

Gender, voice and power for climate action

Improving decision making through the inclusion of women and men's lived experiences



In brief

Bringing local women and men who have experienced climate impacts into relevant policy spaces is an important part of a just decision-making process and meeting the Paris Agreement commitment to a country-driven gender-responsive approach. But there is a lack of robust evidence on the impact of these experiences and their potential to increase the ambition, urgency and quality of climate responses at different levels. Without this, it is hard to make the case for the systematic inclusion of local women and men. We are developing a research programme to collect and distil evidence of the most effective ways to leverage local gendered experiences to improve climate action through unsettling established discourses, grounding narratives, shifting power dynamics and increasing accountability.

Our research

To support gender-responsive climate decision making, we need to understand how and why local experiences can raise ambition, increase urgency and improve the quality of responses – and under what conditions this leads to substantive change. We also need to understand how the local women and men themselves experience participating in climate policy processes and how this may help them shape and improve their own contexts.

The inclusion of women and gendered local experience is a much-needed perspective because:

- Women are often the more vulnerable individuals within community groups, with the least power to influence responses
- Including the voices of those with lived experience of climate change has the potential to disrupt dominant policy discourse and ground technical debates in practical realities.

Box 1. Learning from a gender Talanoa

We held a gender Talanoa at the Community-Based Adaptation conference in June 2018 (CBA12) to gather practitioners' views and understand their practical experience of involving women to improve climate responses. The headline message from the Talanoa participants was that participation alone is not enough. Power and embedded social and cultural norms need to be tackled to enable women to participate meaningfully. Women need privileged support to build their leadership skills due to structural exclusion, but dialogue between men and women is critical to effective climate solutions. Engaging local leaders that set societies' norms in a structured and long-term dialogue with both men and women is essential, as real change takes trust and understanding. It is also important to be clear on which women are able to participate and whether they are explicitly bringing a gendered perspective.

HOW WE THINK CHANGE HAPPENS



Example: IIED and partners brought local women and video testimonies to national dialogues in Tanzania to support women to secure their land rights. The interactions led to government officials committing to re-evaluate their approaches.

LOCAL WOMEN AND MEN BRING LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE TO CLIMATE POLICY PROCESSES. THEY ARE OFTEN SUPPORTED BY AND CONNECTED THROUGH BROADER ALLIANCES, NETWORKS, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS.



Gendered experiences of climate change improve local policies and planning decisions.

LOCAL

Local gendered experiences increase ambition and urgency

Experience and new skills gained through participation support local women and men to engage at different levels.

LIMITED EVIDENCE

SOME EVIDENCE



Example: Local climate change committees in Kenya and Tanzania have reserved places for women to ensure their voices are heard. Women gain skills and confidence through this and influence climate and wider investments.

This happens through changes in individuals, organisations and government processes such as:

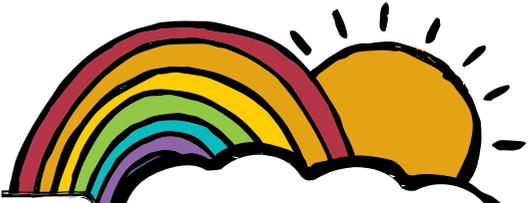
AND WHAT EVIDENCE IS NEEDED

SOME EVIDENCE

Confidence and sharing of experience from national and international engagement support women and men to shape more local contexts.



Example: SDI uses horizontal exchanges between urban poor communities to build community-based expertise and confidence, challenging the idea that solutions must come from outside.



AMBITIOUS CLIMATE DECISIONS ARE MADE THAT REFLECT GENDERED DIFFERENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUPPORT IMPROVING GENDER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACTORS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.



Local gendered experiences increase ambition and urgency and improve international frameworks, financing and decisions.

INTERNATIONAL

and improve national policies and budgeting around climate change.

NATIONAL



LIMITED EVIDENCE

- Unsettling established discourses
- Grounding narratives
- Shifting ideas of knowledge and power dynamics
- Increasing accountability.



Example: The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice convenes listening circles with grassroots women and female ministers and negotiators within the UNFCCC negotiations to ground discussions in reality.

Next steps

We plan to put the experiences of local women and men themselves at the heart of the research.

We will work with organisations with experiences of involving women and men to construct an evidence base of how and where local women and men have raised the ambition, urgency and quality of climate action.

We will conduct in-depth analysis to understand how and why changes have been achieved and connect these insights and experiences into learning networks.

The results will be used to test and refine how we bring about change, with input from grassroots women, practitioners and policymakers. This will help us to demonstrate the value of bringing local women and men into climate change discussions at local, national and international levels – and understand how best to facilitate this.



Get in touch

Do get in touch to discuss opportunities to collaborate or to tell us about your experiences in this area.

To find out more about our research programme please contact:

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IIED promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

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Page 5: Women farmers working on their adaptation project funded by the local climate committee.

Credit: IED Afrique/NEF, 2017