need to make policies gender aware. Having officials with ground experience and particularly women involved in drafting of policies may help both at the state and the national level. A participatory framework can additionally be useful in giving the community and women, in particular, a voice in drafting policies aimed at them.
- Access to assets largely determine how women will be affected by and respond to the impacts of climate change. Lack of property rights and security of tenure can have implications on women's vulnerability in a changing climate, and also their capacity to adapt to a changing climate. Thus, building up the asset base of women must be the fundamental principle in adaptation strategies.

The eighth Gender and Economic Policy (GEP) Discussion Forum on Climate Policy in India through a Gender and Equity Lens was held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on the 2nd of July, 2013. The discussion highlighted the need for addressing gender in India's climate policies.

As a growing economic power, India is increasingly becoming an influential actor in global climate negotiations. It has among the world's lowest per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but is the fifth largest source of GHG globally (in total tonnes).¹ India is one of the most vulnerable nations to the effects of climate change. It is already witnessing warming of average temperature, with frequent heat-waves, extreme summer rains in the north-western region, decrease in seasonal rainfall in the east and the already receding alpine glaciers in the Himalayas. These trends are expected to continue or even worsen to considerable increase in average temperatures, decrease in dry season rainfall, and increase in wet season rains and rising sea-levels. "Such shifts in temperature and precipitation patterns could carry major repercussions for India's freshwater resources and food production."² Human security is also threatened with increasing flash floods, cyclones and other such natural calamities.

India's climate policy, however, can be best described as an attempt to seek a middle ground between maintaining international relations through collective responsibility, and domestic needs and ambitions of economic growth and poverty reduction. On 30th June 2008, India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was released, with eight national subsidiary missions,³ reflecting the same. The NAPCC

recognizes climate change as a global challenge and states its objective as "... establish(ing) an effective, cooperative and equitable global approach based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities..."⁴ It highlights India's challenge of sustaining economic growth along with the global threat of climate change. It also recognizes India's vulnerable position, especially with regard to its economy, which is closely tied to the availability and quality of natural resources (agriculture, forestry, fishing and more). The action plan thus identifies measures to promote the 'urgent and critical concerns of the country'-the development objectives - while yielding 'co-benefits' for addressing climate change.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change impacts different regions, generations, age groups, income groups, occupations and genders differently. Climate change impacts women's life differently than men's, hence, climate adaptation policies and measures need to be gender sensitive. Most consequences of climate change, in terms of access to clean water and fuel, agricultural productivity, risk of famine, are strongly connected to gender equality. Likewise, the NAPCC recognizes that the impact of climate change could prove particularly severe for women. Shortage of water, forest biomass and food grains as well as increased risk to health, would render women the most vulnerable along with children and the elderly. Decline in food and threat of malnutrition may re-enforce the deprivations that women already face. The NAPCC thus recommends that each adaptation programme give special attention to gender.⁵ Women as vulnerable subjects of climate change, is however, the only mention made to gender in the entire plan.

Why gender?

Why women are more vulnerable?

Poor people are more vulnerable to climate change due to their limited adaptive capacities to a changing environment and among them, the rural

poor and rural women are the ones most immediately affected.⁶ Women comprise a considerable proportion of the world's poorest⁷ and disadvantaged population, suffering from various social, cultural, political and economic constraints. They share the maximum burden of household chores but have limited access to resources and opportunities and more importantly a say in decision-making, which render them vulnerable in face of climate change induced challenges and natural calamities. Differences in roles and relations in society, work and domestic life result in differential impact of climate change, rendering women more vulnerable. Women are disproportionately involved in natural resource-dependent activities, such as procurement of water, food and fuel for household consumption. Shortage in the supply of these essential substances only adds to their workload.

Climate change has differential impact on the livelihood of men and women. In developing countries such as India, most women are engaged in agriculture. "Rural women in particular are responsible for half of the world's food production and produce between 60-80% of the food in most developing countries."⁸ Untimely rainfall and high summer temperatures, consequent of climate change, lead to lower farm produce and lower milk production among cattle. This results in women working longer hours, working on own farm as well as additional work as wage labourer along with household care work. Permanent temperature change will lead to loss of certain species and reduce agro-biodiversity, thus, affecting traditional medicine options. Likewise, a rise in the sea-level, resulting from climate change, will affect the livelihoods from fishing in which women are equally involved.

