

GENDER RESPONSIVE ALTERNATIVES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

A GLOBAL RESEARCH
REPORT

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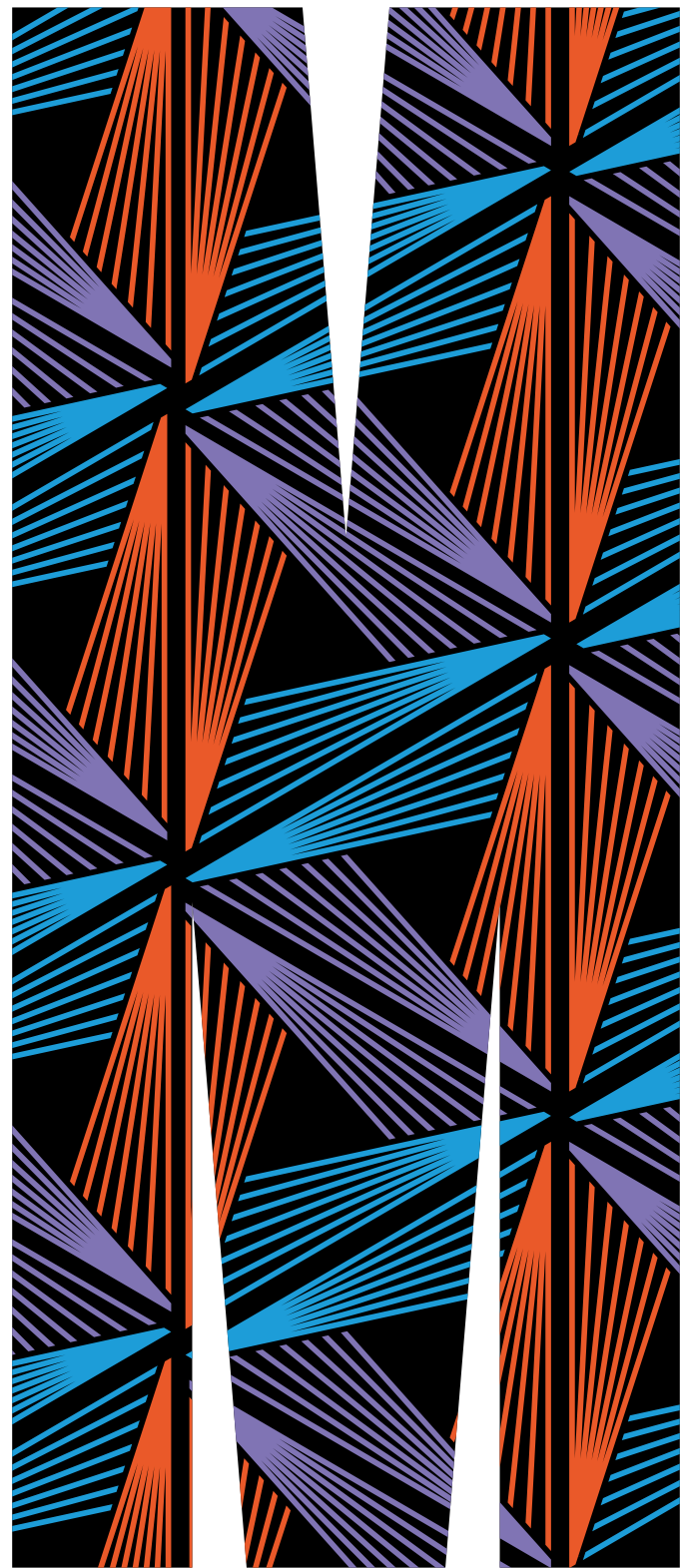




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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CC	Climate change
CDCCCs	Community disaster and climate change committees
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
COP	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations programme
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRACC	Gender-Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change
IO	International organisation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-government organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TAWN	Tangulbei Women's Network (Kenya)
TC Pam	Tropical Cyclone Pam
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
WITTT	Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (Vanuatu)
WPS	United Nations Women, Peace and Security agenda

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Nakamal	A space where all village decision-making is done
Talanoa	The concept of Talanoa emphasises the relational aspect of knowledge and the importance of narratives or drawing from everyday experiences for understanding the full extent of climate change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The complex causes and consequences of climate change demand an approach that encompasses the impact of different risks and hazards across local, national, regional and global scales. Environmental degradation is intertwined with other crises such as armed conflicts, natural disasters, health pandemics, and economic recession and underdevelopment. At present, however, most natural and social sciences research approaches examine just one or a few impacts or causes of climate change yielding partial and often poor situational and global assessments. Responses to risks and hazards are often separated under different policy goals and priorities creating barriers to coordination across agencies and preventing the mobilisation of resources for joined-up programs. There is a missed opportunity to understand how adaptation and mitigation strategies designed for responding to one set of impacts or crises might produce positive outcomes (*by reinforcing or amplifying responses to other impacts and crises*) or negative outcomes (*by counteracting or cancelling out gains in other areas*).

This report on *Gender-responsive Alternatives on Climate Change* argues that women's knowledge, participation, and collective action at the community level in responding to multiple crises is crucial across all governance systems. Doing so, will improve community and national responses to the risks and the impacts of climate change. At present, however, significant gender discrimination rooted in cultural norms and gender-specific institutional barriers prevent the integration of

this knowledge and action in policy and practice. This study undertaken in partnership with ActionAid draws on field research on the experiences of women in some of the most climate change-affected communities in three countries in different global regions prone to crises: Cambodia, Kenya, and Vanuatu. The research highlights women's lives and their cumulative (customary and everyday) knowledge as important starting points for identifying the connections among multiple climate-induced risks and interrelated crises and how to address them. Illustrating women's vital role in both understanding and responding to the causes and consequences of these crises, the report makes a strong case for all governance actors to strengthen women's participation and collective action in the design and implementation of global, national and local climate, development and security agendas. There are **three main findings and sets of recommendations** from this multi-country study:

1 Low Mutual Awareness of Scientific and Women's Localised Knowledge of Climate Change, its Causes and its Consequences

Across the three countries and especially among communities in climate-risk prone areas, we found that women's localised knowledge on the environment intrinsically connects crises – climate, disaster, conflict, food insecurity. (This is due not to any biological or inherent attributes but to women's distinct roles in the gender division of labour in households and communities). Women's knowledge thus has

the potential to inform early warning systems and indicators. However, a lack of mutual recognition of different knowledges undermines the potential for alternative climate responses. Women at the local level have low awareness and capacity to comprehend prevailing technical information while scientific and policy communities have low awareness of women's valuable everyday knowledge in addressing climate-related crises locally. There are few opportunities for women to share and integrate their knowledge with professional scientific and policymaking communities. We found evidence, however, that women's cumulative, customary knowledge can powerfully complement and enhance technical information by revealing how, when and where multiple risks may intersect. Women's knowledge strengthens the resilience of communities and avoids adaptation to climate change that undermines women's and girls' ability to participate in – and benefit from – crisis responses. Integrating women's knowledge and scientific knowledge is a potentially transformative basis for climate policy-making that promotes gender equality and addresses crises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create communities of experts at all levels of governance where women's cumulative, customary knowledge is equally valued and can come together with scientific and technical knowledge.
- Establish “train the trainer” initiatives to enable women to be knowledge brokers in their communities.
- Promote women as local information and data gatherers of the everyday signs or risks of climate change and related crises, allowing them to present their knowledge and effectively make claims on the state. Women's Weather Watch is a good example of how to synthesise this information and data.

