



CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION. WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE?

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KEY POINTS

- 1 Climate change presents the opportunity and the challenge of rethinking policies with a gender approach; to respond with solutions that foster sustainable development and also reduce inequality between men and women.
- 2 In order to incorporate a gender perspective, it is crucial to identify existing links and / or tools that connect different sectors, and ensure robust progress is made towards gender-responsive adaptation policies.
- 3 Gender mainstreaming requires policies and institutions with a strong commitment to strategies that assess the differentiated impacts that climate change has on men and women, as well as the value of the contributions that men and women make. The processes must ensure that men and women are participants as well as beneficiaries of adaption to climate change solutions.

Executive summary

Climate change presents the opportunity and the challenge of rethinking policies with a gender approach; and to respond with solutions that promote sustainable development and also reduce the inequalities between men and women. While gender is becoming an increasingly important consideration in discussions, as proven in the following examples where specific progress was achieved: The 16th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), four of the six countries reviewed (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Uruguay) include gender references in their National Determined Contributions (NDC) and half of them have already developed adaptation strategies accordingly; there is still a long way to go to achieve gender-responsive policies with impact. The methodology used for this work was based on extensive research, literature, the researcher's own work experience, interviews with experts, and informal consultations.

Resumen ejecutivo

El cambio climático presenta la oportunidad y el desafío de repensar políticas con enfoque de género; y de responder con soluciones que promuevan el desarrollo sostenible y que, a la vez, disminuyan las desigualdades existentes entre varones y mujeres. Si bien el género comienza a ocupar espacio en las discusiones climáticas, tal como lo demuestran algunos avances concretos —por ejemplo: el Plan de Acción de Género aprobado en el marco de la 16.ª Conferencia de las Partes de la Convención Marco de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Cambio Climático (CMNUCC) en 2017 (1); el hecho de que cuatro de los seis países relevados (Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay y Uruguay) cuenten con menciones de género en sus Contribuciones Nacionales Determinadas (NDCs, por sus siglas en inglés) y que la mitad de los mismos ya haya desarrollado estrategias de adaptación en esa línea—, aún hay un largo camino por recorrer para lograr políticas género-responsivas con impacto. La metodología del presente trabajo condensa una intensa investigación a través de la bibliografía, experiencias de trabajo propias de la investigadora, entrevistas a referentes y consultas informales a diversos grupos de interés.

General comments about gender and climate change

Climate change affects and impacts women and men differently. In general, the negative impacts are greater on women. The contributions of men and women against climate change are equally necessary and relevant, however they are different. Women are effective agents of change in terms of mitigation and adaptation because they have valuable knowledge and practical experience for solving climate issues (2). As managers of natural resources, carriers of ancestral knowledge, and because of the role they play in communities, domestic, public / political spheres, and in other arenas, women play a significant role as agents of change driving climate change actions.

Stereotypes, the roles culturally assigned to men and women (3), contribute to the gender gap, defined as a measure that shows the distance between men and women in the face of the same variable or indicator (4). Gender stereotypes have an effect on the capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, which unveil patterns of power that are based on gender imbalance. For this reason they must be taken into account when elaborating climate change solutions (5).

Although there are many studies on the relationship between gender and climate change, there still is a lot to be done. According to the authors consulted (3), more qualitative and quantitative data of this relationship needs to be collected. Available evidence does not provide enough information on the situation of women with respect to men in terms of climate change. For this reason, this study provides different examples of policy approaches that have different ways of articulating with other sectors. These can serve as guidelines for future decision-makers when identifying entry points or lines of work for the mainstreaming process that is most appropriate for the context where they work.

In order to understand the underlying causes of gender inequality in the face of climate change and to ensure that policies take into consideration both concerns equally, the roles and differentiated impacts of men and women in the face of climate change (point 3) with regards to such issues as access to water, agriculture, natural disasters, health, and energy need to be identified. Equally important is the degree of representation and intervention that women and men have in the elaboration of public policies related to climate change (i.e. the presence of women in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC delegations - Figure 1), as well as their ability to access financing (i.e. a common barrier is the lack of land titles), and poverty.

