



## Tackling the Double Injustice of Climate Change and Gender Inequality



## PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

This paper provides an overview of the links between climate change, gender inequality and four key impact areas of CARE's work – food and nutrition security, women's sexual and reproductive rights, women's economic empowerment, and humanitarian action. It is not intended as an exhaustive description of CARE's work on climate change and gender. Instead the intention is to inspire action, reflection and conversation about how to move development forward in light of these issues, to ensure CARE and development practitioners are better equipped to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and social justice.

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### *Cover images*

Top: A farming cooperative from Vilcacoto, near Huancayo, in Peru's Junin province, are working together to plant crops that are more resilient to climate change. © Zak Bennett / CARE

Below: Awin Asakib Bianboog from Upper East Region Ghana, 45, married with 6 children, is a Pito (local beer) brewer and also grows rice, maize, millet, sorghum and keeps livestock. © Nana Kofi Acquah / CARE

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# Foreword



This is a period of tremendous change in the world and within CARE. We are witnessing significant shifts in the patterns of poverty and inequality, and we are witnessing significant shifts in our climate.

These shifts are not separate phenomena. Poverty, inequality and the causes and consequences of climate change are intrinsically linked. And neither poverty, nor inequality, nor climate change, for that matter, fall from the sky. They exist because we, human beings, have chosen to live in this way. Climate change is injustice. Poverty is injustice. And resolving gender inequality is inseparable from the solution to both.

We know that lasting solutions will only work with gender equality, inclusive dialogue, and promoting more resilient communities in the context of climate change and conflict in which the world is immersed. This is easier said than done. It is an immense learning challenge to do all of these things together, across all the core areas of our work – for example food and nutrition security, or women’s economic empowerment. Both climate change and the persevering challenge of gender inequality are challenging the way we think about and do long-term development and humanitarian action to the core.

But we are learning to change the way we do things. This report explains the links between climate change and gender inequalities across our core areas of work. It tells stories from the lives of people we work with, provides examples of progress. It reflects on gaps and where to go next, and as such aims to inspire conversation and action on jointly tackling these two giant barriers to our vision for achieving poverty reduction and social justice.

We hope it helps you move along on this learning journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sofia Sprechmann'.

**Sofia Sprechmann**

Program Director, CARE International



In Maradi, Niger, securing women's land rights is helping communities to better respond to the challenges posed by a changing climate. © CARE staff

**We cannot deliver sustainable development without tackling climate change, and we cannot tackle climate change without tackling the root causes of poverty. Gender inequality is a root cause of poverty. It will only worsen if the injustices of climate change and gender inequality are not tackled together, and fast.**

**The injustice of climate change** is clear. People living in poverty all over the world, who have done the least to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions that trigger global warming, are worst affected by climate change impacts. That's not all: the world's poorest also have the fewest resources to cope with rising sea-levels and more extreme and erratic weather. The wealthiest populations, on the other hand, who have contributed most to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, are in a much better position to adapt to climate change impacts and are likely to suffer the least. This global injustice is both a symptom and driver of widening inequalities between a wealthy minority and the billions of people living in poverty worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

**Gender inequality** is a long-standing and pervasive social injustice. Gaps in gender in life chances, opportunities, resources and rewards between women, men, girls and boys continue to exist worldwide. In some countries these gaps are growing, while in others they are shrinking, but nowhere in the world have they yet been fully overcome. True, the global community has in recent years made great strides when it comes to signing agreements and conventions that promote gender equality. But real and tangible action lags far behind the rhetoric. For example, men continue to hold the vast majority of top positions in political and economic spheres. And violence against women and girls continues to be endemic worldwide.

**The double injustice** is that gender inequalities – as far removed as they may seem from a problem that started with greenhouse gas emissions – are deeply related to the unequally distributed causes and impacts of climate change on people living in poverty.

In societies where people are discriminated against based on gender, ethnicity, class, or caste, being a man or woman is often a decisive factor in determining the levels of risk they face from climatic shocks, extreme and uncertain

weather, and changes in the environment and economy. The resources and options people have to act on these shocks and changes are also strongly dependent on gender norms and expectations that govern the lives they live. These norms and expectations can be extremely discriminatory and limiting.

Gender inequality is a root cause of poverty. Climate change, in turn, is making poverty worse. This means that the chances of achieving a better life, for many women and girls living in poverty, are threatened by a double injustice; climate change and gender inequality.

## Sustainable development must tackle climate change and gender inequality

**Sustainable development cannot be achieved without tackling climate change.** Tackling climate change will not be possible without addressing the root causes of poverty, including gender inequality. 2015 is expected to deliver key decisions on critical policy processes including the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a new global climate agreement, and a renewed Global Framework for Disaster-Risk Reduction. The world has a unique opportunity to change course and put development on track towards a just and sustainable future where people's rights, opportunities and life chances in the face of climate change are neither governed nor limited by whether they were born male or female, or by where they were born.

**In global climate policy and action,** gender equality is slowly gaining recognition and is now officially an agenda item under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC is the UN body that governs climate change negotiations and agreements. It is also present in discussions about emerging climate finance architecture, and in national climate change policies. But, again, the gap between words and actions is still vast.

**Responsibility and resources for addressing climate change need to be allocated in fair ways.** The brunt of responsibility for effecting real change lies with those whose actions cause the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, and who also have the most negotiating power and the available resources to take effective action. At the same time, the focus of support to aid climate change adaptation needs to be on the groups and communities who are least likely to access such support easily. These include people who, due to their social position, education levels, limited mobility, etc., are both most vulnerable to climate impacts and at the same time facing the greatest difficulties in accessing resources and services.

**There is no one-size-fits-all approach** for ensuring fair and equitable treatment for women and men. Generalised assumptions about women, men, boys and girls entrench stereotypes and perpetuate the status quo. Also, gender is a crucial but never the only factor in a person's vulnerability to climate change. Strategies and actions need to be tailored to context, whether at community or national level, and need to address the spectrum of factors that lead to entrenched poverty and vulnerability for certain groups.

**Messaging on gender and climate change has been problematic.** Policy and programmes that merely focus on women, and devise actions and investments based on generalised assumptions about them, can do more harm than good. They often entrench stereotypes and perpetuate the status quo rather than resolving underlying issues.

## Toward 2020 – key areas for response

**Tackling gender inequality and climate change is part and parcel of CARE's vision.** CARE is working to achieve a world of hope, tolerance and social justice. Specifically, CARE's vision 2020 is about tackling gender inequalities, building resilience to climate change, conflict and other shocks, and strengthening inclusive governance in our work on food and nutrition security, women's economic empowerment, reproductive rights and freedom from violence, as well as delivering life-saving humanitarian action.

**Gender equity and building community resilience.** CARE's work to strengthen community resilience to climate change strikes at the root causes of poverty, including gender inequality. Addressing the uncertainties and risks involved in climate change, while at the same time dealing with deeply entrenched gender inequalities, is a dual learning challenge. But promising practices are emerging. Locally-driven, participatory tools and methods should be used to inform development practitioners and decision-makers on the best course of action when it comes to addressing the impacts of climatic shocks and shifts. Again, there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Gender inequalities are pervasive, but also dynamic and different in each context.

**Gender, climate, food security and agriculture.** Changes in climate directly and indirectly affect the food security of smallholder farmers and many others. Roles in producing food are often strictly divided by gender, and while deep gender gaps are leading to unequal food and nutrition security around the world, the gender roles and norms surrounding food and farming differ vastly from country to country. Building resilience in agricultural livelihoods only works when all people engaged in smallholder farming have fair access to resources and opportunities to improve their livelihoods. This is dependent on gender-equitable, rights-based and participatory action, and on building adaptive capacity in the face of new uncertainties, new risks and volatility ahead.

**Climate, livelihoods and women's economic empowerment.** CARE's gender-equitable approach advances work on climate change along a continuum from gender sensitivity to gender equality through transformational, systemic change. The global economy has taken unpaid care work – largely supplied by women – and excessive use of natural resources for granted for too long. Women's economic empowerment is not about overburdening women with more responsibilities on top of the unpaid care burden. A transformed economy needs to recognise the links between the causes and the consequences of climate change and women's social, political and economic rights as the basis for new ways of valuing and rewarding all contributions, and distributing resources in fairer ways.

**Reproductive rights and climate change.** CARE sees strengthening women's and girls' reproductive rights as a priority for sustainable development, regardless of a country's population and carbon footprint. In many areas of the world, high population density and high levels of vulnerability to climate change go hand-in-hand. In these areas, women and girls also often experience severe infringements of their right to reproductive self-determination. Dismantling persistent barriers to reproductive self-determination is critical to advancing gender equality and to building the ability of women to adapt to and recover from climatic shocks and changes. It is critical that this is not confused with population control – an agenda that unfairly puts the blame for climate change, its impacts and environmental degradation on the reproductive behaviours of people living in poverty.

**Climate change, disasters and emergencies.** It's not floods, droughts, or tropical storms that discriminate against specific population groups, but society. Social inequalities are responsible for the fact that, as the impacts of climate change create more emergencies and erode people's ability to cope, the livelihoods, health and future prospects of men, women, boys and girls are affected in different ways. Gender-equitable efforts to build people's resilience in the face of disasters must therefore address the structural inequalities that underpin the unequal risks people face. But they also need to recognise and treat everyone as rightful stakeholders and leaders in risk reduction and resilience efforts. Finally, if all losses are to be addressed, they must be visible and accounted for. Measuring the human impacts of disasters, rather than focusing on economic losses alone, is important.





# 1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing community adaptation action plans in Maradi, Niger. © Awais Yahaya / CARE

We cannot deliver sustainable development without tackling climate change, and we cannot tackle climate change without tackling the root causes of poverty. Gender inequality is a root cause of poverty. It will only worsen if the injustices of climate change and gender inequality are not tackled together, and fast.

Climate change affects us all, either directly or indirectly. However, climate change is making the world much less habitable and secure for some people than for others. As such, climate change threatens to make the world profoundly more unequal than it already is. Today, the richest 80 people already control the same amount of wealth as the “bottom” 3.5 billion. And inequality is on the rise in rich and poor countries alike.<sup>2</sup> The wealthiest consume the most resources and are contributing the most to climate change. Inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities – between those who have power and those who are marginalised, between countries, and between women and men – are at the root of persistent poverty around the world.<sup>3</sup>

Climate change and its impacts represent a global, and growing, injustice. The world’s poorest populations have contributed just a small proportion of the total greenhouse gas emissions to date yet they are already bearing the brunt of its impacts. They also have the fewest resources to cope with the consequences of climate change.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the wealthiest populations, who have contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions, are in a much better position than poor populations to adapt to the impacts of climate change and are also likely to suffer the least. This continued global injustice is both a symptom and driver of widening inequalities between a wealthy minority and the billions of people living in poverty worldwide.<sup>5</sup> Social inequality and the injustice of climate change not only reinforce each other but also have common roots. Powerful elites dominate poor majorities. Development models often put economic growth before human rights and the environment, compromising the well-being of billions for the benefit of the few.

