

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICIES IN BANGLADESH: GAP ANALYSIS THROUGH A GENDER LENS

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ABSTRACT

Policy reform is a necessary approach to implementing appropriate responses to climate change. Despite the acceptance of the role of gender in determining vulnerabilities related climate change, low reorganization has been given to gender concerns in the climate change policy documents of Bangladesh. In this regard, gender sensitivity of the key national policies about climate change in Bangladesh was assessed. The discussion also identified some of the existing gaps in the reviewed policy documents. Identified gaps include generalization of women, lack of operational planning to address the vulnerabilities women, lack of recognizing roles of women as active contributors to adaptation and mitigation strategies. It was found that policy objectives related to climate change and gender are addressed in a mutually exclusive manner. Finally, this paper provided recommendations to address the gaps and making gender more central to all policy development.

Introduction

It is now well established that while communities and regions may be exposed to similar adverse effects of the changing climate, the degree of their vulnerability to those changes vary considerably. Bangladesh has historically been exposed to frequent severe weather disasters like floods, cyclones, torrential rains, droughts, river erosion and salinity intrusion. These climatic disasters have increased in frequency and intensity and have been affecting traditional lifestyle and livelihoods in Bangladesh (Ahmad, 2010). It has been suggested that due to existing gender inequalities (e.g. limited access to resources and decision making process) impacts of climate change will hit women disproportionately, especially in the developing world and exacerbate the already existing gender inequalities (Brody et al., 2008; Manat and Papazu, 2009). Social institutions, behavioural norms and the physiological attributes make women more vulnerable compared to men (Shabib & Khan, 2014) and thus affect their capacity to respond effectively to climate variability. Patterns of vulnerability to climate change impacts are also shaped by social factors ranging from gender roles to class to ethnicity. For example, social factors shape access to livelihood resources and roles in decision making.

It is important to remember that women are not only victims of climate change but are also

considered as effective actors or agents of change in relation to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Women often have sound knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as disaster reduction CITATION The \1 1033 (UN Women Watch, 2011). Also, women, being the stewards of natural and household resources, can contribute to community level adaptation strategies. Thus, when it comes to decision-making and implementation towards building resilient communities in the face of climate change, the full and meaningful participation of women becomes essential.

The vulnerability of women can be alleviated through appropriate policy interventions. Additionally, gender-sensitive climate change policies will ensure greater participation of women in setting up strategies to address climate change. This study was undertaken to identify gender-sensitive policies in Bangladesh about climate change and to point out the gaps in appropriate gender

Global Action on Climate Change: UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, the Bali Action Plan and subsequent development

The first definitive action regarding climate change came in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, or, Convention) was established at the conference which came into force in 1994. Finally, 192 countries signed and ratified the Convention and are called Parties (192 in number). In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was signed though came into effect much later in 2005 (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, 1998). This protocol is a legal instrument under which industrialized countries have committed themselves to lower emission on an average of 5% below the 1990 level. The first commitment period ended in 2012. The Kyoto protocol has three primary market-based instruments to lower emission. Even so, the protocol has some drawbacks. Exclusion of the USA, the largest emitter, is one of the main drawbacks followed by the low level of commitment. Furthermore, the targets have been hardly achieved. Many countries have overshot the 1990 level emission. The Conference of Parties (COP 13) in Bali saw some ground-breaking changes in the negotiations for mitigation (i.e., emission reduction). The decision 1/CP 13 or the Bali Action Plan (BAP) calls for a globally shared vision and enhanced actions in 4 areas, mitigation (i.e., emission reduction), adaptation, finance, and technology transfer. The most interesting were the decisions which dealt respectively with mandatory mitigation commitment by developed country parties and voluntary mitigation actions by developing country parties. All country parties are expected to reduce emission. There has been some substantial progress in adaptation talks on how these initiatives can be facilitated and the resources that might be necessary, the process of allocating the available resources among the adversely affected countries equitably. There has also been progressed in technology transfer and development issues. It is almost certain that substantial resources will flow under different circumstances, bilaterally and multilaterally, for adaptation and mitigation. In this regard, Bangladesh will have to prepare itself for utilizing such resources in the most effective way to minimize the impacts of climate change.

Overview of Multi-sectoral National Policies and their Gender Sensitivity

The government of Bangladesh acknowledges the need for coordinated efforts on gender issues to mainstream gender issues in development initiatives and to increase resilience. At present, Bangladesh is engaged in aligning national

legislation and policies with its international commitments to strengthen gender dimensions. Some key policies with regards to climate change adaptation and the provision of gender issues in those policies are highlighted below. In addition, there is also a set of supporting 'rules' and 'regulations' that include important provisions with regards to women and climate change.

