



## No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues

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# No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues

Geraldine Terry

*Both climate change itself and related policies are likely to have wide-ranging effects on gender relations, especially in developing countries. Poor women face many gender-specific barriers that limit their ability to cope with and adapt to a changing climate; these must be removed in the interests of both gender equity and adaptation efficiency. At the same time, gender analysis should be integral to the appraisal of public policies designed to reduce carbon emissions. To date, gender issues have hardly figured in the international policy discourse, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. However, this may be changing thanks to feminist lobbying and the increasing involvement of gender specialists in this field. There is a lot at stake; the international post-2012 Kyoto Protocol agreement will have enormous implications for gender equality.*

*Key words:* gender; climate change; global warming; climate variability and extremes; climate stress; climate shocks; risk perceptions; vulnerability; adaptation; mitigation; climate protection; UNFCCC; Kyoto Protocol

## Introduction

When *Gender and Development* published an issue on climate change in 2002, it was breaking new ground. What has changed since then? Climate change has become a much more dominant issue in industrialised and developing countries alike, thanks partly to well-publicised disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, and the many signs of climate change that are now constantly reported on television and in newspapers. Documents like the Stern Review on The Economics of Climate Change and the Fourth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change have helped to raise awareness and increase understanding of the climatic and environmental changes we can expect. On the other hand, the wide-reaching and very profound effects that climate change will have on human societies are less well-understood, and it is fair to say that academics, gender and development practitioners, and women's-rights advocates are still only starting to grapple with its many gender dimensions.

There are two main policy areas related to climate change caused by humans. The first is mitigation, or reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. The second is adaptation, or preparing for the impact of climate change. There are powerful arguments for addressing gender issues in both these policy areas, both to prevent climate change from exacerbating existing gender inequalities, and to make sure that public policy on both curbing and adapting to climate change is as effective as possible. However, due to lack of research and the resulting paucity of hard evidence on gender and climate change, it is often difficult to discern the many and complex links. If gender is mentioned at all as a climate-change issue, it is usually with reference to the particular vulnerability of poor women in the South.

To some extent, this lack of attention to gender issues reflects an understating of social issues generally in the climate-change discourse. Social scientists became involved in the climate-change field fairly recently, while natural scientists have been working on it for decades. The main discourse is still a stereotypically 'masculine' one, of new technologies, large-scale economic instruments, and complex computer modelling. As alternatives to this dominant approach, various frameworks have been put forward for thinking through the social aspects of climate change, such as sustainable development, climate justice, human rights or ethics, but gender equity has not been central to any of these paradigms either.

Another reason why it is often hard to disentangle the connections between climate change and gender-and-development issues is that climate change is not happening in a vacuum, but rather in the context of other risks, including economic liberalisation, globalisation, conflict, unpredictable government policies, and risks to health, in particular HIV and AIDS, that threaten poor men and women in the global South. Although the effects of climate change interact with, and exacerbate, other types of stress, poor people themselves may not perceive the climate as the most urgent or important of their problems (Thomas and Twyman 2005).

Given these complexities, it is no surprise that some gender advocates and women's-rights campaigners feel mystified, and even disempowered, in the face of climate change, especially as relatively few women have been trained in the skills required to engage in detailed scientific debates. At a recent Round Table on Gender and Climate Change hosted by the Institute of Development Studies and the Department for International Development, for instance, several participants expressed feelings of ignorance. Are such feelings justified? It is certainly true that much more research is needed to illuminate the interactions between climate change and gender inequalities. On the other hand, phenomena such as droughts, heavy rainfall, floods, and cyclones are nothing new. What *is* new about human-induced climate change is not the nature of its effects but its causes, and the scale and speed of change. This means that the world community can act to halt climate change, but it has a very short space of time in which to do so. As well as scaling up research specifically aiming to illuminate gender and climate-change interactions, we need to draw on existing

studies in other fields, such as gender and disasters and feminist political ecology. Although they may not be framed as research on climate change, they can still help us to understand its gender ramifications.

In this short overview, I will present an outline of current thinking on some gender dimensions of climate change, as a background to the articles that follow. I will try to show how gender issues are entwined with vulnerability to the effects of climate change, and how gender identities and roles may affect women's and men's perceptions of the changes. I discuss policies designed to reduce greenhouse gases, climate-adaptation efforts, and, lastly, gender issues in relation to the international climate-protection system.

