

WECF / INFORSE side event; 6 December 2008, 18-19:30 pm
“Sustainable Energy and CC Policies: Poverty Reduction in Asia and ECCAA, Zero Carbon Scenarios in the EU.

Moderator: Sabine Bock

Programme:

Poverty Reduction via Sustainable Energy: more equity in climate protection:

- * Evgeny Bogatkov, Ecological Movement “BIOM”, Kyrgystan
- * Timur Idrisov, Little Earth, Tajikistan
- * Ketevan Kiria, Greens Movement of Georgia.

Mobilize women as change makers:

- * Ruth Bond, National Federation Women’s Institute (UK), Women in the UK work towards a zero carbon scenario
- * Irene Dankelman (Netherlands), WECF, Mobilizing Women as Change Makers

Background presentation:

Mobilizing Women as Change Makers: ensure gender equality in the post-2012 regime, Irene Dankelman (see also PP)

There is an urgent need to appreciate women’s contributions to life, to livelihoods, including food security, as well as women’s contributions in rural and urban societies, cultures and economies.

Or as Prof. Wangari Maathai stated when she accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, December 2004: *“Although this prize comes to me, it acknowledges the work of countless individuals and groups across the globe. They work quietly and often without recognition to protect the environment, promote democracy, defend human rights and ensure equality between women and men. By so doing, they plant seeds of peace”.*

Since the start of human history, women have contributed essentially to the conservation, use and management of natural resources (Owen, 1998), next to their tasks in the household, in food production and other production sectors. Esther Boserup (1970) described how the role of woman-the-gatherer was more important for food security than that of man-the-hunter, from a dietary point of view.

As was underlined in UNDP’s Human Development Report of 2005 gender inequality is one of the most pervasive inequalities. Like many disasters, climate change threatens to increase existing inequalities between women and men.

Is this only a sad story? Is there no future for poor rural women and their families with climate change? No, it is not! Women are taking leadership roles in converting these trends, and preventing new poverty and distress, as positive agents of change, contributing to livelihood adaptation strategies. As underlined by Enarson (2000) and

O'Brien (2007) natural disasters – and therefore climate change, can also provide women with an unique challenge to change their (gendered) status in society.

Women have proved very effective in mobilizing the community to respond to disasters and in disaster preparedness and mitigation, for example, after hurricane Mitch (1998) struck in Central America. Male attitudes towards women changed when the 'NGO Punto de Encuentro' in Nicaragua organized an information campaign on 'Violence against women is one disaster that men can prevent.' (American Health Organization, 1998)

Another example: In the midst of a drought in the Federated States of Micronesia, women dug into the ground and created a new well that filled with drinkable freshwater. Because of their work on the land women had acquired considerable knowledge of the local hydrology. Planners and decision-makers had not considered their possible contributions before. (WEDO, 2007)

Worldwide women are starting to adapt to a changing climate. From their local strategies to sustain their environment and to adapt to climatic change, valuable lessons can be learned: they save assets (seeds, animals, tools), adapt their agricultural practices, changing diets, preventing erosion, water-harvesting, selling of assets and moneysaving, or even outmigration. Women often have a clear sense what they need in order to adapt better to a changing climate. And they organize to have their voices heard. As Winnie Byanyima, director of UNDP's Gender Team mentioned at the last COP-13 of the UNFCCC in Bali (December 2007): "...As women have specialized skills, they can offer invaluable contributions to improve our current climate mitigation and adaptation strategies..." .

Also at regional and international levels, women start to organize to oppose climate change and to claim their rights to a safe and healthy social and physical environment. From South to North, from East to West, the *Network of Women Ministers of Environment* is pushing hardily to make climate change mitigation and adaptation gender responsive. UNDP, UNEP, IUCN and WEDO have formed the *Global Gender and Climate Alliance*, and under leadership of Genanet (Germany), the *gender and climate change network* is active, here at this conference and worldwide. These networks and organizations lobby governments, the UN, particularly the UNFCCC, its protocols, mechanisms and funds to ensure women's rights, integrate a gender perspective and promote women's equal participation in climate change mitigation and adaptation, incl. in the National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs). WEDO has launched its national climate change campaign in the US. And the National Federation of Women's Institutes in the UK has a comprehensive programme to enhance a carbon free economy.

After years of silence around gender issues, since the last COP in Bali, women and their allies have been active to promote climate policies that are just and sustainable, encouraging equity amongst women and men, and other social groups.

It is not just a question of participation or action: Not only do we women want to have a say in climate change negotiations and decisions, we also want these policies and

measures to be more sustainable and just. Or as Bella Abzug (one of WEDO's founders) said: "*Women do not want to be mainstreamed in a polluted stream: they want the stream to be clear and healthy.*"

WECF's lobby points here at the UNFCCC COP-14 in Poznan are clear:

- we want the climate mechanisms to be responsive to people, and particularly to the most vulnerable groups and their needs;
- climate policies and mechanisms, including CDM, REDD, should align with the Human Rights Framework and CEDAW and all MDGs;
- we ask for inclusion of communities in the EECCA region in CC deliberations and plans ;
- strong support is needed to transfer and locally develop and make accessible sustainable energy technologies and resources;
- nuclear energy is no option in mitigating CC.

At the first Asian Rural Women's Conference that took place in Tamil Nadu (India) this spring: Razan Zuater of the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature mentioned:
"*...farmers and rural people, many of them women, are among the worst effected populations. They are not allowed to practice their age old professions anymore. ..Yet they stand their ground and persevere, just as they have done over the ages, aware, consciously or unconsciously, that they are part of the universal human chain of solidarity that lends them....determination and purpose*".