Bangladesh prepared the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) in 2008 and revised it in 2009. This is now an approved document of the Government. This document is considered as the guiding document for integration of climate change issues such as mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and development, and capacity building into the mainstream planning process. BCCSAP categorizes actions under six main pillars and listed 44 programs to address climate change impacts in Bangladesh. A review of how gender is addressed in BCCSAP was carried out by the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) in 2012 (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2013). The review noted that of the 44 BCCSAP programs, only four mentioned gender specifically. Also, the BCCSAP does not refer to women as actors in addressing climate change. Although the BCCSAP states that the 'needs of women will be mainstreamed in all activities under the BCCSAP' (paragraph 27), it did not describe how this will be done or specify any specific instruments or strategies designed to implement gender mainstreaming (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2013). Furthermore, the BCCSAP did not identify a focal person, incentive structure, or monitoring system to ensure the mainstreaming process. The Asia Foundation (2014) noted that BCCSAP considers gender issues by specific programs. However, specific attempts to integrate or mainstream gender across all sectors and programs are not made. For instance, of the nine programs with 29 activities under the BCCSAP theme 'Food Security, Social Protection and Health' only one activity has a specific linkage to women and gender relations, where a comprehensive study is planned to assess the impact of climate change on women and to develop recommendations to address the impacts.

The objective of the Bangladesh Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (BCCGAP, 2013) is 'to mainstream gender concerns into climate change-related policies, strategies and interventions

ensuring access to, participation in, contributions towards and benefits for the diverse group of stakeholders for the sustainable and equitable development of Bangladesh.' The initiative to prepare a BCCGAP in Bangladesh was taken in 2012 by the MoEF and following extensive consultations with representatives of ministries, universities, civil society and development practitioners, a thorough review of relevant national and international policies and documents was released in November 2013 (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2013).

The BCCGAP integrated gender considerations into four of the six main pillars which were identified in the BCCSAP. The four pillars are - a) food security, social protection and health; b) comprehensive disaster management; c) infrastructure and d) mitigation and low carbon development. The remaining two pillars of the BCCSAP-research and knowledge management and capacity building and institutional strengthening were mainstreamed within the above four pillars throughout the document as crosscutting topics.

Clear objectives outlining substantive activities that are accompanied by reachable indicators were incorporated in the BCCGAP. The objectives, activities and indicators were included in the domain of those above four BCCSAP pillars. Specific contribution women make and can make were highlighted as well as the required interventions necessary to incorporate the role of women effectively over a timeframe of five years, from 2013/14-2018/19, were identified.

Bangladesh is one of the few countries that has developed the National Adaptation Plan to Action (NAPA) for climate change (2005) (Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2005). Through the NAPAs, the UNFCCC recognizes that men and women have different roles in securing livelihoods in the developing world. Hence, the action plans include gender in a more comprehensive manner throughout the document. It was recognized in the NAPAs that climate change experience would vary by people depending on their gender, poverty level and location (coastal or non-coastal, rural or urban). The NAPA identified poverty reduction and security of livelihoods with a gender perspective as the most important set of criteria for prioritization of adaptation needs and activities. Even so, no gender-specific goals were established.

The National Women Development Policy (2011) briefly promotes women's role in environmental management and the importance of ensuring facilities for and the security of pregnant women in the event of natural disasters. However, the Asia Foundation noted that in one of their surveys respondents indicated that National Women Development Policy missed an opportunity to highlight climate change-related risks for women (The Asia Foundation, 2012).

Bangladesh ratified the Convention on The Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984 and is a party to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). A section of the 2014 national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action covers women and the environment. The particular section addressed the idea of 'mainstreaming gender in policies and plans' and included an overview of gender in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation, water management, food security and infrastructure, forests and biodiversity, improved cooking stoves, renewable energy, waste management and disaster management (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2009).

The National Forest Policy (1994) states that 'women will be encouraged to participate in homestead and farm forestry, and participatory afforestation programs', however, it does not provide specific directives to achieve the stated goal or set out other gender-specific goals (e.g. decision-making related to forests and forest resources).

