

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

STRATEGIES FOR CROSS- SECTORAL ACTION: GENDER- RESPONSIVE MITIGATION

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OVERVIEW

Climate change is a real and urgent global threat, and developing countries need to quickly adopt low-carbon strategies in energy, transport, consumption, forest landscape conservation and restoration. Women and women's organisations are already leading the way and have demonstrated that gender-responsive strategies and actions are an essential means toward sustainable, effective and equitable ends. Leaders from various organisations discussed their own work and invited session participants to strategise the most urgent next-step actions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Where are we?

Climate change is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced. No 'gender neutral' interventions exist across the gamut of climate change actions. Women living in developing countries face two different but intrinsically linked scenarios when it comes to climate change:

1. They are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
2. They are powerful agents of change.

Because these women are the ones adapting to droughts, floods and other extreme weather events right now, they are at the front lines in the battle against climate change. This puts them in a better position to recognise some of the opportunities that climate change presents.

Examples all around the world that showcase the transformational value of gender-responsive initiatives, such as the Thai industry leader who has turned her solar company into a billion-dollar business, or the Australian trailblazer who is creating a movement to get 1 million women across the country to act on climate change, or the Ghanaian entrepreneur who is bringing bamboo bicycles to the global market.

The role that the women in northern countries have on topics such as consumption cannot be forgotten. Nor can we call ourselves feminists while our daily actions are hindering the lives

of women in the south. So, if women are to be true agents of change, real and measurable action at all levels must be ramped up. Women make up half of the world's population. Thus, it would be illogical to ignore this powerful resource for climate solutions. There has been progress in bringing the issues of gender equality and climate change to the international arenas, as well as to national and local levels, but much of the architecture for implementation is missing, or continues to ignore gender inequalities.

Mechanisms, including the area of financing, lack accountability measures to ensure that decisions have a ripple effect and successfully and positively impact the lives and livelihoods of those whom the policies are considering. This lack of accountability also translates into insufficient access for those with the greatest need, including women, for the billions of dollars already being mobilised.

What are we doing?

Gender is cross-cutting vital areas in the mitigation effort.

We need a greater push for diversity and for women and men to engage in these issues to a much greater extent than today. We need to speed up and move furiously forward – looking at the challenges with gender lenses. It is necessary to look at different aspects, take on new strategies and of course get more women on board.

Today there is a huge gender imbalance with predominantly male representatives at the very high strategic and decision-making levels while women are only visible at the low implementation level. To move ahead it is of the greatest importance to close the gender gap and to link national and international producers to the policy-making levels. If access to forest and food production is not secured in mitigating climate change, we are not going to achieve our goals.

It is necessary to improve data accuracy and to ensure the availability of data with a gender analysis in order to highlight the power relations between men and women. Only then is it possible to know what specific actions are needed in order to improve the situation for women – and for the environment. It's not possible to drive the agenda forward without assessing gender, especially when considering that the food production lies in the heart of women in our own – African – context. Today culture is the constraint towards promoting more accessibility for women, and we risk missing out of 80 per cent of the food production unless we put our emphasis on these cultural issues. Primarily we need to be focusing on the laws, making them more positively enforcing women rights and gender equality.

Cultural elements and cultural barriers, what has been done? How can we address these issues?

It is essential to focus on cultural elements and barriers, trying to push for more rights for women and girls.

Laws and regulations are vital parts of this discussion and needs to be emphasised. It is necessary to collaborate with governments which is now being done – and to emphasise gender equality in these discussions.

These collaborations bring good opportunities for us to demonstrate hard evidence and impacts on climate change in order to push gender equality within this field forward.

Where are we in that progress? Where are we at this time?

'First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win' (Mahatma Gandhi). We (IUCN) are no longer invisible in our fight – but we are one of the very few organisations working on these issues. We are fighting – and what matters is how we fight. We need to come together in this struggle, to take the issues to different platforms and apply new and innovative approaches. We cannot talk to the same donors and partners, or stay in our own networks, if we want to move to the next level. In order to move forward we need to take the conversation further, reaching out to different people and new areas. We need to find out who are 'the movers and shakers' that can bring the agenda forward together with us.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Where do we go from here?

The inspiration comes from women who know exactly what they want to do and what is needed.

The goal of IUCN is to support people in order to move faster and stronger and to connect people in order to understand what works and what doesn't, and why? We need to have the courage to face failure, evaluate the data and see how we can work differently in order to succeed.

Financing is available, but we need to track where the funding is going. Currently there are significant amounts of money that might not be going to the countries where it's most needed.

We should work on developing women entrepreneurship in micro/small enterprises and support women-led energy enterprises. It is necessary for the energy sector to realise how women can be utilised as a springboard to deliver sustainable results – and also start creating jobs for women in the sector. ■

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