## Vulnerability and perceptions

The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (IPCC 2007) recognises that gender roles and relations shape vulnerability and people's capacity to adapt to climate change. It makes special mention of the vulnerability of rural women in developing countries, who are often dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, do most of the agricultural work, and bear responsibility for collecting water and fuel. Climate change is widely predicted to affect all these areas of women's lives adversely. For instance, increased climate variability is making agriculture unpredictable, and continuing desertification in some regions exacerbates the domestic fuel crisis. In urban areas, poor women are likely to bear the brunt of health problems caused by 'urban heat island' effects; increases in vector-borne diseases like malaria, due to changes in temperature and rainfall patterns; and shortages of clean water in cities like New Delhi, which are situated in dry zones (United Nations Population Fund 2007). While poor women's greater vulnerability compared with men is partly due to their relatively limited access to resources and their resulting poverty, this is not the whole story. It also arises from social and cultural norms about, for instance, gendered divisions of labour, physical mobility, and who is entitled to take part in decision-making at household and community levels. In some cases, cultural norms may create situations where men suffer from gender-specific vulnerability. For instance, the deaths in recent years of many young West African men trying to reach Europe by boat can be partly attributed to climate stress on rural livelihoods, which leads them to leave their families and communities and take fatal risks, hoping they will be able to find work and remit part of their earnings back home.

Since the start of the twenty-first century, several extreme climate events have clearly demonstrated women's specific gendered vulnerability to disasters, including the 2003 heat wave in Europe, the Asian tsunami of 2004, and Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in 2005. The cyclone that hit coastal Bangladesh in 1991 also killed many more women than men. Disasters like this are nothing new, and no single climate event can be definitely attributed to climate change, but we are seeing

more disasters caused by extreme weather events, which are predicted to become both more frequent and more intense as a result of climate change. A recent article confirmed that women tend to die in greater numbers than men during and immediately after disasters, and presented compelling evidence that these gender imbalances in mortality are due to women's low socio-economic status compared with men (Neumayer and Plümper 2007).

Just as women and men are vulnerable in different ways to the effects of climate changes, their views regarding the risks associated with climate change also vary. We cannot assume that poor men and women in the same community will share the same opinions and priorities regarding climate risk, because there is evidence that this is gendered, too. As well as expressing different levels of concern about, say, the risk of droughts or floods, men and women tend to perceive different risks as important, and the same risk may have different meanings for men and women (Gustafson 1998). Surveys carried out in the USA have revealed a 'white male effect', whereby white men tend to perceive environmental risks as less serious than black men, black women, or white women do (Satterfield *et al.* 2004). However, not all white men are alike in disdaining environmental risk; in the seminal study that highlighted the phenomenon, the findings were skewed by a mere 30 per cent of white men, characterised by high incomes, high educational levels, and conservative views (Slovic 1999). Some researchers attribute these findings to men and women's different roles and activities (Gustafson 1998), whereas others (for example, Slovic 1999, and Satterfield *et al.* 2004) favour socio-political explanations that include gender alongside other socially differentiating axes, such as class.

Is there any evidence that men and women in the South, as well as in the North, perceive climate risk differently because of their gender? So far there has been hardly any research touching on this, but an interesting study of small farmers in South Africa suggests that this is the case (Thomas *et al.* 2007). These researchers found that gender identity affected the *type* of climate risk that the farmers were concerned about. Of those farmers who recognised heavy rains as a distinctive risk, most were women. Conversely, many more men than women saw drought as a distinctive risk. The difference seems to be linked to gendered livelihood patterns, and the different ways in which the activities of livestock rearing and agriculture are sensitive to climate change. Livestock rearing tends to be associated with men in the study community, and agriculture with women. While this is only a single, small-scale, survey, it shows that poor men and women in developing countries may not share the same priorities with regard to climate risks. This is an area that warrants further research, with a view to ensuring that adaptation policies take into account women's priorities, as well as men's.