2 Women's Participation in Crisis Response Provides the Groundwork for Sustainable Alternatives to Climate Change

Women have collectively customised responses to multiple and interlinked crises and inbuilt prevention mechanisms for long-term sustainable outcomes. Researching women's networks in climate-affected areas established in Cambodia, Kenya and Vanuatu, we found that they effectively linked women's actions between crisis response and long-term sustainable development. In each country, we found evidence of women's participation and leadership in climate change and DRR programming that extended beyond crisis response into long-term sustainable development.

For women to actively participate in such community efforts, there is **an urgent need to overcome the barriers preventing them from engaging**. These barriers exist in many forms, with common challenges including social and cultural norms, gendered divisions of labour (paid and unpaid), gender-based violence, and access to resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Valuing the customary knowledge of women by documenting their approaches in times of crisis and integrating local networks and customary mechanisms in crisis preparedness, planning and response structures.
- Identify and partner with key women's networks and organisations to develop meaningful opportunities for consultation and collaboration across policy and planning and implementation in crisis preparedness, response, recovery and beyond.
- Address basic cultural and material barriers to women's participation, and recognise the importance of women's contributions by providing remuneration, travel and childcare expenses for attendance at meetings and workshops.

3 Women's Collective Action in Forging Community Networks Enables Integrated Responses to Climate, Humanitarian Disasters and Conflict

Women's collective action enables flexible, joined-up responses to interrelated crises at the community level. While society is still largely characterised by gendered division of labour and unequal gender norms that expect women to be submissive, women's networks are proving to be training grounds for sustained participation, recognising women's authority before, during and after crisis. Women's networks can bridge government and civil society by facilitating regular and sustained participation, beginning with local decision-making.

The research highlighted how material and cultural factors combine to prevent women's networks and organisations from participating in formal governance such as commune or village councils and key ministries governing the environment and resources. When women are excluded from local and national level governance, the absence of their voice and representation at regional and global levels – especially in global climate change conferences – is virtually assured. However, the research provided evidence that when women's meaningful participation and leadership is supported and resourced, more integrated and effective agendas result.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support and resource pre-existing women's networks as an entry point for transforming communities and national and international governance.
- Empower women-led organisations and women's networks with training in relevant skills (knowledge of science, policy frameworks and design, advocacy, media etc.) to influence the formulation, design and implementation of integrated development plans and crisis response.
- Strengthen the capacity of all levels of governance (village to national to regional/global) to include women and to understand and value everyday knowledge.

Bridging **women's grounded knowledge** with scientific knowledge, enabling women's **meaningful participation** in the formulation and implementation of climate change policies, and supporting mechanisms for women's **collective action** are significant entry points for integrating risk assessment across crises and creating gender-responsive alternatives. These approaches would allow governments and societies to systematically address climate change and interlinked crises and to effectively respond to the comprehensive security needs of the most marginalised and climate-affected populations, particularly women and girls.

*Bringing together women's everyday knowledge with scientific **knowledge**, enabling gender-inclusive **participation** and supporting women's **collective action** to promote gender responsive alternatives to climate change and related crises.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Scientific evidence predicts catastrophic impacts of climate change on humanity unless emissions of greenhouse gases are drastically reduced *now*. It is projected that by 2100, the compounded threats we will face will be in multitudes across six main human systems: human health, water, food, economy, infrastructure and security.¹ The complex consequences of climate change demand an approach that encompasses the interaction effects of different risks and hazards, and the multi-scalar dynamics to environmental degradation as it is entangled with other crises such as armed conflicts, health pandemics, and economic recessions. Moreover, there is a growing understanding that the impacts of climate change generate multiple and compounded costs and how these are borne disproportionately by poor communities in developing countries despite being among the lowest contributors to carbon emissions and environmental degradation more broadly.

Integrated frameworks for analysis that can inform climate governance, sustainable development and crisis or emergency response are needed because of evidence that the impacts of climate change are increasingly unable to be examined in isolation from other hazards and everyday human insecurities. However, across natural and social sciences so far, the dominant approach has been to focus on specific aspects of human life, and to examine hazards – which includes conflict and violence – in isolation from one another. The same siloing is also evident in the implementation and monitoring of indicators for global agendas on disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change, sustainable development goals (especially SDGs 5, 13 and 16), and on women, peace and security (WPS). If we continue to do so, we then run the risk of misleading ourselves with partial, if not, incorrect assessments of the global processes to climate change. Consequently, global and national solutions especially in terms of mobilising urgently needed resources for programs will be less likely to effectively respond to the comprehensive security needs of the most marginalised and climate-affected populations particularly women and girls.

This report presents findings from a multi-country collaborative research project drawing on experiences

of climate change-affected communities in Cambodia, Kenya, and Vanuatu. It demonstrates how the recognition and inclusion of everyday and traditional knowledge of women holds the key to developing an integrated risk assessment and global response to human insecurities that are also gendered. First, it builds on a range of interdisciplinary research and activism which identifies climate justice as one entry point for promoting gender equality, as much as gender equality is a prerequisite for climate justice.² Second, feminist research has long emphasised that women are situated in different types of structural inequalities that imbue them with distinct viewpoints on the multi-layered realities affecting our global ecosystem. Consequently, our project makes a strong case for promoting diverse women's voices and leadership as necessary in challenging conventional notions of 'expertise' and democratising scientific and policy-based knowledge.

There are three main sections to this report. The first section provides a brief background on why gender gaps exist in the global governance of climate change and what these gaps mean for effectively identifying and addressing interlinked risks and crises. The second section presents key findings across the three countries to illustrate how might a gender-responsive alternative approach to climate change further strengthen integration among existing policies on climate change, gender equality, and peace and sustainable development. Finally, the third section of the report discusses the conclusions and recommendations toward enhancing women's transformative leadership at all levels of governance (village to national to regional/global). An application of the research is illustrated using the proposed framework for facilitating the integrated implementation of Sendai Framework, climate change and WPS agendas.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The overall aim of this research project is to develop an evidence-based, gender-responsive framework that can strengthen women's voices and leadership in responding to climate change and related natural disasters through the recognition and support of their localised knowledge of how multiple risks and hazards are interlinked.