Two factors that work against gender mainstreaming are: 1) a weak commitment to the issue (e.g. in the project framework, when the gender component is added at the end of the project, or in the framework of a policy, when gender issues are included as a technicality, with no political intention of profound change); 2) Stakeholders lack the needed capacities, relevant tools, and significant indicators, and there is a lack of experts within the region to support their actions.

Differentiated contributions of men and women and impacts

Before analyzing how policies address this issue, a brief summary of some of the effects of climate change and their impact on women and girls is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Effects of climate change and how it impacts women and girls*

Subject	Effects of Climate Change	Impact on Women
Access to safe water	Negative impact on water sources affecting vital water supply, domestic and productive uses	Since they are responsible for collecting and managing the water supply, the work burden increases Less access to safe water. Higher risk of malnutrition and disease
Agriculture	Drought and/or flooding, due to temperature changes and erratic weather	They are the most affected by food insecurity because of cultural issues Less access to productive resources (land, livestock, financing, technology) for facing new scenarios and to continue producing
Natural Disasters	Floods, hurricanes, extreme droughts, intense rainfall, heat and cold waves, typhoons, landslides, etc.	More vulnerability due to the following: a) Lack of access to weather information/early alerts. This limits their capacity to respond to natural disasters b) Lack of survival skills taught on a regular basis to young boys, such as swimming or climbing
Health	Increase in infectious diseases transmitted by vectors, such as mosquitoes that migrate due to weather changes	Pregnant women, nursing infants, very young girls, and the elderly, are particularly vulnerable to health threats

* Elaborated based on Blomstrom et al (6) and Casas Varez (2017) (3).

With regards to women's contributions in this area, we observed in the studies reviewed (3) that social programs that are gender-responsive have a greater impact on food security and family nutrition as a whole. The same study describes a regional case of a community in Honduras where a group of women was able to provide access to safe water to their community, by taking on the responsibility and management of their water vending machine, employing women and leading the project at the same time.

The above initiative is an example of the potential of integrating gender perspective in policies, so that women can contribute their much-needed knowledge and, at the same time, become leaders in climate action.

In view of the above, the following key points summarize the issue:

1. Women play a key role as agents of change in climate issues because they hold local knowledge of the sustainable management of natural resources (7). They must be included in the climate agenda because they have different perspectives and experiences. In spite of this, women are under-represented in the decision-making processes for climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies (8). It is essential to ensure their participation in future decision and implementation processes.

2. Greater vulnerability of women to climate change is due to gender stereotyped cultural roles, failure to respect women's rights, lack of economic autonomy of women, underrepresentation in politics, and lack of access to the necessary credit (9). Including the gender perspective in adaptation and mitigation policies allows us to identify the differentiated impacts and, at the same time, adopt the necessary measures to reduce the gender gap.

The relevance of a gender approach

What are the consequences of ignoring a gender perspective when addressing climate issues?

a) Increase and perpetuation of the gender gap. In its fifth assessment, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which in 2011 had already recognized the differential impact between men and women, points out the possibility that these impacts accentuate and crystallize existing gender inequalities (10).

b) The answers can become less and less efficient and effective in the face of climate change (7)¹ not only because they are designed ignoring women as a whole, but also if women's contributions are not included, then the climate change solutions will continue to be reactive instead of solutions that transform reality.

c) How fast we address the negative effects of climate change is key. Not acting synergistically or together means missing the opportunity to find solutions to the negative impacts of climate change and gender inequality with the same actions.

¹ The study states that this could be due to the variety of climate change activities that women are involved in.

Approach in adaptation policies

As expressed previously, in order to incorporate the gender perspective in climate solutions, it is crucial to take into account the entry points and identify public policies that are already in place and foster articulated action between the different sectors working in these areas.

The following paragraphs refer to the status of current policies such as: Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) 11, 12, 13, Adaptation Plans submitted to the UNFCCC, other relevant strategies or initiatives in these areas, and the number of women holding seats in delegations. Also, the legal frameworks of women's rights in the countries were reviewed, since they can be relevant tools for channeling and supporting the gender approach in climate action.

a) Table 2. Reference to a gender perspective in the NDCs of countries surveyed *