## Box 1

### THE COMMON ROOTS OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“The underlying causes and consequences of unsustainability and gender inequality are deeply intertwined and rooted in the dominant economic models. [...] These involve economic liberalization and the concentration of productive and financial activity geared to short-term profits; unrestrained material consumption; unparalleled levels of militarism; and the privatization of public goods and services, all at the expense of state regulation and redistribution. Such processes have caused, in many places, crises of care, which means the breakdown in the abilities of individuals, families, communities and societies to sustain, care for and educate themselves and future generations, thereby undermining people’s rights and dignity.”<sup>6</sup>

Gender inequality – an entrenched and widespread form of social injustice apparent around the world – is one of CARE’s core concerns. Gender inequality persists as a barrier to development and the fulfilment of human rights for all. Discrimination against women and girls continues in poor and wealthy contexts alike, and is deeply rooted in attitudes and behaviours as much as in social norms and in laws. For women and girls who live in poor conditions or who belong to vulnerable groups, gender inequality often exacerbates threats from climate change by restricting their access to resources, or by limiting their options to act in the face of risks and uncertainties. Social norms and behaviours can also be powerful factors of climatic risk for men and boys. An example is the social expectation of “heroic” risk-taking behaviour, which may explain why more men than women died after Hurricane Mitch in 1998.<sup>7</sup> Gender inequalities also limit options for tackling the risks that climate change brings. The opportunities for a better life for women and girls who live in poverty, or in vulnerable and unsafe conditions, are threatened by the double injustice of vulnerability to climate change and gender inequality.

## Box 2

### CARE’S DEFINITION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, men and boys of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Women’s empowerment is one critical aspect of working towards gender equality. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances does not depend on whether they were born male or female.

CARE is increasingly concerned about the danger that climate change poses to the lives and livelihoods of people living in poverty. CARE is working to make a difference to people living in poverty by focusing on four vital areas:

- 1. food and nutrition security**
- 2. women’s sexual and reproductive rights**
- 3. women’s economic empowerment**
- 4. humanitarian action.**

In these areas, tackling gender inequality is a priority for CARE.<sup>8</sup> Environmental change and disasters arising from climate change also directly affect these four areas of work. Political, financial and other decisions that ignore or respond to climate change also affect these areas, both directly and indirectly.

In recent years, CARE has made significant strides in prioritising gender equality. CARE has established minimum standards for gender equality and women’s empowerment in everything it does, from investing in capacity and expertise to programme quality and advocacy. Simultaneously, CARE has piloted practices and advocated for responses to climate change that work for the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations.

CARE is known for its community-based adaptation work, having developed innovative tools and approaches that are widely used. These include a portfolio of practical adaptation initiatives across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean and tried and tested approaches to mitigating climate change in poor and vulnerable communities. And CARE has pushed for social and environmental justice in national and global decisions and frameworks. But the challenge of concurrently addressing two complex problems – unequal risk from climate change and gender inequality – while at the same time dealing with other, rapidly evolving development and humanitarian challenges, is immense. In other words, CARE is learning to integrate its efforts on these issues rather than trying to tackle them separately.

### Box 3

#### CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS TO REVERSE DEVELOPMENT GAINS

“As governments struggle to respond to the growing climate change threat, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions continue to rise at an alarming rate. Based on current commitments from governments to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, the world is now on a path towards 4 degrees Celsius or more of average global warming by 2100.<sup>9</sup> In September 2013, the atmospheric accumulation of CO<sub>2</sub> passed the unprecedented threshold of 400 ppm (parts per million) for the first time.<sup>10</sup> Scientists now warn that the planet is approaching dangerous ‘tipping points’ beyond which tackling climate change will become extremely difficult at best.<sup>11</sup> At worst, it will lead to war, mass migration and the loss of countless lives, territories and cultures.”<sup>12</sup>

Source: Harmeling 2014, p2.

## 2. THE DELAY IN INTEGRATING GENDER INTO POLICIES AND ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

### KEY POINTS

- There has been progress on integrating gender into climate change policies but substantial gaps remain
- Tackling climate change and gender is about equality and not about isolating “action on women” nor about adding to women’s burdens
- Further work must be done to ensure that gender equality is enshrined in global climate policy as a matter of social justice
- Transforming policy into action is still a challenge

### 2.1 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND GENDER INEQUALITY: A DOUBLE INJUSTICE

**The degree to which climate change poses more risks to some human populations than to others powerfully demonstrates the inherent inequities of wealth and power in the global economic and political system. The dangerous effects of climate change, such as extreme temperatures, floods, drought, tropical storms, rising sea-levels and unpredictable weather pose the greatest threat to people already living in poverty. Marginalised groups, often already subject to ongoing crises, conflict, economic volatility and natural disaster, are among those most vulnerable to climate change. Within these marginalised groups, people who are at a disadvantage because of their gender, ethnicity, class, religion, age or sexuality fare the worst.**

Initially, climate change was perceived solely as an environmental problem. It took time for the complex interactions between emissions of greenhouse gases and social inequalities to be acknowledged and to emerge. Today, as the global community develops new Sustainable Development Goals and works towards a new, global climate change agreement in 2015, there is a much better understanding of the links between climate change, social development, justice and equality.

We now know that inequality is one of the main reasons why disasters such as drought, floods or tropical storms affect some people more than others.<sup>13</sup> We know that in many of the world’s poorest communities, gender, ethnicity and age determine a person’s influence on decisions and access to resources such as land or credit. These kinds of discrimination determine what opportunities people have and what obstacles they face in dealing with the impacts of an increasingly volatile climate. Discrimination limits opportunities for education and safety, the freedom to move in public spaces (or lack of it), or to go to market or to work. We know that in sectors and industries focusing on mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, gender inequality is worse. For example, women constitute a small minority of the work force in, engineering, manufacturing and finance.<sup>14</sup>

All over the world, gender inequality is no less apparent than at the highest levels of decision-making on climate change. Female heads of state are the exception to the rule, in 2010, men held 86% per cent of ministerial posts globally. Of the remaining 14% of ministerial posts held by women, only 19% were in finance and trade, 7% in environment, and 3% in science and technology.<sup>15</sup> Despite improvements, women also continue to be underrepresented in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process.

#### Box 4

#### WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

In 2012, at its 18th Conference of the Parties in Doha, the UNFCCC passed a decision to promote gender balance and women’s participation. Since then, the UNFCCC has tracked its own gender balance. As of 2013, less than 30% of the members of most bodies under the Convention were women, and in some cases only 11-13% were women.

Source: UNFCCC 2013

## 2.2 INTEGRATING GENDER INTO GLOBAL CLIMATE POLICY AND FINANCE

Global responses to climate change increasingly recognise the importance of gender equality. For example, most funds in the global climate financial architecture now consider gender issues when allocating funds. However, consideration of gender is far from perfect. Further work needs to be done to ensure that gender equity is enshrined in global climate policy as a matter of social justice. Many countries already have a sound legal basis for integrating gender into policies on sustainable development but the integration of gender into policies and action on climate change lags behind. Where policies are adequate, transforming policy into action is still a challenge.

### Progress in global climate policy and financing

Some countries, and a growing number of multilateral and civil society organisations including CARE, recognise that climate change and social inequality, including gender inequality, are interrelated. A concerted effort to ramp up work to address these issues<sup>16</sup> in the run up to a 2015 climate change agreement is underway (see box 5 below).

Nearly one hundred organisations are working together under the umbrella of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) (see box 6). Organisations in the GGCA alliance span civil society, government and the Women and Gender Constituency under the UNFCCC. Thanks to its efforts, in 2012 the 18th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC reached a landmark decision to put gender equality on the standing agenda of the negotiations.

These and other collaborative efforts have ensured that the emerging institutional architecture for financing action on climate change is now more responsive to gender equality. Most UNFCCC climate funds now consider gender when allocating funds. The Global Environment Facility, which manages the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), adopted a gender mainstreaming policy in 2011. In 2013, the Adaptation Fund, which provides finance for projects to adapt to climate change in developing countries, adopted a set of environmental and social safeguards that also include gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>17</sup>

However, current efforts to integrate gender equity are far from perfect. When gender is considered, the focus is often on women as victims rather than on ensuring all gender groups are recognised as essential contributors and leaders.<sup>18</sup> The Clean Technology Fund – the largest climate investment fund – has been criticised for not considering gender systematically in funding large-scale mitigation projects, despite the gender policies of the World Bank and regional development banks under which it operates.<sup>19</sup>

Currently, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the only climate finance mechanism to have addressed gender inequalities from the outset, provides an opportunity for gender-equitable finance. How well the proposed GCF policy provisions for gender will be implemented remains to be seen<sup>20</sup>, and already the GCF board, with 21 men and only three women, is highly unbalanced when it comes to gender representation.<sup>21</sup>

### EQUITY OR EQUALITY?

Gender equality is the goal of all people being equal in life chances, opportunities and rewards, no matter whether they were born male or female. Gender equity is about what it takes to achieve this goal given existing inequalities - and that is about justice in the distribution of resources, opportunities and rewards between women, men, girls and boys. Read more in CARE's gender policy: <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/CARE+International+Gender+Policy>



A couple farm together in the village of Obraje, in Carhuaz, Peru. © Zak Bennett / CARE

## Box 5

### GENDER AND THE UNFCCC 2015 CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT

The main global policy on climate change is agreed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Work is underway to establish a new legally binding international climate change agreement by 2015. The agreement would come into effect from 2020 to limit a rise in temperature to 2 degrees C, ensure effective adaptation to unavoidable climate impacts, and provide support to help tackle climate-related loss and damage when adaptation is not possible. Although the need to tackle gender issues is acknowledged in most aspects of the latest global climate agreements, there is still a great deal to do to ensure that a 2015 protocol is gender equitable. This includes, among others

- Ensuring that gender equity is part of the guiding principles of any future agreement. Repeated calls were made at the 19th Conference of Parties in Warsaw to consider gender as a crosscutting issue and guiding principle.
- A framework for action that helps ensure policy is translated into practice, including regular expert meetings to understand the connections between gender and climate change, and the establishment of a Gender Action Platform to build capacity on issues around gender-equitable climate policy and to develop ways to monitor success.
- Monitoring and evaluating how well the decisions that include gender equity are implemented.
- Effective and available finance that takes a gender-equitable approach, and enables access to small grant funding for non-governmental actors to undertake initiatives with a specific focus on gender equality.

Source: WEDO 2014a.

## Box 6

### THE GLOBAL GENDER AND CLIMATE ALLIANCE (GGCA)

The GGCA is a global alliance of over 90 civil society, inter-governmental organisations and UN agencies, and NGOs, including CARE. Members work together to ensure that at global, regional and national levels, climate change policies, decision-making and initiatives are gender-responsive. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Women's Environment and Development Organisation, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Environment Programme lead the GGCA Steering Committee. CARE occupied one of the three, two-year rotational seats on the Steering Committee from 2012 to 2014.

