



**Gender and climate change:  
mapping the linkages**

**A scoping study on knowledge and gaps**

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With migration set to increase in response to the adverse impacts of climate change, increasing conflicts over land and resources in receiving areas are also likely (Reuveny 2007, 657) – see the section below.

### **Areas for future research and action**

*Securing women's land and property rights is a priority: more support should be given, financial and otherwise, to existing advocacy initiatives working towards this goal.*

### **2.9 Gender, conflict and climate change**

It is well-recognised that climate change will – and is already – resulting in a growing scarcity of natural resources such as water and arable land in some parts of the world. With heightened competition over diminishing and unequally distributed resources, conflict over resources is set to increase (Hemmati, 2005; Rohr, 2008). Furthermore, conflicts resulting from non-inclusive processes around climate change mitigation strategies may be imminent as large scale Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM) projects in the south, which share environmentally sound technologies developed in industrialised countries with developing countries, rarely involve consultation with local stakeholders (Röhr, 2008). Although there is currently little research explicitly linking climate change with both conflict *and* gender, there is a considerable body of work that exists on gender and conflict, from which lessons can and should be drawn.

So what do we already know? Innovative work has been carried out on engendering conflict early warning systems to better ensure that previously overlooked signs of instability are taken into account. These approaches could be usefully drawn on to help recognise when conflict over resources is imminent, and to potentially prevent the conflict from occurring. For example, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has developed a set of gender-sensitive early warning indicators which include: increased gender-based violence, increased unemployment among male youths, reduced trust between ethnic groups, and a reduction in women's involvement over land disputes (Moser 2007). Many of these indicators reflect the projected effects of climate change on communities – particularly around depleting resources.

In cases where conflict over resources does occur, the gender and conflict literature again presents useful insights which should be used to inform appropriate, gender-sensitive responses. For example, existing work on gender and conflict points to women and men's 'traditionally' differing *roles* in conflict – with men and boys expected to be combatants while women and girls are expected to maintain the home and community in men's absence. This points to the need for policies and programmes that respond to the different roles that women and men play in conflicts, including those over natural resources – for example, interventions that provide women with safe routes to collect water and firewood.

The differential *impacts* of conflict on men and women are also well documented, and include gender and sexual based violence targeted particularly at women and girls; women's reduced access to resources to cope with household responsibilities; the increased time women and girls are required to spend caring for the injured and sick; as well as the obvious risk of death and disability faced by men engaged in armed conflict. The effects of natural resource conflicts on women and men can be clearly seen in existing conflicts. Take for example the case of Sudan. Both the conflicts between the north and the natural resource rich south, and the conflict in Darfur between nomadic and sedentary tribes, are partly a result of quarrels over natural resources. The horrific levels of sexual violence in Darfur, particularly against women and girls, which occur in villages when men and boys are away fighting, in and around refugee and IDP camps, and outside the camps at times when scarce fuel and water is being collected, provide a stark example of the gendered effects of climate-change related conflicts.

It has also been well documented that gender equity is key to effective post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. For climate change adaptation and mitigation, it is essential to ensure that female ex-combatants are equally integrated into political processes and decision-making following conflict. In turn, this will enhance their ability to participate more systematically in decision-making around climate change mitigation and response.

### **Opportunities for enhancing gender equality in climate change-related conflict**

UN [Security Council] Resolution 1325 on peace-building calls for women's greater participation in such processes. Although implementation still leaves much to be desired, a resolution ensuring the participation of women in all processes for preventing climate change, adapting to changing environments and dealing with increased natural disasters will go a long way towards effective and socially just climate policy and the prevention of related conflicts.

(Röhr 2008)

### **Implications for policy and practice**

*Drawing from what is already known in the literature about the need for gender-sensitive interventions in cases of conflict, it follows that interventions to reduce the likelihood of conflict over natural resources, and interventions responding to conflict over resources where it occurs, must be gender-sensitive. One strategy is to design and implement gender-sensitive environmental management systems – intended to decrease the likelihood of resource conflict. Ensuring these systems are gender-sensitive involves taking into account the differing needs of women and men, as well as the differing needs of groups who, for example, may need water for farming and those who require water primarily for domestic use. Such programmes must take into account conflicting groups within communities, potential conflicts between in-migrants and receiving communities, and the possibility of conflicting household members quarrelling over resource provision.*

### **Areas for future research and action**

*Urgent research is required on how to manage environmental migration in a gender-sensitive way. This includes recognising and responding to gender roles and responsibilities around natural resources, and may include ensuring that scarce resources are available for receiving communities, and that water is provided for in-migrants.*

*Research is further needed to establish how best to respond to violent conflict over natural resources in a gender-sensitive way, taking in to account the needs of women and girls, boys and men.*

*Finally, it is essential that research is undertaken into the impacts of natural resource depletion and limited access on intra-household conflict. This is in order to establish policies and practices which lessen the likelihood of arguments over scarce natural resources which may result in gender-based violence.*