## Greenhouse gases and mitigation

Mitigation is a gentle word, but the truth is that the world needs to make a drastic and rapid cut in its greenhouse-gas emissions, to stabilise the global climate and avoid reaching a 'tipping point', beyond which very serious consequences cannot be reversed. Greenhouse-gas emissions can be reduced in several ways; switching to renewable sources of energy and using fossil fuels more efficiently, curbing deforestation, adopting more efficient agricultural practices, and, last but not least, transforming consumption patterns and lifestyles in industrialised countries. The use of biofuels, championed by the European Union, has been denounced as a false solution that is already harming poor people in developing countries (Oxfam 2008).

Although North America and Europe are the regions responsible for most greenhouse-gas emissions to date, future growth in emissions will come mainly from developing countries, due partly to population growth. Some bodies argue that stabilising – and eventually reducing – population growth would also be an effective way to limit climate change. Others reject the idea, maintaining that the real cause of climate change is not the number of people in the world but the unsustainably large 'carbon footprints' of people in industrialised countries, especially the USA. Insofar as population growth is contributing to climate change, there is an obvious potential synergy between meeting the needs of the estimated 200 million women who have no access to family planning services, and protecting the climate. Turning to the other broad strategies mentioned above, they are all likely to affect gender relations. At the same time, mitigation policies that aim to change people's behaviour in any of these areas will need to be based on a sound understanding of gender relations if they are to succeed.

The energy that people use is consumed both directly – for instance, when fossil fuels are burned to provide domestic energy and transport – and indirectly, through the products they buy, which produce greenhouse gases during their manufacture, transport, and disposal. Many environmental groups see the problem of climate change as rooted in unsustainable lifestyles in rich nations. They argue that, rather than seeking technical and economic 'fixes', we need to move away from consumerism as a way of life and reject globalisation in its current, big-business driven form, in order to avert environmental disaster.

The climate-justice lobby has highlighted contrasts between energy consumption in the North and South, rather than disaggregating emissions within countries; in particular, energy-use patterns and lifestyles in industrialised countries are rarely subjected to gender analysis. Yet, gender issues are involved in rich countries' energy consumption at every level. For instance, it has been suggested that globalisation, which consumerism depends on and which accelerates carbon emissions, is driven by a particular type of masculinity that values power and ruthlessness, and is creating a

tiny number of super-wealthy people, mostly men, at the expense of millions of poor men and women who endure its negative effects (Connell 2005).

On a more day-to-day level, the gendered nature of individual energy-use patterns tends to be masked, because of the huge scale of aggregation at which energy is provided and distributed in the North, and the lack of intra-household analyses of energy use. Gender issues in the transport sector have received more attention than in the domestic energy sector, presumably because emissions here can be more easily attributed to specific groups of people. For instance, a recent report cites evidence that in Sweden, more men than women own cars, and male drivers produce considerably more carbon emissions from private cars than do women (Johnsson-Latham 2007). Meanwhile, the gender blindness regarding domestic carbon emissions is starting to be challenged. For instance, the same report contains this provocative comment about carbon emissions: 'If women's consumption levels were to be the norm, both emissions and climate change would be significantly less than today' (*ibid.*, 50).

It is interesting that, in the UK, the so-called 'school run', where mothers drive their children to school, has received a huge amount of attention in the media, because of its contribution to traffic congestion and carbon emissions (see, for instance, Moreton 2006). It is certainly true that the school-run phenomenon both reflects and causes social, health, and environmental problems, including the time-poverty of many working mothers. But the fact that it is women, as mothers, who have been scapegoated in this way, rather than other car-drivers, suggests how easy it would be for future government mitigation policies to penalise women's gendered energy use disproportionately, compared with men's. This also applies to more radical mitigation strategies being championed by green lobby groups; although they may seem extreme now, they may well become official policy in coming years, as the impact of climate starts to bite harder and energy-security concerns deepen, so gender advocates need to be aware of them. For instance, what are the gendered implications of the idea of individual 'carbon allowances'? This is a popular proposal among green campaigners, and one which might well signal the shape of things to come. It is easy to imagine a scenario where women's allowances fail to accommodate their greater need for energy services, due to their many reproductive tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing for children. Such injustices can be avoided by conducting gender analyses of intra-household energy consumption, and by the involvement of feminist economists in appraising the range of mitigation policy alternatives on offer. By improving our understanding of who is responsible for different amounts and types of carbon emissions and why, gender analysis of carbon footprints could also help policy makers to identify the most effective strategies for changing energy-use behaviour (Hemmati 2000).

