Women and Climatic Changes in Ethiopia: A Gendered Assessment

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Within the broader issue of climate changes, the current discourse seeks to prioritize adaptation measures in tackling the adverse effects of global warming rather than a reliance only on mitigation efforts (Aguilar, 2009; UNFCCC, 2010). In this process, women are given an increasing role to play, as the gender approach has shown its enhanced potential in creating sustainable development. Indeed, on June 26th 2014, at Malabo (Equatorial Guinea), the Committee of African Heads of State and Government resolved to develop a “Women and Gender Program on Climate Change”. However, behind the motives of this new approach are the same familiar challenges to be met, the same reports on the position of women within the society, the important role of women in situations of poverty, their low educational level, their difficulty in getting access to information and financial credit or in being included in decisions at political, community and family levels. We must wonder about the intrusion of the question of gender within consideration of the need for adaptation to climate change, which is a part of a wider movement linked with development aid in general. The public and private funding assigned to the resolution of this worldwide danger raises the questions of opportunism, financial confusion and/or lack of general consideration towards the actors involved in the promotion of gender equality. But we shall also take the opportunity to measure the transformations this all implies for the Ethiopian associations that advocate improvement of women’s conditions. Finally, can the theme “Gender and Climate” in Ethiopia propose new paradigms for reflection?

The aim of this paper is therefore to understand how women have been recognized as effective and independent actors in answering some of the challenges posed by climate change. At the same time, we want to question the relevance and reliability of a gendered approach in overcoming the problems generated by climate change in the African context in general and the Ethiopian case in particular.
History of the gender approach to development projects

Only for the last 50 years or so have women been considered as a group of society to be taken in account by the international community. This is relevant to understanding the process of their recent integration within the issue of climate change. In the same manner, the gendered approach to development studies cannot date back before the late 1990s, a fact that delayed women’s involvement in the problems posed by climate change.

Women were first included in the challenges posed to the international community in the context of confronting violence and inequality. The first international act considering women as a social group is dated from 1979, with the signature of the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW). This action was complemented a decade later, in 1993, by the UN “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women”, the first international human rights instrument to exclusively and explicitly address violence against women. Finally, in the United Nations (UN), successive Security Council resolutions taken from 2000 to 2013 promoted women in leadership positions in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, and improved protection of women and girls within a framework of rule of law and respect for human rights (UNDP, 2014). At a regional level, the African Union (AU) adopted in 2003 a “Protocol of Women Rights in Africa” that Ethiopia signed (but not ratified) on June 1st 2004 (AU, 2003; AU, 2013a). Thus women have been slowly integrated as actors within the process of peacemaking in order to diminish the various forms of violence they were facing and in a broader perspective of change of mentality to achieve peace (UNDP, 2014).

In parallel, during the 1980s and 1990s, the gendered approach was raised to face the issues of development and inequality following the 1985 “Beijing Platform for Action”, “an agenda for women’s empowerment”, the first global commitment to gender mainstreaming as a methodology by which women’s empowerment can be achieved. In 1994, the practice of women’s empowerment was re-raised in Cairo in the context of the issues of poverty and population growth. During the 2000s, international organizations launched successive programs that took into account women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender equality for the development community. Some aspects of the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) and of the 2005-2011 “Aid Effectiveness Commitments” promoted gender equality and women’s empowerment. In these efforts, program like the 2008-2013 UNDP strategy were specifically dedicated to this issue. Finally, in 2010, the United Nations General Assembly established the “United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” (UN-Women), seconded by the UN-SWAP (UN “System-Wide Action Plan”) that implements its policy by establishing standard requirements for mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in the following areas: accountability, result-based management, oversight, human and financial resources, capacity, and coherence, knowledge and information management (UN-Women, 2011; UNDP, 2014; UN-SWAP, 2014). It was followed, in Africa, by the call of the Ministers of Gender and Women’s Affairs in the AU to declare 2010-2020 as “African Women’s Decade” in Maseru, Lesotho, in December 2008. The latter aims at re-invigorating regional commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE). In December 2012, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 67/226 to increase investments in and focus on outcomes and outputs relating to gender equality and the
empowerment of women, and to promote acquisition of sufficient technical expertise in gender mainstreaming. This resolution also encourages United Nations organizations to collect, analyze and disseminate comparable data, sorted out by sex and age, to guide country programming (UNDP, 2014).