CARE works with partners in the GGCA, and directly with the UNFCCC and global climate finance institutions. Our work strengthens social, environmental and gender safeguards in climate finance, supports the integration of gender into global guidance for preparing National Adaptation Plans in Least Developed Countries and ensures that gender equity, along with other principles of social justice, are integrated in work towards a global climate change agreement.

See: [www.gender-climate.org](http://www.gender-climate.org)

### Gaps in implementation at national level

The majority of governments have signed international commitments on gender. Agreements such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform For Action are a solid basis for integrating gender into policies for sustainable development.<sup>22</sup> Policies and action on climate change, however, have generally evolved independently of these conventions and national gender policies and remain separate rather than coherently integrated.

Nevertheless, policies and action on climate change are catching up with international agreements on gender and national gender policies. Kenya, for example, was one of the first countries in Africa to recognise that there

was a gender imbalance in activities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Kenya actively promoted balanced participation of women and men as a key step towards gender-equitable climate policy.<sup>23</sup> Since 2010, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has supported a growing number of countries from Nepal to Jordan, Egypt, Costa Rica, Haiti and several others in Central America, the Arab Region, and Sub-Saharan Africa to develop national climate change and gender action plans known as ‘ccGAPs’. The plans will reduce the ‘implementation gap’ that persists between gender-equitable climate policy and gender-equitable climate action on the ground.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3 GENDER AND CLIMATE: A DIFFICULT DEBATE

**Gender inequality is a complex issue, while the debate on climate change is also inherently complex. Introducing gender into the debate on climate change has revived stereotypes and misunderstandings about gender. To date, the call for gender equity in the climate debate, from communities to the highest levels of climate policy, has been almost synonymous with “support for women”. Misunderstandings persist about what gender equality is and what it is not.**

In the push to put gender equality on the climate change agenda, the global community was under considerable pressure to “simplify, sloganize and create narratives with the power to move”.<sup>25</sup> Addressing persistent discrimination against women and girls worldwide must be an urgent priority in all aspects of sustainable development. But an exclusive focus on women and girls, and generalisations about them, can be unhelpful for several reasons:

- Gender is a crucial but never the only factor in a person’s vulnerability to climate change or other risks, thus a holistic perspective is required.
- A focus on women and girls as living in poverty as ‘an investment’ can be exploitative. There is a risk of placing the brunt of the responsibility for reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development on women and girls rather than on those who have the power to make the necessary changes.
- Generalised assumptions about women, men, boys and girls are more likely to entrench stereotypes and perpetuate the status quo than to lead to social and institutional change.

Achieving gender equity is not a ‘zero sum’ game in which gains by one group mean losses by the other. Women’s empowerment does not mean the disempowerment of men. Equity means creating a more balanced, fairer society, in which people have equal chances in life and opportunities not just to survive but to thrive in the face of the many challenges –climatic, economic and others.

Women’s empowerment is not the only issue when it comes to gender equality. Gender, age, ethnicity, caste and many other social factors combine to create powerful barriers that prevent people from taking action in a changing climate. Women and men, boys and girls alike, have roles defined by the local culture and society in which they live, and experience increasing stress and pressure in the face of climatic and economic disruption. Equality means that everyone has equal chances and opportunities in life, not that everyone becomes the same.

A fair climate deal on climate change and gender equity are both part and parcel of the same push for social justice. It requires not only investing resources in the empowerment of disadvantaged people, but it’s also about engaging and holding people in power to account. It means getting people from different social backgrounds and different generations to work together as equally legitimate decision-makers. It means addressing issues at all levels, from households to global leaders. This push for social justice is about more accountability, at all these levels, toward the people whose resilience we seek to support.

Finally, it is risky to claim that we ought to invest in gender equality because this fuels efficiency and economic growth. This logic puts economic growth before human rights. But achieving social justice is not a cost-saving exercise. Nor is it an investment for economic gain. As a UN Women report recently put it, “alternative pathways that move in sustainable directions, economically, socially and environmentally, are possible. They are underpinned by alternative visions and values that emphasise not just profit and growth, but the importance of sustainability, gender equality, inclusivity and social justice.”<sup>26</sup>

## 3. CARE'S VISION OF A POVERTY-FREE WORLD: WHY GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE MATTER

### KEY POINTS

- Promising practices which address the double injustice of vulnerability to climate change and gender inequality are emerging and need supporting
- Understanding gender influences on people's vulnerability to climatic and other changes, helps develop appropriate options to deal with changes, locally, nationally and across sectors
- CARE's gender-equitable approach advances work on climate change along a continuum from gender sensitivity to gender equality through social and institutional change
- Long-term, forward-looking work on building resilience and adapting to climate change goes hand-in-hand with transforming gender relations
- Economic empowerment must recognise the links between the causes and consequences of climate change and women's social, political and economic rights
- Strengthening women's and girls' reproductive rights is a global imperative for development and must be a priority in its own right, regardless of a country's population and carbon footprint

Climate change is not a new sector in CARE's work. Climate change affects everything, directly through the impacts of climatic shifts and shocks, and indirectly through the decisions and actions taken in response. Working towards CARE's vision for 2020, CARE has committed, through a focus on inclusive governance, building resilience and tackling gender inequality, to:

- **Contribute to food and nutrition security.**
- **Help secure women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights and freedom from violence.**
- **Promote women's access to and control over economic resources.**
- **Provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to women, men, boys and girls facing emergencies all over the world.**

### 3.1 CARE'S APPROACH TO GENDER INEQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The better our understanding of how gender dynamics influence people's vulnerability to climatic and other changes, and what options they have to deal with these changes, the more successfully we can target groups and action, locally, nationally and across sectors when supporting vulnerable communities' adaptation to climate change. Every livelihood, whether farming, fishing or trading, has a gender dimension specific to its culture and context. Various CARE initiatives support local practitioners and decision-makers to address the impacts of climate change on communities in ways that are more responsive to gender dynamics. CARE's experience shows that responding to climate change, while ambitiously tackling gender inequalities, requires committed leadership.

#### Box 7

#### CARE AND COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION

CARE's approach to community-based adaptation (CBA) is to support communities in making adaptation plans that are based on climate science as well as on local observation of climate change. CARE builds the capacity of local civil society and government institutions to support communities' adaptation efforts. We also influence the policy and enabling environment to address the underlying causes of vulnerability, such as poor governance, and gender inequalities in resource use and access to basic services.

Source: King 2014





Mapping climate vulnerability in Dakoro, Niger. © Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa staff / CARE

### Box 8

#### **INTEGRATING GENDER EQUITY INTO NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANNING: KEY POINTS FROM CARE'S SUBMISSION TO THE UNFCCC NAIROBI WORK PROGRAMME\***

The Nairobi Work Programme (NWP)<sup>29</sup> is an initiative under the UNFCCC dedicated to assisting countries, and particularly developing countries, to improve their understanding of climate change, assess their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and assess their ability to adapt. The initiative aims to help countries make informed decisions about practical adaptation actions and other measures to respond to climate change, taking into account current and future climate change and variability. CARE is a partner in the NWP and regularly provides technical inputs, particularly on principles and good practices in community-based work, and gender issues. CARE made the following points in a recent submission on national adaptation planning.

Addressing social inequalities and differences in vulnerability needs to be a key concern in national adaptation planning. Inequalities increase harmful climate change impacts on many poor people while constraining their options for taking action to reduce harmful impacts through adaptation. Gender, along with factors such as wealth and ethnicity, often determines the roles, opportunities, power, access to and control over resources of women and men in any context. These factors often control the extent to which people's rights are fulfilled. Social inequalities are an important and often insufficiently addressed barrier to equitable adaptation. Differences in vulnerability need to be addressed in responses to climate change at all levels, from local to national.

Integrating gender at all stages of the planning process is key. In order to address a key underlying cause of vulnerability to climate change, adaptation planning needs to commit to gender equality and promote gender-equitable, rights-based and participatory action. This includes i) promoting gender equality and increasing women's participation in decision-making, developing, identifying and implementing projects, allocating finances, and monitoring and evaluation, and ii) ensuring adaptation builds on the strengths of women and men, as well as girls and boys, and ensures that their skills, knowledge, and capacities contribute adequately to action on climate change.

Source: CARE International 2014c

CARE's approach to integrating climate change into development work has grown from our experience of working closely with people living in poverty. While community-based action is, by definition, carried out at the local level, it is crucial to recognise that action at all levels is required to achieve systemic and long-term change for people living in poverty. This applies especially in making national climate-change adaptation and action plans.

To encourage the uptake of community-based adaptation principles at the national level, the Southern Voices programme convened by CARE Denmark<sup>27</sup> has developed Joint Principles for Adaptation.<sup>28</sup> The principles include participation, inclusiveness and equitable resilience building for the women and men who are most vulnerable to climate change in a given country. Civil society partners in ten countries are currently testing the principles. CARE also supports efforts to integrate gender equity in national adaptation planning processes (see box 8).

### A two-fold learning challenge

Adopting truly transformative approaches to gender equality (see box 9), and supporting vulnerable communities to tackle the challenge of adapting to climate change, are both immense learning challenges. Most organisations, including CARE, are in the early stages of integrating work on these two complex issues.

CARE's approaches to community-based adaptation help people to analyse how they cope and adapt in response to changing environmental conditions, and to develop forward-looking strategies. When people understand how social inequalities such as unequal access to resources or unfair distribution of labour between women and men hinder adaptation, they can begin to challenge inequalities, and become more collaborative and inclusive in their decision-making. Reflecting on gender relations is important in this process. Every livelihood, farming, fishing or trading, has a gender dimension specific to the culture and context, which influences roles, expectations and power over resources and decisions. Awareness of the gender dimension helps people recognise and address what constrains or enables their options for adaptation. CARE Ethiopia's Social Analysis and Action approach facilitates this process (see box 10).

Raising awareness and changing behaviour at the local level are only part of what it takes to make community-based adaptation gender equitable (see list of recommended actions in box 11).

Researchers and practitioners are generating and testing new tools and methods. CARE Mozambique, for example, has adapted the Climate Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity Analysis (CVCA) handbook<sup>30</sup> for analysing gender relationships in Mozambique.<sup>31</sup> An alliance of organisations in the Pacific recently released a comprehensive set of field guides for addressing gender across various aspects of action on climate change.<sup>32</sup> These are just two examples of work to support practitioners in community-based adaptation in becoming more responsive and ambitious in tackling gender inequalities. However, experience shows that the best technical guidance is of no use without political and institutional commitment. Making gender integration a practical reality requires committed leadership.<sup>33</sup>

### Box 9

#### FROM GENDER-SENSITIVE TO TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

A gender-equitable approach advances work by CARE and partners on climate change along a continuum from gender sensitivity to gender equality through transformational, systemic change.

