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Gender, Climate Change and Human Security

by Irene Dankelman, Anna Grossman, and Cate Owren, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Women and Climate Change

Although climate change affects everyone, it is not gender neutral. The Human Development Report 2007 pointed out that climate change magnifies existing inequalities reinforcing the disparity between women and men in their vulnerability and capacity to cope with climate change.

Women, as the majority of the world's poor, are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Not only are poor women more likely to become direct victims of climate change disasters, such as hurricanes and flooding, but when they lose their livelihoods, they often slip deeper into poverty, inequality and marginalization. Therefore, climate change presents a very specific threat to their security.

Valuable lessons can be learned from the gender-specific documentation on the implications of natural disasters. In a recent study by the London School of Economics, the University of Essex, and the Max-Planck Institute of Economics, a sample of 141 countries in which natural disasters occurred during the period 1981-2002 was analyzed by Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper. One of the main findings was that natural disasters lower the life expectancy of women more than that of men, and as the disaster intensifies, so too does this effect. In general, women have less access to resources that are essential in disaster preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation. The UNFCCC has shown that women also face indirect problems when natural disasters strike; they are often less informed, less mobile, more likely to be confined to the house and have less decision-making authority.

Women's responsibilities in the family make them more vulnerable to environmental change, which is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. They are affected in their multiple roles as food producers and providers, as guardians of family health, care givers and economic actors. As access to basic assets and natural resources, such as shelter, food, fertile land, clean water and fuel, becomes hampered, women's workload increases. Poor families, including many female-headed households, often live in precarious situations, e.g. on low lands, along dangerous riverbanks, or on steep slopes. Drought, loss of vegetation, and erratic rainfall cause women to work harder to secure (natural) resources and livelihoods. In such situations, women have less time to get an education or training, earn income, or participate in governing bodies. Girls regularly drop out of school to help their mothers gather fuel and water.

Often in the aftermath of disasters, an increase in domestic and sexual violence occurs. Research by Athony Patt, Angie Dazé and Pablo Suarez suggests that conflict that arises from a shortage of natural resources amplifies existing gender inequalities, while the relocation of people has severe impacts on social support networks and family ties – mechanisms that have a crucial value for women, for example in their coping capacity.

Women's coping strategies: strengthening security

Too often women are primarily perceived as victims of climate change and not as positive agents of change and contributors to livelihood adaptation strategies. As highlighted by researchers like Enarson or O'Brien, natural disasters could also provide women with a unique opportunity to challenge and change their gendered status in society. In general, women have proved effective in mobilizing the community to respond to disasters - in both disaster preparedness and mitigation. However, they also face specific challenges: usually women have fewer assets than men to recover from natural disasters, and generally they do not own land that could be sold to secure income in an emergency. Nevertheless, women worldwide are starting to adapt to a changing climate, and are articulating what they need to secure and sustain their livelihoods more effectively, as well as what they need to better adapt. Local strategies for adapting to climate change provide valuable lessons.

In a note for the Gender and Climate Change Network, Margaret Skutch has summarized priorities of women in times of disaster. Accordingly, the most important are: a safe place for their families and themselves; adaptation of agricultural practices; better access to information; access to services, such as doctors and agricultural extension; development of their capacities; access to resources, including climate-related finances and ecological restoration.

The framework presented in the report shows that if we define human security as security of survival, security of livelihood and dignity (including basic human rights, capacity and participation), climate change has different effects on these respective security aspects, with gender-specific implications. Women have developed adaptive strategies to cope with these problems. There is a wide range of policy opportunities in which adaptive measures can be taken to address women's priorities in times of climate change.

Policy recommendations

Although there are a number of international agreements that aim to secure human rights and human security, gender equality and sustainable development, a gender approach is generally lacking in climate change negotiations and international and national mitigation and adaptation measures. Therefore, a series of policy recommendations is presented in the report. Not only must global and national climate change policies, programs, funds and budgets include a gender perspective, the institutional capacity to mainstream gender in global and national climate change policies and operations should also be enhanced. In a study for Action Aid, the authors Alam, Fatema and Bashar have added that there is a need to address climate change in discussions on women's rights and related interventions.

