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Gender and Climate Change – Recommendations to Cities and City Networks

In the course of the 'Gender into Urban Climate Change Initiative' project, women's organisations assessed the climate policies of 14 cities in four countries with a gender lens, applying the novel 'Gender Assessment and Monitoring of Mitigation and Adaptation' (GAMMA) approach developed during the project. Shortcomings revealed through this process include insufficient commitment to climate action, working in silos, and in particular a lack of awareness, knowledge and consideration of the gender dimensions of climate change. Yet, without taking gender equality into account, climate policy can aggravate gender and social inequality. On the other hand, climate policy can yield a multitude of co-benefits such as improved air quality and health, conservation of biodiversity, liveability of cities, job creation and enhanced resilience not only to the impacts of climate change but also to other constraints and hazards. Most of these co-benefits can only be achieved if social and gender dimensions are properly integrated.

As a result of the project, we offer here a set of recommendations addressing cities and city networks.

Principles

Cities should put much more efforts into integrating social and gender dimensions into their climate change responses. They should develop climate actions that respect and guarantee women's human rights and mainstream gender equality.

Urban policy-makers should acknowledge the care economy, explicitly address unpaid domestic and care work and prevent generating extra burdens for care-givers.

They should work towards transformational actions that address the root causes of gender inequality and seek to change structural norms that perpetuate male privileges and gender inequality.

Strategic priorities

Urban planning and design is one of the unique opportunities of cities to work towards low and zero carbon, resilient, inclusive and gender-just



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communities and societies. Urban planning should respond to people's needs, overcoming colonial and androcentric structures and layouts, should push for denser cities, for a more effective, safe and affordable public transport system and safe walking and cycling routes to ensure access for all to services such as shops, markets, schools, child-care, and health care centres.

Cities should work towards resilient communities in collaboration with local communities themselves, addressing food security, access to drinking water and clean energy, including for cooking, climate proof housing, and disaster risk reduction.

Institutions and processes

Climate change units should be established in each city. Moreover, city governments should establish a gender unit or focal point to help in mainstreaming gender issues in the cities work streams, so that no one is left behind. They should develop a Gender Action Plan and gender indicators closely linked to and coherent with climate change programmes and actions.

To overcome the sectorised view of gender in urban climate policies, cities should establish a climate change committee for the development, implementation and monitoring of climate policies, involving all departments and sectors, including the department of gender equality / women's empowerment, as well as gender experts, women's organisations and community-led organisations.

Cities should ensure public participation and community involvement, including at micro levels, and establish a gender-sensitive and responsive complaint mechanism for the community, especially for women facing adverse impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.

Approaches, methods, data and finance

Cities should undertake gender assessments to review local climate change policies for their gender responsiveness. The GAMMA approach mentioned above can be used by city officials, as well, ideally in collaboration with civil society.

The review and drafting of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and actions should ensure that risks and vulnerabilities of women and other marginalised groups are assessed and their capacity in climate response measures is enhanced.



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Cities should develop community-based adaptation measures, based on existing approaches, including needs assessments as a first step, rather than relying only on technical measures. In this context, they should prioritise pro-poor actions and actions addressing the informal and the care economy in order to strengthen human resilience.

Cities should plan for ecosystem based adaptation, conserve and restore green spaces and involve local women and women's organisations in such activities on a fair basis.

Cities should collect data disaggregated by sex and gender, and analyse these data to generate information on gender power relations and other underlying reasons for gender differentials.

Cities should establish adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure institutional capacity and improved coordination, including tracking of the participation of women in community consultation meetings, programmes and forums, as well as changes in wellbeing and resilience.

Cities should develop a strategic plan for funding which incorporates gender responsive budgeting. They should prioritise sustainable financing of community-based climate resilience initiatives.

Knowledge and capacity-building

Cities should provide capacity building and training for cities officials, councillors and stakeholders, to raise awareness, sensitise and build knowledge on the importance of gender-responsive climate policies, programmes, actions, and institutions.

Cities should acknowledge indigenous and traditional knowledge, as well as the value of women's technical knowledge and the role it plays in climate change responses.

Women and girls should be trained professionally in their role as first responders during any disasters. Particularly, the resilience capacity of women in coastal and other vulnerable regions needs to be strengthened.

Vertical and horizontal collaboration

Cities should call for greater vertical inter-institutional coordination between different government levels.

Cities, in particular large cities, should develop specific action plans with a suitable monitoring/review mechanism, rather than adopting regional climate change policies.



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Bigger cities should develop additional cooperative metropolitan climate action plans, ensure coordination and seek for joint public financing for their implementation.

Cities should be in active partnership and collaboration with different international non-governmental organisations and seek to join city networks. These international network organisations can play a crucial supportive role to local governments through information sharing on climate change and urban responses.

City networks should collect information on gender-responsive urban responses to climate change and offer specific knowledge, technical support and collaborative opportunities. In this, they should follow the recommendations given above.

Linkages of climate change and pandemics

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an opportunity for cities to overhaul their commitments towards equitable climate actions and to support the well-being and livelihoods of all their citizens by pursuing green, sustainable, just and gender-responsive recovery. Responses to the current crisis should be oriented in a planned way to respond to the diversity of the situation of the different genders. It became obvious that climate policy must address public health, and that the design, planning, operation, and evaluation of climate actions has to be updated accordingly.

“Gender Into Urban Climate Change Initiative” was a project led by Gender CC-Women for Climate Justice and conducted in collaboration with All India Women’s Conference, Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice and Solidaritas Perempuan in Indonesia, GenderCC Southern Africa and Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia in Mexico.

The project was launched in 2015 and was part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI), supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Bundestag. It explored options for integrating gender and social aspects into urban climate policies, built capacity at local level in order to strengthen citizens’ ability to become involved in urban planning processes and implementation, and developed gender-responsive policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, inclusiveness and acceptance of local mitigation and adaptation policies.

GenderCC–Women for Climate Justice is a global network of women’s organisations, gender experts and activists working for gender equality, women’s rights and climate justice. Please find more information at www.gendercc.net.