

A Perfect Storm? Women, Food Security and Climate Change



Women are...

'In the kitchen'

- Main providers of food
- Access fewer resources (52% of married women in India have anaemia) and less decision making power than men
- Responsible for most domestic work (in India women spend 35 hours p w on household tasks, men 4 .

'On the farm'

- In large numbers (in SS Africa, 75% of agricultural workforce)
- No land (in Sub-Saharan Africa own 1% of the land) or have smaller and less productive holdings than men
- Less access to credit, and extension services (in Africa they receive 7% of extension services and 10% of credit to small-scale farmers)

'At the market'

- Earn lower wages (in Latin America women's wages 75% those of men)
- Mainly employed in the informal economy
- Widely engaged in small trade, especially food vending (in India 65% of women workers are in informal economy, mostly trade).

Putting climate change in the equation

'In the home'

- Women responsible for caring. Climate change will lead to more water borne diseases and heat-related mortality and morbidity.
- By 2025, 2/3 of the world's population will experience water stress. In urban areas, women and girls already spend hours queuing for intermittent water supplies. This and floods will increase women's workloads.
- They travel further for water or firewood, and this exposes them to sexual harassment and assault

'in the farm, market and public life'

- Given their role in agriculture, responsibility for adaptation is falling on women's shoulders
- Losses (tourist industry) and gains (if labour substitutes carbon) in paid employment
- Women not in decision-making on climate change or disaster risk reduction
- Gender differentials in mortality from natural disasters already evident and conflict over natural resource has gendered dimensions
- Not enough known on patterns of climate change related displacement

Food Prices Increases: Consequences and Strategies



Food Prices

Prices have stabilized, but:

- Prices of staples have increased from between 30% to 150% in 2007 and 2008.
- Since 2006 the average world price for rice has risen by 217%, wheat by 136%, maize by 125% and soybeans by 107%. Prices of butter and milk have tripled and that of poultry meat doubled.
- Parallel large increases in fuel prices.

‘In the kitchen’: less food, more work

- Women and girls first to eat less and less often
- Incomes diverted to increasingly costly food: women and girls first to suffer from cuts in expenditure in essentials (health and education).
- With higher food prices women substitute ‘time’ for ‘cash’ (time poverty). They take on extra work, often with poor returns.
- Intangible psychological impacts on women and men who struggle to meet the food needs of their families.

On the farm: getting the benefits?



- As agricultural labourers or small holder farmers, unlikely to benefit from higher food prices
- Limited access to credit, technology and extension services means they unable to switch to cash crops or increase productivity
- Land ownership and household decision making mean women's land may be diverted to male relative's cash crops
- Expansion of large scale agriculture (biofuels) at the expense of marginal lands,



The market and the rest

- With wage differentials higher food prices have a greater impact on women workers, and their concentration in the informal economy means wages not linked to inflation.
- They are often small traders, especially of food. As consumers buy less food, traders suffer.
- When all else fails women can become involved in sex work or less able to negotiate for safer sex

Resolving the Crisis by Focusing on Women Initial Areas for



Immediate responses

- Research on conditions and relations **within** households.
- Cash/food vouchers to women; special support to women small farmers, food vendors, informal workers, pregnant or nursing mothers.
- Early childhood nutrition and school feeding aware of practices that may exclude girls.
- Renewed efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention among sex workers, and in care programs.



Long term policies

- Increase investments in agriculture.
- Increase women's land tenure security.
- Improve women's access to credit, agricultural inputs and technologies, and market access.
- What else??