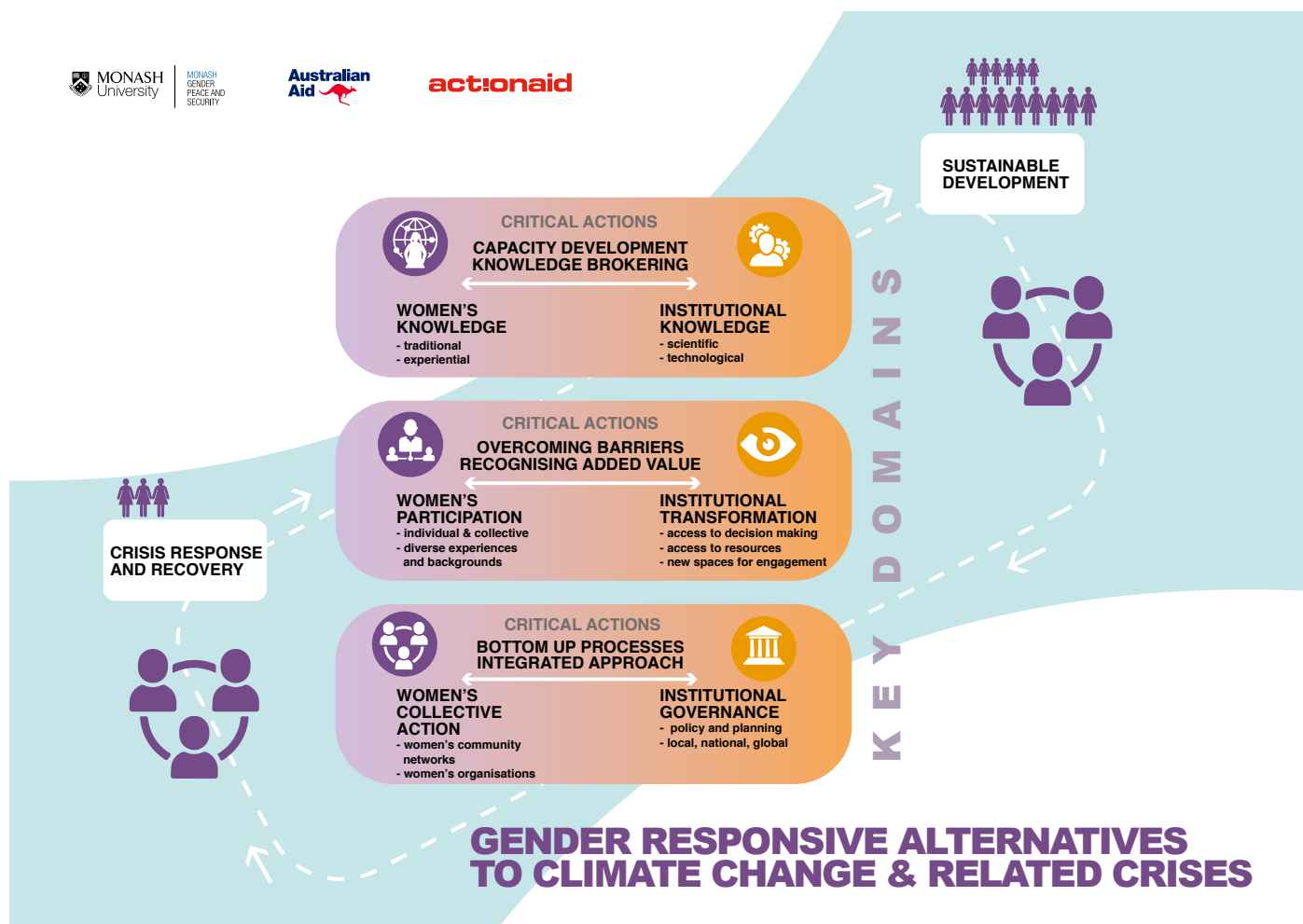
To examine how responses to climate change can promote both climate justice and gender equality we use the concept of “gender-responsiveness” which means “[I]nformed by gender-sensitive analysis and/or agreement, gender-responsiveness as a concept and a practice seeks to enable operational and practical capacity to address gender inequalities, exclusions and differences through action or implementation efforts that are feasible, monitored and evaluated”.³

A framework for gender-responsive alternatives on climate change, integrates women’s **knowledge**, **participation** and **collective action** as developed in this project to mobilise institutional change. By starting with and through women who are on the frontline of multiple crises, researchers and policymakers can identify how, when and where gender-responsive policy change can occur in the face of increasingly interlinked climate-induced crises.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The following key research questions informed the research:

1. What distinct ‘early warning’ signs do women observe for environmental change and its impacts?
2. What is the extent of women’s and men’s awareness of climate change programmes, information and related policies? Do they participate in their implementation?
3. How are women represented in different governance levels, processes and institutions where climate decisions are made?
4. What contributions does women’s knowledge, participation and leadership offer for climate governance, and why do they matter?



DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was collected through a mixed-methods, participatory research design in collaboration with ActionAid Cambodia, ActionAid Kenya, ActionAid Australia and ActionAid Australia in Vanuatu (see Annex 1). First, desk research was undertaken to analyse existing secondary literature, relevant global and national reports, and policy frameworks in the three countries. Second, baseline studies conducted in all three countries provided qualitative data and descriptive statistics relating to the knowledge, participation and leadership among women and men in the selected climate-affected communities that are part of the project. The baseline evidence was used to refine the field research questions and also to guide analysis of the existing literature and national policies. Third, field research was conducted to collect narratives and stories from women and men relating to their everyday life and collective mobilisation in the face of ever intensifying extreme weather, gender inequality and violent conflicts.

Analysis of field research and secondary data across the three countries focused on how women's lives and the forms of knowledge they accumulate are important starting points for identifying how multiple climate-induced risks and hazards are interlinked and how to address them comprehensively. Multiple sources of data therefore served to corroborate, add depth to and/or critique how existing national frameworks and global or dominant understandings of climate change as a security issue are responsive to women's context-specific knowledge and experiences within their households and communities.

2. GENDER GAPS IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

The discourse of gender equality is now a mainstay in global climate governance and across local and international policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. There have been crucial strides in mainstreaming gender within global climate change frameworks. In 2018, General Recommendation No. 37 from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

emphasised states' obligations in addressing the gender-related dimensions to disaster risks and climate change. According to the Committee, "[S]tates parties should ensure that all policies, legislation, plans, programmes, budgets and other activities related to disaster risk reduction and climate change are gender responsive and grounded in human-rights based principles".⁴ Moreover, states have a responsibility vis-à-vis non-state actors, to create an environment conducive for "gender-responsive investment in disaster and climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation..." across which different groups of women should equally participate and lead.⁵ This landmark CEDAW recommendation comes at a time of more than four decades of gender research in climate change and environmental policy.⁶ It also comes together with other major advancements in global climate policy and governance. For instance, the Green Climate Fund which is a financial mechanism for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) launched its pioneering manual on mainstreaming gender into climate finance in 2017. The manual is a recognition that programs and initiatives require the necessary resourcing for them to effectively address the gendered ramifications of climate change. In the same year, at the annual Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the Paris Agreement, the first ever Gender Action Plan was adopted. This milestone is in large part due to the strong mobilisation and lobbying of civil society groups representing women's, indigenous and environmental rights.

An unequivocal and consistent commitment to gender equality is present within disaster risk reduction (DRR) agendas such as the global Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), 2015-2030. In 2011, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (formerly UNISDR, now UNDRR) developed a 20-point checklist on making DRR gender-sensitive. The checklist serves to facilitate and coordinate DRR by governments at national and local levels to reflect a gender perspective across five main priority processes: technical, political, social, developmental and humanitarian. It explicitly states that gender is integral to the whole cycle of DRR beginning with how problems are understood, how resources are mobilised and allocated, what issues are prioritised and how decisions are made, and to the practice and implementation of DRR in development and humanitarian programs.



