

Anushka Virahsawmy



# Gender and climate change



Climate change is a global concern. Marching for climate justice during COP 17 - Durban, December 2011.

Photo: Saeanna Chingamuka

### KEY POINTS

- Climate change affects women disproportionately.
- Women's representation in decision-making positions on climate change and sustainable development related decision-making bodies are 60% and Zambia tops the list in SADC.
- There is a lack of gender-disaggregated data for the sector.
- Adaptation and mitigation strategies remain largely gender blind.
- Budgets for addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction management should be gender responsive.
- The Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance stepping up campaign for gender and climate change including lobbying at national level.

### Context

#### Global

There is no doubt that the overall climate is changing, and this poses serious global challenges. This is because climate change is an environmental, social, economic, energy, food, political, ethical and moral challenge. It is a crisis

perpetuated by the endless pursuit of growth and prosperity.

Ultimately, the world faces not just a climate crisis, but also a crisis of sustainability. The key contributor to global warming is human-induced climate change, because of exploitative, unsustainable economic growth, consumption

and production patterns, applied especially by the global North and the elites in developing countries. Women in the south contribute the least to climate change yet feel its effects the most.

### SADC level

Peace begins @ home



Gender and climate justice by 2015!

Against this background, the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance has embarked on a campaign for an Addendum to the SADC Gender Protocol on Gender and Climate Change. This underscores the fact that like a constitution, a protocol is a living document that should be open to amendment, reflecting specific needs and concerns at any given time. This is yet another example of how - by being organised and strategic - civil society is yet again prying open democratic spaces and getting gender into key areas of the regional agenda.

There are precedents in the region to governments elaborating on gender instruments in response to civil society demands. In 1998, a year after the signing of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, Heads of State adopted an addendum on violence against women and children. Just as women's organisations drafted this addendum, so the Alliance has drafted an Addendum on Gender and Climate Change for consideration by Heads of State through their ministers.

Even before the adoption of this addendum, the Alliance decided in 2012 to include an eleventh chapter in the Barometer on gender and climate change. This measures the performance of governments against the draft provisions of the Addendum. The message is simply that there is no time to waste.

### National level

Zambia is experiencing increasing droughts and floods, and other knock-on effects: 'social, economic and environmental problems, such as increased poverty and deforestation due to charcoal burning'.

Although issues of environmental protection fall directly under new Ministry of Local Government and Housing, environmental issues should be cross cutting in various line ministries such as Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Community Development, of Defence, of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Health, Education and others.

A National Policy on Environment Zambia provides a framework for addressing environmental and climate changes. Parliament amended the 1990 Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Act during the implementation of the FNDP. This led to the creation of a new institutional framework, the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Systems.

However, despite the enactment of the legal and policy frameworks, the challenge is to translate the policy directives into harmonised and coordinated implementation plans. The sector has weak institutional and legal frameworks to implement and enforce the laws. There is a lack of human resources as well as funding.

### Gender and climate change

While climate change affects everyone, it does not affect everyone equally. The poor and vulnerable in Africa and other developing countries that have the least responsibility for climate change suffer the most as they experience violence, exclusion and loss of sovereignty over natural resources. Women make up 70% of the world's poor and this places them on the frontline of coping with disproportionate climate impacts on their livelihoods.



Working together for a clean environment. Women participate in a clean-up of market space under Big Tree in Kabwe. Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Of the people who die in climate-induced natural disasters, 85% are women, while 75% of environmental refugees are women. Owing to these and other vulnerabilities that emerge from women's social role and status, their voices and interests need amplification within policy-making around climate change.

It is important to understand the human face of climate change, not least because climate change has particular

gender characteristics. Women suffer more from the impacts of climate change because of their limited access to services and goods. A growing body of literature on the gendered impact of climate change highlights aspects such as:

- Food insecurity - the stresses placed on women to provide sufficient food for their families;
- Water - the added effort required to secure sufficient water for family and access to clean water to prevent water borne diseases;
- Health - interruptions to health services delivery for example anti-retroviral treatment or TB treatment,

and impacts on those caring for the terminally ill (unpaid care work);

- School dropout - girl children who drop out of school because of responsibilities on the home front; and
- Migration and displacement - threats to women's safety and security because reliable water sources are further away or forced displacement owing to natural disaster. In the case of floods and tsunamis, for instance, women are the majority of victims because they stay to protect children.
- Women are more likely to be the unseen victims of resource wars and violence because of climate change.

Table 11.1 outlines the gender dimensions of climate change.