Adaptation policies need to build on and strengthen women's experiences, knowledge and coping strategies. The organization of women and their coalitions and networks at community, national and international levels should be supported to ensure that recovery and adaptation measures respond to women's needs and concerns. Moreover, community-based preparedness and response plans should take women's social, economic, physical and psychological vulnerabilities into account to reduce the impact of climate change and natural disasters on women.

This article is an excerpt from the report 'Gender, Climate Change and Human Security' that was authored by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), in partnership with organizations in Senegal, Ghana, and Bangladesh, commissioned by the Greek chairmanship of the Human Security Network and facilitated by ELIAMEP. The report includes general analyses and information, as well as case studies from the three countries and policy recommendations.

The complete report Gender, Climate Change and Human Security including all references is available [here](#)

For further information on Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), please see: www.wedo.org and for the International Women Leaders Global Security Summit, 15-17 November 2007, New York, please see <http://www.womenandglobalsecurity.org/>

A selection of documents and references on "Gender, Environment and Conflict" can also be found at the [ECC-Platform](#).

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POLICY & RESEARCH

Environmental Refugees: Growing Awareness – growing action?

"Natural Disasters Contribute to Rise in Population Displacement" – This was the eye-catching title of a press release by UNEP for the World Refugee Day on June 20 2008. UNEP is not the first international organization that has identified climate change as an important source of forced migration in the future. Others, like the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), but also the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have already contributed to a growing public awareness toward the issue.

Several aspects in the debate about the impact of climate change on refugee movements are still disputed; most important among them: the increase in numbers expected due to climatic changes, the best methods of assessing direct climate change effects on migration and the uncertain legal status of environmental refugees. None of these issues is going to be easily resolved but attention towards the problem is increasingly evident across different organizations and political camps. A good chance to gain insight into the current state of research however is coming up this October, at a conference hosted by Each-For, an EU research project devoted to "Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios".

The cross-sectoral character of the problem creates the need for a well concerted effort of different actors. It will be challenging to bridge national reservations towards migration issues with a fragmented institutional setting on the international level. The fact that many key issues in the debate remain unresolved is part of the problem. But Governments, International Organizations and NGOs have to show that they are capable and willing to constructively work together despite their different perspectives and interests. (Joeran Altenberg)

For the study "Migration and Climate Change" by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), please see [here](#)

More information on the EU research project is available at <http://www.each-for.eu/>

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Address Matters: The United Nations, Environment and Security

Bringing environment into security discourses is easier than anchoring security in environment discourses – at least at the United Nations (UN). This is one key conclusion of the joint swisspeace-ETH Zurich paper "Linking Environment and Conflict Prevention - The Role of the United Nations".

Dividing environmental conflicts into direct, indirect and complex resource conflicts, the authors assess the strengths and weaknesses of the UN system against this categorisation. One of their results is that the environment and particularly the climate agenda is already too overloaded to take on another issue like security. However, in the realm of peace and security, the UN already has experiences on the role of environment and resources in conflict transformation. Conflict prevention remains thereby underdeveloped: The focus is mostly on conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction. Another central problem is the UN approach of segregating instead of integrating topics. While there are specialised organisations to deal with environment, trade, development and peace, there is little horizontal integration between these organisations.

With a view to future conflict potentials resulting from climate change and increasing environmental degradation and resource consumption, the authors suggest a bundle of 26 measures. Particularly noteworthy are the suggestions for improving horizontal integration and cooperation within the UN systems. This includes among others training of UN mediators in environmental affairs, the improved preparation and provision of environmental information and expertise, and establishing "Environment and Natural Resources Management Units" within UN missions to facilitate horizontal coordination. (*Achim Maas*)

The report is available at <http://www.swisspeace.ch/typo3/en/publications/index.html>

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Corruption in the Water Sector: Underestimated but widespread

Corruption in the water sector is a substantial and overlooked threat to environmental sustainability and puts the lives and livelihoods of billions of people at risk. The Global Corruption Report (GCR) 2008 from Transparency International uncovers connections between corruption and the water sector and states that "corruption in the water sector is widespread and makes water undrinkable, inaccessible and unaffordable".

