

More Equal - More Resilient

Why CARE International is making gender equality and women's empowerment a priority for community-based adaptation



CARE is working to help people and communities in developing countries better adapt and become more resilient to a climate they did not create. We support women and men, girls and boys becoming agents of change—because we believe that, with the right knowledge and sufficient means, families are able to adapt themselves.

Social inequalities put many poor people on the frontline of harmful climate change impacts while constraining their options for taking action to reduce them through adaptation. Gender is often a defining factor of these barriers to adaptation. Critical awareness of and effective measures to address gender inequalities, therefore, are key elements of CARE's work on addressing climate change. Empowering women, and engaging men in a process whereby women and men work together as equally recognised decision-makers and agents of change from the household to the global level, is a crucial pathway toward gender equality, and resilience.

CARE's perspective

Inequalities in the distribution of rights, resources and power are at the root of poverty and vulnerability. Neither can be reduced effectively without taking action to understand and address these inequalities. These inequalities increase many poor people's vulnerability to harmful climate change impacts while limiting their options for acting on climate change. Gender roles and

relations also play a strong role in determining power relations, mostly to the detriment of women and girls, and with implications for the whole of families and communities who depend on them.

The large majority of the world's poorest people are women.¹ In most developing countries, women and girls tend to carry the primary responsibility for collecting water² and they produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food.³ Yet they generally have much poorer access to land, agricultural inputs, extension information and credit than men,⁴ and often suffer disproportionately from the consequences of nutritional deficiencies and increased workloads and distances for water collection.⁵ According to a 141-country study of disasters between 1981 and 2002, gender inequalities in socioeconomic status account for the fact that disasters, on average, kill more women at an earlier age than men.⁶

Gender Equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born male or female.⁷

CARE seeks a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. Due to its impacts on the lives and livelihoods of poor and marginalized people, climate change poses an unprecedented threat to achieving our vision. This issue brief is part of a series that provides insight into CARE's climate change initiatives, experiences and approaches. It was released April 2012.



As a result of these and other factors, women and girls also constitute the majority amongst those worst affected by harmful climate change impacts.

The most climate-vulnerable people lack access to information about, benefits from and control over decisions about mechanisms for adaptation to climate change. Poor women in developing countries face higher levels of illiteracy and innumeracy than men, have diminished access to information, credit, legal support and training, and are three times less likely than men to be formally employed.⁸

In our work on climate adaptation, therefore, CARE encourages critical awareness of social inequalities including gender roles and relations, and prioritise effective measures to address gender inequalities. Such measures involve making particular investments in women's empowerment in the context of adaptation, but also need to pay close attention to engaging men in the process.

What CARE does

- The **CARE International Gender Policy** commits CARE to gender equality as an explicit, internationally recognized human right.
- CARE is at the forefront of developing **practical approaches and supporting policy solutions** to community-based adaptation and pro-poor carbon finance that work for women and men, and empower women as agents of change.
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To learn more about CARE's approach to adaptation, please go to: www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation. For more information, contact Agnes Otzelberger, PECCN, Africa Climate Adaptation and Global Gender Advisor, aotzelberger@careclimatechange.org.



More on CARE's work on gender equality and women's empowerment

- CARE International Gender Policy: <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/CARE+care+international+gender+policy>
- CARE, climate change and gender: www.careclimatechange.org/gender-empowerment
- Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa: Issue Brief on Gender: www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP_Gender_2011.pdf
- Communiqué on gender and community-based adaptation in Africa: www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP2011_Gender_and_CBA.pdf
- *Joto Afrika* special issue on gender in community-based adaptation: www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/JotoAfrika_11112011.pdf

For more information: www.careclimatechange.org

1 UNFPA (2009). The State of the World Population 2009. Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate.

2 WHO and UNICEF (2010), Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water.

3 IUCN, UNDP & GGCA (2009): Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change.

4 Simavi, S., Manue, C., and Blackden M. (2010). Gender Dimensions of Investment Climate Reform. A Guide for Policy Makers and Practitioners.

5 WHO (2011). Gender, Climate Change and Health.

6 1981–2002. Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 97 (3). pp. 551-566.

7 CARE International Gender Policy 2009.

8 Simavi, S., Manue, C., and Blackden M. (2010).