The Forestry Sector (Amendment) Rules (2009) address gender issues, according to the 2014 national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). In the consultation process for the Country Investment Plan (CIP) for agriculture, food security and nutrition (2011) included engaging women farmers and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Accordingly, gender is articulated throughout the CIP.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) has reviewed the National Environmental Policy (1992) and the National Environment Policy 2013 has included women's roles and the right to benefits.

In addition to the aforementioned national policies, a gender review of the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) in Bangladesh was conducted by the Global Gender Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in late 2012 (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2013). The program concluded that gender was a key theme to be focused on during the consultation process for the development of the strategic program for climate resilience (SPCR). Nevertheless, the drafters omitted to include the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) as a key stakeholder in the process. It was also mentioned that while gender-differentiated impacts of climate change are acknowledged, and specific areas that require special attention in this regard were highlighted, only 1 out of the 3 proposed investment projects (i.e. Investment Project 3) mentioned women issues and gender-sensitive indicators of success (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2013).

Gender GAP in Policies and Recommendations

In climate change policies in Bangladesh, the consideration of gender issues needs to be more specific and focused (e.g. often these policies do not mention any specific goals or actions with regards to gender sensitive programs). Although the existing policies in Bangladesh acknowledge the particular vulnerabilities of women, they often do not necessarily have any operational plans to address these vulnerabilities and also do not always cater to the specific needs of women. Indeed, most of the relevant policies are reactive in nature. Lack of effective proactive policies to accommodate gender issues is thus a substantial gap in the existing policies.

Some experts have noted that policy objectives related to climate change and gender are addressed as mutually exclusive issues, and existing policies do not consider gender-specific operational activities. In policies related to gender and reproductive health, the impact of climate change is not considered except the National Women Development Policy 2011 (CITATION Sha14 \ 1033 (Shabib & Khan, 2014)).

Even though women are included in adaptation discourse, gender-specific considerations are apparently not promoted. Multi-sectoral responses and collaborations to address climate change, and policies related to disaster preparedness and

response, livelihoods and health care may consider the integration of gender issues into priorities (CITATION Sha14 \ 1033 (Shabib & Khan, 2014)). Moreover, the generalization of women is another major gap in both national and international policy papers. The existing policies often feature women as being victims of climate change and ignore their role as active contributors to adaptation strategies in changing environmental realities. Both the design and implementation of the emerging adaptation activities must ensure participation of women. For this reason, understanding of gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities is fundamental to developing effective interventions. For example, the 2006 study on "Climate Change, Gender and Vulnerable Groups in Bangladesh" (completed in 2007) which was commissioned by the Climate Change Cell is one of the first gender differentiated vulnerability studies that aimed at understanding gender sensitivity in adaptation. The study identified specific vulnerabilities of women and girls when at multi-purpose cyclone shelters (MPCS) and proposed changes in the design the criteria of MPCS established in 1994 (CITATION The12 \ 1033 (The Asia Foundation, 2012)). The earlier design had toilet facilities only on the ground levels, which were too risky to be used by women and girls during a cyclone. The reluctance of women and girls to take shelter without proper toilet facilities in MPCSs was manifested in the high death rates among females in areas hit by Cyclone Sidr. Accordingly, a committee was commissioned by the Caretaker Government (2006-2008) to revisit the design and recommend necessary alterations and two alternative designs were approved to make MPCSs more gender-responsive.

Conclusion

This review and synthesis of the policy literature show two main concerns- no specific goals or actions with regards to gender sensitive programs are mentioned in these policies, and they tend to ignore the role of women as active contributors to adaptation strategies.

It is necessary to formulate and implement climate policies, actions and strategies at local and national levels which will include monitoring, evaluation and flexibility to allow policy adjustment when required. It can be a combination of top-down and bottom-up approach. Women's unique knowledge and coping mechanisms should be given

importance and to ensure unbiased participation of women throughout all the stages of the planning process, institutionalization of stakeholder involvement is required. Gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring development and evaluation, a collection of gender-disaggregated data as well as gender analysis are required to understand the different roles of women and men. Climate change adaptation programs developed through gender analysis is required to amend the situations of women. Access to information and credit, capacity building, improved access to land and natural resources, sustainable energy and technology and access to reproductive health information and services should be considered for the wellbeing of women. Incorporation of gender-specific objectives into national plans and development, organization and dissemination of sustainable adaptation technology explicitly responsive to women's needs may contribute to minimizing their vulnerabilities. Finally, collaboration, as well as coherence among the institutions accountable for climate change and gender, are required to deploy necessary partnerships and create the means and conditions to continue to do so.

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