Country	Mention and/or Gender Perspective in NDC	Gender Content in NDC
Argentina	No	
Brazil	Yes	Reference is made to fostering gender-responsive measures, in the context of respect for human rights (14)
Chile	No	
Costa Rica	Yes	States to be in favor of incorporating a gender-transformational approach in government climate management (15)
Paraguay	Yes	The National Development Plan acknowledges the strong role of women (3)
Uruguay	Yes	Among the priorities and needs for implementation and support, the document mentions the need to have information available on social vulnerability associated with adverse climatic events, and incorporating a human and gender rights approach (16)

* Prepared based on the NDCs submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by each country. Also compared with data collected by Casas Varez (3) and Gender Climate Tracker (26).

b) Status of the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) with regards to the Convention

Of the six countries surveyed up to and including May 2019, only Brazil and Chile have submitted their NAPs to the UNFCCC. A few observations in reference to these follow.

Brazil: The Strategy for Vulnerable Populations is one of the eleven sectors and topics of Brazil's NAP. According to the Strategy, issues of race and gender are factors that contribute to vulnerability (17). That is, all references made to gender have to do with issues of vulnerability and indigenous peoples. The idea of women as agent of change is not mentioned.

Chile: When referring to the principles, the plan states the importance of taking into account social aspects, gender and ethnicity (18).

Paraguay: It highlights the need to include gender, particularly in the decision-making process and equity in the application of adaptation activities. It also takes into consideration the unique knowledge of women as for example in the management of natural resources and their role as agents of change (19)

c) Other strategies, policies and initiatives

In order to further the depth of this study, other policies and programs were reviewed.

Costa Rica: Action Plan of the National Climate Change Strategy (abbreviated PAENCC in Spanish). The process of gender mainstreaming began in 2011 with the PAENCC action plan (3). It got the National Women's Institute and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) committed to the process. Part of the plan, was to strengthen government institutions and the UNFCCC technical negotiating teams that were representing the country in matters of gender and climate change (20).

National Policy of Adaptation to Climate Change. Participation and inclusion to guarantee gender equity are part of the guiding principles. It cuts across the whole document and is expressed as one of the approaches to the adaptation process (21).

Paraguay: *National Policy for Risk Management and Reduction.* It identifies gender perspective as one of its cross-cutting themes (22).

Uruguay: *National Strategy for Gender Equality by 2030* (23). The document cuts across different areas of government. One of its policy guidelines is to include gender perspective in the process towards sustainable development.

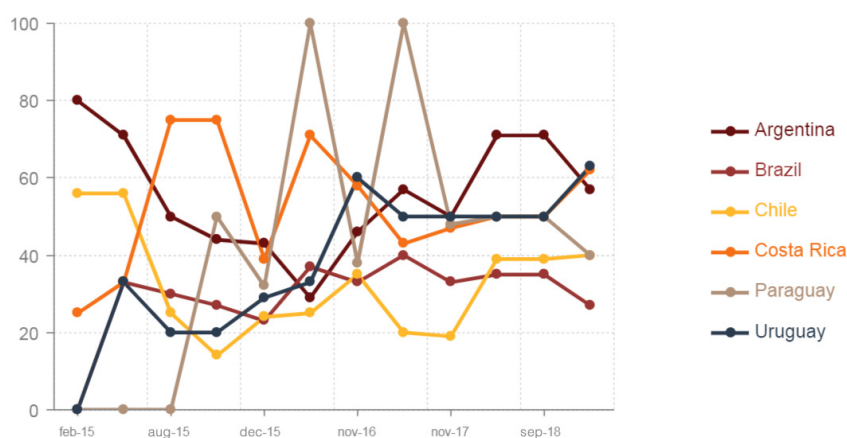
National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change and Climate Variability for the Agricultural Sector. In 2019, the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay (MGAP in Spanish) conducted a study (24) within the framework of the National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change and Variability for the Agricultural Sector that included findings with regards to men and women. According to the study, women are more likely than men to incorporate changes that improve production and quality of family life. In spite of this, the beneficiaries and technical assistants from the MGAP that foster the adoption of adaptive measures have been men.

Each policy has its own unique approach and they have key aspects that can guide other gender mainstreaming initiatives at the regional level, the collection of learning experiences, and the systematization of information and cases. Uruguay and Costa Rica joined efforts with institutions specializing in gender issues, and during the process developed synergies with already existing tools. All three cases refer to an approach differentiated by gender. In Costa Rica, gender has been a cross-cutting process that the government has supported throughout various initiatives including 5C Women and the incorporation of a group of women² to the Citizen Advisory Council on Climate Change (25).

