GENDER ANALYSIS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

Key messages

- Social constructions of gender roles mean that men and women experience climate change in different ways.
- Gender-responsive approaches ensure equitable and effective adaptation and mitigation.
- Gender is referenced in the Preamble, Article 7 (Adaptation) and Article 11 (Capacity Building); but not mentioned in Articles 4, 5 and 6 (Mitigation), Article 9 (Finance) or Article 10 (Technology) of the Paris Agreement.
- Not referencing gender risks gender blindness in implementation, reinforcing existing gender roles and relations, and thus perpetuating inequality between men and women.

Why does gender matter?

Societies construct acceptable roles for men and women—which determines what they are expected to do, the knowledge they have, their control over power and resources, and their decision-making capacity. These gender differences also influence the ways in which men and women experience climate change. In order to not reinforce inequality, being gender-responsive highlights awareness of these differences, and the importance of being gender-equitable in implementation.

Women and men do not form homogeneous groups—in reality other social identifiers (for example culture, ethnicity and religion) create unique circumstances. The sum of these different power relations is often grouped together as shorthand within the broad category “gender”.

Commitments to Gender in the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Participation and gender balance

Decision 23/CP8 made at COP18 in Doha is concerned with “Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol”. This decision includes an agreement that gender and climate change will be a standing agenda item within the COP.

Gender-responsive decisions

The Lima Programme of Work on Gender, outlined at COP20, makes explicit recognition of the need to ensure inclusion and gender equitable participation and benefits from adaptation. Decision 18/CP.20 highlights the goal of Parties for developing and implementing gender-responsive climate policy.
Gender and the Paris Agreement

Despite the existing UNFCCC commitments to gender, the Paris Agreement is, outside of the Preamble, largely gender-blind. By not explicitly referencing gender there is the risk that Parties do not apply a gender-responsive approach in implementing the Agreement. This, in turn, may lead to the reinforcement of existing gender roles and relations, and the perpetuation of inequality between men and women.

The term “gender” features only three times throughout the whole Paris Agreement: once in the Preamble; once in Article 7 (adaptation-focused); and once in Article 1 (capacity building-focused). Gender references were progressively removed when tracking the evolution of the text that became the Paris Agreement. In the February and August intersessionals Parties called for gender language in the Preamble, the Objective/General section, adaptation, finance, technology and capacity building. By November, the draft Agreement and the draft decision text included reference to “gender equality”, “gender-responsive” and “gender-disaggregated data”. Gender was missing from mitigation and technology transfer.

Where gender is mentioned in the Paris Agreement

Preamble

The Preamble highlights the importance of observing and respecting other related commitments to vulnerable groups by “Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity”.

This emphasis on gender is consistent with other agreements and reflects scientific understanding as outlined in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Gender dimensions of vulnerability result because of the differential access of men and women to the social, financial and environmental resources that are required for adaptation. Women typically have less control over land, lower education levels, more restricted mobility (due to their home-based roles), and poorer levels of participation in decision-making (although this is changing at national level, with Rwanda, South Africa and Namibia having more female parliamentarians than male). These gender roles also contribute to the relatively higher vulnerability of women to weather-related disasters, with one study of extreme events in 141 countries from 1981-2002 finding that women are killed at an earlier age than men.

There is now more nuanced understanding of the ways in which vulnerability (and impacts and adaptation) are differentiated by gender – and recognition that women (and other vulnerable groups, as referred to in the Preamble), are not homogeneous. Unpacking these differences is essential to identify context-specific differences in vulnerability, and thus ensure that attempts at adaptation and mitigation are gender-responsive. In particular, to redress inequalities, gender-equitable access to technology and climate finance may involve positive discrimination in favour of women.

Article 7-Adaptation

Article 7, paragraph 5 of the Paris Agreement states “Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach,

taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate”.

Gender roles and relations lead to differential vulnerability between men and women. Gender-blind adaptation responses therefore run the risk of reinforcing the existing gendered nature of vulnerability and resulting inequality. Gender-responsive adaptation is thus likely to involve different types of support for men compared to women. Support for cash cropping or other commercially-oriented production in rural areas as a mechanism of livelihood diversification to adapt, for example, is likely to preferentially enable adaptation of men. This is because they typically have access to land and the education and mobility that enable them to participate in value chains and travel to markets, whilst gender roles marginalise women from these opportunities. That said, women should not be regarded as helpless victims of climate change who require additional adaptation support relative to men.

Gender-responsive adaptation, based on an understanding of the way in which vulnerability is gendered, has many advantages. Women’s knowledge and skills can be identified and actively integrated into adaptation planning, increasing inclusion and empowerment. Gender-responsive adaptations are better targeted to the different needs of men and women, and thus more effective and efficient. Equitable adaptation also offers the opportunity to contribute to transforming gender relations and bringing about greater equality.

Article 11-Capacity Building

Article 11, paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement states that “Capacity-building should be country-driven, based on and responsive to national needs, and foster country ownership of Parties, in particular, for developing country Parties, including at the national, subnational and local levels. Capacity-building should be guided by lessons learned, including those from capacity-building activities under the Convention, and should be an effective, iterative process that is participatory, cross-cutting and gender-responsive”.

