

Rebekka Øvstegård (Bioforsk, Norway)

Gender analysis is an important component of the ClimaRice project in order to better understand the ways in which women and men are differently affected by climate change and how they are adapting.

During the current year, a preliminary analysis has been carried out on gender issues. This will be followed by a detailed study in 2011 in selected areas in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The expected outputs will provide more detailed analysis on gender differences and a better understanding of men and women's vulnerabilities to climate change and clarify the special needs of men and women to adapt. The overall goal is to contribute towards developing appropriate strategies and policy to address gender issues in climate change.



Photo: (Ragnar Vaaga Pedersen)

The main emphasis of the ClimaRice project is to develop local ownership through active participation of stakeholders in the design, implementation and management of adaptation strategies and ensure the sustainability of rice production. When developing appropriate responses to the impact of climate change it is important to develop technologies that are accessible, beneficial, and acceptable to both male and female stakeholders. In adaptation research, limited attention has so far been given to differences between men and women within vulnerable communities. The ClimaRice project aims to provide more detailed analysis on gender differences and thereby improve the understanding of men and women's vulnerabilities to climate change and adaptation in the study area.

In this technical brief, the links between gender issues and climate change adaptation in agriculture and the methodology to analyze gender issues are outlined.

Gender concepts

Gender refers to the social roles and relations between women and men. This includes the different responsibilities of women and men in a given culture or location.

Gender roles of women and men are socially constructed and such roles can change over time and vary according to geographic location and social context.

Gender equality is when women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.

Gender analysis is the study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are.

(FAO, 2007; 2010)

Climate change adaptation, agriculture and gender

Climate change has specific effects on women and men because of the different roles they play in society and their differentiated access to social, economic and physical resources. The distinct roles and responsibilities of women and men give rise to differences in vulnerability and ability to cope with change.

Women do play an important role in agriculture in many developing countries. Understanding the changing role of women in agriculture due to climate change is important to develop future adaptation strategies. Socially, women are a vulnerable group and are likely to be disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Women's traditional roles as the primary users and managers of natural resources, primary caregivers, and their engagement as household laborers on farm activities means that they are involved in and dependent on resources that are put most at risk by climate change. Women also lack rights and access to resources and information vital to overcoming challenges posed by climate change (UNECA, 2009; Röhr, 2007).



Photo: (Ragnar Vaaga Pedersen) Women in rice field

Gender inequality and a gender sensitive approach

Gender inequality means that women and men often do not have equal access to the assets they need to pursue or sustain their livelihoods and those of their families. Policies, institutions and processes, both formal and informal, reinforce these gender inequalities.

A gender-sensitive approach to livelihoods involves understanding the different roles, needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations of women and men. Gender analysis requires disaggregation of households to better understand the different priorities, livelihood constraints and opportunities of women and men. This includes understanding:

- the dynamics of gender differences with respect to social relations - how 'male' and 'female' is defined in a given context; their roles and responsibilities
- gender division of labor in productive and reproductive work within the household and the community
- access and control over resources and services
- involvement in decision-making structures and processes
- the distinct needs and potential (social and economic) of women and men

The Human Development Report (2007/8) states that gender inequalities intersect with climate risks and vulnerabilities and that climate change is likely to magnify existing patterns of gender disadvantage. This underscores the importance of participation of women in planning processes for adaptation to climate change. Equal involvement of men and women in adaptation planning is important not only to ensure that the measures developed are actually beneficial for all those who are supposed to implement and use them in their daily lives, but also to ensure that all relevant knowledge, (knowledge from both men and women) is integrated into policy and programs.

Gender in ClimaRice

The ClimaRice project emphasizes women's important role in agriculture and in particular rice farming. The project has used Women Self Help Groups as an entry point to analyze gender issues and increase awareness.

The project team has interacted with several Women Self Help groups in the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and has organized training and awareness workshops to improve their awareness and capacity on issues related to climate change and adaptation technologies.



Photo: (TNAU) Capacity building with Women Self Help Group members at Farmers Training centre in Trichy district, Tamil Nadu



Photo: (TNAU) Farmers meeting in Bhavani Sagar

Women Self Help Groups

A Women Self Help Group (WSHG) is a group of rural poor women, usually composed of 10-20 women, who have volunteered to organize themselves into a group for eradication of poverty of the members. Members make small regular savings contributions over a few months until there is enough capital in the group to begin lending. Funds may then be lent back to the members or to others in the village for any purpose. In India, many SHGs are linked to banks for the delivery of microcredit.

SHGs are formed and supported usually by NGOs or by Government agencies. Linked not only to banks but also to wider development programmes, SHGs are seen to confer many benefits, both economic and social. SHGs enable women to grow their savings and to access the credit which banks are increasingly willing to lend. SHGs can also be community platforms from which women become active in village affairs, stand for local election or take action to address social or community issues.

The WSHGs engage in self-employment projects that allow them to generate an income and, in many cases, begin to build wealth and exit poverty.

In ClimaRice, members of Women Self Help Groups from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh take part in training and awareness workshops related to climate change adaptation in agriculture. Women are trained on skill development and farm level adaptation measures such as water and nutrient efficiency in rice, biofertilizer production, azolla cultivation, mushroom cultivation, interpretation of weather based agro advice, soil sampling, quality seed selection, seed germination test, seed treatment with biologicals and nursery raising through mat nursery method.

Way forward

The Climarice project will in 2011 employ a detailed gender analysis in selected areas in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, to get more specific information on the current trends, women and men's perceptions about climate change, how changes in agriculture practices and in particular rice farming due to climate change affects women's role and economy, alternate options of employment for women, and the autonomous and planned adaptation measures to address the climate change impacts on women.

Focus group discussions, questionnaire surveys of women and detailed interviews with representatives of SHGs will be held in villages in the study areas, as well as a questionnaire survey in 2011.

The results from the study will be presented to policy makers, managers and farmers groups to highlight the role and importance of gender in adaptation to climate change in both the states AP and Tamil Nadu.

References

Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), (2009). Gender and climate change, women matter.

FAO (2010). Gender website. URL: <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/why-gender/en/>

FAO (2007). People-Centered Climate Change Adaptation: Integrating Gender Issues. Brief. Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, FAO, Italy, Rome.

Röhr, U., 2007. Gender, climate change and adaptation. Introduction to the gender dimensions. Background Paper. UNEP, USA, Washington.

United Nations Development Programme (2007). Human Development Report 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World.

ClimaRice II Project (2009-2011)

ClimaRice II is an integrated project that aims to test and validate climate change adaptation techniques related to rice production, in close co-operation with farmers and local agencies in two study areas in the Cauvery River Basin, Tamil Nadu, and Krishna River Basin, Andhra Pradesh, in India.

The overall goal is to contribute to the regional and national adaptation strategies to sustain rice production and ensure food security amidst changing climate. The partners are:

- Bioforsk - Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research (Project Co-ordinator)
- Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, India
- International Pacific Research Institute, Hawaii, USA
- International Water Management Institute, Hyderabad, India

The project is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs/The Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi.
Read more: www.climarice.com