² <https://5cmujeres.wordpress.com/>

d) Women's Participation in the UNFCCC Delegations

Graph 1 (26) shows that the percentage of women in the delegations of the countries analyzed ranges from 25% to 60%. The ranking is led by Uruguay and Costa Rica. These two countries are the most advanced with regards to development of policies, however further analysis is needed to conclude that this aspect is decisive, and that there are no other contributing factors.



Graph 1. Percentage of women in the UNFCCC delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Based on the Gender Climate Tracker (26).

e) A Macro Legal Framework for Women's Rights

In reference to climate change, the authors consulted agreed that the vulnerability of women is related to the rights they enjoy and their economic autonomy, since these aspects affect their greater or lesser capacity to respond. Likewise, robust legal frameworks and national legislation can favor mainstreaming gender into climate change issues.

In view of the above, a brief examination of the legal framework ensuring equal rights of men and women was conducted. The countries surveyed in the study are signatories of several international human rights documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They also have in their respective national constitutions specific articles guaranteeing that everyone be treated equally under the law.³ Additionally, there are different laws at the national or sub-national levels specific to women's rights which differ from country to country on key issues such as gender violence, parity and political participation, maternity and paternity leave, equal rights and opportunities, among others.

While the conditions described do not guarantee in themselves equality between men and women or closing the gender gap, this analysis is relevant because a robust legal framework can be a solid foundation for decision makers when designing gender-responsive climate actions (i.e. it can serve as a support, or connect the different sectors for mainstreaming the gender approach).

³ Argentina: Constitution 1994 (art. 14 bis, 16, 37 and 75 subsections 2, 19, 22 and 23), Brazil Constitution 1988 (art. 5), Costa Rica: Constitution 1999 (art. 33), Chile: the right to equality and non-discrimination is recognized by the "Political Constitution of the Republic" (art. 1 and 19), Paraguay: National Constitution 1992 (art. 46, 47 and 48). Uruguay (art.8).

1. Recommendations

In view of the above, the bibliography reviewed, and the conversations with experts conducted within the framework of this study, a list of lessons learned and recommendations follow.

Although the following recommendations are of a general nature and require further analysis specific to each circumstance, they are included for consideration in future approaches to this issue:

- a. Raise awareness and engage high-level political authorities and decision makers so that this issue becomes part of institutional or programmatic policies in the climate agenda at different levels.
- b. Identify diverse stakeholders that work in the intersection of gender equality and are committed to climate change and environmental agendas, in order to foster synergies and joint commitments that lead to transformative action for the climate agenda.
- c. Take into account that the base context is crucial both in the approach and in the design of the gender mainstreaming strategy. When it comes to adaptation,

issues such as access to safe water and sanitation, health and education need to be included, since gender issues often relate to basic development.

d. Strengthen gender capacities within government organizations and bodies that guarantee continuity of gender-responsive actions and extend them to all stakeholders.

e. Incorporate the gender approach in a comprehensive manner to ensure transformation, because if gender is included as a technical contribution to policies, then the gender-transformational impact is weakened.

f. Generate relevant and meaningful gender indicators that allow addressing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and initiatives effectively.

g. If they exist, rely on macro frameworks to connect sectors. For example, if the legal framework for equal rights and opportunities is robust at the national level, it can serve as a channel to increase possibilities or as a tool for gender-responsive climate policies.

2. Final observations

This study shows that progress has been made in gender-responsive adaptation policies such as the plans mentioned in 5b and the strategies in 5c. Barriers still exist both in terms of policy design and implementation. There is insufficient commitment and capacities of the stakeholders; few relevant tools available for the design and implementation phases; a scarce amount of experts, resources, disaggregated data, and documented cases in the region; all of this is added to a difficulty in generating significant indicators, among others.

In spite of this, funding policies, such as the gender policy of the Green Climate Fund (27), encourage the commitment of countries that show less progress. In turn, countries, such as Costa Rica and Uruguay, have made progress in the development of several initiatives at various levels.

The climate change adaptation agenda is a great opportunity to foster commitment to gender-transformational policies that guarantee responses to climate change and gender inequalities at the same time.

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