Work to achieve transformational, systemic change in gender relations involves:

- Taking into account the different effects of climate change on women, men, boys and girls, their specific priorities, and different gender roles and norms in responses to climate change (**gender-sensitive steps**).
- Creating dialogue and platforms to critically evaluate the fairness and value of gender roles and norms, and to renegotiate these rules and norms in the context of action on climate change (**gender-responsive steps**).
- Addressing structural barriers to gender equality in policies and practices responding to climate change, such as discriminatory laws and customs or socially engrained beliefs that constrain the roles and opportunities of women and men to take action on climate change (**gender-transformative steps**).

Source: CARE International 2013

Climate change is not a standalone sector, and therefore needs to be considered across CARE's work. As changing weather extremes, unpredictable rainfall, changing patterns of droughts and floods, sea-level rise and the knock-on effects of these phenomena begin to deeply affect CARE's work to achieve poverty reduction and social justice, the tools, principles and actions outlined in this paper offer emerging good practice in dealing with uncertainties and changing risks, across different sectors. The following sections explain in more detail the links between climate change, gender inequalities and the key areas in which CARE is working to make a significant impact in the years to come.

#### **Box 10**

### **CARE ETHIOPIA AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND ACTION: AN APPROACH TO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATIC SHIFTS**

Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approaches help community groups to understand the connections between social conditions and behaviours and development challenges. Originally designed for sexual and reproductive health initiatives, the approach encourages individual and collective shifts towards more equitable social norms and behaviours, and lasting change. The SAA process has three phases: exploration and analysis, understanding and seeing things differently, and action for behavioural and social change.

CARE is a partner in the Pastoralist Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) consortium working in the Afar, Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia. CARE Ethiopia is adapting SAA to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability to climate change. SAA helps pastoralists to identify the socio-cultural and behavioural factors that limit their capacity to adapt to climatic shifts and thus their efforts to become more food secure. The SAA process explores issues such as how building a culture of saving in pastoral communities, or reducing social pressure to maximise and maintain the size of herds until a crisis occurs, could help strengthen resilience. SAA also helps examine how social and cultural norms governing the behaviour of women and men of different ages, ethnicities, or social and health status, support or hinder their efforts to adapt.

Exploring the use of SAA represents important progress for CARE Ethiopia. Social and cultural rules and behaviours determine the actions people are able or prefer to take in response to shocks, stresses and changes, and strongly influence the success or failure of adaptation actions. Both climatic and social change are complex processes. SAA offers a practical way forward.

Source: Daze 2014



Men and boys herd small livestock in Ethiopia. © CARE staff.

### INTEGRATING GENDER INTO COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM CARE AND PARTNERS IN AFRICA

At a regional learning event convened by the CARE-implemented Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa (ALP) in Ghana in 2011, CARE practitioners and representatives from local and regional partner organisations made the following recommendations for implementing gender-equitable community-based adaptation (CBA) initiatives:

#### Project management

1. Analyse gender and other influences on power before planning adaptation activities to ensure a good understanding of the different levels of knowledge, skills, power and capacities in the community.
2. Analyse the drivers of change in gender roles and relations – how power dynamics shift in response to the pressures and stresses of climate change and other factors over time.
3. Ensure that gender considerations are included at all stages in the CBA project cycle. Tailor CBA methods and tools to the local context and climate to ensure that they respond to gender dynamics and the realities of change, risk and uncertainty.

#### Monitoring and evaluation

4. Monitor and document gender equality outcomes in CBA-related projects to generate knowledge and evidence that can be used to advocate for, and contribute to, an enabling policy environment for gender-equitable CBA at community, national and global levels.
5. Recognise that gender is about power relationships. Therefore, it is important to monitor and evaluate gender dynamics not only in absolute terms (numbers of female/male beneficiaries) or in isolation (impacts on men versus impacts on women), but also in relative terms (increase or decrease in gender gaps, changes in gender relations).

#### Working with others

6. Promote the inclusion of gender-equitable CBA strategies in government climate-change plans, policies and programmes at local, national and international levels.
7. Internally assess and respond to the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to gender equality within partner organisations and networks for successful implementation of CBA projects.
8. Develop capacity-building programmes that emphasise the vision, value and importance of gender-equitable CBA in order to respond to continuously changing and unpredictable climate change.

Source: Adaptation Learning Programme 2011

## 3.2 GENDER, CLIMATE, FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

**All people engaged in smallholder farming, women and men must have fair access to resources and opportunities to improve their livelihoods, and fair access to food in the face of climate change. And a gender-equitable response to climate change and food and nutrition security must not only be sensitive to gender differences in roles and needs in processes of food production and consumption, but must also address social and economic power imbalances between women and men.**

### CARE, food security and climate change: a focus on smallholder agriculture

One of the most visible consequences of climate change is its impact on agriculture and livestock production. Changes in climate alter long-term weather patterns and increase the variability of seasons from year to year. Weather is increasingly unpredictable. Changes in climate have direct effects on the food security of populations who depend directly on their own food production and indirect effects on many more by affecting food supply and prices.<sup>34</sup>

The current global food system is a major source of the emissions that cause climate change. The current system is also already unsustainable. Nearly 1 billion people<sup>35</sup> do not have sufficient nutritious food. Around another billion do not have food that provides a healthy, balanced diet. The inadequacy of the global food system to meet the right to food for all is not simply about population numbers. Consumption patterns in wealthy countries and by affluent populations all over the world fuel demand for commodities such as beef, soya and palm oil. Environmentally unsustainable production methods for these commodities make disproportionate demands on land, water and other natural resources that are becoming more stretched as the climate changes. But, for poor communities, these resources are crucial for dealing with the impacts of climate change. CARE's ambition is to protect and support the rights and resources of smallholders as custodians of the ecosystems upon which they depend and to ensure that their food and nutrition security needs are met.

### Gender dynamics in food, farming and climatic shifts

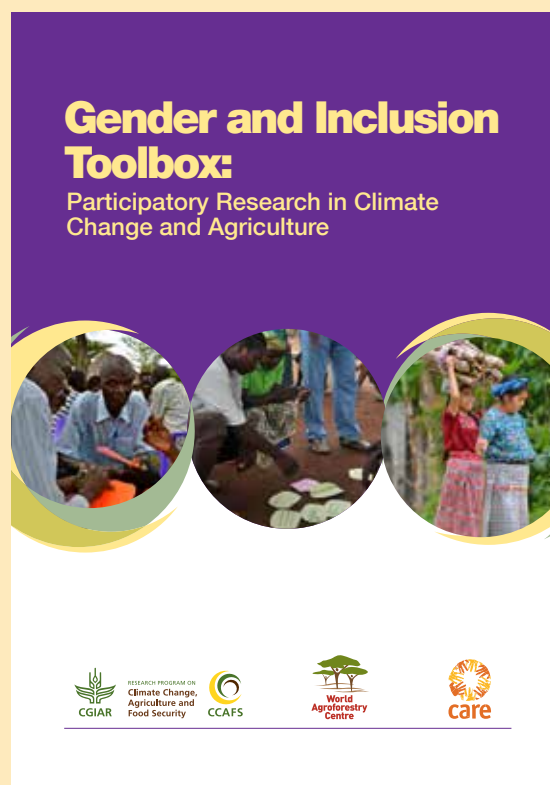
In communities of smallholders all over the world, whether farming crops, rearing and herding livestock or fishing, the roles and rules in producing, processing and marketing food are often strictly divided along gender lines.<sup>36</sup> These roles and rules are pervasive, but they can and do change over time, between locations, between people in different situations and at different stages in their lives. They also change because of environmental shifts such as climate change.

Gender roles and norms *per se* are not the problem. But gender roles and norms often come with discrimination and power imbalances that create serious differences in the ways that people experience adversity and take opportunities in the face of climate change. Food production is a prime example. In food production, discrimination against women is widespread. There is a gender gap in the distribution of assets, services and information important for producing food and coping with shocks and stresses. Women do not have equal access to land, credit, literacy, mobility, climate information services, agricultural inputs and technologies.<sup>37</sup> For example, women hold only 10% to 20% of land titles (see box 13). Only 5% of extension services are directed at women working in agriculture. Men hold 86% of management positions in the agricultural sector.<sup>38</sup> Gender inequalities also mean poorer life chances and fewer choices for women and girls when changes in climate squeeze people's resources (see section 3.4).

In recent years there have been efforts to better understand the ways in which an increasingly volatile and extreme climate impacts on the food and nutrition security of women and men, girls and boys in vulnerable communities, and how their roles, in turn, influence the way they respond. Participatory tools provide ways to understand the gender dimensions of decision-making, division of labour, use of time, access to and control of resources. They are useful tools for understanding gender relationships in rural communities that depend on farming crops, herding and fishing (see box 12).

### Box 12

#### CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME – CARE GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION TOOLBOX FOR AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH



The Gender and Inclusion Toolbox: Participatory Research in Climate Change and Agriculture is the result of a long-term partnership between the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), and CARE International.

Participatory research has shown that gender inequality affects food production and that women and girls are particularly vulnerable when food is in short supply.<sup>39</sup> For example, gender dynamics influence the distribution of food in households. Households headed by females face economic, legal and social challenges. Climate variability has a disproportionate effect on the typical household chores carried out by women and girls, such as fetching water.

While these gender inequality scenarios may ring true in many cases, they are generalisations in the extreme<sup>40</sup>, as we can see in the different localities where CARE and partners support farmers in adapting to climate change. While in Kanchanpur district, western Nepal, women constitute the majority of the agricultural work force<sup>41</sup>, women in Maradi, Niger, are largely excluded from farming (see box 13). In East Mamprusi, in Northern Ghana, on the other hand, although men typically control cash crops and marketing, women are considered to be “more business-like” and drive the sales of smallholder produce.<sup>42</sup>

So far, work on gender, food security and climate change has mostly focused on ‘women’, simply describing what women and girls can and cannot do to deal with climate change. This has led to an overwhelming focus on stereotypes of women as subsistence farmers. Very little work has been done to improve understanding of the role that important factors other than gender, such as race, class, age, ethnicity, religion or health status, play in how people respond to climatic shocks and uncertainty.<sup>43</sup>

### **Outlook: transforming gender relations and agricultural livelihoods in the face of climate change and economic shifts**

All people engaged in smallholder farming must have fair access to resources and opportunities to improve their livelihoods, and fair access to food in the face of climate change. Going forward, gender-equitable responses to climate change and food and nutrition security must not only be sensitive to gender differences but also abstain from stereotyping women and men on farms, rangelands, and in fishing and forestry. Gender-equitable responses must address imbalances in social and economic power between women and men of different socio-economic groups.

Long-term, forward-looking work on building resilience and adapting to climate change should go hand-in-hand with gender-transformative work (see box 9 in section 3.1). In Muguja in the Southern Nations and Nationalities’ People’s Region (SNNPR) in Ethiopia, for example, women in the most marginalised households were given goats, conforming with traditional social gender norms around livestock. But the women were also trained as ‘para-vets’ so they could look after the cows’ health. Cows are the most valuable asset in their communities but are very vulnerable to changing patterns of drought and disease. The women’s new roles as para-vets transformed how, as a marginalised social group in their communities and as women, they valued themselves, envisioned their future and were regarded by others.<sup>44</sup>

Gender transformation, however, cannot be not just about people’s individual aspirations and the relationships they have with their peers. It should also include pressing for lasting, structural and institutional changes, for example in the distribution of assets that are crucial for farmers to cope with changes, as is the case with the initiative to secure women’s land rights in Niger (see box 13).

### CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN LAND RIGHTS IN NIGER

Addressing the related problems of food insecurity, under nutrition, gender inequality and climate change requires structural changes. Closing the gender gap in access to productive land is an important structural change. In developing countries only 10–20% of land titles are held by women.<sup>45</sup> CARE's Women and Land Initiative in the Maradi region, Niger, addresses this. Since 2010 the initiative has been demonstrating how securing women's land rights helps communities better respond to the challenges posed by a volatile and changing climate.

In the last 30 years Niger has experienced recurrent food crises. In the Maradi region, in the south of the country, agriculture is the main activity of 85% of households. Between 10% and 15% of children under five suffer from acute malnutrition, classified as 'serious' by the World Food Programme. Periodic droughts are characteristic of the Sahel region, but the interval between drought years when agricultural production is poor has shortened. Now, on average there is a shortage of rainfall every one in three years. Each successive drought makes it more difficult for households. Herds have to travel further to green pastures. An increasing number of nomadic communities are settling down in the southern parts of Niger to grow crops. Climatic stresses, population dynamics and changes in land use mean access to land is becoming ever more fierce.

Meanwhile, cultural practices and increasing land scarcity are keeping a growing number of women out of farming. Women struggle to gain access to land, let alone gain control. Although national and religious laws formally give women land rights, weak and sometimes contradictory application of laws and rights adds to the problem. Seclusion – a cultural practice whereby Hausa women rarely leave their homes and then only with permission from their husbands – was originally only practised by wealthy households where husbands did not need women to work outside the home. But a shift towards more conservative interpretations of Islam has spread seclusion to poor households, preventing women from making a much needed contribution to feeding and providing for their families. At the same time, husbands in poor households struggle to provide for their families single-handedly under increasingly volatile climatic, economic and social conditions.

The Women and Land Initiative, working in 30 communities in southern Maradi, has been working to raise awareness and secure support from local, traditional, state and religious authorities for women to exercise their rights to inherit land, and to buy or lease land, under the Niger Land Act. The project has also contributed to increasing the representation of women on local land committees from 10% to 20%. The land committees, and supportive local leaders, and especially religious leaders, now advise on the advantages of gender-balanced control over land. Advantages include better abilities to cope with the impacts of the longer and more frequent droughts as a result of climate change.

Source: Mamadou and Salaou 2013.



Deciding when to plant in Dakoro, Niger. © Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa staff / CARE

### 3.3 CHANGING CLIMATE, CHANGING LIVELIHOODS AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

**Women's economic empowerment in the face of climate change should not build on simple assumptions about women's and men's roles and attitudes. Nor is economic empowerment exclusively about increasing access to finance and jobs. Economic empowerment must recognise the links between the causes and consequences of climate change and women's social, political and economic rights.**

#### Close ties between economic empowerment and climate change

The causes and consequences of climate change are closely linked to economic activity, production and consumption. Unequal distribution of wealth, livelihood resources and opportunities not only accounts for the unequally distributed impacts of climate change on specific population groups, but is also the main reason for the differences in the environmental footprints of different industries and countries, and different social groups within them. Economic development in the world continues to take for granted excessive use of natural resources to fuel growth and an abundance of free domestic and care work – largely provided by women.<sup>46</sup>

Income inequality is on the rise globally. At the same time, the social welfare functions of states are diminishing. These trends not only affect efforts to close gender gaps but also reinforce women's vulnerability to climate change.<sup>47</sup> Globally, 2.5 billion people are financially excluded and have no access to basic financial products such as savings, credit or insurance.<sup>48</sup> Many people who live in poverty have no stable asset base and no safety net. Often taking the risks involved in starting a new business or trying a new crop when floods or drought loom season after season proves impossible. As climate change destabilises the resources on which billions of livelihoods worldwide depend, the ability to change, adjust and take the risks involved in trying out new strategies is a key asset. In many contexts, the degree to which people have this ability depends strongly on their gender. Women's and men's access to services, financial products, technologies or new business opportunities can be strictly differentiated by social – and often legally enshrined – norms.

#### Gender equality in the economy: a long way to go

Globally, the last few decades have seen improvements in education and reductions in economic gender disparities but there are still huge gaps and new threats are continually emerging.<sup>50</sup> Just over half of women worldwide now have jobs (552 million more in 2008 than in 1980), compared with four-fifths of men.<sup>51</sup> However, women continue to be paid less than their male counterparts. In most countries, women's wages are between 70% and 90% of men's and ratios are even lower in some Asian and Latin American countries.<sup>52</sup> While women are over-represented in informal economies where they have no legal protection or formal rights,<sup>53</sup> they are still vastly under-represented at the highest level. A recent global survey found that only 18.3% of companies had at least one woman in top-level management.<sup>54</sup> And at least 80% of global green jobs are expected to be in industries where women are currently under-represented,<sup>55</sup> for example in engineering, manufacturing, and financial and business services.<sup>56</sup>

#### Gender, livelihoods and natural resources

Most of what we know about the effects of climatic shocks and shifts on women, men, girls and boys in given locations is based on their economic assets and household tasks – essentially, who owns, controls or uses different productive resources, for example land, credit, seeds, animals, trees and water and how tasks are divided. As access to natural resources dwindles in the face of increasing weather extremes, and political and commercial pressures,

#### Box 14

##### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT?

CARE seeks to address the exclusion and marginalisation of women from economic processes and systems which contribute to their exploitation, vulnerability and prevents them from participating fully in all aspects of life and reduces efforts to eradicate poverty in general. A woman is economically empowered when systems and structures support her ability to succeed and advance economically and she has the power to make and act on economic decisions.





Livestock herders in Garissa, northern Kenya, are grappling with intense droughts.  
© T. Plush / CARE

### **SLOW SHIFTS IN GENDER ROLES IN DROUGHT-STRICKEN GARISSA, NORTHERN KENYA<sup>49</sup>**

In Garissa, northern Kenya, where livestock herders grapple with intensifying droughts, the Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP) for Africa works on community-based adaptation. Here, men usually take the lead. Women and younger men tend to have a very limited say in planning decisions, be it within their families or at community level. Traditional labour division is strict. The expectation is that women's lives are confined entirely to the domestic sphere. They do not take part in farming activities. It is the men who prepare the land, plant seeds, grow crops and take care of animals.

However, dryland communities in Garissa are experiencing environmental and climatic changes, economic challenges, settlement and urbanisation, and things are changing. The activities led by ALP in the villages of Nanighi, Kone and Balich have contributed to loosening rigid norms. Instead of a strict separation by gender in production there is now more interaction. Men have started to consult women in their seasonal planning, and women are taking on

new roles and activities. Women now milk cattle and sell milk and other produce. Women are getting more and more involved in generating income and making decisions. This interaction has led to crucial changes in community-based adaptation planning. For example, climate information now not only guides planting and the use of agricultural inputs, but also informs women's choice of investments and savings. Communities analyse climate risks for both production and post-harvest processing to reduce and spread climatic risks for everyone involved. Speaking in public is no longer a complete taboo for the women ALP works with in Garissa because of their experiences in creating digital photo stories on climate change and adaptation.

But social change, and especially changes in gender norms, do not happen overnight. It is important to put the achievements of a single set of activities over a few years into perspective. For example, although women in Nanighi, Kone and Balich are now acknowledged for their business and leadership skills, they are still not in a position to make decisions about buying or selling animals. Equality in voice and opportunities for women in Garissa's agropastoralist communities is still a distant goal. It will take more than a single initiative to achieve. Community-based adaptation and gender-transformative work share this long-term vision and approach to social change.

and as people look for strategies to deal with these changes, their options can strongly depend on whether they are male or female, and the life stage they are at. In early life, boys and girls have different opportunities to attend school. In later life, boys and girls take on different types of work and leadership roles, and engage in different social interactions as they grow up.<sup>57</sup>

Among the most frequently quoted gender-differentiated impacts of climate change is the growing burden borne by women and girls of collecting water for household use as water resources become increasingly scarce.<sup>58</sup> Another is growing hardship because of forest degradation. Gender roles mean that women often depend more directly than men on water, firewood, food, medicinal plants and other important raw materials provided by forests. The story of Nakuyima Florence Batange of Jinji district, Uganda, is one of many that demonstrate how access to resources is often lost to commercial agriculture and industrially driven deforestation (see box 17).

CARE's Village Savings and Loans Associations (see box 16) have helped fuel successes in community action on climate change in many countries using women's economic empowerment as the starting point for change. Women and men in countries from Latin America to the Pacific say that VSLAs improve their ability to cope with various forms of risk. In many places, VSLAs are used as a springboard for innovation in the face of uncertain weather. In Maradi in Niger, for example, women use savings to buy solar kits for recharging mobile phones. The payments they receive for this service provide extra income. The ability to charge mobile phones also means that people can share weather forecasts and early disaster warnings more regularly and easily. Many also report that thanks to VSLA groups, women and men are more willing to share economic and domestic responsibilities. Changes in gender norms occur slowly and are often met with scepticism and resistance. Often, however, this gives way to support as people begin to appreciate the benefits of happier interactions and more collaboration.

#### **Box 16**

##### **VILLAGE SAVINGS TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN LOCAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

CARE's Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) approach has proven to be an effective platform for women's economic empowerment at the community level. VSLAs make people more financially secure, and boost the self-esteem and influence of socially marginalised groups. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, VSLAs reach three million people in 26 countries (CARE International UK et al. 2013). VSLAs are a key element of action on climate change that targets highly vulnerable groups.

VSLAs differ from a lot of micro-finance work in that they are 'savings-led'. They are informal community savings groups allowing members to save flexibly, take loans to invest in small businesses and draw on a social fund to cope with unexpected events. A self-selected group of people comes together to save money each week and uses the accumulated funds to finance small loans. This simple informal banking system can have a dramatic effect on people's ability to invest in income-generating enterprises and to cope with erratic cash flow.

VSLAs build financial and social capital. Members gain self-esteem, solidarity and respect from their peers through regular transactions and joint successes. VSLAs often become platforms for addressing social stigma or challenging gender norms around women's and men's economic roles, benefiting social and gender relations. VSLAs have also helped members build the financial credibility needed to deal with more formal banking and financing institutions.

Source: CARE International UK et al. 2013

### UGANDA: DIVISION OF LABOUR, FORESTS AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Uganda has long faced a deforestation crisis. Only 40 years ago, natural forests covered over 40% of the country. Now, natural forests cover just 20%. Uganda faces grave ecological consequences from the industrial and agricultural development that drive deforestation. The consequences of the economic and climatic changes underway are accelerating drought and flood cycles, soil erosion, loss of species, and are causing deterioration in water quality and quantity in Lake Victoria.