Women have also been found to be affected differently, and often more severely by natural disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones and storms due to gender inequities resulting in high illiteracy, limited capabilities, lack of access to

resources and assets, low mobility and work opportunities outside the home. Rehabilitation from such natural calamities put additional care burden on women, whilst men generally return to their pre-disaster productive roles outside the home.⁹ Caring for the ill, additional nutritional deficiencies along with food and water shortage accentuate the vulnerability of women in the face of natural disasters. Thus, “two of the biggest climate change impacts on women are work overload, including increased investment of time, and double burden due to distress migration of their men-folk.”¹⁰ Vulnerability to climate change can accentuate non-climatic stresses such as poverty, lack of food and energy security, environmental sustainability, loss of traditional coping skills, health risks and gender inequity.¹¹

Women in climate change mitigation and adaptation

Limited access to information and education lowers the mitigative capacity of women, however, they can be made aware of their adaptive capacity. Adaptation involves adjustments to decrease the vulnerabilities of communities and regions to climate change variability. While substantial mitigation will take considerable time to achieve, adaptation aims at addressing current needs. But unlike short-term coping, it has implications in the future: working towards reducing the vulnerabilities to climate shocks and stresses in the future.¹² The high levels of poverty, informal sector work, gendered division of labour and lack of access and control over resources decrease the adaptive capacity of women making them more vulnerable. Gender should thus, be integrated into climate adaptation mechanisms and resources for adaptation should be directed at women. Additionally, women have a vital role to play in adaptation because of their gendered knowledge. Women being the primary users of natural resources such as water and forest-produce, have intimate knowledge of their natural environment and are thus able to develop adaptive strategies.

Factoring gender into activities can help in making significant contribution to not only adapting to climate change but also to “reducing disaster occurrence and loss as well as to more equitable and sustainable development.”¹³ Gender awareness is thus imperative for effective adaptation. Adaptation requires local action and actors and so women should be involved from the very beginning to understand how they have been affected and what measure will best suite them. Gender neutral measures may not properly address their concerns.

The NAPCC mentions crop improvement, drought proofing, afforestation, recharge of water sources including rain water harvesting, protection of coastal areas, improvement in health through control of vector borne diseases, risk financing and disaster management as some of the existing adaptation related programmes. It does not however address gender in any of these adaptive mechanisms. Analysing the differential impact of such adaptive measures, Aditi Kapoor states that organic agriculture is best for restoring soil fertility and retaining soil moisture. At the same time, however, it is a very laborious activity in which women are primarily involved. There is thus need for technology and schemes to lessen the burden on gender – such as community vermicomposting, mechanisms to provide women weather related information, etc. Additionally, special efforts are needed to cultivate the capacities of women. Their knowledge of traditional saline, drought and flood resistant seeds and animal species need to be adapted in the face of climate change. Efforts have to be made to develop technology required to aid in the implementation of such traditional knowledge gathered over the years by working on the field, to address food security. Activities like rain water harvesting would also have differential positive impact on women as women have the responsibility of water collection for the household. Such interventions would contribute towards saving women’s time and effort, thus

leaving more time for income generating activities as well as improving their health.¹⁴

NAPCC

Although the NAPCC mentions vulnerability of women in climate change, none of the missions is gender sensitive or gender responsive.

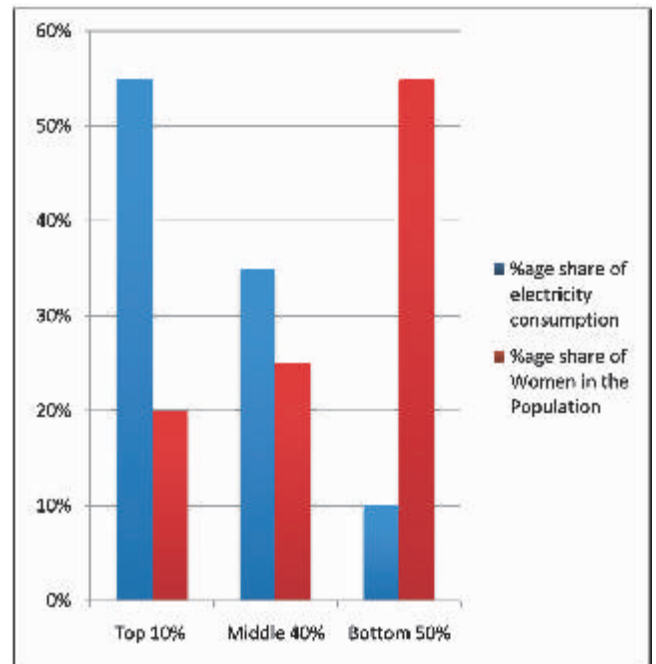
NAPCC and Energy

The purpose of the National Solar Mission is to promote the use of solar energy for power generation. India being located largely in the equatorial sun belt of the Earth has ample access to such clean energy which by replacing fossil fuels can ensure energy security to all. The National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency in Industry and the National Mission for Sustainable Habitat also address ways to promote energy efficiency. While the former is aimed at the industrial sector to make changes in the use of technology and fuel, the latter's focus is on the residential and commercial sector. It is important to address gender in energy efficiency as women can not only benefit from such initiatives but can also contribute in production and management of energy resources and also make important choices in the use of the same.

