



Key messages

- Urban scenarios in India are highly complex, with many social dimensions in terms of caste, gender and class. As such, a gender-sensitive approach to climate compatible development is fundamentally different in cities, compared with one in rural areas.
- Urban residents demonstrate different vulnerabilities and capacities for facing the impacts of climate change than people living in rural areas, principally: weaker social cohesion, with the result that women and marginalised people are more dependent on external help in times of need; a higher likelihood of flooding and waterlogging due to poor infrastructure and basic services; and a higher likelihood of food insecurity.
- Project activities should be adapted to address these gender differences, for example, by working through community volunteers and arranging meetings to suit men and women's availability.
- Popular participatory methods developed in the context of rural settings can be adapted to suit the urban setting. In the case of the ACCCRN project, this involved undertaking Participatory Urban Appraisals through several smaller meetings, so as to understand the diversity of factors and issues involved.

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How do gender approaches improve climate compatible development? Lessons from India

Introduction

Although evidence shows that women are both victims of climate change and important contributors of knowledge and skills in disaster risk, adaptation and mitigation strategies, the gender perspective is largely missing from the design and planning of climate change responses and policies. In addition, most research into gender and climate change has been exclusively conducted in rural contexts. There is strong scope for filling these knowledge gaps to improve the understanding of the relationship between gender and climate change in urban settings.

This policy brief explores the advantages and challenges of integrating a gender dimension into climate compatible development strategies in urban settings, with a focus on the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) project in India. An initiative funded by The Rockefeller Foundation, the project was implemented in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh by the Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG).

Findings from a study that focuses on the ACCCRN project show that due to the complex social dimensions found in urban contexts in India, a gender-sensitive approach to climate compatible development is fundamentally different in cities, compared to one in rural areas. Furthermore, urban residents demonstrate different vulnerabilities and capacities for facing the impacts of climate change, and these must be recognised in climate compatible development policy and programming. In India, strong patriarchal structures affect men and women's ability to tackle

climate related risks. However, up until now, gender mainstreaming has not generally been considered essential in the process of developing climate compatible development mechanisms in this country.

This brief is based on a research study, presented in a longer technical report commissioned by CDKN and carried out by Practical Action Consulting (PAC), together with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Latin America (Peru), Eastern Africa (Kenya) and South Asia (India). The full study is published under the same title on www.cdkn.org.

By providing evidence of the importance of gender-based approaches for achieving climate compatible development in urban settings, it is expected that the findings and recommendations of this brief will benefit policy-makers, civil society, practitioners, academia and donors in India and beyond.

Strengths and weaknesses in local communities

The seven-year (2007–2014) ACCCRN project, implemented in Mahewa ward, Gorakhpur city, aimed to improve the resilience of local people through the formation of community institutions and participatory micro-planning processes. The project included interventions in water and sanitation, decentralised drainage, climate resilient agriculture, community health and risk resilient buildings and schools, as well as the identification of climate thresholds and hazards.

Although not specifically targeting women, the initiative adopted various measures to respond to women's vulnerability to climate change in the areas of health, water, sanitation and food, and promoted livelihood activities particularly suited to female members of the household.

The project raised awareness of the diverse needs and challenges of different sections of society, including women, but also their strengths, which could be harnessed to contribute to climate compatible development. The active contribution of men and women in resilience planning, and women's participation in particular, made a substantial contribution to the impact and sustainability of the programme.

Women's contribution to building climate resilience

The study shows clear evidence of the relevance of gender-sensitive programming in climate compatible development to promote and achieve people's empowerment. A core feature of the ACCCRN project was its focus on the active contribution of both men and women in resilience planning, and this approach ensured that practical issues were addressed across multiple areas affected by climate change. Women's participation, in particular, made a substantial contribution to impact and

sustainability, with results that included improved committee functioning, greater access to potable water, more efficient public services and the uptake of climate resilient agricultural techniques. Furthermore, women often prioritised low-income, marginalised groups as beneficiaries for project interventions.

Several ACCCRN project members agreed that: "Had women not participated actively, the project outcomes would have been considerably less, may be around 10–20% of what was achieved. It is largely because of women that the project has been sustainable so far, as well as effective in resilience building."

The ACCCRN project built people's resilience and capacities to absorb shocks and stresses brought about by a changing climate and extreme weather events. Greater transformation came about when women were involved as agents, rather than as mere recipients. This involved creating spaces for women to share their experiences and perspectives and to contribute to decision-making processes, both at local level and also higher up, where women's voices tend to become lost in patriarchal governance structures.