More gender-aware research and analysis has been done on energy use in developing countries than on energy use in the North. Energia, the Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, has been playing a significant role. On average, 30 per cent of total energy supply in developing countries comes from traditional biomass

fuels such as wood, charcoal, and animal dung; in some countries, such as Nepal, Uganda, and Tanzania, wood-fuels alone provide 80 per cent of total energy requirements (World Resources Institute n.d.). It is mainly women who collect and use these types of fuel, and who bear the brunt of fuel poverty in developing countries. Yet, several alternative and cleaner technologies are available, such as more efficient biomass, biogas, and solar power. Improving women's access to such clean energy services for tasks such as collecting fuelwood, fetching water, processing food, and cooking, would help meet their practical needs as well as challenging unequal gender relations. Combined with the provision of clean electricity for lighting, which would widen women's options as to how they use their evenings, it could support women's empowerment, as individuals and as a collective marginalised group.

There are various examples of clean energy projects that address women's gendered needs and interests, for instance by enabling women to earn an income through the use or provision of renewable energy services (ENERGIA/DFID Collaborative Research Group on Gender and Energy 2006). Improved stoves programmes have long been a popular development intervention in this field, and can make significant contributions to reducing carbon emissions at the same time as they reduce indoor air pollution and so bring health benefits for women. For instance, an improved stoves programme in Sri Lanka and Kenya reduced national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 3 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively (Hogg *et al.* 2001, cited in ENERGIA/DFID Collaborative Research Group on Gender and Energy 2006). For poor women in the South, the worst-case scenario would be mitigation policies that force developing countries onto low-carbon development paths, without ensuring access to affordable alternative energy sources.

During the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007, governments agreed to establish a new mitigation mechanism, known as 'Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation' (REDD), through which countries such as Indonesia and Brazil will be compensated for preserving their forests. In theory, this could bring significant greenhouse-gas emissions reductions, because about 18 per cent of global carbon emissions are due to forest clearance in the global South, mainly due to agricultural expansion (H.M. Treasury 2007). Women form the majority of the millions of people who depend on forests for their livelihoods, yet they play hardly any part in either deforestation or formulating policies relating to forests and their preservation (Gender CC Network n.d.). The main gender concern here is whether they will gain or lose from REDD. Will their livelihoods be safeguarded, or trampled in the stampede to appropriate REDD's financial rewards? And will government revenues from REDD credits be spent on gender-equitable sustainable development, or end up in the bank accounts of corrupt, mainly male, minorities?

Agriculture is another sector where large cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions could be made. Possible mitigation strategies include: improved management of crop land, restoring fertility to degraded land, cutting methane emissions from livestock by the



use of new feed mixtures, and changing irrigation and fertilizer use in wet-rice farming. Rural women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food in most developing countries (FAO 2008), so gender analysis has an obvious relevance to mitigation in this sector. On the other hand, in many rural societies women are sidelined from decisions regarding agriculture even when male household heads are absent, and they often lack access to important inputs such as irrigation water, credit, tools, and fertiliser. To be effective, agricultural mitigation strategies need to take these and other aspects of local gender relations into account. Policy makers should consider some well-known studies in the gender-and-development literature that link the failure of certain aid-funded development projects to gender inequalities (for example Jones 1986).

### Coping and adapting

Whether or not governments implement effective mitigation policies, the effects of climate change will be felt for at least 40 to 50 years, due to the time-lag between emissions being made, and their impact being felt (H.M. Treasury 2007). So to be sure of surviving and thriving in the longer run, individuals and societies need to adapt: in other words, to take action to reduce their vulnerability to future climate stresses and shocks.

Adaptation is different from coping, which, although it may ensure short-term survival, may not protect people from future effects of climate change. Adaptation can take many different forms, and occur at various levels. The most effective way for poor countries to adapt is through gender-equitable sustainable development, which would give them the flexibility and resources they need to respond, including skilled, educated, and healthy men and women. More specifically, least-developed countries have prepared National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) that contain a range of policies and programmes. For instance, Bangladesh's NAPA includes these priorities for direct government intervention: reforestation of coastal areas to protect against cyclones and storm surges; building storm shelters; and providing drinking water to areas affected by salinisation. It also contains measures intended to help people to adapt their own livelihoods as necessary. Examples are integrating climate-change topics into the school curriculum, and providing public information (Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2005).