Water affairs are mostly seen as a technical process, and to date, little attention has been paid to the social and political factors that influence decisions about water. Therefore the GCR 2008 is a good start in exploring this pervasive problem and in bringing the issue to public attention.

Within the thematic section of the GCR 2008 report, corruption is divided into four water sub-sectors: water resource management, water and sanitation, water for food and

water for energy. Corruption in the water sector comes primarily down to governance problems and is prevalent because current diffuse responsibilities leave the administration of water resources vulnerable to loopholes and co-ordination failures that can be exploited by corrupt activities.

Among the key lessons for fighting corruption in the water sector Transparency International emphasises the need to build pressure for water reforms. To this end the national and local levels need to join forces. The Afghanistan example shows precisely why this is necessary. A 2007 study mentioned in the GCR report, found that the responsible persons for safeguarding and equitable distribution of water abused their position by accepting bribes to deliver additional water to landowners and communities. However, through information exchange, targeted financial support, water user groups or district development assemblies, it remains possible to limit this scope of corruption. Accordingly, the report's recommendations can be reduced to two main factors: transparency and participation. (*Meike Westerkamp*)

The full report is available under:

http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr/download_gcr

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Arctic Change: New maps = new conflicts?

It looks as if current world maps will soon become history in view of the latest developments in the Arctic. Researchers at the University of Durham in Britain have come up with a first draft map of the region. It shows how melting ice will open up new sea routes through the Northwest Passage. More importantly, however, the Durham map also depicts the accepted jurisdictional limits and the so far unresolved territorial claims made by the Arctic coastal nations of Denmark, Canada, Norway, Russia and the United States. These claims are lucrative and contentious in equal measure. In July the US Geological Survey published estimates according to which about 13 percent of the world's undiscovered petroleum reserves and roughly 30 percent of undiscovered natural gas reserves are located in the Arctic. At the same time there is a looming possibility of the Arctic becoming ice-free given that successes in combating climate change have so far been modest. This could potentially result in new conflict situations due to the better accessibility of these and other resources.

Attempts to bring about a peaceful balance of interests in the Arctic are still in their infancy. Great hopes are being pinned on the international Convention on the Law of the Sea that will be used to arbitrate between competing territorial claims. In March the EU High Representative Javier Solana together with the European Commission also argued for the need for action within the EU and called for an EU Arctic policy. The concerned littoral states, on the other hand, are attempting to uphold their jurisdiction in this matter and to achieve better coordination. These states met in Ilulissat (Greenland) in May and announced their intention of settling their claims in accordance with the principles of international maritime law. Denmark's Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller even stated that these – non binding – decisions would result in peace returning to the North Pole. Time will show whether this optimism is justified. Canada and Denmark, for instance, still have until 2013 and 2014 to submit their territorial claims to the United Nations. In view of current geological and climate-related findings their claims are hardly expected to be moderate. (*Dennis Taenzler*)

For more information on Arctic governance, please see <http://www.arctic-council.org>

For the Arctic map of the International Boundaries Research Unit at the University of Durham, please see <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic/>

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Congo: A new rainforest protection fund to address poverty & climate change

The world's second largest expanse of tropical forest will benefit from the conservation activities of a new financial mechanism: The Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) was launched at the highly attended June 17, 2008 event in London. The rainforest, known as the "world's second lung", not only helps to regulate global climate, but also provides food, shelter and livelihoods for 50 million people. The CBFF, with a £100 million initial grant from the British and Norwegian Governments, will help communities manage their forests, find sustainable livelihoods that aid forest conservation and reduce deforestation rates.