While there is now deliberate incorporation of gender in climate and disaster governance, key challenges remain. Gender gaps in climate governance are evident in that women's localised knowledges and everyday experiences of climate change continue to be marginalised from global climate negotiations. A key barrier is in the continued low levels of direct participation from diverse women leaders in global conferences such as the UNFCCC COP. By contrast, men have been dominating global climate conferences and over the last ten years their participation registered the highest at 73 percent in COP15 Denmark (2009). In 2014, women comprised only 25 percent of government chief negotiators. Women's underrepresentation is also reflected at regional and national levels of environmental decision-making because most negotiators are also often leaders of environmental ministries in their home countries.⁷ What this means is that relevant national ministries can either serve as important gate-keepers or gateways for promoting gender-equal global representation in climate and security negotiations. Lack of gender-balance at the national level makes it possible for countries to still send all-male delegations despite the UNFCCC gender action plan explicitly prioritising gender-balance, participation and women's leadership ('Priority Area B'). Female representation in national parliaments is found to correlate with more stringent climate change policies and consequently, with lower carbon emissions.⁸ Hence, promoting gender equality in national political decision-making is crucial to addressing global climate change.

Women face less barriers and have fared better when it comes to indirect participation in climate negotiations. COP participant lists show near equal representation of men and women among NGO delegations. As a result, "women occupy a larger share of NGO representatives to each COP than their government delegate counterparts".⁹ This represents important progress for gender representation among the highest levels of decision-making. However, where crucial and actual decisions are made, usually by governments, women do not have an equal number of seats at the table and therefore are less able to affect the outcomes of decision-making. Ultimately this gender inequality also impacts smaller and grassroots NGOs who fare even less in terms of access and influence compared to business groups and technocratic lobby groups which are also male-dominated arenas.¹⁰

Another important barrier to women's broad and diverse participation is that climate governance – particularly beginning with global conferences and negotiations – is currently characterised by the prioritisation of primarily technical or bureaucratic and market-based solutions. The scope of the debate is almost exclusively about carbon emissions which though clearly a vital and primary point for addressing climate change, does not adequately capture the everyday realities around loss and damages already faced by many populations. Global agendas need to radically shift away from this privileging of climate science, technology and finance at the expense of or without due regard to issues of equity in climate financing, displacement and migration, long-term adaptation and promotion of justice. Hence, a distinct contribution of applying a gender lens for climate governance is in revealing how the consequences of climate change cannot be addressed by technological fixes alone. Moreover, by delimiting the scope for negotiations, climate governance becomes complicit in the reproduction of male-dominated fields and interests.

An important step highlighted in gender research is citizen participation in the production, validation and application of scientific knowledge.¹¹ For example, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It funds projects in developing countries that will enable them to meet international environmental obligations. GEF research finds that "when projects fail to address gender differences within the environmental context, they risk wasting development resources on projects and creating negative effects on welfare, equity, equality, and sustainability. Project results are superior when gender considerations are taken into account during all processes of planning, design, and implementation".¹² This means not simply about adding women into pre-existing processes and 'passing down' information relating to climate change and DRR, but reviewing problems from the standpoint of women. That is, asking what are the range of insecurities that women experience before, during and after crises? How can women access and contribute to technical or scientific knowledge in ways that effectively communicate their everyday experiences? Democratising climate science – the range of scientific or technical information relating to the environment and climate – is therefore a fundamental aspect to ensuring gender-responsiveness because "scientific knowledge can be conceived as a global public good in which the citizens have a stake".¹³

In the next section, the report turns to the research findings across Cambodia, Kenya and Vanuatu to further unpack why these gender gaps exist and what they mean for identifying how risks and hazards are increasingly interlinked and how to address insecurities comprehensively.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Climate change is not a gender-neutral phenomenon. Research on women's experiences of disasters and climate change have shown that they bear direct and indirect costs. For instance, women are more vulnerable to death and violence when a disaster occurs due to socially-constructed gender relations and pre-existing patterns of gender inequality. Intensified demands on care provisioning to meet rising health and welfare needs have a greater impact on women than men given that they are expected to attend to the care of others to the point of depleting their own health and well-being.¹⁴

Building on this scholarship, the project focused on examining what knowledge women have to help advance understanding of the basis for women's equal capacity in preparedness and response. While we know that women experience disasters differently and more intensely because of their care obligations, this research wanted to connect how their social and cultural roles are also linked with gender-specific awareness of the warning signs and different dimensions to climate change impacts.

Critical Actions: Gender-Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change & Related Crises



KEY FINDING #1:

LOW MUTUAL AWARENESS OF SCIENTIFIC AND WOMEN'S LOCALISED KNOWLEDGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ITS CAUSES AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

People's customary, everyday knowledge is increasingly recognised for their value in global climate change and DRR agendas. New and emerging research has begun to document how this form of knowledge can:

1. Strengthen scientific information and technologies especially around monitoring and risk assessment;
2. Deepen or enhance the quality of resilience through shared lessons for adaptation; and especially for indigenous traditional knowledge;
3. Serve as a repository of accumulated knowledge relating to human interaction with the environment that can provide long historical perspectives that will sustain humanity in the future.¹⁵

Cambodia, Kenya and Vanuatu are countries experiencing climate change impacts in very different ways particularly in relation to rapid and slow-onset disasters. Findings from our three country cases demonstrated rich localised and traditional knowledge that women have. In all three countries, the communities we examined showed that in contexts where there is strong gendered division of labour, this also means gender-differentiated knowledge. Though the women in our research expressed low awareness on existing policies and programs from state and donor organisations, they nevertheless had high awareness on everyday indicators relating to their changing environment, and of the interdependence of human life and nature. For instance, a strong theme across all three cases is how through their roles as primary caregivers, women are socialised from a very young age about food provisioning which is crucial to daily survival and even more so in the aftermath of disasters. This means that the women developed a distinct or gender-specific knowledge on natural resources and their geographic landscape that in some cases were very different compared to men.

Women's cumulative, customary knowledge reveals that climate change impacts occur in a continuum with other drivers of social, cultural, political and economic insecurity. For instance, women from Pursat, Cambodia informed us:

“We learnt how to farm from our mothers... what to plant depending on availability of water, how to tie rice stalks and harvesting. Our community practices collective harvesting... This is changing now for our community, not many women want to become farmers...many women are now garment factory workers.”¹⁶

The women noted that changes in the environment impacted their community through constraining livelihood options and changing social practices such as communal farming. What these women's observations suggest is that responses to climate change must be integrated with other development and protection mechanisms that address communities' agricultural and resource governance needs, women's physical security and improved working conditions for women and men who are moving to factory work located primarily in urban areas.

In Vanuatu, after Tropical Cyclone Pam struck in 2015, men and women from remote communities of Tanna Island recalled how their communities were able to rebuild even without access to disaster relief due to their indigenous coping mechanisms around identifying specific types of food sources and preparation. Importantly, it was the women who had the knowledge of these methods as well as the crucial implementers of survival instructions from male village chiefs. Women were also actively involved in monitoring the welfare of their community right before the disaster and in the aftermath. The informal disaster response mechanisms among Tanna women was facilitated by their pre-existing connections via village produce markets which is almost exclusively a women's space.

The Pokot women in Kenya who participated in our research possessed a strong interlinked understanding of how extreme weather translates to their individual insecurities. A female informant from Baringo county reported that “[A]n increase in FGM [female genital mutilation] cases is always associated with similar increase in cattle-rustling as young men raid for cattle to get married”.¹⁷ These women belonging to pastoralist societies had a distinct understanding of extreme weather because this disaster corresponds with forced or child marriages at an even younger age in order for their families to survive by having access to cattle. In societies where harmful practices continue to regard women as property, resource

scarcities intensify gender-based violence. Gender dynamics help explain how droughts have long been flashpoints for communal conflicts in Kenya as groups compete over land and cattle – which are also pathways for young men to secure status by getting married. For our Kenyan respondents, conflict management and disaster risk reduction are interlinked and need to equally create spaces for the incorporation of women's knowledge.