So far, such government-led adaptation strategies and financing schemes have not been subject to scrutiny by gender-budget specialists. However, as the impact of climate change intensifies, it is likely that more and more public funding in both industrialised and developing countries will be needed for public adaptation measures. Drawing on gender-budgeting techniques to compare the gendered costs and benefits of alternative adaptation strategies would be a very useful way to ensure that poor women's interests and priorities are not overlooked (see, for instance, Hofbauer Balmori 2003).

Meanwhile, millions of poor women and men in affected regions are adapting to climate risk on their own initiative and with their own resources, with little or no help from governments. While it may not yet be possible to attribute any specific climate phenomenon, such as a heavy rainstorm, to human-induced climate change, what people do now in the face of such problems indicates how they are likely to respond to climate change in the future, and in turn this can contribute to adaptation policy development. For instance, the authors of a joint ActionAid and Institute of Development Studies report talked to poor women living in the Ganges River Basin about their responses to erratic monsoons. These women explained the ways in which they were responding: by, for instance, growing different crops, and finding alternative livelihood activities such as fish-farming. The women in the study were also quite clear about the support they needed, mentioning access to training and information, and agricultural extension advice, among other things (ActionAid and Institute of Development Studies 2007).

While that report focuses exclusively on poor women, a study of drought-affected smallholder communities in Tanzania and Kenya disaggregates men's and women's adaptation strategies within the same households (Eriksen *et al.* 2005). This study found that households whose members each specialised in different non-agricultural livelihood activities tended to do reasonably well in the face of climate stress. However, women's livelihood options were much more limited than men's. They were constrained by lack of access to financial capital, gender norms that excluded them from the more profitable activities such as bee-keeping, and heavy reproductive work burdens that prevented them from putting much time into any type of income-generation initiative. Despite this, women tried hard to find income-generating activities that could compensate for their loss of income from agriculture, and so enable them to maintain some degree of financial independence from their husbands. The study shows that, regardless of whether or not they reduce vulnerability at the household level, people's adaptation strategies can alter intra-household gender relations, to women's disadvantage.

As yet, there are few studies like this one, which explore the connections between climate adaptation strategies and changes in gender relations in particular contexts. This is an important area for future research. Any such research should be informed by key gender- and-development concepts developed over several decades, such as the conceptualisation of households as social institutions peopled by individuals with different interests, rather than as units. In relation to climate adaptation, this implies that the costs and benefits of micro-level adaptation strategies will not necessarily be distributed fairly between men and women.

Highlighting the agency that poor women, as well as men, demonstrate in the face of climate risk counteracts the tendency in the discourse to cast them as powerless victims. In fact, women often have an especially important role to play in adaptation, because of their gendered indigenous knowledge on matters such as agriculture and

maintaining water supplies (ActionAid 2007). On the other hand, the extent to which poor women and men can exercise resourcefulness in response to climate impacts should not be romanticised, either. Short-term coping with climate impacts is one thing, but longer-term strategic responses may require resources and support which are so far conspicuously absent. Because of their gender-specific vulnerability, there are strong arguments for directing aid-funded adaptation projects to poor women. But the gender inequalities that make women more vulnerable in general also need to be tackled at their roots. They include women's relative lack of assets such as financial capital, but also their lower education levels compared with men, and their exclusion from decision-making at all levels over how assets such as land should be used. These barriers to behavioural change need to be addressed in adaptation policies; otherwise, climate-risk responses may be shaped more by entrenched gender norms than by objective rationality.

## The international climate protection regime

The international climate protection system is codified in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and its Kyoto Protocol. In this section, I will briefly outline this system, before highlighting the related gender issues.

The convention's aim is to stabilise greenhouse-gas concentrations, to prevent dangerous interference with the climate. Under the Kyoto Protocol, industrialised countries have agreed to cut emissions collectively by 2012, and, at the time of writing, the agreement for the next commitment period is being negotiated.

