

Gender and State Climate Change Action Plans in India: Research and policies to enable poor women and rural communities adapt to climate change.

Alternative Futures

Narrative Report

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INTRODUCTION

This evidence-based policy research and advocacy on 'gender and climate change adaptation' was triggered by the understanding that India's adaptation policies must be gender-responsive. This is because adaptive capacities and vulnerabilities to climate change are different for men and women (IPCC Report, 2007 Ch 17).

This research project carried forward the work initiated by Alternative Futures through an earlier policy research project on 'Gender and the National Action Plan on Climate Change' (NAPCC). The NAPCC mentions that women, already disadvantaged by the gender gap, will be particularly affected by climate change. However, the National plan fails to include the gender dimension in its eight action-focused Missions that encompass both mitigation and adaptation strategies to deal with climate change. The NAPCC is India's national climate action blueprint but in India's federal structure the nationally agreed adaptation measures will reach its people through State-specific climate plans, based on the NAPCC. These plans, called State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs), largely focus on agriculture and allied activities because at least two-thirds of India's people still live off this sector (Census 2011).

At the start of the CDKN project, some States had shared public drafts of their State-specific climate action plans and these too, like the NAPCC, had failed to include gender dimensions. Thus was born this project – to make State-specific plans more gender responsive, based on (i) analysis of current policies, including public provisioning; and (ii) evidence from adaptive farming interventions from selected agro-climatic zones.

RESEARCH FOCUS

This evidence-based policy research aimed to:

- a) Influence four State-level governments in India to mainstream and articulate gender and inclusiveness in their State-level Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs)
- b) Demonstrate that adaptation policies need to promote climate-resilient low-input agricultural practices and address gender-based differences in doing so; and
- c) Unveil the truth behind adaptation-related gender budgeting in the four selected States.

For (a) and (c), the four States selected were Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Primary work for (b) was done in three highly vulnerable agro-climatic zones which are also poverty-stricken and have low gender development indices:

- Anantapur, India's 2nd most **drought-prone** district in Andhra Pradesh;
- North and South 24 Paraganas, two of the most dense districts in West Bengal, both in the **cyclone-prone** Sunderbans region which also witnesses salinity ingress and floods; and
- Gorakhpur, a **chronically flood-prone** district in the Indo-Gangetic Plains of Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

ACTIVITIES

a) *Incorporating gender components in State-level Climate Change Action Plans (SAPCCS)*

This involved desk review and analysis of selected draft SAPCCs, including programmes and schemes within the plans as well as meetings with relevant bureaucrats at the State and national level. This helped identify and assess programmes/schemes in terms of their adaptation focus and gender responsiveness. Learnings were drawn from policy analysis, field-based adaptation practices of some of four partner NGOs in the above States as well as our primary research. Policy roundtables and policy briefs were used to inform officers in departments dealing with planning and implementing the different components of SAPCCs. The target for influencing policy change was the nodal officer for the SAPCC in each State.

The project was designed to ensure that policy change was owned by the nodal department of the SAPCC in each State. Thus, as the first step, successful inter-departmental policy roundtables were hosted where the nodal officer for the SAPCCs officially invited officers from all collaborating departments working on agriculture and allied activities. This was done in 3 States – Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. In each State, Alternative Futures collaborated as the knowledge partner.

b) *Undertaking primary research to highlight gender dimension of adaptive practices in agriculture*

Primary research was undertaken on organic farming¹ as an adaptive agriculture practice in the above mentioned agro-climatic zones. In each zone, a comparative study was done between 25 conventional and 25 organic farmers working in adjoining villages in a district. Local variation in climate parameters was measured by installing a rainguage in each village and Stevenson Screens, to measure maximum and minimum temperatures, for each cluster of villages. Villagers were trained to take the readings. Gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data was collected for agricultural inputs and outputs, crop resilience, time spent on various activities, workload and tools used as well as decision-making roles. A baseline survey collected a variety of data and further data was collected through surveys, face-to-face discussions, focused group discussions and participant observation by the field staff of partner organizations working in each of the selected districts. This was the first time farm-based adaptive interventions were studied from the gender lens.