Nakayima Florence Batange lost everything in 2002 when a large sugar company, Kakira, cut down the Butamira Forest Reserve in Jinja district. The company completely destroyed 1,250 hectares of forest in order to extend their plantation. Despite disputes, petitions and support from NGOs, Nakayima's community ultimately lost the forest to Kakira Sugar Works. The consequences have been disastrous. Kakira had promised to provide jobs but the only employment offered was occasional weeding on the plantation. Farmers who grew sugar cane for Kakira on their land were paid so little that they had to take out high interest loans to buy seed and fertiliser, and to rent equipment. They ended up in debt.

Florence says: "I used to cut logs for firewood and sell them in the Iziru trading centre close by. It provided a good living – enough for school fees. We collected herbs from the forest for medicines and interspersed crops in the 700 hectares that was planted and managed by the community, so we had enough food for everyone. Now there is no forest, but we women still have the responsibility of feeding our families. Even though we are ready to work, it is almost impossible to feed our families." To feed their families, the women of Butamira had depended on water, firewood, honey, mushrooms and other forest resources. A few low-paid jobs and tax payments by Kakira to compensate for the destruction of the forest have not made up for their loss.

Source: CARE International 2008

### Gender stereotypes: the difference between empowerment and over-burdening

Increasing women's access to paid employment, education and financial resources is said to benefit child nutrition and family food security.<sup>59</sup> But this builds on the assumption that women worldwide will continue to shoulder most of the unpaid burden of care, a burden which is set to increase as climate change affects food security, health and access to water.<sup>60</sup> The problems faced by women who participated in financial literacy training in CARE's PRODUCE initiative in northwest Bangladesh (see box 18) illustrate why economic empowerment must find better ways to address how unpaid care work is shared.

Many conversations on gender equality and strengthening women's leadership in a greener economy have been about supporting and 'investing in' women in their existing, stereotypical roles: as caregivers and child minders, in charge of domestic chores and directly depending on natural resources. They are often portrayed as economically responsible, selfless and 'guardians of nature'.<sup>61</sup> In general, women have not had the economic means and power to drive the consumption which fuels the carbon emissions causing climate change<sup>62</sup>, but this is rarely considered when presenting 'heroic' and 'selfless' images of women. Not only do these stereotypes paint an accusatory picture of men as greedy, inconsiderate and lazy, but they also miss the point. Women must get more involved in leadership not because of alleged attitudes or social and environmental track records, but "simply" because they are under-represented.



A couple in one of CARE's projects in Vietnam. © CARE staff.

### CLIMATE-RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS AND NEW INCOME OPPORTUNITIES IN NORTHWEST BANGLADESH: WHO WILL TAKE ON THE CARE WORK?

Bangladesh is, because of its geography and socioeconomics, highly vulnerable to frequent natural disasters and the effects of climate change. The riverine char lands (sand bars) of northern Bangladesh, among other ecosystems in the country, are hotspots for climatic hazards, such as threats from sea-level rise and the hydrological changes resulting from Himalayan glacier melt. Bangladesh is, at the same time, one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world. Both rural and urban populations live in highly vulnerable and unsafe conditions.

In the char lands, marginalised families settle and farm crops on sand banks year after year, even though it is absolutely certain everything will be washed away in a few months. They have nowhere else to live or grow food. Their situation is getting worse. River erosion on an unprecedented scale means their land literally disappears in the floods. Family after family has to retreat from the crumbling shores. During the rainy (flood) season especially, men move to cities. Many women also move to work in underpaid jobs and unsafe conditions, for example in the famously exploitative garment industry. Those who stay behind lack education, mobility and work. As a result they often get into debt, deepening their poverty further.

The CARE Bangladesh PRODUCE initiative in the northwest char lands, works to improve the adaptive capacities and resilience of char dwellers to disaster and climate-change impacts. The project started with a participatory Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis<sup>63</sup> to increase awareness among local government representatives and communities about climate-related, and other types of risks. The analysis led to the development of community and district level disaster-risk management and adaptation plans. Together with partners, CARE introduced simple agricultural technologies, crop varieties tolerant to local conditions, developed infrastructure and energy efficient technologies, and revitalised traditional resource management practices. Providing opportunities for gainful employment for women who had not migrated to cities was part and parcel of strengthening climate-resilient livelihoods.

In Charghonoshyampur, for example, PRODUCE built on a successful model from a dairy value chains project and gave women training in financial literacy through a basket production initiative, which at the same time provides them with an income. The trainees learned how to forecast production and earnings, and to plan saving and spending, for example on education and medical expenses. The basket weavers' husbands largely supported the initiative,. However, it was not them but other women who took on the weavers' childcare and domestic chores – mostly mothers, sisters and friends. This shows that women's economic empowerment cannot be about access to finance and income alone. A wider set of social changes is needed for everyone to contribute and benefit equally.

### Outlook: economic development that integrates the care economy and stops climate disruption

Boosting women's savings and income (see box 17) can be a critical first step towards making them economically more secure and improving gender relations in poor populations trying to cope with the combined impacts of climate change, economic instability and environmental degradation. But changes at this level are not a cure for the overall systemic malfunctions that lead to inequality between countries, regions and gender groups, or pollution and climate disruption.

Women's organisations have called upon the sustainable development and climate change communities to systematically integrate discussion and work on the care economy with efforts to develop a green economy. Greater consideration of unpaid care would contribute to greater equality and, in turn, greater equality would contribute to climate resilience. A sustainable economy must place care and wellbeing at its core. This means creating decent work and sustainable livelihoods for all, and counting the costs of environmental degradation and climate change.<sup>64</sup> As well as adequate remuneration for care work and redistribution of care work between men and women, new development indicators must be created that accurately track advances in well-being rather than just economic growth.<sup>65</sup>

Women's economic empowerment in the face of climate change should not be built on simple assumptions about women's or men's roles and attitudes. Instead women's economic empowerment should recognise the links between climate justice and rights by:

- 1) providing fair opportunities and access to resources for effective adaptation and sustainable development; and
- 2) strengthening women's influence on investment in mitigation and climate adaptation at all levels.

This is essential if efforts to tackle climate change are to meet people's diverse needs and to benefit from everyone's positive contributions. Among other things, women's economic empowerment means increasing high-level formal employment of women in climate-related sectors, supporting informal women workers to organise themselves to claim formal rights, influencing policy and institutional change, and encouraging women to participate proactively in the innovation of technical and social solutions that meet their needs.

### 3.4 CHOICE, NOT CONTROL: REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**Strengthening women's and girls' reproductive rights is a global imperative for development and must be a priority in its own right, regardless of a country's population growth and carbon footprint. Over-consumption of resources that contribute to causing climate change, fundamentally controlled and driven by wealthy populations, not by the reproductive behaviour of poor populations, is overstressing the capacity of our ecosystems. Climate-change adaptation and family planning must share an agenda of social justice. This agenda must address the reproductive rights and choice of poor people, and not simplify a blame and control approach.**

#### Unfulfilled rights to reproductive self-determination

In many areas of the world, for example in Bangladesh, Niger and in the highlands of Ethiopia, high population density and high levels of vulnerability to climate change go hand-in-hand.<sup>66</sup> These are also places where women and girls frequently experience severe infringements of their rights to reproductive self-determination. They have limited access to the information, services and supplies needed to enable them to choose whether to have children and if so, how many and when. Reproductive health services are often poor. In 2010, in South Sudan, where 196,000 women are pregnant at any given time, there were only 19 registered midwives and 132 community midwives. One in seven mothers dies from pregnancy or birth-related complications.<sup>67</sup> In many places, drought and economic stresses drive families to force girls into early marriage and motherhood, as is the case in Masvingo, Zimbabwe (see box 19). In Dakoro, Niger, early marriage, extremely high birth rates and poor reproductive health services are a major barrier to girls' and women's resilience (see box 20).

The unfulfilled reproductive rights of women and girls in these and many other places make them vulnerable to climatic shocks and changes. But the challenges of unfulfilled reproductive rights have become entangled in conversations on climate change in ways that conflate

#### Box 19

##### MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE: EARLY MARRIAGE IN TIMES OF DROUGHT

Literacy levels are relatively high in Maringire, Masvingo, Zimbabwe, where CARE and partners promote conservation farming practices to improve the productivity of the dry, degraded soils people in Masvingo need to grow crops and make a living. A school in the village has been plagued by worsening droughts in recent years. Strategies to deal with drought range from changing farming techniques to reverting to wild plants. But there are only so many shocks a family can deal with. When a drought hits before a family's land, crops and budget have recovered from the previous drought, which happens more and more often, many families see only one way out. They marry their daughters at a much earlier age than usual. This is increasingly often the only strategy they have for coping with failed harvests, hunger and financial stress resulting from drought. The dowry provides cash and the departure of a daughter means one less mouth to feed. The girls, forced to abandon their education and enter marriages and sexual relationships at a very young age, forfeit their well-being and often their health.

these rights with an unjust agenda of population control. Investment in family planning for women and girls in the global South has been claimed to create multiple wins. The claim is that family planning reduces population pressure and thus minimises the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and also relieves pressure on natural resources which are becoming scarcer because of climate change.<sup>68</sup> Such claims risk compromising rather than achieving equality and just outcomes for women living in poverty who are already adversely affected by climate change.

#### Box 20

##### NIGER GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH

In Dakoro, in southern Maradi, Niger, the Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa works to support communities in adapting to climate change. Changes in climate mean less rainfall, higher temperatures and more erosion due to violent winds. A gender and adaptation study showed that because women did not have access to contraception extremely fertility rates were high. Fertility rates are a major cause of differences in vulnerability to climate change between ethnic communities.

In Niger, the legal marriage age for girls is 15 years. In the last two decades, the average age at first marriage for girls has gone up only slightly, from 15.1 twenty years ago to 15.7 in 2012. For men, the average age at first marriage has gone up faster, from 21.1 to 24.7 between 2005 and 2012. In Dakoro, opinions on when a girl is ready for marriage differ across ethnicities and locations. For religious and economic reasons, the tendency is to marry girls early, often before they reach 15 to avoid any risk of non-marital pregnancy. If girls marry later, it is less likely to be because of concerns for their education than because childhood pregnancy carries health risks. Large families are as much proof of a man's masculinity as proof of a woman's dutiful contribution to society, and are a symbol of prosperity and resilience. Contraception, although increasingly in demand by women to lessen the health risks and burden of care of numerous pregnancies, is opposed, especially by men and often on religious grounds.

As such, very early marriage for girls and expectations that couples will have large families are reasons why fertility rates in Niger are among the highest in the world. Niger is one of the rare countries in which birth rates are not just very high but increasing.