As well as setting national targets, the protocol contains three market-based mitigation mechanisms; carbon emissions trading, the clean development mechanism (CDM), and joint implementation, the last of which refers to projects implemented by two or more industrialised countries. Emissions trading allows countries that have not used up all their emission allowances to sell their excess to countries that have exceeded their targets. According to the UNFCCC (2008), 'Carbon is now tracked and traded like any other commodity'. The CDM is the main formal mechanism whereby industrialised countries can support emissions-reduction projects in developing countries, earning credits that can be counted towards meeting their own Kyoto targets. As well as these mitigation mechanisms, there are four funds for financing adaptation in developing countries, all with slightly different remits.

Many environment and development NGOs have condemned international mitigation and adaptation efforts as grossly inadequate. One criticism is that they rely too heavily on technical and market-based mechanisms for curbing greenhouse-gas emissions. This represents a fundamental departure from the sustainable development principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), to which the UNFCCC is linked (Hemmati 2008); neither is it in keeping with the wider UN human-rights framework. Principle 1 of the Declaration stated that 'Human beings are at the

centre of concerns for sustainable development' (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.), yet the social dimensions of climate change, including its impact on gender relations, are missing from both the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol. Social development and poverty alleviation are briefly mentioned in the action plan produced by delegations to the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007 (Preamble to Decision -/CP.13 Bali Action Plan, UNFCCC 2007).

Framing climate change as a problem that needs mainly technical and economic solutions makes it hard to find an entry point to introduce gender-equality issues into the equation. The current carbon trading system has very high transaction costs, which exclude poor people generally. Moreover, as many gender advocates have pointed out, markets are inherently gender-inequitable, because of women's restricted access to resources such as land, credit, and information, compared with men's access, so the emphasis on markets to curb greenhouse-gas emissions is biased against women (Gender CC Network 2008). On the other hand, given the potentially catastrophic effects of uncontrolled climate change on women's human rights, the UNFCCC's emphasis might be acceptable on pragmatic grounds, provided we could be sure that its market mechanisms and technical fixes would actually reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. While some gender advocates want to reject the whole principle of commoditising carbon, others argue that it is better to work with the current mechanisms, for instance lobbying for CDM projects to be directed at improving poor women's access to clean energy services.

The Bali Conference marked 'something of a breakthrough' (Hemmati 2008, 2), for gender advocates, who had lobbied such international meetings for years with little sign of having made an impression (Gender CC Network 2008). Growing numbers of participants, including the UNFCCC Secretariat itself, seem to accept the need to mainstream gender issues into any future agreement. In addition, two groups, first the Gender CC – Women for Climate Justice – Network, and second the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, formed by several UN bodies and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), were launched during the conference. However, it remains the case that gender concerns can only be addressed in the climate protection system if there is a basic change of paradigm that puts both women's and men's human rights centre-stage (Hemmati 2008).

## Conclusion

'No climate justice without gender justice'; this slogan was a rallying cry for feminist lobbyists at the Bali Conference. It is likely to be heard more and more loudly in coming years, as women's organisations and gender-equality advocates become more involved in climate-change debates. Gender equality will be best served by an international climate protection system that works, and the outcomes of international negotiations for a post-2012 agreement under the Kyoto Protocol will determine

whether or not the global community will cross the threshold of irreversible climate change, or pull back in time. Feminists will be lobbying for gender-equality concerns to be integrated fully into that agreement, with a view to ensuring that, at the very least, new mitigation and adaptation policies do not disadvantage poor women, but rather deliver them some benefits; for instance, through increased transfers of useful and appropriate technologies, which meet women's energy-service needs. Participants at a recent WEDO meeting recommended that women's-rights advocates should concentrate on national information-gathering and activities first, before feeding lessons and recommendations from those into global lobbying (WEDO 2008).

Outside the international negotiations, the gender dimensions of climate vulnerability and adaptation are increasingly being discussed, as demonstrated by a recent spate of NGO reports and meetings of gender-and-development academics, advocates, and activists. Thinking through mitigation policies from a gender point of view may be a bigger conceptual challenge. Yet it must be done, so that they do not disadvantage poor women North and South, and so that they avoid the risk of foundering due to inattention to gender dimensions.

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