Our research also found that despite strong knowledge of their community's needs and dynamics, women's contributions especially potential for leadership are not always supported nor recognised by governments and aid organisations especially during and after disaster response. Yet, our case studies underscore that women's knowledge is needed in identifying full range of hazards and interlinked nature of climate change-induced crises. Gender-based violence and women's exclusion from political decision-making are climate change issues particularly in remote and rural areas. Women are part of implementing solutions and are even on the frontlines of specific intersections of environmental and political crises, so the range of expertise they can provide needs to be taken seriously.

KEY FINDING #2: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CRISIS RESPONSE PROVIDES THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

All three case studies from our research have the necessary laws, policies and action plans relating to gender, climate change, and DRR.¹⁸ Our research also identified recent progress in terms of gender-responsiveness based on the inclusion of specific gender provisions such as addressing women's needs in crisis situations and economic development, protection from gender-based violence, and promoting political participation and leadership within national frameworks and action plans. However, goals are yet to be realised on the ground and lack integrated monitoring across the different policy frameworks and plans. Implementation requires localisation and coordination among government agencies and stakeholders. Crucially, deeply-embedded harmful, cultural norms and practices that discriminate against women counteract national-level gender mainstreaming efforts.

Women in the sciences and representation across all agencies and ministries

Across the three countries, grassroots women and women working in government and non-government organisations reported on the tendency to confine gender issues within ‘women-only programs’. Where there have been spaces for gender inclusion, these have been possible under departments viewed as ‘soft issues’ such as social welfare, culture, and women ministries. For programs under departments and ministries relating to energy, meteorology, land and natural resources, gender is seen as relevant only in meeting inclusion requirements thus treating women as beneficiaries rather than decision-makers and implementers. Women rarely have influence in setting agendas and defining outcomes, and this tends to be even more pronounced in sectors around resource governance, DRR, and climate change. In the words of one of our research participants, in DRR awareness-raising: “[W]hen they hear ‘gender’, they just throw it to the women. I tell them not just women but also men”.¹⁹ As recommended in the Environment and Gender Index report, “[S]ectors that fall under the environmental and sustainable development arena, and that are distinct from the traditional ‘women’s rights’ areas of health and education, are good entry points for these countries to make progress on gender equality”.²⁰ Promoting women’s participation and leadership across all agencies and ministries needs to start by developing women’s expertise at basic community or village governance structures. Women’s access to education and promotion of careers in the sciences are needed so they can also enter into relevant ministries that are most directly in charge of climate change and DRR. This then helps debunk prevailing notions that gender is a women-only issue and/or that women do not have the capacity to lead beyond issues relating to social welfare. This finding has global relevance because even in other countries and in the Global North, “[I]nformation about women’s role and access in environment-related sectors is not comprehensively collected and reported”.²¹ There is a need to improve data collection to feed into monitoring and reporting of how gender-equal outcomes are facilitated within ministries that are traditionally male-dominated areas.

Targeting gender-responsiveness within such government agencies and ministries builds on other

research studies that suggest gender differences such that “[M]en are associated with business-science climate change frames and women with the ethical-justice climate change frames and this guides gender difference in the use of the frames”.²² Challenging male-dominance and the embeddedness of traditional masculinities in climate governance will require broader representation from different groups of men including spaces for caring masculinities. Importantly and again, promoting women’s participation requires addressing the costs of participation. For example, in Kenya and Cambodia, a reason behind why environmental protection and conservation tends to be a male-dominated field is due to high risks associated with the job. These roles demand cracking down on illegal companies or individual offenders, guarding against poaching syndicates, and responding to land-related disputes which entail security risks, threats of violence or even death. In Cambodia, a male environmental protection officer believed such occupational hazards is why their profession is still not widely viewed as a job for both men and women. “Out of 100 staff [in provincial department], 7 were women” and none of the women were field-based officers.²³

KEY FINDING #3: WOMEN’S COLLECTIVE ACTION IN FORGING COMMUNITY NETWORKS ENABLES INTEGRATED RESPONSES TO CLIMATE, HUMANITARIAN DISASTERS AND CONFLICT

Women’s community networks

In our research with selected communities across the three countries, we found that for areas where democratic spaces have historically been constrained due to authoritarian rule, and where prohibitive cultural norms are still prevalent, women have formed community networks or women-only groups that allow them to talk to each other to discuss their shared experiences and mobilise collectively to advocate for their needs in formal government processes. Women’s community networks such as Women I tok tok Tugeta (WITTT) in Vanuatu and the Tangelubei Women’s Network (TAWN) in Kenya serve as critical pathways for training and promoting leadership. These networks that women formed have allowed them to also gain ‘bottom-up’



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leadership experiences and to solidify their social capital within their communities as stepping stones for competing for higher levels of public office. As one female FGD participant in Vanuatu explained, “[T]his space allows us to talk about issues arising in our household. In churches, we have women’s groups there too, but that is for spiritual things. WITTT is our safe space for our social issues”. In Kenya, a TAWN member reported, “We support each other. We want a collective voice because then we have more power. Becoming part of a network is protection”. These networks operate through strength in numbers in order to go against patriarchal structures in their communities. By becoming part of the network, the women are able to leverage their common experiences thereby avoiding potential violence involved as women are ‘singled out’ as threats to the community resulting in being targeted for intimidation or harassment by men who wish to maintain their silence and exclusion.

In Kampot and Pursat, Cambodia, we found that in areas where democratic spaces have historically been constrained due to authoritarian rule, political participation for both men and women has been limited. Our focus group discussions revealed that both men and women in these remote areas do not seek help from the government when there is a disaster because they are used to coping on their own and due to fear of government backlash. However, DRR and climate change programs can open spaces and help develop a culture of public engagement via new more open and deliberative forums for disaster

preparedness, prevention and response policy-making. Despite restrictions that prevent ‘unauthorised’ community-level mobilisations or overt political activism, women are able to develop networks because they are discussing issues of DRR and climate change that are seen as ‘technical’ rather than political. When women gather and help their communities build disaster resilience, they have gained the support of local commune and provincial officials. Because of the successive disasters their communities are facing, there is space for growing recognition that women are vocal members and do in fact contribute to their community’s welfare. Our focus group discussions with the women DRR champion network suggest that in the name of DRR and climate change, they are incrementally helping develop a culture of public engagement via deliberative forums for disaster preparedness, prevention and response policy-making. This potentially serves as an entry point for enabling both democratic participation of men and women as well as eliminating cultural norms that are discriminatory to women in Cambodia.

Groups such as WITTT, TAWN and the Women DRR Champions lend further support to existing scholarship that show women’s movements are behind progressive policies and change.²⁴ It is therefore vital that the necessary resources are mobilised across all national agendas and programs to sustain women’s networks and professional mobility within the sciences and related government ministries.