**TABLE: WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT AID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Plans/actions for women and gender mainstreaming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>“Convention of Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>“Beijing Platform for Action”</td>
<td>First global commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>UN “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women”</td>
<td>First international human rights instrument against violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2013</td>
<td>Women, peace and security within UN Security Council Resolutions</td>
<td>To expand the role of women in leadership positions in prevention and resolution of conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2015</td>
<td>MDGs: “Millennium development Goals”</td>
<td>To consolidate previous agreements for development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2011</td>
<td>“Aid Effectiveness Commitments”</td>
<td>Developing countries and donors commit to ensure that their development policies follow gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2013</td>
<td>First UNDP “Gender Equality Strategy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Creation of the UN-Women</td>
<td>“United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2011</td>
<td>UN-SWAP: “United Nation System-Wide Action Plan”</td>
<td>To implement the UN policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The critical intersection of climate change and gender mainstreaming: a financial opportunity for Ethiopia?

6  It was only during the second part of the last decade that international attention began to be concentrated on the importance of the intersection of climate change and gender equality. This is surprising, as the consequences of climate change are by no means gender-neutral (African Development Bank, 2009). The starting point of these efforts to bring the two agendas together was initiated jointly by publication in 2007 of the UNDP report and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Rodenberg, 2009). This was then followed by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), which was created by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (IUCN, 2007), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). The objective was to ensure that climate change policies, decision-making, and initiatives at all levels should be gender-responsive.

7  Indeed, a strong relationship exists between climate change and environment-based livelihoods, which, in turn, are closely linked to gender (Alexander et al., 2011). In all developing countries, it has now been demonstrated that women are more vulnerable to climate changes and effects because two-thirds of women are poorer, they receive less education, and they are typically not involved in political and household decision-making processes that affect their lives (Rodenberg, 2009). Their work is more directly related to the environment as their main activities include fetching water and bringing wood for household purposes (FAO, 2011, ch. 2), tasks that are also related to their main diseases (BRIDGE, 2008; Rodenberg 2009, 29). Moreover, cultural norms related to gender sometimes limit the ability of women to make quick decisions on whether to move to safer ground in disaster situations before it is too late. In the same manner, they are not taught to swim or climb trees, endangering their likelihood of surviving in case of natural disaster (Araujo & Pearl, 2007). Another study showed in the case of Ethiopia that when climate change leads to shortages of food or water, social norms may lead to greater malnutrition among girls and women because of expectations that women are to eat only after they have fed their families, which often means there is little left over for them (Pelter & Capraro, 2015). Finally, women have less access to land property and resources. In overall terms, climate change exacerbates the existing economic and social gender disparities (Rodenberg, 2009, 26-30; GCCASP, 2012).

8  However, paradoxically, it has at the same time been noticed that women have unique knowledge and skills related to their environment. Women are important food producers and providers, and because of this central role in agriculture (FAO, 2011, ch. 2), they are...
major agents of social change. Their knowledge of natural resources and environment (e.g., potable water sources, soils, seeds and animal reproduction) can help bring about a more effective and sustainable response to climate change (IUCN/UNDP/GGCA, 2009: 122). This applies both to work that is already being undertaken by women and to activities in which women could assume a leading role. In developing countries, for instance, women frequently play a major role in the reforestation and afforestation of cleared land and in forest conservation (Bäthge, 2010: 4; IUCN/UNDP/GGCA, 2009: 155). In the same manner, the use of efficient energy systems at the household level (e.g., special cooking stoves and ovens) could reduce emissions and harness the potential of women as agents for mitigation measures (IUCN/UNDP/GGCA, 2009: 159). For instance, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) combined two aspects of its activities, involving the gender approach and climate change, in developing the project “Enhancing Women's Assets to Manage Risk under Climate Change: Potential for Group-Based Approaches”, which was carried out between March 2011 and September 2014. Within this project, a specific policy note on Ethiopia was drawn up; it showed that when women are given access to climate information, households are more likely to better adapt themselves to climate change (Berga, 2014a; 2014b; GCCASP, 2012). Therefore including women and a gendered approach to climate change is deeply relevant as the challenges faced need such an approach in order to achieve sustainable success (Bäthge, 2010: 11-16).

