

Policy Recommendations on Gender Integration in Urban Climate Change Policies addressing Cities, City Associations and Networks

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Introduction

Gender integration into urban climate policies ensures that these city-level policies are gender responsive and gender-sensitive. The planning, formulation, implementation and monitoring of urban climate policies need to acknowledge the impact of climate change on women, the role of women in mitigating climate vulnerabilities and adapting to ensure that resilient and transformative cities will be achieved. This document will outline policy recommendations addressing cities, city associations and networks, on how gender can be integrated into urban climate change policies.

Proposed Policy Recommendations

1. It is recommended that one of the first steps towards integrating gender into climate change policies at City level, is the adoption of a new conceptual framework to develop mitigation and adaptation policies. Many cities have focused their climate change policies and strategies around building resilient urban areas and communities. According to a report that explores the challenges in municipal climate change policy planning, resilience can have varying definitions but in the context of climate change, common understandings of resilience are attached to recoverability¹. How rapidly communities can recover from climate vulnerabilities and environmental threats has largely been the focus and goal of local governments. Uncritical resilience efforts therefore can easily perpetuate unjust and unsustainable policy measures and outcomes. Although worthwhile, it would however, be valuable for climate policies to also apply a transformative theory lens. These policies would therefore not only focus on resilience and recoverability, but they would also focus on transformational actions that address the “root cause of vulnerability, opening up opportunities for revision and replacement of existing unsustainable development trajectories, the successful negotiation of power relations and building empowerment”².

When climate policies take a conceptual framework of transformation, there is greater opportunity to recognise the need for gender integration within climate policies. Women can be better empowered and equipped to deal with climate change threats as a group that faces

¹ <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11027-011-9301-2.pdf>

² <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11027-011-9301-2.pdf>

significant vulnerability during climate disasters and hazards. This is better achieved through the recognition of a need for the revision and replacement of existing policy measures and mechanisms.

2. A climate change vulnerability assessment is a key tool in the policy-making process. This vulnerability assessment is a method of identifying the adverse impacts of climate change that are geographically specific. Once potential impacts have been identified, it becomes easier for adaptive capacities to be identified and implemented. Therefore, gender-responsive climate policies for cities cannot be developed with an exclusion of an accurate data and science-based vulnerability assessment (which is then followed by the development of a climate response strategy). The integration of gender into climate change vulnerability assessments needs to reflect in the vulnerability indicators. Gender like age, employment, education needs to be an indicator on the vulnerability assessments that cities develop. When climate change vulnerability assessments fail to include gender as an indicator, they subsequently fail to recognise how climate-related disasters and threats affect women differently to men. This then results in climate change strategies that are not gender-responsive and gender-sensitive.

The *Local Government Climate Change Support Program (LGCCSP)* aims to assist district and local governments to better respond to climate change. The LGCCSP was established through a partnership between the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH³. The initiative includes the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) as an implementing partner. The *Let's Respond Toolkit* was developed under this program as a guide on how municipalities can integrate climate change into their planning processes. Amongst other resources, the LGCCSP provides its participating municipalities with a step-by-step climate change vulnerability assessment template that includes indicators and score sheet. Gender ought to be included into this evaluation tool as an indicator to understand factors such as the prevalence of women-headed households, unemployed women and the vulnerability of quality water and sanitation facilities that serve women, in different municipalities, cities and communities.

³ <https://letsrespondtoolkit.org/>

3. It is advised that gender experts, researchers and practitioners should be involved in the policymaking process to ensure gender integration into City climate policies. Gender-climate experts provide an understanding of the role of the interlinkages of gender and climate change and how this nexus can be used as a broad indicator in the development of climate policies. It is advised that climate policies should ensure that they recognise and account for the gender differentiated roles in a particular sector; be it transport, energy, water and sanitation or health. This indicator represents the union of gender and a sector, and it recognises the role of women in that particular sector. Then importantly, climate policies need to recognise the gender differentiated impacts of climate change in different sectors. For example, through the inclusion of this indicator, policymakers are able to gain an understanding of how mitigation and adaptation measures in the water or transport sectors will impact women differently to men. When gender experts analyse policies through this lens, there is greater provision for gender-responsive policies and programmes.

4. It is recommended that cities should be in active partnership and collaboration with different international non-governmental organisations such as the C40 Climate Leadership Group and the Local Governments for Sustainability – ICLEI. These international network organisations play a crucial supportive role to local governments and cities through climate change information sharing and climate resilience actions. For example, C40 started the Women4Climate initiative that aims to raise awareness through research on gender, cities, and climate to highlight the role that women play in championing climate action in their cities⁴. This is only just one example of how C40 is committed to integrate gender into climate action policies and programs. A membership to an organisation that holds such a vision and mission, can inspire local governments to commit themselves to gender equality in climate change. The vision is to place gender equality at the heart of climate action policies and an example of a city that has done exactly that is Quezon City in the Philippines. The City created a Gender and Development Council Office that provides technical support to the city administration, mainstreams gender and promotes budgeting that responds to women issues⁵. It is therefore advised that urban cities as well as rural and peri-rural cities should become members of such international

⁴ <https://www.w4c.org/who-we-are>

⁵ <https://www.c40.org/news/gender-equality-climate-action-women4climate/>

networks and leverage on the knowledge, technical support and collaborative opportunities presented to ensure that local women's needs are integrated into city policy formulation.

5. The enhancement of women's participation in decision-making processes is crucial to developing gender integrated climate policies and programmes. This participation needs to be at both the macro and micro levels and ensure that an environment that builds the agency of women is created at each level. The formulation of Gender Focal Desks within city and municipal environment and climate change departments can ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated into proposed policies, programmes, and annual budgeting. These Focal Desks should include a civil society representative (that is a woman), it could also include a representative from a youth group working on climate justice.