The study showed that early, frequent and often back-to-back pregnancies have toxic synergies with other factors that increase vulnerability to climate change, such as restricted mobility or lack of education. The research concludes that "it is not proposed to support Malthusian theories which are currently re-emerging and with which we are in total disagreement: According to these theories, to cut population growth would raise living standards by limiting the number of mouths to feed and, thus, also preserve the environment. Studies worldwide have demonstrated that families choose to have less children when they can afford to do so: when less labour is needed, when child mortality goes down, when living standards rise and opportunities and means to educate children are in place. [Our research] has shown that this is far from the case in Niger."<sup>69</sup>



Source: Monimart and Diarra Doka 2014

Woman from Dan Maza community, Maradi, Niger. © Fiona Percy / CARE

## Are fertility rates of the world's poorest a major threat to our climate and nature?

The carbon footprint of a child born into wealth in North America, Europe, or in the wealthy sectors of other regions and countries will be hundreds of times greater than the carbon footprint of a child born into poverty (see figure 1). Yet, some choose to present high fertility rates in the world's poorest communities as a major threat to the stability of the global climate.<sup>70</sup> This view on high fertility rates is incompatible with CARE's commitment to climate justice. Action on climate change hinges on tackling inequality and the consumption patterns of the wealthiest rather than tackling the reproductive behaviour of people living in poverty.

Most global development actors understand that controlling fertility in the poorest populations is not an appropriate or effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Family planning as a way to adapt to climate change impacts, however, has gained in popularity because of claims that it addresses resource scarcity and environmental degradation.<sup>71</sup> The unfulfilled reproductive rights of women and girls have a crippling effect on their capacity and the capacity of their families to deal with the impacts of climate change. However, in the context of climatic shifts that put additional pressure on the already dwindling natural resource base of poor populations, there is a thin line between meeting urgent demand for family planning on the one hand, and playing the unfair blame game of population control on the other.

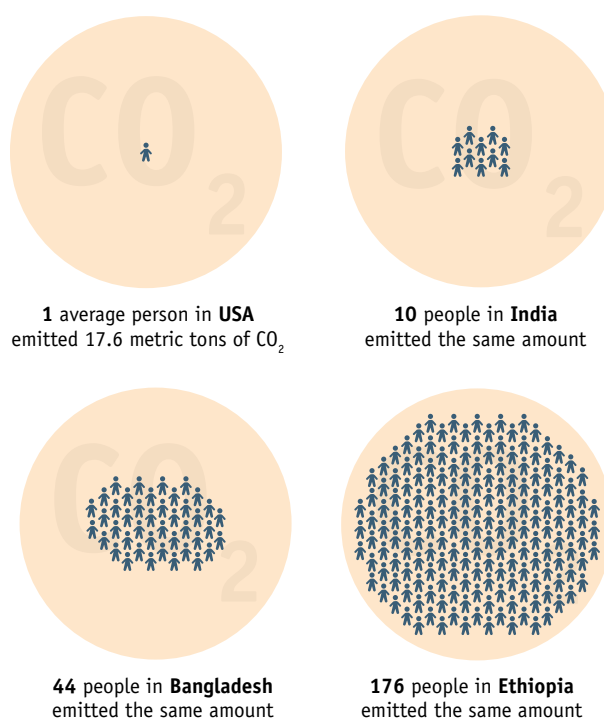
Addressing women's and girls' rights to bodily integrity<sup>72</sup> and minimising their exposure to health risks and violence are global imperatives. Tackling these persistent barriers is critical to advancing gender equality and to building the ability of vulnerable communities to adapt to and recover from climatic shocks and changes. But to conclude that family planning can provide an answer to all these problems would be simplistic, if not dangerous. There are a number of caveats to consider with respect to family planning as a strategy for climate-change adaptation.

First, there is a history of human rights abuses related to reproductive health services. Previous population scares<sup>73</sup> did not materialise but were used to justify coercive population control in poor populations, mainly targeting women, but also men. Decades of experience in population and environment programmes have shown that rights and choice are too easily undermined when misguided natural resource management concerns drive reproductive health services. When policy and funding focus on reducing birth rates rather than providing women and families with information and services to make their own choices, this can lead to an emphasis on "results" and pressure to make a certain choice.<sup>74</sup>

Second, overpopulation as a driver of resource scarcity, conflict and food insecurity often receives disproportionate attention. The world today has enough resources to feed the undernourished billion. Waste and obesity are at one end of the food spectrum and hunger at the other. Large, poor, marginalised populations and powerful corporate interests compete for land and water. In many cases it is unjust to blame hunger and poverty on poor people's fertility.<sup>75</sup>

Third, there is confusion between correlation and causation when it comes to understanding the relationship between fertility and poverty or vulnerability. In many contexts where wealth has increased and the size of families has shrunk, lower fertility was the result of poverty reduction, not the cause.<sup>76</sup> In other words, people often choose to have fewer children once they can afford to and once child mortality rates fall.

**Figure 1:**  
**Comparison of per capita emissions in four countries (2010)**



Based on 2010 emissions, Source: <http://data.worldbank.org>

### Outlook: reproductive rights, not control

Sexual and reproductive rights are about self-determination. They include the right to life, health, reproductive self-determination, security and to bodily integrity. This means the right to survive pregnancy and childbirth, to freely choose whether, when and how many children to have; whether, when and with whom to have sex; and whether, when and whom to marry. It also means the right to information, education and means to achieve all of the above. These rights are enshrined in the various international human rights covenants to which most countries in the world are signatories.

However, these reproductive rights are still among the most contested in the world, not only in developing countries. Population control is nothing to do with reproductive rights and self-determination and yet often adopts the language of rights and equality to advance its agenda. As the time window to act on climate change and conserve dwindling natural resources closes, the responsibility to act urgently lies with wealthy elites, and not with women living in poverty who need to be the ones in charge of how many children they have. In degraded environments, reducing vulnerability to climatic impacts will often entail raising health standards, and in many cases, providing information, services and supplies for family planning. But this must not be subordinated under environmental objectives, and come with strict safeguards on women's rights and choices.

### 3.5 CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES: UNEQUAL RISKS

**Floods, drought and storms do not discriminate, society does. This is why, as climate change creates more emergencies and erodes people's ability to cope, the livelihoods, health and future prospects of men, women, boys and girls are affected in different ways. Gender-equitable efforts to build people's resilience in the face of disasters address the structural inequalities which lead to the unequal risks that people face. And if everyone's losses are to be addressed, they must be made visible and accounted for. Measuring the human impacts of disasters. Measuring the human impacts of disasters, rather than focussing on economic losses alone, is important.**

#### Climate change: a growing threat to development<sup>77</sup>

Disasters, once considered to be rare and random, are becoming almost regular events. Just take the Philippines in recent years, or a low-lying country like Bangladesh where sea-level rise is a steadily increasing hazard.

Climate change is causing sea-levels to rise steadily, threatening the very existence of some small island states. The trend towards more extreme and more disruptive weather events is consistent with the predictions of climate scientists. With changes in climate, heat waves will become more common, winds more violent, droughts will intensify and rain will fall more heavily, triggering dangerous floods and landslides.<sup>78</sup> The frequency of disasters is increasing and economic losses from disasters double every decade.<sup>79</sup> As extreme weather is likely to become the new "normal" in many places, climate change threatens to reverse over 20 years of progress in reducing extreme poverty. Drought can have a particularly crippling effect on development.<sup>80</sup>

#### Box 21

##### CARE'S HUMANITARIAN AND EMERGENCY STRATEGY

Launched in 2012, CARE's humanitarian and emergency strategy renews CARE's dual humanitarian and development mandate. CARE is in a unique position to respond to gender aspects in climate change from a development and human rights perspective. We focus on specific groups – often women and girls – that are chronically poor and vulnerable and stressed by disasters.

'Impact groups' are not target groups, they are 'samples' in populations that allow CARE to determine the success of its work. At the same time, CARE's emergency and humanitarian responses focus not just on the ethics of disaster relief management but also on the ethics of development. CARE works towards climate justice, which means addressing the fact that those who are least responsible for climate change are already bearing a disproportionate burden of its impacts.



**“Reducing vulnerability can only be done through addressing inequality and power. Wealth is increasing, but so is inequality, and many people are completely left behind.”**

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia<sup>83</sup>

### **Disasters do not discriminate, society does**

The severity of disasters such as those caused by Typhoon Haiyan, Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Sandy depends on the magnitude of the climatic event that triggers it but also on the social, economic and political conditions among the populations affected.

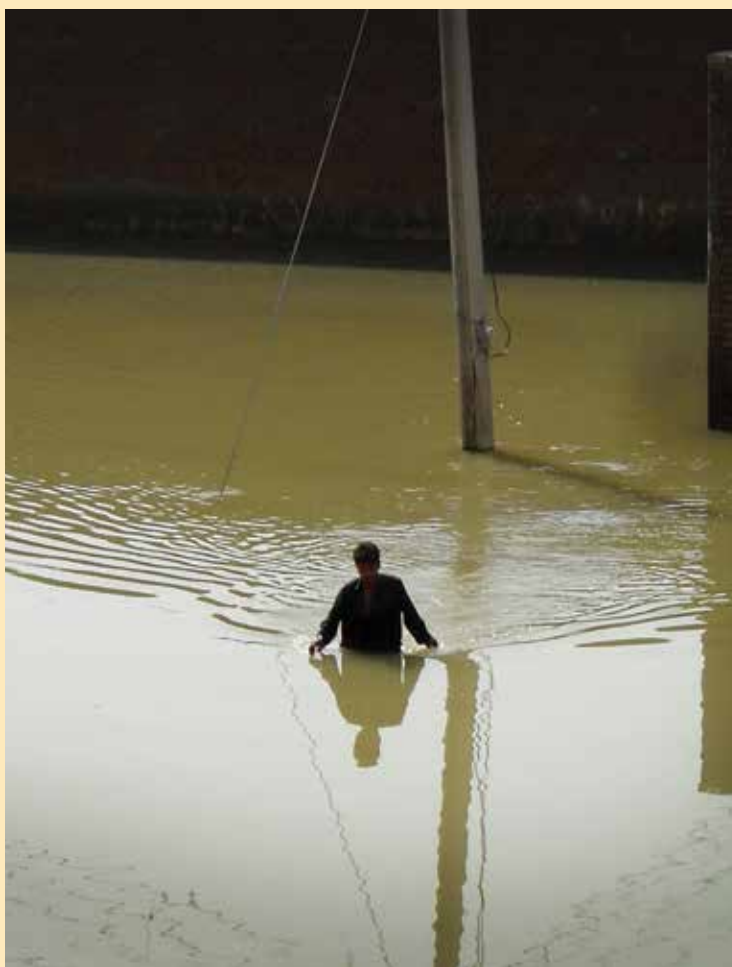
Socioeconomic inequality means that poor and marginalised populations live in conditions which are not as safe as those in which wealthy populations live. Poor populations are therefore at greater risk of suffering extreme losses from disasters and economic volatility than wealthy populations. According to Oxfam, 97% of people on low incomes have no insurance cover, and 90% of people in low-income countries have no social security, which leaves them highly vulnerable to major risk or financial shock.