The project demonstrates these important outcomes even though gender-based approaches were not a systematic part of the project design. In the absence of such a formal plan, evidence around the positive impacts of gender-based approaches can be 'lost'. This can lead to the false conclusion that gender-based approaches are an optional (and burdensome) extra, rather than a key strategy for achieving greater impact and the sustainability of climate compatible development in urban settings.

The power of a gender-sensitive approach

The ACCCRN project adopted various measures to respond to women's vulnerability to climate change. Most of these produced positive results, offering confirmation that a gender-

Key definitions

Gender-blind – Project description/proposal does not refer to any particular gender aspects or differences between men and women.

Gender-aware – Project description shows an awareness of gender issues by mentioning differences that need to be taken into consideration, but actual activities do not follow a gender approach consistently, from design to implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

Gender-sensitive – Project follows a gender-sensitive methodology (gender-analysis, gender disaggregated data are collected, gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring and evaluation, etc.) and aims to promote gender equality.

Gender-transformative – Project follows a gender-sensitive methodology, aims to promote gender equality and also to foster change and challenge gender discriminatory norms and/or root causes of vulnerability to climate change, and of unsustainable development. In other words, the project aims to address the underlying causes of environmental or development issues.

Climate compatible development – This is about transforming development pathways to face the climate problem head-on. It moves beyond the traditional separation of adaptation, mitigation and development strategies. Climate compatible development processes adopt strategies and goals that integrate the threats and opportunities of a changing climate to lower CO₂ emissions, build resilience and promote development simultaneously.

sensitive approach leads to better climate compatible development outcomes. Among the many impacts observed were training and information sharing in the health and water sectors, improved

access to potable water and increased immunisation rates among children. Climate resilient agricultural techniques helped to address food and nutrition insecurity, and alternative livelihood strategies improved income-generating opportunities for women.

Where women play a role in deciding how to use this income, the money was spent on education, health and food. Opportunities to train with other neighbourhoods gave women and men a chance to overcome shyness and gain confidence, thereby contributing to the sustainability of interventions.

Mixed meetings and fora helped men and women of different castes and classes to become more aware of the challenges they face and take decisions jointly. These participatory consultations brought out the diverse needs and priorities of community members, as well as a range of skills that were used to contribute to climate compatible development.

Had a gender-sensitive approach been integrated from planning to evaluation stages, the impacts of the ACCCRN project could have been longer lasting, more effective and wider ranging. For example, women's participation beyond the community level was limited, and this probably prevented their experiences and perceptions from penetrating higher levels of decision-making power, something that will be needed if gender is to figure more prominently in policy and practice.

The case for gender mainstreaming in climate compatible development

In India, gender mainstreaming is not considered imperative in the process of developing climate compatible development mechanisms, especially when working on new issues or in unfamiliar settings. The popular belief is that when using a gender-based approach, it takes longer to understand the issues at hand and develop appropriate interventions. As a result,

there may be a reluctance to 'go the extra mile'. Insistence on the explicit integration of gender issues into projects tends to come from donor organisations.

Men, and particularly women, face a range of social and cultural barriers which challenge their ability to tackle climate related risk, such as strong patriarchal structures that dictate the roles they should play. While these restrictions prevented many women from participating in the ACCCRN project, a few of them were proactive, grew in confidence and took on leadership roles. Support and encouragement by facilitators, as well as attempts to build awareness among men, women and decision-makers about how people, including women and children, are affected by climate change, helped many women to contribute to local planning processes.

Recommendations

With limited initiatives addressing climate change using gender-based approaches in urban areas, the ACCCRN project provides a number of useful insights, as well as practical examples and tools to address these domains in an integrated manner. Lessons should be considered, adopted, replicated and adapted by other urban interventions in adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. The research findings also indicate various areas where further action can be taken to strengthen efforts aimed at integrating gender-sensitive approaches into climate compatible development actions and policies. Specific recommendations emerged from the study, according to the different categories to which stakeholders belong.

National and state level policy-makers

- In societies where patriarchy is strong, proactive efforts are required to create an enabling environment so that women can feel confident and participate more fully in decision-making processes. Community-based participatory planning and

monitoring can provide this space and are crucial for improving the effectiveness and accountability of climate compatible development actions. In Uttar Pradesh, the 74th Constitutional Amendment, which mandates community involvement in local urban planning, should be fully implemented, so as to facilitate the embedding of gender-based approaches and resilience micro-planning within government schemes.