However, it must be pointed out that the problems of women’s conditions and gender equality have not improve much over the past 10 years; the same problems continue to be raised by international organizations. Only a few of these problems have shown any change since the launch of the “Millennium Goals” in 2007. The evaluation of these goals by the UN Economic Commission in 2014 specifies that the majority have not been achieved in matters of gender issues, notably with regard to Goal 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), Goal 3 (promoting gender equality and empowering women), Goal 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) and Goal 8 (developing a global partnership for development). Moreover, in 2014, the conclusions and recommendations of the report continued to be at the same stage as in the UNDP report of 2007. Moreover, several indicators do not provide sufficient gendered information that can help at empowering women.

Reports underline the fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by natural disasters while at the same time they play a vital role in disaster risk reduction, and recovery. The need to enhance women’s access, capacities and opportunities to participate in preventing and responding to disasters is therefore recognized. In parallel, climate change poses a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development where the family is believed to be a contributor to such development. Finally, the Commission concluded by stating that insufficient priority given to gender issues and significant underinvestment in gender equality and the empowerment of women continue to limit progress on the “Millennium Development Goals” for girls and women of all ages (UN Economic and Social Council, 2014; UNDP 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Program and framework</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women and Climatic Changes in Ethiopia: A Gendered Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Climatic and Environmental Challenges: Learning from the Horn of Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2010-...</td>
<td>UN “Framework Convention for Climate Change” (COP 16, 18, etc.)</td>
<td>COP 16: The “Cancun Agreement” is the first global climate change policy to include multiple references to gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11-12, 2010</td>
<td>“Africa Regional Dialogue on Forest, Governance and Climate Change” in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)</td>
<td>All stakeholders should facilitate the effective participation and representation of women in decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>“International Day for Disaster Reduction” celebration choosing the theme of “Women and Girls—the (in)visible Force of resilience”</td>
<td>The government of Ethiopia initiated the “Climate Resilient Green Economy” (CRGE) initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2017</td>
<td>Second UNDP gender equality strategy</td>
<td>Outcome 1e (UNDP will support partner efforts to increase women’s access to and ownership and management of ecosystem goods and services, including through climate finance) and 1f (UNDP will support governments to ensure that women can access affordable and clean energy). Output 4.5: Measures in place to increase women’s access to environmental goods and services (including climate finance).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26 2014</td>
<td>CAHOSCC: “Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change”</td>
<td>Resolve to adopt “Women and Gender Program on Climate Change”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In considering the links between climate changes issues, the women and gender approach and financial resources, the question of financial opportunism has to be raised. Indeed, the current architecture of climate finance involves numerous private and public players, as there are currently over 50 international public funds, 45 carbon markets and 6,000 private equity funds providing climate change finance. Nevertheless, given various barriers and limitations, including low institutional and technological capacity, much of Africa has continuing problems in accessing these climate finance structures. In July 2012, the entire African continent had managed to attract only a meager 2.07% of “Clean Development Mechanism” (CDM) projects worldwide: out of the 4,389 registered CDM projects, only 91 went to Africa. Thus far, most CDM funding had tended to overlook small-scale projects that would benefit women (Senay Habteseyon, 2012). In June 2014, in Malabo, the President Kikwete of Tanzania declared that Africa needs more than 15 billion US dollars per year to fight against climate change and that this amount keeps on rising (up to 17 billion US dollars projected for 2030) (AU, 2014). In parallel, the “Funds for African Women” launched in 2010 by the AU is still seeking partners in addition to the contribution from member states (1% of the fund). The AU expects additional resources...
from the African private sector, the African diaspora and African philanthropists (AU, 2013b). Considering the low level of financial support, the slow evolution of mentality regarding women’s considerations and gender mainstreaming, as well as the fact that the issues regarding the environment crosschecked the same agenda as did women’s issues, the budget allocated to climate change could be a financial solution for women’s issues as well.

12 Promoting the integration of a gender perspective into environmental and climate change policies could provide adequate resources and access to financial credit. It could ensure women’s full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels while integrating their specific needs (as for instance in water and reforestation projects). It could also ensure sustainable management of natural resources through women’s empowerment and access to information. It is now recognized that involving women and men equitably in climate finance mechanisms would increase the impact and benefits of all programs. It has been demonstrated that women’s empowerment leads to gains in productivity, in environmental sustainability and in confronting the ill effects of climate change. And yet, many finance programs and strategies continue to overlook typical women’s activities that could count as adaptation and mitigation (such as tree planting).