<b>Table 11.1: Gender dimensions of climate change</b>	
<b>AREA OF CONCERN</b>	<b>GENDER IMPLICATIONS</b>
<b>Food security</b>	Productivity in Southern Africa is expected to drop by 20-50% in extreme cases to 90% of the rural poor's intake.
<b>Water</b>	Climate change is likely to exacerbate water shortages. Women are largely responsible for water management in communities and in the home. Shortages will result in greater time spent fetching water, exacerbate disease, and divert women from other economic pursuits.
<b>Division of labour</b>	Crop and livestock production changes could affect the gendered division of labour and have negative effects on incomes of women and men.
<b>School drop out</b>	Increased household chores may lead to larger numbers of girls dropping out of school.
<b>Land</b>	Women's already tenuous rights to land could be eroded further.
<b>Transport</b>	Men generally have a much higher carbon footprint than women, as more women use public transport.
<b>Health</b>	Women are the most affected by ill health in communities, as they bear the brunt of caring for the sick. Climate variability can fuel nutrition-related diseases and epidemics like malaria, increase the spread of vector and water-borne diseases, and reduce drinking water availability, exacerbating heat stress and respiratory illness.
<b>Stress</b>	Stress levels and related diseases may increase for both women and men. Because they are expected to provide for the family, men experience and express stress in different, often more devastating ways than women.
<b>Migration</b>	Resource shortages may increase male migration and increase the burden of work and family care on women.
<b>Gender violence</b>	Adolescent girls report high levels of sexual harassment and abuse in the aftermath of disasters, because of families living together in open spaces, lack of privacy for dressing and bathing among others. Scarce resources worsen conflict, and there is often a gender dimension to this.
<b>Mortality</b>	A study of disasters in 141 countries has shown that women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men.
<b>Decision-making</b>	Most key decision-making institutions relating to climate change have a male-dominated hierarchy.

### **Effect of mining on environment**

Mining operations of national and transnational corporations have been cited for environmental and climate injustices. They have destroyed land, displaced people and have promoted conflict among various chiefdoms.

The national and transnational corporations have total control of the land where mining activities are undertaken and deprive communities of the ownership

of mining. Mining activities are taking place in almost all 10 provinces of Zambia. In these communities, mining activities have destroyed women's alternative livelihood opportunities, such as production of honey, farming, gardening and fishing. The difficulties in accessing licensing, has caused women, youths and children to engage in illegal mining activities. They have no legal protection.

Women and men alike working in the mining sector have been exposed to illnesses, such as TB. For example, in Kitwe, communities have suffered air and river pollution. Zambia has been mining continuously up to 1994 without addressing the potential danger of lead. The smelting process which was unregulated during that period has contributed the release of heavy metals in dust particle form which has settled in the ground in surrounding communities. Although the mine and smelter are no longer functional, the city is poisoned as a result of the debilitating concentrations of lead in the soil and water from slug hips that were left from the smelting and mining era” (Moody, 2007, p. 136).

This has an impact on women as they are often left with the burden of caring for the sick miners, usually men who are affected by the minerals and chemicals.

The process of cleaning Kabwe started in 2007 and is still in progress. The World

Bank approved a US20 Million Dollar grant to clean up the town.



Women selling charcoal for survival in Kafue even though sustained handling is hazardous to their health - Zambia, September 2012.  
Photo: Cynthia Kalizinje

### National frameworks for climate change

#### National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)

Both the fifth and sixth National Development Plans show that the government supports the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA). The NAPA is expected to complement government efforts by contributing to security of vulnerable groups, including women and children, in Zambia who suffer the adverse effects of climate change.

Zambia comprises 84% natural vegetation, including 50 million hectares of forest with a deforestation rate of approximately 250,000-300,000 hectares per year. Zambia faces a huge challenge in forest management. Millions of trees are cut for farming purposes, fuel or for road development. Mostly communities in high density areas and rural communities burn charcoal for energy and also sell it. Many depend on trees for energy. Despite guidelines by Ministry of Lands and Traditional leaders as well as local government authorities to control charcoal burning, the practice continues due to lack of alternative sources of energy.

#### Conservation farming

The challenge for Zambia is to develop capacities, policies and legal frameworks for adaptation, mitigation and response climate change.

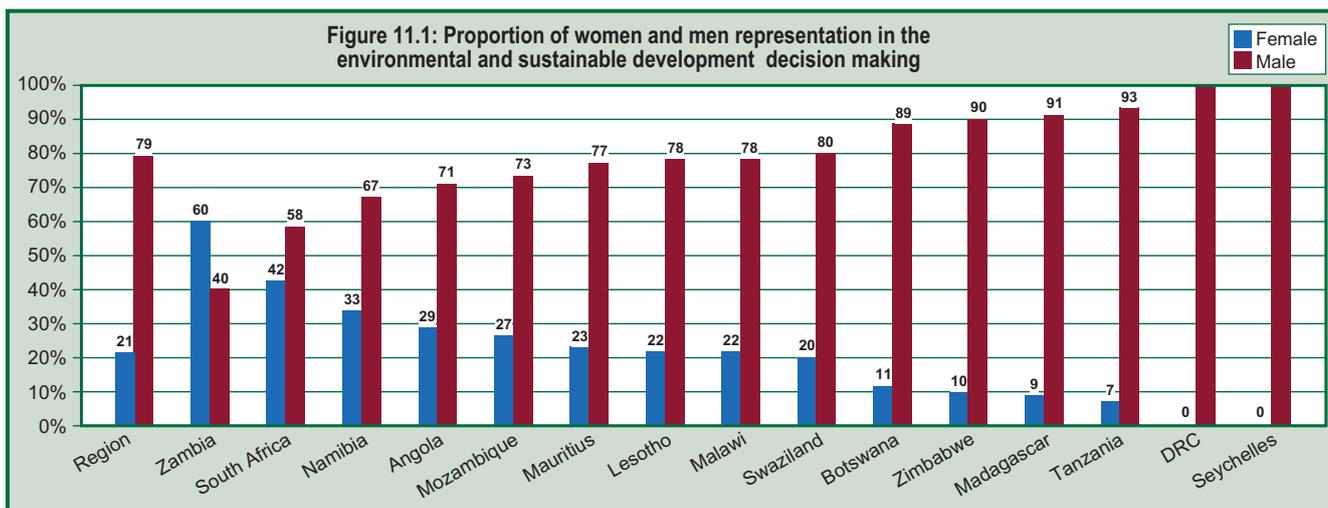
The Norwegian Church Aid and the Barefoot College of India empower women in solar energy as an alternative source of energy. Overfishing by mostly women in the search for improved livelihood is one of