Access to energy is not only required for cooking and heating purposes but is intrinsically tied to livelihood. Census 2011 reveals that 67.2% of the households of India have access to electricity¹⁵, while 31.4% rely on the use of kerosene. For cooking and heating, 67.2% households rely on traditional bio-mass such as dung cakes and firewood, and only 28.5% have access to LPG or piped natural gas (PNG). Access to electricity as per equity reveals that the top 10% of the population in terms of income class consumes more than 55% of the electricity generated and distributed. While the middle 40% consumes around 35% and the bottom 50% has access to less than 10%. The bottom 50% in terms of income class, additionally, comprises of the highest percentage of women in the population at 55% (Figure 1). Thus, energy

distribution as it stands currently is extremely skewed.¹⁶

Figure 1: Electricity Consumption according to Income and Gender¹⁷



Source: Srinivas Krishnaswamy for GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013

According to Srinivas Krishnaswamy, the government's focus in the last decade has been on increasing electricity generation capacity, mostly through coal-fed thermal power plants, complemented by hydro power. However, in the same period, the percentage increase in electrified households has been just about 15%. Additionally, most of the thermal power plants in the country are situated in Eastern India but the proportion of electrified households in this area is the lowest. Thus, large mega watt power plants do not necessarily increase energy access. Decentralized energy systems have been on the other hand found to be more effective in this regard. The NAPCC aims at promoting the use of renewable energy, however, its focus continues to be on grid connected large systems rather than on decentralized renewable energy systems.¹⁸

NAPCC and Agriculture

The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture recognizes the importance of agriculture in India's

economy and the livelihood of its people. It maps out four focus areas crucial to agriculture in adapting to climate change – dry-land agriculture, risk management, access to information and use of biotechnology. 60% of the country's arable area falls under the dry-land or rain-fed zone, therefore, it becomes important to focus on prevention of decline in agricultural yield as well as securing farm based livelihoods. The National Action Plan states that it hinges on the development and use of new technologies, and this becomes evident in this mission. Development of drought and pest resistant crop varieties; conservation of soil and water; training workshops for farming communities; and, financial support for relevant technology are listed as priority actions under dry-land agriculture. Suman Sahai argues that the focus on dry-land agriculture is correct but the mission's recommendations are very technical. For instance, additional breeding programmes for development of drought and pest resistant seeds is not required as there are several existing varieties of temperature resistant crops and farming communities must be trained on how to get the most of these existing varieties. Similarly, financial assistance should not only be provided for investing in and adoption of new technology but also for insurance and education on how to use such insurances.

For the purpose of risk management the mission recommends strengthening weather insurance mechanisms; creation of web-enabled, regional language based services to facilitate weather insurance; development of GIS and remote sensing methodologies for soil resource and land use mapping; mapping of vulnerable eco-regions and pest and disease hotspots; and, developing and implementing region-specific contingency plans based on vulnerability and risk scenarios. In order to increase access to information, the action plan lists development of databases, monitoring, collation and dissemination of information on soil, weather, land, water resources and more as priority. Further, the mission advocates use of bio-

technology in agriculture as well as strategies to maintain the milk yield of cattle.

The mission on sustainable agriculture is technology driven and even with the increasing feminization of agriculture gender finds no mention in it. It is evident from the priority actions recommended under this mission that it has been devised keeping the male farmer in mind. Insurance and credit are required for agriculture but without *pattas* in their name women cannot access these. Further, the recommendation for creation of web-enabled services is not likely to be fruitful as the communities it is intended for hardly have access to the web, even less so in the case of women. Similarly, there isn't any requirement for the development of GIS methodologies for soil and land use mapping as the data on it is already available. Use of bio-technology as a problem solving tool occupies a disproportionately large space in the NAPCC on agriculture. However, the solution through such interventions would be available only in 30 to 40 years, whereas the need for it is now. Kapoor states that there seems to be some confusion in the climate policy; on one hand it talks of India's organic past on the other it recommends GM and High Yielding variety of seeds.¹⁹ Efforts should, instead, be made to conserve the genetic diversity of crops and animal breeds. Adequate importance should also be given to traditional knowledge that communities, women in particular, have learnt over generations from experience on the field in dealing with the changing climate. "A knowledge-intensive rather than input-intensive approach should be adopted."²⁰ A diversified production model for crops, livestock, fisheries, poultry and agro-forestry must also be adopted. For example, the homestead gardens cultivated by women have been found useful in supplementing daily nutrition.