13 Over the last five years, and especially since 2012, projects have been built in Ethiopia following the two axes of gender and climate, developing innovative actions in a macro-approach that crosschecked climate dangers and gender issues (GCCASP, 2012). Agriculture is the key sector of Ethiopia’s economy, and here climate change issues and gender equality need to go together. Indeed, Ethiopia’s economic production is characterized by its low intensity, low productivity and high susceptibility to climate variability and shocks (drought, floods, etc.) (Ethiopia Weekly Humanitarian Bulletin, 2015). Thus there is a third axis that must be considered alongside the two axes of gender and climate, and this is economic development. Since a link was made between these three issues, Ethiopia has slowly increased its benefit from international financial resources allocated to development, to some extent channeling this funding to climate and gender issues (Zewdu et al., 2014). This process started with programs like IPMS Ethiopia 2004-2012 (“Improving the Productivity and Market Success of Ethiopian Farmers”) which used funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to improve the productivity of Ethiopian farmers and focused on gender mainstreaming, at the same time producing 27 research papers on women and gender related to agriculture and climate (ILRI, 2013).

14 In 2012-2013, with $23.2 million from the Canada Fund for African Climate Resilience, Canada provided support to smallholder Ethiopian farmers to help deal with climate change. Further projects have proposed to use the carbon finance to help the poorest and most marginalized people, where women represent the two-thirds of the population. Additional programs also plan to train women and men jointly in agricultural development (in Ethiopia 85% of women live in rural areas), and to promote equal access to credit and information. For example, the NGO CARE and its specific program “Poverty, Environment and Climate Change Network” (PECCN) used climate-oriented financing to improve microcredit given to Darara women, and training them in haymaking. It aims at empowering women and educates them to confront the problem of drought (CARE, 2013). Projects have been adapted to local conditions by providing mules and proper information on seeds that will be responsive to climate change while preserving the local biodiversity and expanding business opportunities. For example, the Gurmuu foundation

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and the Swiss associations “Bread for All” and HEKS EPER (Swiss Church Aid) used funds specifically allocated to climate and development in order to plant trees and provide seeds in the Guduru region in order to decrease poverty, and develop the knowledge of soil management while empowering women (Keller, 2009; Künzler, 2010). The benefits of the actions based on local peoples’ experiences, knowledge and way of living have amply proven themselves.

Finally, regional research centers and activities have been promoted that have gender-based approach (Ethiopia Climate Innovation Center [CIC], ILLRI-ETHIOPIA, IFPRI, PHE Ethiopia Consortium, Horn of Africa Center, etc.). In the framework of its “Climate Technology Programme” (CTP), the United Kingdom supported in 2013 the creation of a national Climate Innovation Centre (CIC) to support the development and growth of local innovation capabilities and businesses in Ethiopia (9£m between UK and Norway). By 2023, the global program expects to create 14 000 “green jobs” with at least 30% for women. Within the GGCA, Finland sponsored a project starting in 2008 called “Gender Responsive Climate Change Initiatives and Decision-Making”. The fourth and last phase of the project is currently underway and will last two years (July 2014 - June 2016); the support will be 2.6 million euros, at roughly the same level as previous phases and will involve Ethiopia. In January 2015, Christian Aid and partners began work in Ethiopia to implement the “Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters Programme” (BRACED) of the UK Department for International Development (Pelter & Capraro, 2015, 2015). These are some examples of what has been achieved in bringing together the two agendas. Finally, the schedules of these achievements, and the increasing number of programs and projects launched since 2012 and that are still to begin, show that focusing on the intersection of climate danger, development aid and gender issues may lead to a real change of mentality towards women within the society, in developing countries at large and in Ethiopia in particular. However, much has to be done in order to achieve the final goals of both climate and gender concerns in Ethiopia and worldwide, as a gender gap in climate decision-making still exists at every level (Pelter & Capraro, 2015).

List of abbreviations

16 AU: African Union
17 CDM: Clean Development Mechanism
18 FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
19 GBM: Green Belt Movement
20 GGCA: Global Gender and Climate Alliance
21 GCCASP: African Gender, Climate Change and Agriculture Support Program
22 GTZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH
23 ICT: Information and Communication Technologies
24 IFPRI: International Food Policy Research Institute
25 IPCC: International Panel on Climate Change
26 IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature
27 UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
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