**RURAL WOMEN AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE: THE NEW LEGAL FRONTIER**

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[[1]](#footnote-0)Climate change has resulted in many serious environmental alterations that, in the long run can impact human health. Its effects include a rise in sea level, which leads to the loss of coastal land, reduced agricultural productivity, higher risks of drought and loss of biodiversity. The populace is more exposed and vulnerable to health issues occasioned by an increase in temperature. In Africa, an increase in temperature equates to an increase in the population of mosquitoes, thus increasing the risk of exposure to malaria and insect borne diseases.

No one is immune to climate change. However, its effect differs on the basis of region, gender, and class, and this is due to the ability of different systems to mitigate or adapt to such changes occasioned by global warming. These adaptive features are social and environmental specific. In one of Eliot Levine's[[2]](#footnote-1) interview with Global Citizen, he said, "Climate change is going to amplify the already existing divide between those who have resources and those who do not." This is the unfair consequence of climate change. It affects everyone, but the availability of adaptive measures to mitigate its effects is what distinguishes the level of the consequences felt by the various classes of individuals in society[[3]](#footnote-2). Where urban areas are more exposed to sophisticated adaptive measures, the poor, who are often residents in rural areas, are more dependent on measures provided by nature, which have been depleted by the evil they serve to cure.

For instance, urban communities can utilize technology to battle temperature increases by constructing standard buildings with a good air conditioning system to reduce heat retention. However, the rural community, on the other hand, does not have access to such technological infrastructure.

Does the effect of Climate change also vary based on gender? The answer to this is in the affirmative. As climate change affects rural and urban communities in another way, so does it affect men and women in such societies differently. The most vulnerable and marginalized classes will experience a greater impact of climate change. Unfortunately, rural communities and women fall into this category. According to the United Nation’s Chronicle, 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in rural communities are women. Also, in urban areas, 40% of the poorest households are headed by women. The impact of global warming on women in rural areas is devastating. It is aggravated by their stronger reliance on threatened natural resources than their male counterparts. This difference is occasioned by the differences in their roles, responsibilities, access to land, and decision making. Women have less exposure to and access to technology, agricultural inputs, and training, which would otherwise have increased their adaptability to climate change.[[4]](#footnote-3)

Rural women are more dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood and survival; they are saddled with the responsibility for household water supply and fuel for cooking, which have both been greatly affected by climate change. Rural women are more responsible for time consuming and labor intensive tasks. They are often engaged in subsistence farming, which includes raising livestock at home. Despite the fact that they are involved in activities that are gravely affected by climate change, they are more often than not excluded from decision making that could affect their situations, which makes it more difficult and/or less able to confront climate change. Furthermore, women and young girls, especially those in rural areas, have limited and restricted access to controllable environmental goods and services. Nonetheless, during periods of environmental disasters, rural women are expected to go the extra mile to secure household livelihood as they have been saddled with such responsibility

Despite women’s vulnerability, it is pertinent to state further that rural women are very active and effective agents of adaptation. Women's roles in the home and responsibilities as stewards have strategically positioned them to make valuable contributions to climate change mitigation, disaster reduction, and adaptation strategies.[[5]](#footnote-4) These women have developed adaptive skills in relation to water storage, food preservation, food rationing, and management of the available resources, which in turn mitigates the hardship occasioned by climate change.

The laws on climate change has failed to include women in its policies, however, steps have been taken globally to curb the issues of Climate change and its effect on women generally. In 1991, at the Women’s Congress for a Healthy Planet which took place in Miami with women from about 83 countries in attendance, a policy document known as Women’s Action Agenda 21 was created.

It is important to state that this policy later became the basis for negotiations at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) preparatory meeting and its subsequent Earth Summit where the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was open for signatures.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Countries all over the world are creating policies to promote sustainable development. National policies aimed at this end should identify that women are also affected by the results. Therefore, they should be included in the formulation of such policies in order to provide solutions tailored towards the hardship they encounter as a result of climate change. Governments should include women’s perspectives in their policies, plans, and other measures to attain sustainable development. The above can be achieved by carrying out analysis, collecting data, and developing practical tools to increase attention to gender perspectives in this regard. Equally, the government should promote women's participation and involvement in climate change initiatives. Women in all areas, both rural and urban, should be duly represented to contribute their valuable expertise in mitigating the impact of natural disasters.

It is without doubt that technology is one of the relevant tools to mitigating climate change all over the world, as access and exposure to technological improvements differentiate the impacts of global warming on urban and rural communities which was confirmed at the UNFCCC. Therefore, it is important to give rural women access to information and communication technology. Furthermore, there should be promotion of women’s lower education in the fields of science and technology to ignite women’s passion in such areas.

In Bolivia, a program encouraged traditional farmers to train other farmers and their animals to predict the weather. This training prevented the loss of crop yields. The females in that program contributed to spreading their traditionally gendered knowledge, which yielded great results for society. Gender inequality is given little or no attention in the degree of variation in the impact of climate change on both men and women. Inclusion of women in climate change projects, particularly when technologies are tailored to tasks performed by women, will be extremely beneficial to society.[[6]](#footnote-5) It is time to break the bias, time to unite and roll off the barriers, it is time to take the stage and attain ground breaking results. THE TIME IS NOW.

HEY, QUEEN, GET SET'- LET'S ROLL!

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1. IPCC 2007, Summary for Policymakers, in Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Eliot Levine was the Director of the Environment Technical Support Unit at Mercy Corp. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-climate-change-affects-women/> accessed 11th March, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Aguilar, L., 2008. "Is there a connection between gender and climate change?", International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Office of the Senior Gender Adviser. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2008) “Gender perspectives on climate change,” Issues paper for interactive expert 1 panel on Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/issuespapers/Gender%20and%20climate%20change%20paper%20final.pdf> accessed 11th March, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change. Rep. IUCN, UNDP, Global Gender and Climate Alliance. Web. <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2009-012.pdf> accessed 11th March, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)