¹ Several State governments have declared their States as organic agriculture States. India has the world's most number of organic producers according to global surveys by FIBL-IFOAM on organic agriculture.

Simultaneously, several best practices collected from the field were scrutinized through a gender lens and a policy lens, based on learnings from policy analysis and the field as well as using gender concepts.

c) ***Examining state budgets for allocations to adaptation sectors and to gender within them***

For the above mentioned four states, state budgets were scrutinized for allocations/spending to 'adaptation' responsive sectors based on the categorization used by the Indian government in the NAPCC. These allocations were then further examined for gender budgeting or women's component, as the case may be, to understand where women were benefited and by how much. Though this research was based on secondary sources, the study itself was a first of its kind.

CHALLENGES

- One of the challenges was the resistance of the new West Bengal political leadership on any intervention to promote gender equality. After weighing the risks, AF decided not to directly engage in policy advocacy with this state government on the SAPCC. However, primary research and budget analysis was carried out here.
- Collection of primary data had its own set of problems. One, data had to be collected on many parameters from diverse geographies and through different organizations where the field staff had to be trained on various aspects. Two, there were language barriers as in Sunderbans, for instance, the questionnaire had to be translated into the local language for the field staff to understand and fill and then re-translated into English to be fed into the excel sheets on the computer. Three, motivating conventional farmers, who were not part of the partner organisations' constituency in their work, was initially difficult and some time was lost in collecting ongoing data from them.
- The climate did change! Late rains led to late sowing and harvests of the *rabi* (winter) crop, leading to delays in collecting, processing and analyzing the crop data. It also delayed writing of journal articles and policy briefs since both were dependent on the research findings.
- Interestingly, getting detailed information from women farmers was a problem because women are not used to being asked too many questions and the field staff – primarily male – also not used to talking about crops to women farmers. The field staff was thus not well-versed in drawing information from women, a skill that is different from getting information from men.

OUTPUTS

Key outputs were aimed at policy makers and scientists involved in influencing and/or making the State climate actions plans, especially those related to the agriculture and allied activities. Also targeted were government bodies set up for the empowerment of women, like the National Mission for Empowerment of Women and the High Level Committee on the Status of Women. The main outputs as against the deliverables were:

1. **Policy Roundtables (6-8 expected):** A total of 7 roundtables were held. Of the three roundtables held in Uttar Pradesh, two were hosted by government departments – the agriculture department and the environment department. In West Bengal the one roundtable held was

hosted by the Supplier and its partner organization (see challenges below). In Madhya Pradesh, the one roundtable held was hosted by the environment department (*Completed*).

2. **Policy Briefs** (8-10 expected): A total of 11 published in English, Hindi and Bengali (*Completed*).
3. **Issue-based Website**: An interactive website <www.gencap.org.in> on 'Gender and Climate Adaptation Policy' to document ideas, books, best practices, policy papers, research outputs, etc, as also offer social media platforms - all to encourage public debate on the issue (*Completed*).
4. **Media articles** (at least 2 per State expected): Several media stories on the theme in popular print and online media in English and Hindi (*Completed*).
5. **Best Practices documentation** (8-10 expected): A total of 9 'best practices', documented on the website, reflect adaptive farming models from partner organizations. These practices have been analysed from the gender lens to give suggestions on how government policies can promote them to help women farmers adapt (*Completed*).
6. **A short film** (20 minutes – additional, a new deliverable) to show how women and men farmers are impacted differently by climate change and how their solutions also differ – all through voices from the field from women farmers and frontline government representatives. A few short clips are available independently to highlight key points. These are uploaded on You Tube through the link on the www.gencap.org.in website (*Completed*).
7. **National-level advocacy meet** (additional, new deliverable): An end-of-the-project national-level policy advocacy roundtable to share all the outputs of the research with key policy makers - the scientific head of India's National Initiative on Climate-resilient Agriculture (NICRA) research programme, the deputy head of India's National Mission for Empowerment of Women, Joint Secretary from the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the UNDP Climate Change Advisor assisting the India government to formulate and roll out the SAPCCs (*Completed*).
8. **Journal articles** (5-6 expected): Two articles have been submitted and response is awaited. The rest of the articles are in the process of being completed and submitted (*ongoing*).