Different education levels between men and women influence adaptive capacity, and thus positive discrimination to increase access for women and girls is an important mechanism to build capacity to respond to climate change (and also to address broader inequalities). Gender-equitable capacity building includes understanding the different needs of men and women for awareness raising and vocational training opportunities. When appropriately empowered as agents of change, women can play a key role in adaptation and mitigation activities and, at the same time, reduce their situation of inequality relative to men.

Gender roles and relations mean that women and men typically engage in different daily activities that take place in different spaces at different times. Organising an agricultural extension training event in a rural community in the morning, for example, may disadvantage women because it clashes with the time that they may be travelling to fetch water, or beginning to prepare meals. Similarly events at distance from the home, or in public spaces, may impede women’s participation relative to men. Gender-responsive capacity building may mean that the topics need to be targeted towards men or women, bearing in mind gender roles. It may also require practical differences in delivery in terms of timing and location (and possibly for similar trainings to be provided to men and women separately).
Where gender is not mentioned in the Paris Agreement

Articles 4, 5 and 6-Mitigation

Articles 4, 5, and 6 refer to mitigation in terms of commitment to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and maintenance of carbon sinks, but there is no explicit reference to gender. Typically mitigation has been considered to be more of a male issue than a female one, because gender roles mean that men are more likely to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. This relates to their relatively greater use of energy (e.g. use of motorised transport to reach formal sector jobs), and higher likelihood of participation in industry or large-scale agriculture. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to experience energy poverty and be reliant on natural resources for (more limited) domestic use.

The lack of mention of gender with regards to mitigation in the Paris Agreement is unusual since it enshrines national level commitments in Nationally Determined Contributions, which are the benchmarks against which countries will report progress. An analysis of the 162 INDCs submitted as of April 2016 shows that 40% explicitly mention “gender” or “women” in the context of their national priorities and ambitions for reducing emissions. Three quarters of sub-Saharan African Parties reference “gender” or “women”, making the region a global leader in integrating gender equality into sustainable development priorities2. Without the reinforcement of gender within the Paris Agreement it is important to ensure that the (I)NDC gender references inform the development and implementation of gender-responsive mitigation strategies. Similarly it will be important to ensure that the co-benefits of mitigation interventions, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Land Degradation (REDD), do not inadvertently reinforce inequality through inequitable distribution of benefits.

Understanding of gender differences has evolved, and now nuances beyond the traditional binary are recognised. Men and women both have roles to play, albeit perhaps different ones, in mitigation. If designed appropriately there are a number of mitigation activities that can simultaneously create opportunities to contribute to women’s empowerment. Given their role in natural resource-based activities, promotion of afforestation and agroforestry interventions among women may be tied to emissions trading whilst also generating sustainable incomes. Energy poverty can be addressed through, for example, energy-efficient stoves and ovens which do not promote deforestation, are time-saving, and also have health and safety benefits.

Article 9-Finance

Article 9 of the Paris Agreement makes reference to the need for increased availability of climate finance, and transparent commitments of financial support from developed to developing countries. Finance is a key component of the Agreement in order to support costs of adaptation and mitigation. Not highlighting the need for finance to be spent in a gender-equitable manner runs the risk of adaptation and mitigation activities reinforcing inequalities.

Article 10-Technology

Article 10 of the Paris Agreement highlights the importance of the availability of technology – but makes no reference to gender. As with finance, the purpose of technology is to enable adaptation and mitigation. The technology needs of men and women reflect their different gender roles and norms. Without due consideration of these gender differences, technologies may inadvertently add to women’s workloads. Conservation farming as an adaptation to drying conditions, for example,

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promotes minimum till – but the increased need for weeding often adds to women’s labour burden (since weeding is typically a woman’s role).

As with capacity building, gender roles and responsibilities also mean that women and men may have different availability to learn about new technologies, and different capacity to make their voices heard in strategic decision-making.

Priorities to ensure gender-equitable implementation of the Paris Agreement

1. Assess the gender differences and establish baseline situation
   - Undertake analysis of gender differences in vulnerability, as well as adaptation and mitigation (current activities and future needs).
   - Determine where sex-disaggregated data exists (e.g. through national household survey data) and make plans to sex-disaggregate relevant data in future in order to be able to monitor change in vulnerability within the context of implementation of adaptation and mitigation activities.

2. Analyse adequacy of existing policies and strategies with relation to gender issues
   - Determine the extent to which existing climate change-related policies and strategies address gender issues and gaps. Revise if necessary.
   - Ensure that development of related strategies are gender-sensitive, for example the (I)NDC and National Adaptation Plans. If the National Adaptation Plan is not yet completed, critically assess the process to determine whether it is gender-equitable (for example is sufficient room made for comments and inputs from both men and women). Use assessment of gender differences to inform inclusion of activities.
   - Establish monitoring framework using sex-disaggregated indicators.

3. Implementation
   - Determine budget needs to effectively implement gender-responsive climate policies and strategies.
   - Apply gender budgeting, highlighting how public resources will be allocated such that both men and women benefit equitably. If the policies and strategies which they are planned to implement have already been made gender-responsive, gender budgeting involves ensuring that resources allocated to their implementation also equitably benefit men and women (for example if resources allocated are less than that required for full implementation).
   - Monitor budgetary allocations with the support of sex-disaggregated indicators.

Gender-responsive implementation of the Paris Agreement supports other international commitments

- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)
- Sustainable Development Goals, particular SDG 13 “to take urgent action to address climate change and its impacts” mentions the need to “promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities” (13.b).