Relevant city departments should also ensure that there are monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place that provide accurate data on whether women did participate in community consultation meetings, programmes, forums and how many women participated. This can help to identify whether the processes are reaching, empowering, and benefitting women as well as the areas that need improvement. This data should be compiled and published to ensure accessibility to research institutions, other municipalities, and cities and importantly to the general public.

6. It is recommended to all cities, government associations and non-governmental networks that attitudinal change is prioritised in order to achieve gender responsive policy planning, implementation, and monitoring. This change is needed amongst city officials, policymakers, and communities. This can be achieved through educational workshops on gender mainstreaming in public policy, education on what the gender and climate change nexus is and how it should be integrated into policy formulation and implementation. Facilitators of such workshops should be gender and climate change experts that have worked on projects and research and have a track record in this field. Such workshops should not be hosted as tick-box exercises, as seen many a time within government departments, but rather these should be sustainable and be followed with implementable behavioral action plans.

Furthermore, attitudinal change includes challenging structural norms that perpetuate male privileges and gender inequality. The value of women's technical knowledge and the role it plays in climate change policy and programmes needs to be recognized and not underestimated by both men and women in City offices and communities. A good example is an ICLEI case-study on how health care centers in Rwanda's cities were made to be more sustainable. In Kigali, the Gitarama health care center received improvement of its water management system as well as energy efficiency. Rain harvesting tanks with solar-powered pumps and a range of energy efficient lighting solutions were installed in this health center. Technical training of technicians within the health care center was provided. This training included maintenance of the installations, how to read the meters for effective monitoring and communication of water and electricity usage. It is in projects like these that attitudinal change is valuable for the communities being served, the city officials and the project management team from the implementing partners. This can be achieved through ensuring that women are employed as technicians and are also training in the maintenance and monitoring of the installed infrastructure. Women empowerment and gender equality should not simply be buzzwords, but these should be actioned and in a project such as this, it begins with both men and women entrusting women with the ability to perform tasks that are societally restricted to men.

7. There is a need for improvement by the cities to include social and gender dimensions to their climate change responses and actions. It is therefore recommended that municipalities and cities should consider community-based adaptation measures in their planning and development of climate policies. There are resources available out there to guide the cities and municipalities like the *Roadmap for Inclusive Planning Guide*, developed by C40. This guide would enable the different departments to integrate socio-economic aspects to their respective climate change policies and further assist planning teams and committees to understand that inclusivity is critical and thus the social co-benefits and impacts across all social groups including women and girls need to be considered and integrated into climate plans and programmes. A Needs Assessment should form the first step of climate policy planning and should be actioned through a customisable workshop to evaluate the city's diverse needs and which social groups need to be considered and how their needs need to be addressed with climate action. Climate Policy can yield a multitude of co-benefits such as improved air quality and health, 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.

8. Cities and municipalities are significant contributors to spending and financing related to climate mitigation and adaptation. Therefore, it is crucial that the cities develop a strategic plan for funding and sustainably financing community-based climate resilience initiatives which incorporates gender-budgeting. Planning and implementing comprehensive mitigation and adaptation climate actions often poses a challenge to policy makers, in particular bridging the gap between funding and budgeting for both. Both climate change issues and gender may require extensive monetary resources and an inclusive policy-making process. However, it is without a doubt that working collectively in groups and networks is essential to building a sustainable movement that is geared towards achieving sustainable change, service delivery and building climate resilient gender responsive cities. In this instance, open and transparent communication, education, and awareness of the nexus of gender and climate change is key in driving the goals of achieving sustainable cities and climate resilient communities.
9. Inclusive participation by all stakeholders is critical in ensuring that cities develop long-term plans and visions. For example, cities often set targets that include providing all residents with access to safe, affordable, and net-zero emissions energy; access to public transport, safe walking & cycling routes and buildings that will operate at net-zero emissions. Communities are promised to enjoy clean air, resilience to the health impacts of climate change and food security. However, it is important for policymakers at city-level to consider how all these beautiful targets are going to be met and be sustainable without meaningful participation of those affected. It is recommended that these considerations direct the policy development and planning of climate policies, plans and action. Communities and social groups that are to potentially benefit from these initiatives cannot be identified without mapping out their different needs, impacts and input. Cities have to be committed to upholding and enforcing pro-poor and inclusive climate and gender responsive policies.
10. Capacity building and training is advised and recommended for cities officials including ward councilors, and all their stakeholders to raise awareness on the importance of having gender

responsive climate actions, measures, programmes, and policies. An accountable and gender responsive climate governance structure is critical in order to achieve the cities climate action plans and improve public service delivery. Another area of improvement will be the cities and municipalities to establish a climate change committee that is represented by all departments and sectors, that will also help to break down silos which affect coordination and implementation. The Covid-19 pandemic has indeed created an opportunity for the cities and municipalities to revamp its commitments towards equitable climate actions and to support the well-being and livelihoods of all its citizens by pursuing green, sustainable, just and gender sensitive recovery.

11. Cities base their climate action and measures on the premise of their vulnerability study outcomes which blanket all vulnerable under one roof. The poor, marginalized, migrants, unemployed, youth, women and children are all referred to as vulnerable even though they are all impacted differently by climate change, and they have different needs to address their effects. Proper data disaggregated by socio-economic status, sex, and gender is the best method to address climate change effectively, equally, and sustainably. We recommend that each city municipality establish a gender unit or desk to help in mainstreaming gender issues in the cities work streams, so that no one is left behind.