- Government policy and programmes relating to climate compatible development – including National and State Action Plans on Climate Change – must integrate women's perspectives when designing and implementing livelihood support strategies.
- Areas that are closely associated with women's roles and responsibilities – such as education and health – require more funding to help urban dwellers achieve better living standards and adapt to changing weather patterns.
- A key area for maximising benefits from climate compatible development initiatives is offering support so that women can achieve greater economic empowerment at the individual level. This will place them in a stronger position to make decisions about investments in key areas exposed to climate change, thereby building household resilience. Such an approach will involve activities aimed at transforming gender relations by building awareness and confidence among women, men, elders and society in general, around equality and empowerment.

Academia, development practitioners and civil society

- The impact of climate change and disasters on men and women from different socioeconomic segments of urban societies should be studied in greater depth and detail, so as to understand nuances and support the development of effective and sustainable strategies for climate compatible development and gender equality.

- Further research is needed into the social implications of climate change in urban areas, exploring such issues as alcohol consumption and domestic violence. More studies are also required to understand how the food security of urban populations is affected.
- Research or projects must systematically collect gender disaggregated data, analyse differentiated needs and vulnerabilities and develop gender equality indicators. This data can also help organisations to monitor and report progress towards climate compatible development and gender equity objectives.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that women are involved in awareness and capacity-building workshops on climate compatible development, given their close association with salient issues. Improving women's awareness levels and capacities can increase the resilience of the entire family, as well as strengthen impact and sustainability of interventions.
- Given the heterogeneous nature of urban societies, with different castes, classes and genders demonstrating different needs, priorities and skills, project developers should pay greater attention to the perceptions and experiences of different sections of society when designing climate compatible development initiatives.
- Special efforts need to be made to build networks and strengthen social cohesion in urban areas, where interactions amongst neighbours appear limited.
- The focus and strategies of interventions and policies needs to be better adapted to urban contexts, vulnerabilities and capacities. For example, while in urban areas fast, high and tangible returns are required to mobilise people, in rural areas even awareness and capacity-building interventions can motivate residents' participation and commitment.

Donors

- Given the general perception that adding a gender equality objective to any project creates a heavier workload and produces little additional benefit, there is a clear need for donors to be explicit in pushing for the integration of gender-based approaches in interventions. This should involve identifying actors willing and capable of pushing for gender equality, creating coalitions of willing individuals, and offering them support.
- Likewise, donors should play a proactive role in promoting knowledge-sharing and exchange around these issues, including improving dissemination of practical tools and training to support the adequate design, planning, implementation and monitoring of climate compatible development and gender equity outcomes.
- Advocacy efforts are also required at policy level, which donors can influence by making funds available for gender-sensitive climate compatible development pilot projects, research and scaling up.

About CDKN

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) aims to help decision-makers in developing countries design and deliver climate compatible development. We do this by providing demand-led research and technical assistance, and channeling the best available knowledge on climate change and development to support policy processes at the country level.

About Practical Action Consulting

Practical Action Consulting (PAC) is the consulting arm of Practical Action, an international development agency working with poor communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help them choose and use technology to improve their lives.

For further information

Access the complete India report, the synthesis report and country reports and briefs from Kenya and Peru online: <http://www.cdkn.org/gender-equality-climate-compatible-development> and <http://practicalaction.org/cdkn-gender-and-climate-change-initiative>



Funded by:



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

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This document is an output from a project commissioned through the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN). CDKN is a programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Netherlands Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by DFID, DGIS or the entities managing the delivery of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network, which can accept no responsibility or liability for such views, completeness or accuracy of the information or for any reliance placed on them. This publication has been prepared for general guidance on matters of interest only, and does not constitute professional advice. You should not act upon the information contained in this publication without obtaining specific professional advice. No representation or warranty (express or implied) is given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this publication, and, to the extent permitted by law, the entities managing the delivery of CDKN do not accept or assume any liability, responsibility or duty of care for any consequences of you or anyone else acting, or refraining to act, in reliance on the information contained in this publication or for any decision based on it. Management of the delivery of CDKN is undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, and an alliance of organisations including Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano, LEAD Pakistan, the Overseas Development Institute, and SouthSouthNorth.