Findings from the three countries revealed that women may have unique early warning insights on how extreme weather triggers community-level violence and displacement. Yet, even if women may know when an impending crisis is about to break out, cultural barriers beginning with male dominance in the household hinder them from contributing in the prevention of violence or developing timely crisis response. Pre-existing exclusionary conditions accumulate from multiple care burdens, unequal decision-making in villages to the implementation of national policies. As a female informant pointed out, “[W]omen are constantly on farms but just because of culture where women are not allowed to talk where the men are, this is a big challenge for inclusion when women cannot talk”.²⁵

Our research participants stressed deeply-held beliefs that bar women from speaking out in public especially in community spaces and/or when in the presence of men (which are usually key decision-making bodies). For example, women participating in our Cambodia research identified cultural expectations of timidity and acquiescence as markers of good femininity. These are then used against women to silence them by the men in their communities and to justify their exclusion from leadership roles. Similarly, in Vanuatu, women trace their marginalisation in their country to customary rules that explicitly disallow them from physically attending the *nakamal* – a space where all village decision-making is done. In response, women have devised ways over time to circumvent these prohibitive norms by influencing the men in their families to speak on their behalf in village decision-making processes. However, there is no guarantee that the men will promote women’s interests let alone make decisions that are favourable to the women. Such exclusions only exacerbate the marginalisation of women and girls especially those who are internally displaced by environmental disasters and thus, at an even greater disadvantage when they cannot articulate their gender-specific needs. In the case of accessing life-saving sexual and reproductive health assistance in emergency situations, women’s silence can lead to higher mortality and long-term health complications due to unsafe pregnancies and as a result of suffering traumatic sexual violence.


All three women’s networks we examined as part of this research demonstrate the importance of ensuring a

continuity of gender-responsive policy interventions across all phases from ongoing sustainable development, crisis or emergency response and during transitions or in the immediate aftermath. First, these women’s networks were either formed or transformed due to a catalyst issue. This means that the women developed and advocated for issues that are more than what was the initial basis for their mobilisation (see Annex 2). Proving the feminist adage from Audre Lorde, the women’s networks did not remain as ‘single-issue’ struggles because the women did not have single-issue lives. The women are actively integrating security issues and agendas together in the context of their everyday lives. For example, in the case of TAWN, their advocacy initially formed around ending FGM and has since evolved to address issues such as elections, political disenfranchisement and DRR. Similarly, in Vanuatu, women understand climate change as a continuum with their experiences in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam and ongoing development issues such as access to reliable water and sanitation especially in remote villages. In Cambodia, even where the space to evolve politically is restricted, the network nevertheless is indirectly enabling social and cultural transformations regarding young women’s ability to speak up and loudly, and to take on ‘visible’ leadership roles in their communities.

For the women’s networks, crisis response and long-term development overlap and mutually reinforce one another. The issues that these women advocate for cannot be boxed as falling either in crisis response or development programming. A female informant from Cambodia stated:

“I observed our community has limited knowledge on public services in general not just DRR. So I want to improve the knowledge. I am planning to develop a proposal in my community to organise a public forum not just on DRR/CC awareness but also information on accessing public services”.²⁶

All three countries are considered to have medium-level human development and are also experiencing multiple forms of disasters. Hence, for the women in our research, their communities require capacity and assistance comprehensively. In the case of WITTT, they were formed in



the aftermath of a cyclone but have since used that catalyst to continuously engage government and non-government organisations in facilitating ongoing development programs and expanding their network. In Kenya, because TAWN has been built and developed over a long period of time to champion women's rights, the women have become more capable in other areas of community work and need only to be tapped and further trained by government agencies as part of effective conflict management and disaster response. Investigating similar women-only groups in other country contexts can help further reveal the important continuities between effective crisis response and long-term sustainable development with gender equality at its core.

Our findings align with recent studies that demonstrate how globally a lack of women in climate governance reproduces a very partial and technocratic view of climate change which then depoliticises and de-escalates the urgent climate change-related and interlinked crises we are facing. Research has shown that more gender equal decision-making can enable more inclusive, sustainable and integrated environmental solutions. For instance, research from the environment and gender index showed that “countries which take seriously their commitments to advancing gender equality in environmental arenas are making strides toward long-term wellbeing for all their citizens”.²⁷ Countries working towards gender equality are also therefore more likely to achieve climate justice.²⁸ However, achieving climate justice on a global scale is stunted by barriers to women's participation and leadership at national and community levels.

First, even when there is a critical mass of women in climate policy-making, we must be careful not to automatically equate this with gender-responsive climate policies.²⁹ Mainstreaming a gender perspective into climate governance “requires the input from those actors who are knowledgeable about gender aspects on climate issues. Those actors interested in change and transformation, and those who represent groups who have previously been excluded from climate governance should also be included”.³⁰ Thus, this research emphasises transformative leadership by and for women as an important distinction that can help advance women beyond ‘top-down’ forms of participation that end up leaving conventional technical or scientific knowledge production intact. Indeed, in Vanuatu, respondents raised caution in terms

of how participation may still be limited if interventions fail to account for pre-existing community networks and relationships among different groups of women:

“NGOs when they come, they just go to specific people, they don't follow the [local] structure which means they don't reach all the women. But WITTT is everywhere. Could NGOs recognise WITTT so they understand what we are doing here? We want to work in partnership to further expand our network.”³¹

Second, there has been progress in promoting women's inclusion within community-level DRR, climate change and development programming as part of decentralised governance in all three countries for this project. However, there is lack of clarity on what role different groups of women can play and how in the implementation of different policies and programs. For example, according to one female informant in Kenya, “[G]ender is now part of everything in policy processes especially in the devolved government...down to the subnational level with the CIDP [county integrated development plan]. Gender is integrated successfully so far. We are still trying to figure out how coordination works but we have made significant progress”.³² In Cambodia, commune-level governance requires economic support and often there may be awareness on DRR/CC but there is a lack of budget despite being the first responders from the government. As pointed out by a male informant, “[T]here is a need to strengthen roles of all four levels – national, provincial, district and communes. We need to define what each one's roles are when disaster occurs.”³³ Similarly, in Vanuatu, there has been important progress in promoting women's inclusion in community disaster and climate change committees (CDCCCs) established after TC Pam. However, these committees' functions are yet to be integrated within an overall plan for sustainable development and promotion of women's rights. One female participant from Eton stated that: “the women were included as part of ‘tick-box’”.³⁴ In Eton and Tanna, for example, research participants were not clear what the mandate of women's representatives on CDCCCs was or how women could become involved in the committees. As a result, some key informants

observed a growing tendency to relegate women's leadership only within and up to community 'DRR and CC only issues' rather than capacity for leadership in national security and development concerns including improving women's political participation within the national parliament.