The CBFF will be managed by the African Development Bank in partnership with the 10-member States of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and run by a Governing Council co-chaired by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Wangari Maathai and Rt. Hon Paul Martin, Former Canadian Prime Minister. In response to the significant effects of climate change in Africa, Dr. Maathai said "We have been calling for carbon justice by working with the countries who have contributed to assist the countries that are going to suffer the effects. We have to meet each other half way to deal with a difficult crisis that we all face".

Thus, the Fund is part of a coordinated international effort to include forest conservation into a larger framework of global climate protection activities. The CBFF will finance innovative community conservation projects within COMIFAC's Action Plan, over a ten year period up to 2018. The Fund encourages and depends upon long term collaboration between civil society, governments and the private sector.

Among the concerns regarding the Fund's work are the rampant corruption in the Congo Basin area and the future financial contributions from member countries. Nevertheless, given the estimates that over two thirds of the Congo Basin rainforest will be destroyed by 2040, the CBFF provides a hopeful and truly necessary mechanism for local conservation with global ramifications. (*Irina Comardicea*)

For more information on the Congo Basin Forest Fund please visit:

<http://www.cbf-fund.org/index.php>

To find out more about the Congo Basin Forest Partnership please see:

<http://www.cbf-pn.net/de/cms/index.php/home.html>

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Europe the Emerging Climate Superpower: A new security policy paradigm?

In recent years the European Union has systematically strengthened its pioneering role with regard to climate issues. The announcement of climate change goals and the package of related measures proposed by the European Commission were a step in this direction. The Krium Workshop entitled "Europe the emerging climate superpower. A new security policy paradigm?", which took place in Bonn on May 31, 2008, took off from this point. Can the EU don the mantle of a global player through a coordinated climate and energy security policy that focuses on prevention and cooperation? What opportunities and risks are associated with this approach? These issues were the subject of a discussion by Hans-Jochen Luhmann (Wuppertal Institute), Dennis Tänzler (adelphi research) and Christoph Bals (Germanwatch).

Dennis Tänzler felt that the EU's climate and energy policy goals for 2020 provide only a partial scope for a potentially influential European role. The most promising in this regard are the policy initiatives for shaping global climate and energy governance. However, in view of the Solana and European Commission report on „Climate and International Security“, there is still insufficient evidence of adequate political backing for these measures. Hans-Jochen Luhmann, on the other hand, emphasized the new dimension of the EU's role on the international stage. According to him, the EU is using climate and energy policy as a means to extend its power. The inclusion of air traffic outside Europe in the emissions trading framework is proof, Luhmann felt that the EU is evolving into a hegemonic power that makes the rules – even for countries outside of Europe – instead of submitting to them. By applying policy instruments such as emissions trading and promoting renewable energy, which also affect sectors outside Europe, the EU would increasingly act as a hegemonic power. The growing consolidation of power in Brussels vis-à-vis the EU member states is also furthering this development.

While there was a heated debate on the concept of concerted action by the EU and the growing repercussions on global security, Christoph Bals' concluding remarks alluded to a discussion recently broached by the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas: climate and energy policy attest to the fact that nation states are currently ceding their regulatory powers and that, increasingly, regional regimes such as the EU are crucial for a functioning international community. (*Rixa Schwarz, Germanwatch*)

For more information, please see <http://www.germanwatch.org/>

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"Very British": Climate Security at the Wilson Center

The Right Honorable Hilary Benn MP, UK State Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, joined a small group of experts for a discussion on climate change and security on May 13, 2008, at the Wilson Center. [...] Benn has been outspoken on the need to address climate change's challenges. In an April 2008 address to the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University, Benn argued that climate change and development "are bound together so tightly that we must either succeed in meeting both or we will fail to in both."

By many measures, the UK government has been at the forefront of the discussion on emerging climate security issues. In April 2007, then-UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett chaired the UN Security Council's first session devoted to climate change and security. The now-famous Stern Report, commissioned by the UK government in 2005,

was a major impetus for ramping up attention to climate change, including consideration of its security dimensions.

Earlier this year, the United Kingdom published its first National Security Strategy, highlighting the importance of addressing climate change for national and global security: Climate change is potentially the greatest challenge to global stability and security, and therefore to national security. Tackling its causes, mitigating its risks and preparing for and dealing with its consequences are critical to our future security, as well as protecting global prosperity and avoiding humanitarian disaster.