As Oxfam puts it, ‘inequality is hardwired into crises. Almost anyone who is marginalised – because of their caste, colour, class, age, ability or gender – will likely suffer from shocks more than anyone else.’ Inequality of risk is not confined to low-income countries; it is on the rise all over the world. 81 For example, 40% of people who did not evacuate during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 were physically unable to leave or were caring for a person with a disability.<sup>82</sup>

#### **Box 22**

#### **SEPTEMBER 2014 FLOODS IN PAKISTAN: NO WOMEN DOCTORS, NO HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN**

CARE surveyed 400 women and men after floods that affected 2.5 million people in Pakistan. Three-quarters were hungry. It was mostly women and children who had to skip meals as a result of the floods. Half of the women interviewed said that they faced huge difficulties in accessing healthcare, or that they could not access healthcare at all. The major reason for this was that no women doctors were available to treat them, and that the cultural context did not permit them to consult men doctors. An overwhelming majority of male respondents said they would seek employment elsewhere as the floods had left them without means or work opportunities locally. The absence of men raised concerns for the security of the women and children left to fend for themselves.



Pakistan has been hit regularly by major flooding in recent years. © Wolfgang Gressman / CARE

Poor households are often unable to access or mobilise assets to buffer losses from disasters. They are rarely covered by insurance or social protection. In eroding their assets to survive hard times, the poorest people become less able to cope with the impact of disasters. Each climatic shock, such as a drought, flood or storm, which will become more frequent and more intense with climate change, makes poor households more vulnerable to the next, trapping many in a downward spiral. Droughts and floods in particular cause not only short-term losses but long-term impoverishment.<sup>84</sup>

Gender inequalities often mean that women and girls living in poverty are disproportionately affected by disasters, exacerbating existing inequalities. Although more research is needed to understand these impacts fully, data shows that gender affects mortality rates, slows the return to income-generating activities, increases responsibilities for care, increases the risk of gender-based violence, affects girls' education and leads to deteriorating health (see box 22). Nevertheless, the impacts of disasters on humans are complex and context specific. Differences in the number of women and men, and different age groups affected by disaster can also be attributed to family separation, for example when young people (often men, but also women) migrate from rural areas to seek seasonal or longer-term employment in cities.<sup>85</sup>

There have also been cases where gender roles and expectations have led to higher mortality rates among men when compared with women.<sup>86</sup> When conflict or disasters strike, "men and boys are exposed to specific forms of violence and vulnerability which are often little understood or addressed by emergency response efforts".<sup>87</sup>

### Progress in integrating gender in tackling disaster risk reduction (DRR)

In the run up to the World Conference on Disaster-Risk Reduction and Resilience (2015) and the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), CARE is calling on states and multilateral organisations to put gender equity at the heart of wider reforms to the humanitarian system. CARE is pushing for a gender marker for monitoring emergency responses. Although gender and gender-based violence are complex, a gender marker would at least enable initiatives that attempt to tackle these issues to be tracked.<sup>88</sup>

As climate-change policy begins to consider gender inequalities (see section 2.2), similar trends are emerging in disaster-risk reduction (DRR) and humanitarian action.<sup>89</sup> There have also been calls to address gender inequalities in the recent creation of a global mechanism to address loss and damage from the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided by climate adaptation or mitigation efforts.<sup>90</sup> However, in practice, attention to gender in disasters and emergencies is inconsistent. Systematic, reliable, quantitative and qualitative information on the relationship between gender inequality and disaster impacts<sup>91</sup> is still lacking, particularly for slow-onset disasters that constitute a high proportion of climate-change impacts.<sup>92</sup> Generally, the need is for better ways to respond to the gender dynamics present in each individual context, rather than for the generalisation of individual circumstances, which only leads to more gender stereotyping. CARE's CVCA handbook<sup>93</sup> is a tool for undertaking context-specific, gender-sensitive analyses of capacities and vulnerabilities to climate and related disasters<sup>94</sup> but it is not a quantitative method.

### Box 23

#### ACCOUNTING FOR DISASTERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASURING NON-ECONOMIC LOSSES

Between 2009 and 2011, 62 out of 70 national progress reports to the Hyogo Framework for Action did not collect gender-disaggregated information on disaster vulnerability and capacity.<sup>95</sup> However, even gender-disaggregated information is not enough for measuring losses from disasters that accurately reflect gender dynamics.

Impacts of disasters are often measured in ways that make the losses incurred by women invisible. The most common measures of household loss, housing and agricultural land, represent loss of resources that tend to be held by men. These measures ignore the loss of women's assets, as well as the impacts on assets that are much more difficult to quantify, such as education, health and especially human lives. The 2013 floods in Central Europe caused the greatest economic loss from a disaster that year (USD22 billion) and the loss of 25 lives.<sup>96</sup> Though Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 caused less economic damage (USD13 billion), 8,000 people lost their lives and millions of livelihoods were destroyed.<sup>97</sup>

### **Outlook: tackling inequality as a key part of tackling risk**

The most effective way to reduce the impacts of climate-related disasters is to tackle structural inequalities and discrimination while strengthening the ability of marginalised groups to claim resources, learn life-saving skills, and take leading roles in disaster preparedness and recovery.<sup>98</sup>

Building resilience – stabilising a system in the face of increasingly volatile climate and markets, and social instability – is becoming a unifying goal in humanitarian action and development. Resilience alone, however, does not reduce inequality, or enable people not just to survive but to thrive despite changes and shocks.<sup>99</sup>

The policy and practice of integrating gender in disaster-risk reduction plans needs to go beyond considering women and girls as vulnerable groups or as economic resources. Everyone should be treated as rightful stakeholders and leaders in risk reduction and resilience efforts.<sup>100</sup> The fundamental causes of inequality that underlie vulnerability and resilience need to be addressed.<sup>101</sup> This means securing basic services – health, education, social protection and insurance, emergency early warning and climate information – as well as providing equal opportunities to make a living and to influence decisions that shape lives.



# 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mirtha Vasquez Huarcaya (27) explains how Chamiseria community, near Huancayo in Peru, are planting crops which are more resilient to climate change. © Zak Bennett / CARE

## GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The root causes and impacts of climate change, poverty and vulnerability, and gender inequality are closely related. As social inequality is on the rise in many parts of the world, gender inequality is entrenched, widespread, and persists as a barrier to achieving development and the fulfilment of human rights for all.

The chances of a better life for women and girls who live in poverty, or in vulnerable and unsafe conditions, are often threatened by the double injustice of climate change and gender inequality. And in many places, strict gender norms and expectations limit the options available to both men and women as they try to manage the new risks that climate change brings.

In the global response to climate change, the role of gender equality has gained increased recognition at all levels. For example, most of the climate funds under the UNFCCC now require that gender issues be considered when allocating funds. There is a solid, legal basis for integrating gender into policies on sustainable development at the national level in many countries. In local level responses to climate change, too, promising gender equitable practices are beginning to emerge. CARE, for example, has been working on integrating gender into community-based adaptation tools and processes. But this is a learning effort in its early stages. And where adequate policies do exist, closing the implementation gap between policy and action is the next challenge.

The way gender issues have been addressed in the context of climate change policy and action has often been problematic. Further work is needed to ensure gender equity becomes enshrined in climate strategies and programmes as a matter of social justice and not just a function of economic efficiency. Gender is not a standalone reason for shaping vulnerability to climatic and other shocks and changes, yet it is still poorly understood how the multiple social factors of vulnerability – age, ethnicity, religion, etc. – work together in different places. And finally, gender equality needs to be understood as an issue not by and for women alone, but as an agenda by and for the advancement of everyone in society; as an indispensable part of achieving social justice.

## What next? Key ways forward

The world has a unique opportunity now to change course and put development on track towards a just and sustainable future where people's rights, opportunities and life chances in the face of climate change are neither governed nor limited by whether they were born male or female, or where they were born. 2015 is expected to deliver key decisions on critical policy processes including the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a new global climate agreement, and a renewed Global Framework for Disaster-Risk Reduction. And in the years to come, CARE has committed to make a difference to the lives of people living in poverty by focusing on four key areas – food and nutrition security, women's sexual and reproductive rights, women's economic empowerment and humanitarian action. Addressing gender inequality, and how environmental change, disasters, and policy and economic changes arising from the impacts of climate change affect all of these issues, is vital to CARE's vision for 2020 and beyond.

- **Globally, a strong boost in support for climate justice and gender equality**, is needed in all the post-2015 agreements. In climate policy and finance at the international and national level, while some countries and mechanisms still need to catch up, the focus needs to be on providing consistent support for the implementation of gender principles and commitments.
- **To address climate change effectively at the local level**, adaptation planning needs to be led by affected communities and promote gender-equitable, rights-based and participatory action. This includes, but is not limited to, bringing more gender balance into initiatives. To address the deeply-rooted reasons why people are affected by climatic shocks and shifts in different ways, adaptation action needs to be informed by an understanding of social inequalities, and the vulnerabilities and strengths of women and men of different social groups in the face of an uncertain and volatile climate.
- **Building resilience in agricultural livelihoods and ensuring food and nutrition security for all** only works when all people engaged in smallholder farming have fair access to resources and opportunities to improve their livelihoods. This, in turn, hinges on building adaptive capacity in the face of the uncertainties, new risks and volatile changes, and also on social inclusion, gender equity, and combating discrimination and marginalisation. While there are global tendencies in gender inequalities, and while some can be quantified, the gender dimensions of food and farming are very context specific. Tackling them in appropriate ways is not a matter of one-size-fits-all solutions.
- **Women's economic empowerment** in the face of climate change should not be about recruiting more people into an inequitable, unsustainable economy that relies on exploiting natural resources and unpaid care work. Instead it's about the way resources and labour are distributed and valued in the economy. As CARE's experience with village savings and loans groups shows, boosting women's income is a critical first step towards better economic security and improving gender relations. Beyond that, economic empowerment needs to challenge the overall economic malfunctions that lead to inequality and climate disruption.
- **Strengthening women and girls' reproductive rights** is a global imperative for development and must be a priority in its own right, regardless of a country's population growth and carbon footprint. It is high levels of consumption, fundamentally controlled and driven by wealthier populations, not the reproductive behaviour of poor populations, that is overstressing the capacity of our ecosystems. A shared agenda between climate change adaptation and family planning must be one of social justice – and therefore one of reproductive rights and choice, and not one of blame and control. There must be strict safeguards for these rights and choices when it comes to family planning in the context of climate vulnerability and environmental degradation.
- **A gender-equitable effort to build people's resilience in the face of disasters** must address the structural inequalities lying behind the unequal risks people face. Building resilience should not just be about keeping people just above the survival threshold. Everyone should be treated as rightful stakeholders and leaders in risk reduction and resilience efforts - the policy and practice of disaster risk reduction needs to go beyond considering women and girls as vulnerable victims or economic investments. Measuring the impacts of climate-related disaster beyond economic loss is important for making all types of loss and damage visible and to ensure it is accounted for, so as to build an evidence base of the human impact of climate change.

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