the challenges that Zambia is facing. Grassroots Trust (2012) has observed that catching small fish using mosquito nets or Chitenges is depleting fish from the rivers. Grassroots Trust recommends empowerment of women by organising the fishing communities to regulate their own fishing rules and ensure ownership of the resources. This is because natural resource management is an important system of conserving the environment.

## Women and men in decision-making in environment and agriculture



*It is proposed that the Addendum on Gender and Climate Change makes reference to ensuring women and men equal participation in all decisions related to climate change at all levels by 2015, as specified in Article 12-13 of 2008 SADC Gender Protocol.*



Source: 2012 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, Gender Links.

At 60%, Figure 11.1 shows that Zambia has surpassed the 50/50 target in terms of women representation in climate change and sustainable development related decision-making bodies. Zambia leads the rest of the

SADC region in this sector. Key positions that women occupy include Minister and Deputy Minister of Local Government, Housing, Early Education and Environmental Protection as well as Minister of Tourism.

## Gender disaggregated data



*It is proposed that the Addendum calls on all SADC states to establish, by 2015, a system to collect sex disaggregated data and develop qualitative and quantitative indicators on climate change.*

Like almost all other SADC countries, Zambia has not successfully collected or collated sex disaggregated data on the effect of climate change or natural disasters at a national scale. Ad hoc studies may have been carried by NGOs but information is scant.

In order to develop robust systems for collecting gender disaggregated data the following are key: Co-ordination of all relevant government institutions, humanitarian agencies and UN agencies; emphasis on protection of individuals; and development of effective early warning mechanisms.

## Sustainable technology



*It is proposed that the Addendum calls on all SADC States to develop, deploy and disseminate sustainable technology that is responsive to women and men, for example, promoting cleaner burning fuel for household use that will reduce air pollution and cut annual cooking costs for women by 25%.*

Like in most SADC countries women and men have traditionally relied on wood for cooking - readily available and cheaper. There are emerging campaigns

to urge citizens to use cleaner energy but the startup costs are usually big and do not offer an incentive for the citizens to opt for those alternative energy sources.

### Waste management

Zambia has recognised the important role sustainable environmental and natural resource management plays in socio-economic development. In 1985 Zambia initiated the formulation of the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) in 1985 and subsequently the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) (1994). National Solid Waste Management Strategy (NSWMS) was developed involving stakeholders. It provided an integrated approach to addressing the problem of poor solid waste management which negatively affects human health and environment.

The newly created Ministry is mandated to deal with environmental protection and solid waste management. Poor sanitation has led to outbreaks of water borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, and dysentery. In many instances the burden of care for the sick in the family and in communities falls on women.

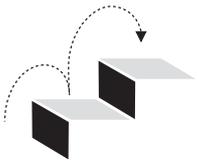
Industrial waste has been reported to be polluting water sources. There is also increasing attention on non-solid waste such as used oils and sewer sludge.

Consistent with the Agenda 21 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Zambia seeks to devise collaborative interventions to protect the environment and control pollution; promote sustainable waste management practices; protect and preserve human health; and sustainable rationale for sustainable use of natural resources.



A woman cooking using an energy saving wood stove in Zambia.

Photo: Cynthia Kalizinje



## Next steps

There is a need for

- Lobby for the Addendum to the SADC Gender Protocol on Gender and Climate Change and nominate gender, climate change and sustainable development champions.
- Map climate change effects on women through an initial qualitative study that can be developed into specific quantitative frameworks.
- Intensify public awareness campaigns.
- Build capacity of women from different contexts on climate change issues; and
- Together with women from communities, develop adaptation and mitigation programmes that are replicable.



- Government to commit to gender concerns in national budgets with specific regard climate change and environmental affairs.
- Set clear short and long-term targets for reducing carbon emission that keep average global temperature increases well below 1.5 degree Celsius, and support a shared vision that enables gender equality and avoids adverse effects on vulnerable groups - especially women.
- Use the local radio stations in addition to using the national broadcasters to disseminate information on climate change.



Good waste management controls pollution and preserves human health thus contributing to reducing women's burden of caring for the sick. Women cleaning streets in Zambia, 2006.

*Photo: Derrick Sinjela*