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Mobile/ Info lady

I am going to outline a couple of case studies. The first is called The info lady. This was developed by D.Net a non-profit research organisation that champions the use of ICT for economic development of Bangladesh. Info Lady is the simple idea of a woman cycling round villages close to her home offering door-to door services based on information needs. Her equipment which started as a mobile phone has grown in response to the needs of the people she visits to include a laptop, internet modem to allow access to a database in Bangla with ideas for mitigation and adaptation of climate change as well practical items such as a blood pressure monitor, water testing kit and pregnancy kit.

Although info Lady's aim is to address the broader issues of poverty including maternal healthcare, sanitation, and legal advice she also provides information on vital livelihood strategies which are very much led by what the people want to know. Since Bangladesh suffers extreme weather conditions caused and intensified by climate change, information on alternative crop selection, crop rotation, use of natural fertilizer and pesticide are also included as well as alternative income sources.

The project also by its very nature shifts assumptions. In a country where women aren't very publicly visible and don't occupy public space, we have a woman who is mediating information on climate change and other issues. She is often young, she is mobile and she is if not local to the specific village, she is local to the area. She is also the most appropriate person to be doing the job having access to both women and men. One info lady reports that it was a scandal when this modern woman started her rounds two years ago unaccompanied. Now people cheer her when she arrives. Elders gather to hear what she has to say.

Info Lady is also an example of a technical project. Whilst we know technology doesn't always provide the answers, technology when used appropriately can be grounded in very real social outcome. It also works because of mediator is the most appropriate person and the impact is about creating greater equality because people have access to information.

Equally her equipment is a demonstration that the people she visits are not one dimensional defined only by their rural status. The internet connection, the phone to make national and international calls is an indicator of complex and rich lives and an acknowledgement of their participation well beyond rural settings. Their lives have relevance beyond the local context – their desire, ability and necessitate a participation beyond their village from finding market prices of crops to seeking work opportunities in the cities.

Because this project was not exclusively set up to deal with climate change it is an example of how climate change cannot be divorced from other social and economic issues. Climate change and all its associated impacts from affecting livelihoods to natural disasters are all bound up with the way people experience poverty. It is difficult to extricate one from the other and in many cases truly understand where one issue begins and another issue ends.

Tribunals

My second example is the gender and climate justice tribunals which at their heart aim to place a rights based approach at the forefront of climate change discussions. 'This is our turn to speak out.' was how one participant at the Nigeria Delta tribunal put it, one of 18 climate justice tribunals held globally before COP 15.

The aim of the hearings were to provide an opportunity for women who have been impacted by climate change to tell of their experiences, their stories of their changing lives and to gain a voice within policy on climate justice. Having seen bits of footage of their testimonies it gives a very real human perspective of the impacts and it ceases being just about science but becomes more about people.

In the Nigeria Delta two tribunals were organised by GCAP (a coalition of women's and other organisations) to hold government and oil companies including BP and Shell to account. Local women acted as witnesses at these tribunals. Testimonies at the Nigeria Delta tribunal suggested that as a result of climate change, the women had witnessed excessive heat and high temperature as well as flooding and landslide. The Nigeria Delta is also marked with ongoing conflict around indigenous rights and environment protection due to it being oil rich. Another participant attributed the rising incidence of poverty to climate change, as well as oil pollution in the water and the land and the

conflict which led to a many deaths, and rendered many others homeless. Again we see how climate change feeds into other insecurities and inequalities reducing people ability to adapt, and affecting the way people experience poverty.

Tribunals offer a way of raising awareness of rights and holding governments and big corporations such as Shell accountable. Whilst the women in Nigeria were hopeful that their stories would travel to Copenhagen, they were disappointed that no government officials attended. Although these tribunals are not grounded in political or legal authority they nonetheless provide a platform for promoting basic human and women's rights, which are enshrined in international agreements such as CEDAW. In raising rights the platform offered by the tribunals in Nigeria Delta has lead to further plans of action including strategies for lobbying government and multinational corporations.