IMPACTS

This research intervention by CDKN has been able to deliver more than its promise by institutionalizing policy changes both at the Central level and in three of the four selected States.

- **Impact at the national level** – India's approval committee for SAPCCs at the nodal Central Ministry of Environment and Forest has asked **all** State governments to "highlight the gender component....with their special needs in the context of climate change as well as (ensure) their involvement in the implementation process." This has been recorded in the Minutes² of the April 2012 meeting of the Expert Committee. This mandate resulted from active engagement with the Central ministry and submission of the first research-based policy brief recommending ways in which State governments can incorporate a strong gender component in their SAPCCs.

²http://environmentmanipur.com/Climate%20Change_Pdf/Minutes%20of%202nd%20Expert%20Committee%20Meeting%20at%20MoEF%20held%20on%20April%2017%202012.pdf

- **State government climate plans reflect research findings and acknowledge Supplier's intervention** - The latest versions of the Uttarakhand SAPCC and the Madhya Pradesh (MP) SAPCC include specific research-based gender inputs³ and acknowledge the role of the Supplier in its Foreword. The Uttarakhand SAPCC (or UAPCC) mainstreams gender in several places and includes as Annexure⁴ the detailed outcomes of the State-level policy roundtable. Based on recommendations in a policy brief for MP, the MP SAPCC includes making of gender-responsive 'local action plans on adaptation (LAPAs)' by village Panchayats (local self-governance institutions) as an adaptation strategy.
- **Government 'ownership' of the evidence-based policy advocacy process** – All policy roundtables, 2 in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and one each in MP and Uttarakhand, were hosted by the State governments with invite letters sent to different department by the SAPCC nodal officers. The introduction section of the UAPCC reads, 'The invitation from Mr Jai Raj, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF), the nodal officer for the UAPCC, signalled the importance of integrating gender concerns in the UAPCC for all relevant departments (pg 21).' In the MPSAPCC, the Supplier was listed as a 'gender expert' by the environment department on its own accord. The Minutes of the Expert Committee include gender as one of the many listed areas to be addressed by all SAPCCs.
- **UN in India and other agencies take on board project imperatives:** UNDP helped India frame the guidelines for the formulation of SAPCCs. The guidelines were silent on gender. Subsequent to research-based outputs and policy outreach, the UNDP member in the Expert Committee raised the issue of gender in SAPCCs and subsequently has formally asked the Supplier to prepare a toolkit to mainstream gender in the implementation of all SAPCCs. The Expert Committee's new focus on gender and inclusion has also been adopted by other bilateral and international agencies entrusted to help formulate SAPCCs.
- **Some research output submissions have been included in India's submission on gender to UNFCCC:** Some of the research outputs submitted to the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) as part of civil society inputs have been used in the official submission made by India to UNFCCC on the 18th Conference of Parties (COP) decision on the goal of advancing gender balance in bodies established to the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. One of the points has been included verbatim – '*Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on all climate-responsive programmes must be undertaken using gender-responsive indicators and involving gender experts.*' Other areas included pertain to giving primacy to gender budgeting, gender sensitization of policy makers and creating an enabling environment for women to become active agents in climate solutions and decisions regarding these.

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³ A similar process is now underway for Uttar Pradesh (UP) SAPCC.

⁴ http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC_final_UAPCC_26Aug13.pdf (pg 208);
http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC_Revised_UAPCC_27june12.pdf (pg 21).