

Panel on
Women, Food Security and Climate Change
21 October 2008

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW:

- we already heard that disadvantages due to persisting gender inequality experienced by women are exacerbated by disasters and impacts of climate change
- we've also seen that women on the ground, all over the world, are already doing adaptation strategies
- but even though women have developed important strategies to cope or adapt to changes, the magnitude of future hazards may "overwhelm" their capacity to adapt
- we also need to be reminded that there are so many other challenges faced by women that are not related to climate change but altogether hinder their capacity to be resilient
- women are primarily concerned with food security – they are producers, they are farmers, they are fishers, they distribute the food, they sell, they consume, etc

CHALLENGES:

Challenges specific to women in agriculture:

- with lesser resources available such as water, firewood, etc, women tend to allocate more time for their farm-based and home-based activities
- droughts have adversely affected household food provisioning – it is now becoming more difficult for women to look for food, fuel and water which were previously
- disasters such as floods and landslides exacerbate women's lack of access to food and over the quality of food and conditions of its production
- few rural women have access to mechanisms, such as training and calamity insurance, which could help them become more resilient and responsive to the impact of disasters

Challenges specific to women in fisheries:

- too much rainfall and stronger typhoons make it more difficult for small fishers to undertake fishing activities
- coastal communities and small islands are vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion; loss of settlements is a real threat
- ocean temperature increase has led to coral bleaching, rendering large tracts of coral resources necessary for fish survival and biodiversity destroyed
- coastal communities are too dependent on fishing; overall, economic dislocation of small fishers, with women bearing the brunt of food insecurity

INITIATIVES

- women are already organizing themselves, at community level and at national level, and getting more involved in dialogues with local and national governments to protect their livelihoods, inc farming and fishing
- women are involved in natural resource management such as watershed protection, forest management, fish sanctuary management, etc
- women are moving to secure their land, ancestral domains, coastal zones
- women are promoting sustainable agriculture practices which include secure control over seeds, diversified farming, eco-farms, etc
- specific to fisheries, women are involved in management of fishery resource, including mangrove reforestation for food security and climate change mitigation and adaptation (mangroves provide nursery and habitat to fry stages of varied fish species, protect coastlines from waves, tidal currents and typhoons, promotes growth of corals and seagrasses, and fix carbon...)

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS DURING THE OPEN FORUM:

These can be roughly classified into the following categories:

- **governance**
 - citizen-government dialogues
 - transparency and accountability of local and national governments
 - basic services for human development very much needed by vulnerable fishing and farming communities, esp women; they need to be supported as our food producers
 - women should be involved in decision-making at all levels of governance (international, national, local)
- **resource management**
 - women as resource managers
 - even as agriculture contribute substantially to climate change, it is the plantations/big industrial farming system that is the cause of this; we therefore support sustainable agriculture and fishing systems that support small holders and small fishers; this provides us with better chance at protecting the environment
 - land use policies is important to be put in place
 - need to look at scientific evidence, need to do research, concerning for example biofuels, invasive crop varieties – how these threaten food security and ecosystems
- **adaptation strategies** – we are interlinked; need to think of how global and national systems for adaptation are playing out; market driven trends in CCA and mitigation, for example, demand of industrialized countries for biofuels, are threatening food security and ecosystems of developing countries; the economics of climate change mitigation and adaptation should be monitored and we need to engage to ensure these do not lead to climate injustice
- **inequality and/or climate injustice**

- persisting inequality within community of nations/states, within countries, within households;
 - developing countries produce less greenhouse gas and yet bearing the impacts in greater intensity; developed countries contributing hugely to global warming pay this off in terms of “aid”, not in terms of just compensation
 - women have lesser carbon footprint but bearing impact in more intense ways, i.e., food insecurity, etc; women are driven to risky activities in exchange for food (e.g., sex for fish)
 - consumption of food is very unequal; those who produce food eat less
- others:
- there are a lot of practical ideas and experiences and these actually reflect the diversity of contexts of countries, communities, men and women
 - we should recognize therefore the importance of bottom up planning for CCA
 - in addition to the initiatives already discussed by the panelists, participants esp from the Pacific islands pointed out that relocation is already being done

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Can be categorized into these general headings:

- increase investment for sustainable agriculture – flood-resistant crops, improving soil quality, water for irrigation systems, protecting biodiversity, promoting organic, diversified farming system;
- ensure access to land or to coastal zones for women – this is a fundamental principle in CCA as mentioned by Ms Lorena Aguilar in her paper; property rights for women, other instruments to secure access to productive farm land and fishing grounds
- develop mechanism and funding for social protection or safety nets – e.g., crop insurance, cash transfers, food vouchers
- ensure access to skills development, credit, technology, information, for women

Underlying all of the above is women’s empowerment and men’s cooperation as well as attention to economic models that perpetuate persisting inequality and climate injustice.

RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO THE MANILA DECLARATION:

1. include sustainable agriculture (ask for details from Esther)
2. promote initiatives for renewable sources of energy
3. strengthen human rights perspective of the declaration