Third, the global rules and procedures must inevitably change to be more conducive to different perspectives and approaches especially those developed by women as a result of deeply-embedded gendered divisions of labour beginning with the household level. Globally, this means also changing how climate change is discussed and how solutions are negotiated. For example, at COP23 hosted by Fiji, the distinct Pacifica approach of *talanoa* was adopted as an overarching theme and principle.³⁵ The concept of *talanoa* emphasises the relational aspect of knowledge and the importance of narratives or drawing from everyday experiences for understanding the full extent of climate change. Through the initiative of Fiji, *talanoa* is promoted as an alternative approach to climate change because:

"Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and therefore inconsistent with the Talanoa concept. Talanoa fosters stability and inclusiveness in dialogue, by creating a safe space that embraces mutual respect for a platform for decision making for a greater good."³⁶

At the global level, *talanoa* aligns with core principles reflected in feminist methodology and care ethics for example, on mutual dependence, trust and empathy.³⁷ *Talanoa* represents a form of non-traditional or Western-centric knowledge production and deliberation that may be more amenable to bringing in women's knowledge and participation across all levels of governance. Women's presence is not enough to effect transformative or radical shifts in policy-making when prevailing norms and codes in climate governance spaces continue to privilege the same masculinised forms of activities, behaviours and solutions.³⁸ Mechanisms through which climate change is discussed and examined at the global level need to be made accessible to women especially at the community level. At the same time, women require opportunities to acquire the institutional and scientific knowledge including awareness of existing national policies in order to be on the same level playing field to be able to articulate and share their narratives and solutions particularly in the context of interlinked risks and hazards. To be truly gender-responsive, climate governance practices and norms that determine how climate decision-making is undertaken need to be challenged and transformed.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research provides important conclusions. In order to advance scholarship and policy-making that integrates gender and climate change across all security and development agendas, gender cannot simply be an ‘add-on’ or after thought once the technical and programmatic decisions have been made. Rather, women’s knowledge, participation and collective action represents indispensable pillars in analysing peace and climate change at a time of escalating and interlinked crises. Women who are on the frontline of multiple crises can inform how, when and where gender-responsive policy integrations can occur in the face of increasingly interlinked climate-induced crises. The gender-responsive framework developed in this project identifies concrete pathways for women to be able to lead in integration of security, development and humanitarian agendas across all levels, phases and forms.

First, this research showed that analysis of gender is relevant in the brokerage of multiple types of knowledge and leadership necessary to develop integrated responses. In practice, this can be applied in developing multi-level platforms that integrate women’s everyday and traditional knowledge in the development of early warning systems, and supporting women’s equal capacity to report and disseminate a range of information relating to prevention of conflicts, gender-based violence and climate risk reporting. Second, women require direct representation at different levels of formal and informal governance especially in climate-related leadership positions within the community, national agencies/decision-making bodies and global climate negotiations. Third, institutional and strategic pathways need to be identified to facilitate integration of leadership and resources and for ensuring continuity in ongoing sustainable development efforts, emergency or crisis response and during transitions and post-crisis recovery. Bringing these elements together will enable a more holistic understanding of climate change and its intersection with other crises that may cause or compound climate events and natural disasters. Climate change solutions that are gender-responsive require a comprehensive approach to security and different types of leadership to encompass the needs of the most marginalised groups of women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations rely on the collaboration of all government and non-government actors from diverse agencies and sectors. Particularly, the global community especially policymakers must not be oriented to only look out for the exceptional and catastrophic scenarios of climate change. Lessons from our three case studies show that very gradually and with clear certainty, climate change is the defining experience for people’s shared sense of security and belongingness in everyday life. Our case studies show that broad transformations are underway both negatively and positively. Specifically, for societies already experiencing extreme weather and successive disasters, climate change is challenging the relevance of gender stereotypes and norms that keep women and girls ‘silent’ and out of decision-making and leadership roles. For the most climate-vulnerable communities, unequal gender relations only harm and disadvantage them in building disaster resilience and climate adaptation.

Low Mutual Awareness of Scientific and Women’s Localised Knowledge of Climate Change, its Causes and its Consequences

Across the three countries and especially among communities in climate-risk prone areas, we found that women’s localised knowledge on the environment intrinsically connects crises – climate, disaster, conflict, food insecurity. (This is due not to any biological or inherent attributes but to women’s distinct roles in the gender division of labour in households and communities). Women’s knowledge thus has the potential to inform early warning systems and indicators. However, a lack of mutual recognition of different knowledges undermines the potential for alternative climate responses. Women at the local level have low awareness and capacity to comprehend prevailing technical information while scientific and policy communities have low awareness of women’s valuable everyday knowledge in addressing climate-related crises locally. There are few opportunities for women to share and integrate their knowledge with professional scientific and policymaking communities. We found evidence, however, that women’s cumulative, customary knowledge can powerfully complement and enhance technical information by revealing how, when and where multiple risks may intersect. Women’s knowledge

strengthens the resilience of communities and avoids adaptation to climate change that undermines women's and girls' ability to participate in – and benefit from – crisis responses. Integrating women's knowledge and scientific knowledge is a potentially transformative basis for climate policy-making that promotes gender equality and addresses crises.

- Create communities of experts at all levels of governance where women's cumulative, customary knowledge is equally valued and can come together with scientific and technical knowledge.
- Establish “train the trainer” initiatives to enable women to be knowledge brokers in their communities.
- Promote women as local information and data gatherers of the everyday signs or risks of climate change and related crises, allowing them to present their knowledge and effectively make claims on the state. Women's Weather Watch is a good example of how to synthesise this information and data.

Women's Participation in Crisis Response Provides the Groundwork for Sustainable Alternatives to Climate Change

Women have collectively customised responses to multiple and interlinked crises and inbuilt prevention mechanisms for long-term sustainable outcomes. Researching women's networks in climate-affected areas established in Cambodia, Kenya and Vanuatu, we found that they effectively linked women's actions between crisis response and long-term sustainable development. In each country, we found evidence of women's participation and leadership in climate change and DRR programming that extended beyond crisis response into long-term sustainable development.

For women to actively participate in such community efforts, there is **an urgent need to overcome the barriers preventing them from engaging**. These barriers exist in many forms, with common challenges including social and cultural norms, gendered divisions of labour (paid and unpaid), gender-based violence, and access to resources.



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- Valuing the customary knowledge of women by documenting their approaches in times of crisis and integrating local networks and customary mechanisms in crisis preparedness, planning and response structures.
- Identify and partner with key women's networks and organisations to develop meaningful opportunities for consultation and collaboration across policy and planning and implementation in crisis preparedness, response, recovery and beyond.
- Address basic cultural and material barriers to women's participation, and recognise the importance of women's contributions by providing remuneration, travel and childcare expenses for attendance at meetings and workshops.

- Support and resource pre-existing women's networks as an entry point for transforming communities and national and international governance.
- Empower women-led organisations and women's networks with training in relevant skills (knowledge of science, policy frameworks and design, advocacy, media etc) to influence the formulation, design and implementation of integrated development plans and crisis response.
- Strengthen the capacity of all levels of governance (village to national to regional/global) to include women and to understand and value everyday knowledge.