State Action Plans on Climate Change

The 12th five year plan states that various stakeholders, including the State governments are expected to be involved in the implementation of

NAPCC. The states are thus required to prepare State level Action Plan for Climate Change (SAPCC). The SAPCCs have been found to be gender-blind, giving no focus on the differential impacts and different capacities of men and women. Like the NAPCC, the SAPCCs have been found to be very techno-managerial and scientific, leaving no room for bottom-up planning. Some states have undertaken vulnerability studies, however, the focus of these studies has been on safeguarding physical resources and not on the people and their adaptability to climate change. Low status of the nodal department along with lack of exposure and capacity building has been found to be limiting the fate of SAPCCs.

There is thus a need to make policies gender aware and officials must be trained in the same. Having officials with ground experience and particularly women involved in drafting of policies may help

both at the state and the national level. Additionally, participatory framework should be adopted to give the community and women a voice in drafting policies aimed at them. There is also a need for gender disaggregated data for the differential impact of climate change on women. However, access to assets largely determine how women will be affected by and respond to the impacts of climate change.²¹ In agricultural economies, therefore, women's vulnerability is affected by their relative insecurity of access and rights over resources and sources of wealth such as agricultural land.²² Lack of property rights and security of tenure can have implications on both - their vulnerability in a changing climate, and also their capacity to adapt to a changing climate. Thus, building up the asset base of women must be the fundamental principle in adaptation strategies.

Endnotes

¹ Aaron Atteridge, Manish Kumar Shrivastava, Neha Pahuja and Himani Upadhyay, "Climate Policy in India: What Shapes International, National and State Policy?" <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3357885/>. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

² David Michel, "Introduction," in *Indian Climate Policy: Choices and Challenges*, eds. David Michel and Amit Pandya (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center), Page 3. <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/fullreport.pdf>. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

³ National Solar Mission; National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency; National Mission on Sustainable Habitat; National Water Mission; National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem; National Mission for a Green India; National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture and National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change.

⁴ Government of India, National Action Plan on Climate Change, Page 1. <http://pmindia.nic.in/Pg01-52.pdf>. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

⁵ Government of India, National Action Plan on Climate Change, Page 14.

⁶ Quoted in Jyoti Parikh, "Towards a Gender-Sensitive Agenda for Energy, Environment and Climate Change," in Expert Group Meeting on The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Office at Geneva, November 2009)

⁷ Jyoti Parikh, *Gender and Climate Change Framework for Analysis, Policy & Action*. (IRADe and UNDP India, 2007). http://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/gnder_cc.pdf. accessed on 1st October, 2013.

⁸ Lorena Aguilar, *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change* (IUCN and UNDP in partnership with the Gender and Water Alliance, ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, UNESCO, FAO and WEDO as part of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA)), Page 83.

⁹ IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment_report_wg2_report_impacts_adaptation_and_vulnerability.htm. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

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¹¹ Jyoti Parikh, "Towards a Gender-Sensitive Agenda for Energy, Environment and Climate Change".

¹² Geraldine Terry, "Introduction," in *Climate Change and Gender Justice*, eds. Geraldine Terry (Oxfam GB, 2009), Page 5. http://www.climateaccess.org/sites/default/files/Terry_Climate%20Change%20and%20Gender%20Justice.pdf. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

¹³ Quoted in Yianna Lambrou and Grazia Piana, *Gender: The Missing Component of the Response to Climate Change* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006), Page 16. http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe1/docs/pe1_051001d1_en.pdf. Accessed on 1st October, 2013.

¹⁴ Aditi Kapoor at GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013.

¹⁵ Connected to the electricity grid.

¹⁶ Srinivas Krishnaswamy at GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013.

¹⁷ Srinivas Krishnaswamy at GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Aditi Kapoor at GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013.

²⁰ Suman Sahai at GEP Discussion Forum VIII, July 2013.

²¹ Lorena Aguilar, *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change*, Page 8.

²² IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Page 730.

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