Observers outside the UK government have also weighed in on the debate, such as the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), which released a report by Nick Mabey on climate change and security in April 2008. In the coming months, the Environmental Change and Security Program will continue to convene transatlantic discussions on the links between climate change, security, and foreign policy. (*Karin Bencala & Geoff Dabelko, Environmental Change and Security Program Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*)

For future events at the Wilson Center, please see:

<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.welcome>

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events are also regularly published at <http://www.ecc-platform.org/>

"Climate Change: Preparing for the New Security Environment" in London (3 September)

Organized by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), the conference will provide a forum to discuss the current state of research on the linkages between climate change and security, with a special focus on responses and solutions for planners and policymakers. Key questions include: How will climate change reshape future approaches to defence and security? What policy initiatives are needed in order to deal comprehensively with climate-driven insecurity, and what steps need to be taken to make these changes? How will climate change affect international relations, security policy, economic relationships and tensions within and between countries?

Further information on the event is available at

<http://rusi.org/events/ref:E48481B8ED91EC/>

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"Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability" in Bonn (9-11 October)

The conference will strive to distil the current state of scientific research and debate with the perspective of providing a future outlook and policy-relevant recommendations. The EFMSV-Conference's goal is to bring together experts of multiple disciplines, dealing with the pressing issues of environmental change, migration and social vulnerability, in order

to share knowledge, identify gaps and seek solutions. In this regard the international conference will feature case studies, scenarios, and an analysis of the major outcomes of the two-year long research project „Each-For“.

Further information on the event is available at <http://www.efmsv2008.org/>

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"The IUCN World Conservation Congress" in Barcelona (5-14 October)

More than 8,000 of the world's leading decision makers in sustainable development from governments, NGOs, business, the UN and academia will assemble for the ten-day IUCN conference. The event will provide a forum for participants to debate, network, learn and develop ideas and solutions for a sustainable world.

Further information on the event is available at

http://cms.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm

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IN BRIEF

Illegal Logging still pandemic, Biofuels and the Food Crisis, Civilian Crisis Prevention under Review, Water Scarcity in Stockholm

Deforestation, a major contributor to climate change, is still rampant globally and **European Union countries are guilty of compounding the problem of illegal logging** according to a WWF report released in July 2008. The report shows almost one-fifth of the wood imported into the European Union in 2006 came from illegal or suspected illegal sources. The study highlights the ineffectiveness of the existing EU licensing scheme, Forest and Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT). Even if all agreements currently being negotiated by the EU with partner countries under FLEGT were concluded about 90 per cent of the illegal wood would still enter the EU markets. WWF urges the introduction of EU legislation to guarantee that only legal wood is traded on the European market. The report is available [here](#)

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In a recent study, **Oxfam analyzed the multiple social and environmental effects of current biofuel policies**. The results show that the use of biofuel in wealthy countries is neither a solution to the climate crisis nor the oil crisis, and instead is contributing to a third: the food crisis. Even though in poor countries biofuels may offer some genuine development opportunities, the potential economic, social and environmental costs are severe - decision makers should thus proceed with caution. The full report can be downloaded [here](#)

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The **German Federal Government's Action Plan on "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building"** was adopted in May 2004. On July 16 the Federal Government published its second review report on the implementation of the plan. The action plan defines crisis prevention as a cross sectoral challenge, promotes cooperation between public and private actors and sets out a strategy for institutional

adaptation. The recommendations ought to be implemented within the next 5 to 10 years. The review report (in German) is available [here](#)

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"Progress and Prospects on Water: For a Clean and Healthy World" was the title of this year's World Water Week, which took place in Stockholm between August 17 and 23. With a special focus on sanitation, the conference's numerous seminars, discussions and other events brought together experts and decision makers for capacity-building, partnership-building and follow-up on the implementation of international processes and programmes in water and development. More information about the World Water Week is available at <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>

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