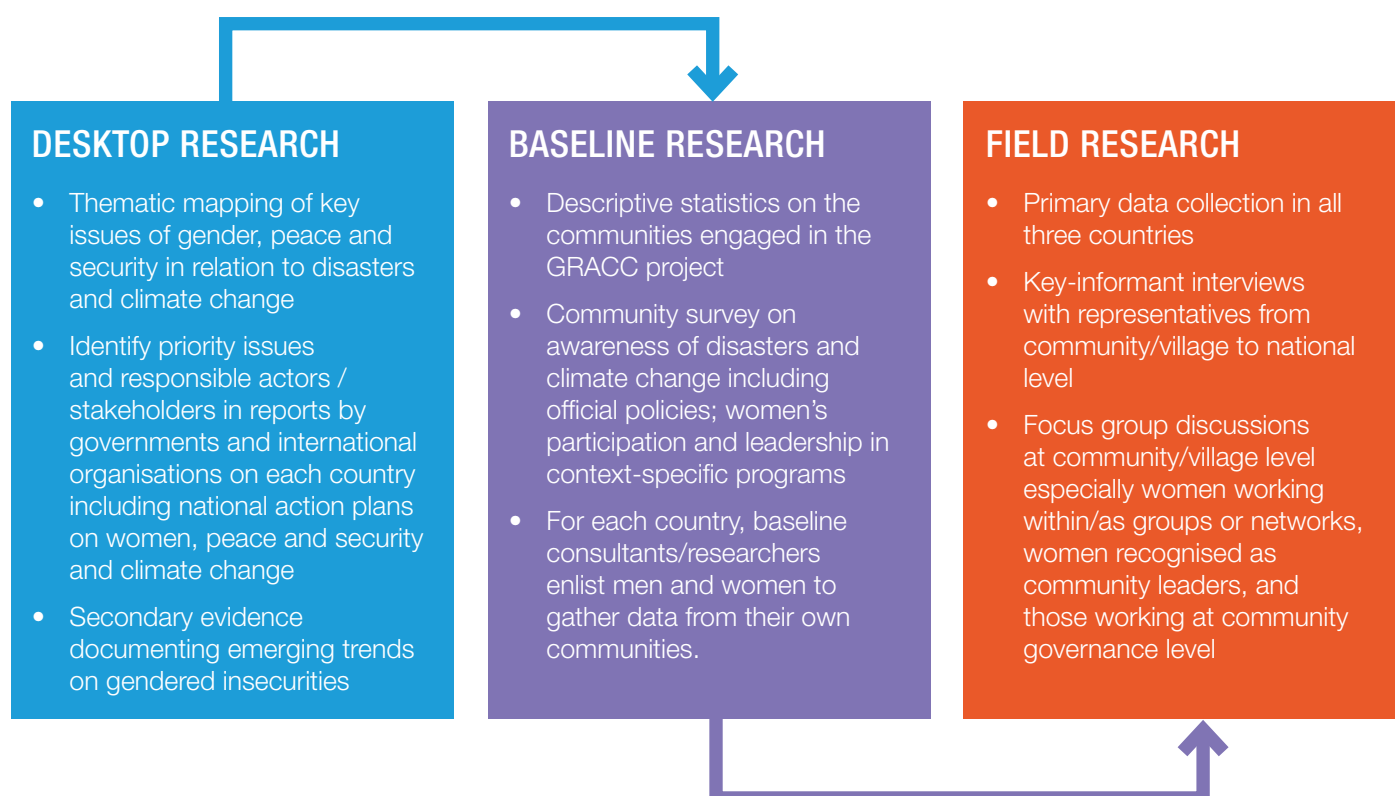
Women's Collective Action in Forging Community Networks Enables Integrated Responses to Climate, Humanitarian Disasters and Conflict

Women's collective action enables flexible, joined-up responses to interrelated crises at the community level. While society is still largely characterised by gendered division of labour and unequal gender norms that expect women to be submissive, women's networks are proving to be training grounds for sustained participation, recognising women's authority before, during and after crisis. Women's networks can bridge government and civil society by facilitating regular and sustained participation, beginning with local decision-making.

The research highlighted how material and cultural factors combine to prevent women's networks and organisations from participating in formal governance such as commune or village councils and key ministries governing the environment and resources. When women are excluded from local and national level governance, the absence of their voice and representation at regional and global levels – especially in global climate change conferences – is virtually assured. However, the research provided evidence that when women's meaningful participation and leadership is supported and resourced, more integrated and effective agendas result.

Bridging **women's grounded knowledge** with scientific knowledge, enabling women's **meaningful participation** in the formulation and implementation of climate change policies, and supporting mechanisms for women's **collective action** are significant entry points for integrating risk assessment across crises and creating gender-responsive alternatives. These approaches would allow governments and societies to systematically address climate change and interlinked crises and to effectively respond to the comprehensive security needs of the most marginalised and climate-affected populations, particularly women and girls.

ANNEX 1. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY



DATA COLLECTION

KENYA: (Baseline) 100 household surveys

CAMBODIA: (Baseline) 380 household survey respondents

VANUATU: 79 household survey respondents

	Gender distribution KII			Gender distribution FGD			
	F	M		W-only	M-only	Mixed	
KENYA	5	0		3	0	2	
CAMBODIA	4	12		3	2	5	
VANUATU	7	5		3	1	2	
GLOBAL	16	17	33	9	3	9	21

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS PARIS AGREEMENT

Country	Signature	Ratification
CAMBODIA	22 Apr 2016	6 Feb 2017
KENYA	22 Apr 2016	28 Dec 2016
VANUATU	22 Apr 2016	21 Sep 2016

CEDAW

Country	Signature	Ratification
CAMBODIA	17 Oct 1980	15 Oct 1992
KENYA	-	09 Mar 1984 (accession)
VANUATU	-	08 Sep 1995 (accession)

SDG INDEX

	SDG Index*
CAMBODIA	109
KENYA	119
VANUATU	Not included

* Rank out of 156 countries

ANNEX 2. WOMEN'S NETWORKS ACROSS THREE COUNTRIES

	Tangulbei Women's Network (TAWN)	Women DRR/CC Champions and Grassroots Women	Women I Tok Tok Tugeta
LOCATION	Baringo county, Kenya	Kampot and Pursat Provinces, Cambodia	Eton, Erromango and Tanna, Vanuatu
YEAR OF ORIGIN	2008	2016	2015
MEMBERSHIP	2716 (estimate)	27 (14 'grassroots or community' women and 13 government 'champion' counterparts)	3,700 (total estimated number in 2015) ³⁹
'CATALYST ISSUE' ¹⁴⁰	Started as part of ending gender-specific challenges faced by women such as FGM, child marriages, low literacy levels for girls/women, and high poverty levels among their communities. The group focused on challenging norms that make their society patriarchal such as beliefs that denied women the opportunity to make decisions in their homes, community, state and society. The group is progressively working to get women into leadership positions.	This group was formed as part of a DIPECHO DRR project (2016) based on project learnings and recommendations from previous DIPECHO projects to enhance women's leadership in DRR. ActionAid Cambodia also conducted several research studies on the impact of disasters on women and found that women are often left out of DRR planning and decision-making, despite being at high-risk during disasters.	In the aftermath of TC Pam, AA Australia established 'blue information tents', which provided 'rights-based training' and were created as 'safe spaces' for women to talk to each other regarding their experiences and collective or shared needs. These have transformed into permanent women's forums that meet regularly and are engaged in collective action through WITTT. WITTT members have actively pushed to transform post-disaster response to promoting women's participation across the development-humanitarian nexus, and their vital role in driving the protection of their rights and resilience building in communities.

ENDNOTES

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- 7 IUCN Global Gender Office (IUCN GGO), *Women's Participation in Global Environmental Decision Making: An EGI Supplemental Report*, (IUCN: Washington, DC, 2015), p.10, <http://genderandenvironment.org/resource/womens-participation-in-global-environmental-decision-making-an-egi-supplemental-report/>; see also Hemmati, Minu and Ulrike Rohr, "Engendering the climate-change negotiations: experiences, challenges, and steps forward," in *Climate Change and Gender Justice*, edited by Geraldine Terry (Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing and Oxfam GB, 2009), pp.155-168.
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